

Acts of the Holy Spirit - 22
Confronting Idols
Acts 19:23-41 Week of October 14, 2018
Bay Park Life Groups – Leader

Ephesus was the principle city, the capital of Asia Minor. Though Ephesus was commercial center as well, it was pre-eminently a center of pagan religions and occult practices . . . The pride of the city was the Temple of Artemis (Diana) whose building was four times the size of the Parthenon and called one of the seven wonders of the world. The temple was such an attraction that it drew huge numbers of people from all over the world. As a result, the temple became an enormous economic boon to the city, generating a great deal of income from visitors, and serving as a banking institution in its own right.¹

Timothy Keller

1. Pick one of the following:

- What tourist filled destination have you travelled to and how did it impact you? Why are we drawn to certain destinations and attractions?
- Have you ever traveled, or wanted to, for religious purposes? If so where and why?

Read Acts 19:23-27

2. Why was the Gospel so offensive to some Ephesians? What can we learn from this for today?

There are many reasons why the Gospel can be offensive. Like the fact that:

- It claims to be “the Way” (v 23) and not “a Way.”
- It leads to a changed life (v 26).
- It does not bow to culture and traditions but rather challenges them (v 27)

What can we learn? The book of Acts is clear, there will be times when the Gospel is received with joy and times when it causes a stir, or both. This tells us that:

- We should expect some opposition at some point in our faith journey.
- When opposition occurs, it doesn’t necessarily mean we’ve failed.
- Opposition itself doesn’t mean our faith is wrong or misguided. Though opposition may appear dressed in intellect and logic, it’s source is often fuelled by the darker desires of the heart (lust, greed, pride, selfishness, vanity, comfort).

3. The growth of Christianity obviously impacted Demetrius’ wallet as fewer idols and shrines were being sold locally and globally (vv 25-26). Though Demetrius’ concern was purely economic, not moral or religious, he still couched his greed by appealing to professional and civic pride - *our trade will lose its good name*”

¹ Timothy Keller, *Mission to Ephesus*, (Redeemer Presbyterian Church, 2005) p 174

and “*the goddess... of Asia... will be robbed of her divine majesty*” (v 27). You could say Demetrius’ real idol was his bottom line, which he hid under the mask of patriotism and under the banner of professionalism. What other idols do we wrestle with today? What masks do we hide them under?

4. What if instead of fighting God, Demetrius had surrender to God? What blessings might he have experienced? What might his life have looked like after?

Read Acts 19:28-41

5. Why did Paul’s friends not want him to appear before the crowd? What lessons can we learn from this?

Paul’s desire was clearly to reason with those who were disturbed (vv 30-31). But to do so would have been foolish. Their minds were closed, their hearts wrapped around their wallets and comfort. From this we learn that:

- Sometimes it takes more courage and love to be silent than to speak. Had Paul spoken, matters would have likely escalated to the point of violence.
- Sharing the Gospel takes patience. Just because one opportunity to share the Gospel isn’t favorable doesn’t mean that there won’t be others. It’s a matter of trusting the Holy Spirit, his work in hearts and his timing.

6. Why did Luke record these events? How might this impact us?

Luke probably wrote this down for the same reason he mentions Gallio’s pronouncement in chapter 18. The city clerk, like Gallio demonstrates that Christianity was not illegal, for it posed no threat to the civic order, that opposition to it was purely personal. Surely many opponents of Christianity in Luke’s time were trying to stop the gospel in any way possible. One of the ways was to try to get it banned from the public arena by branding it unpatriotic or subversive of the public order. But both in Corinth and Ephesus, public Roman officials rule that this is not the case. Luke is therefore citing legal precedent in order to anticipate possible objections and head them off. Maybe Luke had been a lawyer as well as a doctor! ²

There is a growing sense that sharing Christ is un-Canadian and subversive to our society and it’s moral and sexual ethics. This is not new, nor is it true. To believe that Jesus is The Way and to be open about our faith isn’t wrong, it’s right. Capitulating to the pressure to be silent does not encourage democracy or freedom or speech and religion, it actually kills it.

7. How has God been speaking to you through Acts 19:23-41? What changes do you see taking root in response to God’s nudging?

² ibid p 181