

TRUTH OR CONSEQUENCES

Digging Deeper, April 30

Acts 19:21-41

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As we begin digging deeper into Acts 19, we come face to face with the impact of false gods on the lives of people. This is not a new confrontation in Acts 19, and we must face the reality this confrontation continues throughout history until this current day. Let's try to realistically face this confrontation and identify the consequences involved when truth is presented to a community.

Day One: The beginnings of the disturbance (Acts 19:21 – 23)

Transitioning from the folly of the sons of Sceva attempting to cast out demons Paul is making out his travel itinerary including Macedonia, Achaia, and Rome. Paul and those with him have seen miracles, conversions, and transformation of lives. Paul resolves in the Spirit to continue his mission of taking the gospel to as many places as possible.

Whenever the gospel of Jesus Christ is presented the forces of Satan are unleashed. George Nixon Briggs, (April 12, 1796–September 12, 1861), was an American politician and philanthropist. He was the Governor of Massachusetts, and a U.S. Representative for six successive terms. In May of 1850, while President of the American Baptist Missionary Union, he addressed the missionaries in Buffalo:

You go to an embassy compared with which all the embassies of men dwindle into insignificance. You go forth as ambassadors of Christ. You go to crumble idols—to convey light to benighted minds—to kindle love to God in the souls of ungodly men.

Always remember, Satan's intent is to destroy and kill, while Christ came to the world to bring life! John put it this way: *The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.* (John 10:10) With that in mind, how urgent is our task to present the gospel? Just as Paul planned where he was going next, we should have a focus for our efforts in presenting the gospel. As you pray today ask God where you should be going to present the gospel.

Day Two: Stirring the Pot (Acts 19:24 – 27)

Demetrius, a silversmith apparently of prominence among the crafters of shrines to Artemis recognizes the danger to his business because of the ministry of Paul. As people were responding (19:20, 26) to the gospel the allegiance to Artemis was destined to decline. As the goddess' influence declines business was going to decline. It appears Demetrius real allegiance is not to the goddess but the money her worship provides to him and his craftsmen. It is one thing to say that people are prone to idolatry; it is another to say, as Calvin did, that "the human mind is, so to speak, a perpetual forge of idols." Calvin is intimating that as one idol loses prominence another takes its place. What we recognize from this account and perhaps from our own experience is money is often a supreme idol.

So how do we guard against that in our lives? We must realize our purpose or mission. Robert Morgan reminds us, "The mission statement of Christ's church is not often repealed or restated. Christ is building His church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it. Rather than restate Christ's mission statement

for His church we need to respond obediently to it. The missionary enterprise is not elective but essential, not optional but an obligation.”

Digging deeper into your life, how do you respond to Christ’s call to “make disciples”? Pray today that God will deeply impress you to be a partner with Him in building His church.

Day Three: A mob frenzy (Acts 19:28 – 34)

There is one word that is used twice in this brief portion – confusion. The crowd didn’t know why they were there (verses 29 and 32). The NIV uses the word *uproar* in verse 29. One thing we need to keep in mind is the enemy of our soul delights in keeping people confused. The ESV translators apparently chose to use the word *confusion* in both instances to show there was no clarity among the citizenry about what was going on within their city.

The Asiarchs were ten officers elected by the various cities in the province of Asia, whose duty it was to celebrate at their own cost the public games and festivals. The games in honour of Artemis were held in May, which was called after her. The mention of the Asiarchs here makes it probable that this disturbance took place, as it very naturally might, in that month. (Page, T. E. (1897). *The Acts of the Apostles* (p. 208). Macmillan.)

Paul was apparently interrupting the festivities as many people were beginning to abandon their idol worship and following Christ. John reminds us “Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.” 1 John 3:8 No wonder the silversmiths were leading the unruly mob, a mob who didn’t even know why they were there!

Remind yourself again of the consequences of disregarding or ignoring truth. John points it out, the vast difference of following powerless idols which are tools of Satan, “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.” John 10:10

This brief passage serves as a caution to us. Loud voices are not necessarily wise voices. Demetrius had managed to secure a mob but not a solution to his dilemma as we shall see. We should listen to the voice that says “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” John 14:6

Ask yourself, “Have I resorted to a loud voice to make my point?” How can you go about evaluating your responses to the uncomfortable circumstances in which you sometimes find yourself? What happens when *truth from God’s word* confronts you? Remind yourself of Paul’s word to us in Romans, *For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace.* (Romans 8:6)

Day Four: A false rationale (Acts 19:35 – 40)

Paul’s testimony is found in Acts 19:26 when he says, “gods made with hands are not gods.” And A. W. Tozer reminds us that “An idol of the mind is as offensive to God as an idol of the hand.” This truth counters the argument of the town clerk who is attempting to convince the mob of the *divinity* of their goddess, a goddess who *fell from the sky.*”

The clerk wanted to falsely assure the mob they had nothing to fear from the message of the gospel. We should ask ourselves, is the gospel we are living and preaching have no impact on those around us? Why should this be a false reality to those who hear and see the gospel in our lives? What is the consequence if our gospel has does not impact our culture? Another way to ask this question is what is the consequence in our culture without the gospel?

Jesus tells us “You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people’s feet.” Matthew 5:13 Ask yourself “How do I maintain saltiness of the gospel message?” What are some habits needed to maintain that saltiness?

Day Five: Reality sets in (Acts 19:41)

If the clerk was correct the mob was out of order. (Mobs are almost exclusively always out of order!) They could have been charged with rioting as the clerk felt there was no danger of the gospel affecting their culture, their worship, or their lifestyle. So, they were easily dismissed.

We have the benefit of seeing what took place after all this took place. History tells us “The struggle between the followers of Christ and of Artemis continued even after the destruction of the Artemision, according to a fifth-century inscription mentioning the replacement of a statue of the goddess by a cross. (Achteimer, P. J., Harper & Row and Society of Biblical Literature. (1985). In Harper’s Bible dictionary (1st ed., p. 66). Harper & Row.)

The cross replaced the goddess. That can happen even today (keep in mind the change may not be overnight) The false gods of today are no less false than they were in the days of Paul. It is up to us to continue speaking and living the truth. The future depends on it!

What will you do to affect the tomorrows of our culture? What are you doing to live the truth?