

Acts 19:21-41 “The Power of the Spirit to Overcome Idolatry” 12.14.14.

Intro. When you think of “idolatry” what comes to mind? More than carved images

The worship of idols or excessive devotion to, or reverence for some person or thing. An idol is anything that replaces the one, true God. ?What are some idols that Christians & non-Christians might worship without realizing? How about *you*?

Subject: The Ephesians turn from idolatry The Riot at Ephesus

Object: Turn from idols to God

Context: [21-22] When these things were accomplished, Paul purposed in the Spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, “After I have been there, I must also see Rome.” 22So he sent into Macedonia two of those who ministered to him, Timothy and Erastus, but he himself stayed in Asia for a time: Paul had been teaching at Ephesus, making disciples, developing leaders, and people were turning from the occult to Christ. Paul was led by Spirit to go to the Gentile churches at Philippi & Corinth to receive an offering to help the impoverished Jewish church at Jerusalem, and then planned to go to Rome. Paul sent Timothy & Erastus ahead while he remained at Ephesus

A. The Conflict With The Culture [23-27]

1. People were turning from idols to God [23-27]

23And about that time there arose a great commotion about the Way: **24** For a certain man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of Diana, brought no small profit to the craftsmen. **25**He called them together with the workers of similar occupation, and said: “Men, you know that we have our prosperity by this trade. **26**Moreover you see and hear that not only at Ephesus, but throughout almost all Asia, this Paul has persuaded and turned away many people, saying that they are not gods which are made with hands. **27**So not only is this trade of ours in danger of falling into disrepute, but also the temple of the great goddess Diana may be despised and her magnificence destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worship: Idols are not like God – unable to save, unworthy of worship. Any idol will misrepresent the glory that is God [Ex.20:4-5]. The Bible provides the revelation of God.

a. The Holy Spirit empowers you to turn from idols to God [26] It was not Paul’s persuasion but the work of the Holy Spirit, Paul was God’s instrument [**Jn.16:5-14**]

2. The spread of Christianity causes conflict with those who reject God

a. The spread of Christianity caused conflict with those who made their living from the sale of idols since many people turned from idols to God [25-26].

b. **Diana is the goddess of fertility and pleasure** temple of Diana was an economic engine of the city [1 of 7 wonders of Ancient world, 127 white marbles pillars 60’ high], also a treasury & bank where kings, cities, and merchants made deposits

c. silversmiths had lucrative business selling silver images of Diana [24]

d. 3 concerns: silversmith trade will be hurt, temple will lose prestige, Diana will lose majesty [27]

v. Christianity conflicts with the beliefs, lifestyle, & status quo of “idolaters”

** neo-atheist billboards attacking God, Christ, the Bible

? What are some conflicts that you’ve experienced as you turned to God? **

B. The Confusion of the Mob [28-34] 28 Now when they heard *this*, they were full of wrath and cried out, saying, “Great *is* Diana of the Ephesians!” 29 So the whole city was filled with confusion, and rushed into the theater with one accord, having seized Gaius and Aristarchus, Macedonians, Paul’s travel companions. 30 And when Paul wanted to go in to the people, the disciples would not allow him. 31 Then some of the officials of Asia, who were his friends, sent to him pleading that he would not venture into the theater. 32 Some therefore cried one thing and some another, for the assembly was confused, and most of them did not know why they had come together. 33 And they drew Alexander out of the multitude, the Jews putting him forward. And Alexander motioned with his hand, and wanted to make his defense to the people. 34 But when they found out that he was a Jew, all with one voice cried out for about two hours, “Great *is* Diana of the Ephesians!”

1. The angry mob wants to silence the message of the gospel

a. Angry silversmiths grab Paul’s companions & stir city such that they fill the theatre [@ 25,000 seats]. [28-30]. Paul’s friend sought to keep him from the mob [30-31]

** mob pressure and the call to be politically correct

** pressure on college and university campuses

2. Most in the mob don’t really know why they are part of the opposition [29,32]

a. People were confused [29,32] most in the mob did not know why they were there

b. Jews put Alexander forward to address the crowd [ie. that the Jews opposed Paul too] but since the Jews oppose idols too the mob wouldn’t hear him [33]

c. for 2 hours crowd chants “Great *is* Diana of the Ephesians!” [34] – acoustics would amplify the crowd

? What are some ways that non-Christians can feel threatened by Christians and their faith? How might people be confused about the Christian faith?

C. The Call for Reason [35-41] 35 And when the city clerk had quieted the crowd, he said: “Men of Ephesus, what man is there who does not know that the city of the Ephesians is temple guardian of the great goddess Diana, and of the *image* which fell down from Zeus? 36 Therefore, since these things cannot be denied, you ought to be quiet and do nothing rashly. 37 For you have brought these men here who are neither robbers of temples nor blasphemers of your goddess. 38 Therefore, if Demetrius and

his fellow craftsmen have a case against anyone, the courts are open and there are proconsuls. Let them bring charges against one another. 39But if you have any other inquiry to make, it shall be determined in the lawful assembly. 40For we are in danger of being called in question for today's uproar, there being no reason which we may give to account for this disorderly gathering." 41And when he had said these things, he dismissed the assembly.

1. Rational people have nothing to fear or oppose in Christianity [35-41]

a. **The city mayor (clerk) quiets the mob 4 arguments:** a. no danger to Diana [35-36], b. Paul did not blaspheme Diana or rob temple [37], c. Use the courts if a law was violated [38-39], d. Roman authority prohibits civil disorder [40]

2. The evidence reveals what is true and right [38-39]

** I'm not afraid of the exchange of ideas about religion, faith, and philosophy but the attempt to suppress the exchange of ideas [Christian faith involves faith but it is reasoned, reasonable and supported by the evidence]

Conc. Why didn't the silversmiths consider whether the gospel was true? Appears their primary focus was money. You have to choose between pursuit of pleasure [worship of Diana], pursuit of materialism [silversmiths] or pursuit of true and living God. We are to love God more than anything or anyone [Mt.22:37-38]. As the Spirit empowers us let us choose to turn from idols to God!

Discussion Qs

1. What are some idols that Christians might worship without realizing?
2. What are some conflicts that you've experienced as you turned to God?
3. What are some ways that non-Christians can feel threatened by Christians and their faith?
4. Reflection: What idols may you be unknowingly worshipping? How can you turn from idols to God?