

### The Lecture Hall of Tyrannus

Acts 19:8-41 (Key verse: 19:9b)

*“He took the disciples with him and had discussions daily in the lecture hall of Tyrannus.”*

Many Christians especially young people ask themselves, what is God’s will for my life. Why am I living? How can I be happy? All these are ultimately centred on, what is God’s vision for my life and how can that vision be planted in my heart? Our campus is also like Ephesus, all kinds of things happen on campus. Different religions, freedom of expression to identity. We get influenced on dress code, hair styles, nails, you name it. All kinds of sin, worship of sexual pleasure which is a form of idolatry, sexual immorality, to name a few. It is a place where ideologies are discussed, where learning happens and all kinds of activities are held. There are lecture halls for lectures on various subjects. And all these activities and events shape who we ultimately become. How is all this related to this passage? We shall see that In Ephesus God used Paul’s daily Bible studies with the disciples as the power source to advance the kingdom of God, and in the process planted world mission vision in Paul’s heart. The fear of the Lord could be planted in man’s heart and Jesus name held in high honour. Men and women could be convicted of sin and genuinely repent. All this happened through the lecture halls of Tyrannus. As Paul and the disciples discussed the word of God in the lecture halls of Tyrannus, God could answer some of our deepest life questions and their lives could genuinely be transformed. I pray that we may be encouraged through this passage to have an intentional attitude to study God’s word diligently and establish lecture halls of Tyrannus in our campuses. Amen!

When Paul arrived in Ephesus he found some disciples there, however they had not received the Holy Spirit, only the baptism of John. Verse 6-7 reads, “When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied. 7There were about twelve men in all.” Paul then placed his hands on them for the anointing of the Holy Spirit. They still needed to grow even though they had received the Holy Spirit. Unfortunately, there still a number of Christians who think once you have received the Holy Spirit you do not need to learn from the Bible. Some pastors would even go as far as to say, God told me this and that, claiming to have received such divine knowledge through the Holy Spirit and then make these claims of what God said authoritative, just as the Bible. This was not the case with Paul. Because of the Holy Spirit we are able to love the word of God, hear from it and be convicted of the word. Because of the Holy Spirt the Bible become a book of life, the words in the bible become alive and can change our lives. Paul wanted his disciples to grow to become genuine disciples of Jesus.

Look at verse 8-9, “Paul entered the synagogue and spoke boldly there for three months, arguing persuasively about the kingdom of God. 9But some of them became obstinate; they refused to believe and publicly maligned the Way. So Paul left them. He took the disciples with him and had discussions daily in the lecture hall of Tyrannus.” Paul began to teach boldly, arguing persuasively about the kingdom of God. However, some of them refused to believe and publicly maligned the way. Paul’s arguments were persuasive, he made clear who Jesus was and the coming kingdom of God. Yet some refused to believe. They intentionally refused to believe because in addition they maligned the way. To malign is to intentionally be spiteful about the way of Jesus. Some of these people were too proud to accept the word of God. They became a bad influence for the disciples and those who genuinely wanted to know about the kingdom of God. So Paul left and took the disciples with him. They had daily discussions about the word of God in the lecture hall of Tyrannus. Paul created a good environment for the discussions of the word of God. Would you rather have a teacher lecture or have a class of discussion, I think a discussion is more preferred by students or anyone. This means the disciples were free to ask questions and have discussions freely. Let us look again at verse 9b, it says they had discussions daily. This means everyday they would meet and have bible discussions. In this way they could have daily guidance through the word of God. They could also make daily decisions to

obey Jesus and guard their minds against the deceptive messages of this world. This is how the disciples could actually grow up continually.

Look at verse 10, "This went on for two years, so that all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord." Their discussions went on for two years and they discussed the word of God so well that the word of God could be heard throughout the province. They were transformed by the word of God, such that all Jews and Greeks in the province heard the word of God. For the whole of two years day in and day out, studying the word of God, something began to happen. They could become source of blessing for the people in the province. To have studied daily for two years clearly reveals their hearts desire to grow as disciples of Jesus. Verse 11 -45 show the impact of Paul's daily bible study with the disciples, such a simple act, yet we shall see how God used it for his glory.

Look at verse 11-12, "God did extraordinary miracles through Paul, 12so that even handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched him were taken to the sick, and their illnesses were cured, and the evil spirits left them." Usually a miracle on its own is extraordinary, however in this case the bible states explicitly that the miracles were extraordinary, perhaps this was because it was handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched Paul which when taken to the sick, their illness were cured, even evil spirits left them. They were extra-ordinary to also signify that such was a special case. At the same time this might make Paul appear as an extra ordinary man, even cause people to start worshiping him. However, verse 11 is clear, its reads, "**God did extraordinary miracles through Paul.**" It was God who worked through Paul to cause extraordinary miracles to happen. Through having daily bible studies had such a great effect, not only filled up Paul with the spirit of God, but made him over flow such that aprons and handkerchiefs that touched him healed the sick and drove our evil spirit. God could work greatly through Paul, because he studied the world of God diligently daily.

Unfortunately, people like to copycat the effects of what God does instead of depend on the source, the spirit of God. Generally as people we like short cuts, we want same outcomes as Paul but with little effort. We want to experience the extraordinary work of God in the lives of others and our lives. It is clear that God could work greatly through Paul's life because they diligently studied the word of God daily. All the persons in history whom God used greatly, they loved and lived by the word of God. They spent time with the word of God as though it was their oxygen. However, copycats focus on the results, on the outcomes and emphasize the results or outcomes more than relying on the person of Jesus Christ. This copycat attitude was the second effect Paul's bible study of the word of God produced within the region.

Look at verse 13-14, "Some Jews who went around driving out evil spirits tried to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those who were demon-possessed. They would say, "In the name of the Jesus whom Paul preaches, I command you to come out." 14Seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, were doing this." The Jewish priest used to conduct exorcism, something which the Catholic priest still practice today. It is some technique that is followed to drive out a demon or evil spirit from a person. There are couple of movies on this done by the Catholic priest. So now they saw the effect of Paul and his teachings and now they too wanted a similar effect. Look at verse 15-16, "One day the evil spirit answered them, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know about, but who are you?" 16Then the man who had the evil spirit jumped on them and overpowered them all. He gave them such a beating that they ran out of the house naked and bleeding." It is very interesting actually that the evil spirit knew Jesus and Paul, but did not know the sons of Sceva. Some say this is because Paul and Jesus were a real threat to the kingdom of Satan. That Satan does not bother to know people who are not a threat to his empire. The sons of Sceva were beaten up so badly, left the house in nakedness and bloodiness. They did not know Jesus personally, simply wanted to use his name in order to replicate Paul's ministry. Copycat ministries are based on sensationalism, but lack content. The seven sons of Sceva wanted the

glory of Paul's ministry without the cross. They had no daily Bible studies, but they still wanted to perform miracles in the name of Jesus. Basically, they were pretenders and hired hands, not authentic shepherds. However, in the end they were exposed. May we not be a copycat ministry but a ministry that diligently studies the word of God. So we may have a renewed mind, a heart of flesh not of a rock. Only the word of God has power to reveal our sin so that we may repent and experience Jesus newly.

Now that the sons of Sceva became exposed shamefully, this caused the third effect from the lecture halls of Tyrannus (studying the word of God). Look at verse 17, "When this became known to the Jews and Greeks living in Ephesus, they were all seized with fear, and the name of the Lord Jesus was held in high honor." The name of the Lord Jesus was held in high honor. This is in Ephesus, a province that is filled with superstition, evil spirits and worship of man made gods. Yet because Paul and the disciples studied the word of God diligently daily, fear and honor of the name of our Lord Jesus could grow in peoples hearts. How could this be? **Remember in verse 10, the discussions went on for 2 years such that all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord.** So because of the discussions all people in the province knew about Jesus and what Paul preached. When the sons of Sceva were beaten up for trying to use what they heard from Paul, it became clear that the person Paul preached about was real and their only saviour. They could see the false promises of this world for happiness, joy and success. Moreover, they could realize their sin and need of Jesus. This fear and great honour for our Lord Jesus that seized peoples hearts was not just lip service. Believers could now genuinely repent of their sin and a number who practiced sorcery burned their scrolls publicly which is a lot of money actually [18-19]. These scrolls were regarded as secret knowledge, thus was not cheap stuff but expensive. However, there was genuine repentance and clear evidence that Jesus name was held in great honor and the fear of the Lord was genuine. Verse 20 tells us that, in this way the word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power. When there was true repentance, God's word could also spread and grow in power. The people became walking bibles. It really does take God's power to cause a person to have the fear of the Lord and genuinely repent from sin.

The fourth effect of studying the bible diligently, was that God could plant world mission vision, to go to Rome. Look at verse 21, "After all this had happened, Paul decided to go to Jerusalem, passing through Macedonia and Achaia. "After I have been there," he said, "I must visit Rome also." Paul experienced the power of God's word to advance the kingdom of God without a limit. Through this, God opened up his spiritual eyes to see God's greater vision. The vision Paul saw was to not only pioneer gospel work in Rome, but to pioneer the gospel in all nations through Rome. Rome was a superpower, every nation aspired to be like Rome, they had advanced technology and systems. However, through Paul, God wanted Rome to influence the world with the word of God. Our modern day Rome is the USA. Africa and the world is influenced greatly by American ideologies of freedom and democracy. However, through Paul, Rome could serve the word of God to all nations. So Paul took two of his helpers, Timothy and Erastus, teaching the word of God through the province of Asia.

The fifth thing the study of the bible produced in Ephesus was persecutions. A silversmith named Demetrius started the riot [23-24]. He brought two issues against Paul, first, that their business was losing money because Paul had said that gods made by human hands are no gods at all. Secondly, they became furious because, the great goddess Artemis will be discredited and robbed of her Divine majesty [25-27]. This resulted in a riot. Look at verse 29, "Soon the whole city was in an uproar. The people seized Gaius and Aristarchus, Paul's traveling companions from Macedonia, and all of them rushed into the theater together." At the heart of this riot was the problem of idolatry, especially the love of money. But also there was the problem of the worship of sexual pleasure, since the temple of Artemis in Ephesus was actually a house of prostitution. There was actually confusion, they were not all in unison. There were even people who did not know why they were there [32]. From here we can learn that, when we truly study the word of God and teach the word of God, people become convicted of their sin and idolatrous lifestyle. They can become rebellious like the people of Ephesus and make

lot of noise. However, they actually don't know what they are doing. Those who teach the word of God should then not lose sight of God's vision. What people think and say does not diminish the truthfulness and faithfulness of the word of God. They are merely a distraction.

In conclusion, we already have started to see the influence of first world countries in South Africa, we have a new definition of sexuality. Which directly wants to redefine marriage and family, and this has infiltrated the church. A person can choose whether they are male or female, and there is a strong insistence that they should be called according to their new identity. All these are part and parcel of the culture that promotes relativism, that there are no moral absolutes. A complete rejection that God, created them male and female. Our country is also filled with broken families, children raised by single parents. Some even neglected to be raised by single grandparents. All these distort God's creation order and sin become rampant. Where then is our hope? I believe our hope is in establishing the lecture halls of Tyrannus in our campuses and wherever we go. An intentional attitude to study the word of God diligently is our hope for repentance from sin and our salvation from the power of sin and death. This is because God's vision to raise disciples and expand his kingdom still remains. Ephesians 6:12 tells us that, "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms". We do not fight those who oppose the word of God, but rather we fight by studying the word of God diligently. Studying the word of God is our sure hope in our campuses, South Africa and the world. May God establish lecture halls of Tyrannus through young campus students in our campuses. May God bless our ministry in raising us to study the bible diligently and teach the word of God to others in love. Amen!