



A FIGHT, AN IDOL, AND AN INVINCIBLE JESUS ACTS 19:11-41

Ephesus was located on the west coast of modern Turkey. And with somewhere between 200-250k people, it was the third largest city in the Greco-Roman world after Rome and Athens. It was a center for political power as it served as the capital of its province. It was a center for economic power—It was at the center of multiple trade routes and had incredible accommodations and advanced infrastructure such as the Theater capable of seating 24K people or the library of Celsus. It was a center of religious power. Ephesus prided itself on the great temple of Artemis/Diana. She was the daughter of Zeus—goddess of fertility and of wild animals, her temple in Ephesus was one of the biggest structures in the ancient world. It was much bigger than a football field and because of that was and one of the seven wonders the ancient world. And lastly Ephesus was a center of magical power.

Now when I say magic don't think David Copperfield, think demonic activity and people trying to tap into nature or demons, or ancestors, in order to manipulate and use that power. And it's with this understanding that we need read vs. 11-12. "And God was doing extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul, 12 so that even handkerchiefs or aprons that had touched his skin were carried away to the sick, and their diseases left them and the evil spirits came out of them. This has been abused and cited as a proof text for prosperity handkerchiefs. **Picture** Q:How does the Green Prosperity Prayer Handkerchief work? A: **Don Stewart** lays his hands on the Green Prosperity Prayer Handkerchiefs and prays over them. As soon as possible the handkerchief is sent to you. Q: Why is the prosperity prayer handkerchief green? A: Green represents renewal and prosperity. In the Spring plants come to life and sprout green leaves. In the United States, green is the color of money and prosperity.

No! Remember the point of miracles in Acts is to testify to the superiority of Christ and his power over what everyone else is doing or believing. Paul has been preaching about Jesus for two years in Ephesus and God is validating that teaching by showing that his power is so unrivaled, that even a handkerchief that has touched someone united to Christ, defeats demons opposed to Christ. This is total domination!

Now don't forget magic and idol worship were not just common practice they were big business and plenty of people were looking go cash in and specifically vs 13 says "Then some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists undertook to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying, p"I adjure you by the Jesus whom Paul proclaims." 14 Seven sons of a Jewish high priest named Sceva were doing this. So a guy named Sceva had 7 sons—probably a homeschool family—who were traveling exorcists and the see that Paul's Jesus is casting out demons in uniquely powerful ways and so they try to take advantage of that it goes really bad really fast.

Look at vs “15 But the evil spirit answered them, “Jesus I know, and Paul I recognize, but who are you?”
16 And the man in whom was the evil spirit leaped on them, mastered all of them and overpowered them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded.”

The demon says yea I know Jesus and I’ve heard of Paul, but I’ve never heard of ya’ll. And the demon empowers this man to give these guys what in Alabama we’d call a good ole country butt whoopin. I love Matt Chandler’s comment here: Sometimes in a fight, it’s hard to tell who won—general rule: If you came into the fight wearing pants, and you left without pants—you lost. But look what this leads to, “17 And this became known to all the residents of Ephesus, both Jews and Greeks. And fear fell upon them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was extolled.” When Paul used Jesus named, spirits came out, and if you try and manipulate Paul’s Jesus you get owned and you may lose your clothes.

And as the superiority of Christ begins to gain ground in Ephesus something else happens “Also many of those who were now believers came, confessing and divulging their practices. 19 And a number of those who had practiced magic arts brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. And they counted the value of them and found it came to fifty thousand pieces of silver. So they have a little book barbeque. I love this....these are new believers—not people who are becoming Christians—people who already are. People who had trusted Christ but still had some serious sin problems and some wicked habits and this display of God’s power in Ephesus moves them to publicly confess and abandon all of that for Christ.

Like think about this—this isn’t a few people coming forward confessing that they’ve had a bad temper recently these new believers are saying that yea I’ve been doing my devotions and then practicing witchcraft. These are people who are being unbelievably honest about serious even embarrassing sin because Christ is better and he’s worthy of exclusive devotion. We should show grace to new believers. God works over time. Guy who cussed. And as they do 20 So the word of the Lord continued to increase and prevail mightily.”

Now by throwing their books in the fire they’re, saying not only are the following Jesus, but their not following anyone else including Artemis. And this exclusive worship of Jesus started to become problematic. Remember we said that idol worship was big business. And so as more and more people came to Jesus the businesses centered around Artemis lost more and more money.

Vs 23 says this caused a big disturbance and we Vs 24” For a man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of Artemis, brought no little business to the craftsmen. So this guy made souvenirs of the temple that you could place in your home. And he gathers the Artemis craftsman’s guild together and says 25 ...“Men, you know that from this business we have our wealth. 26 And you see and hear that not only in Ephesus but in almost all of Asia this Paul has persuaded and turned away a great many people, saying that gods made with hands are not gods.

Guys the religious stock market is about to take a hit. And they may have to get jobs at McDonald’s. And they don’t want to do that. Now Demetrius’ has made it clear that his primary motive is greed, but this guy’s a politician—he’s going to do some smooth gamesmanship to get more people on board with what he’s saying “27 And there is danger not only that this trade of ours may come into disrepute but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis may be counted as nothing, and that she may even be deposed from her magnificence, she whom all Asia and the world worship.” This guy would be great on the campaign trail. Yes I want to be rich but I’m not totally selfish I have other reasons—Our profession might get a bad rap, and Artemis might not get glory and Ephesus might be remembered as a has been city that used to

have a global deity. So he gives a professional reason, a religious reason, and a patriotic reason to take action and now he's got everybody fired up. Vs 28 shouting "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians."

So they attract a huge crowd and move the protest into the Theater which was huge. And they're all screaming and if vs 32 isn't a comment on our political climate I don't know what is, "Now some cried out one thing, some another, for the assembly was in confusion, and most of them did not know why they had come together." Some people don't even know what's going on! They tried to get someone up to speak but when the crowds saw he was Jewish they chanted Great is Artemis of the Ephesians for two hours. No reasoning, no arguments, no thinking, just emotions on fire in blind commitment to their team's ideology—we'll talk more about that in a second.

So finally the Mayor of the town gets up and tells everyone to calm down. Tells everyone Artemis isn't going anywhere, that Paul and his buddies haven't committed any crimes and sends everybody home. And after this Paul leaves for Macedonia.

So this is Paul's experience in Ephesus. When you read the book of Ephesians you can be sure that Paul had some of these scenes in mind as he was writing. And as we look at Paul's time in Ephesus I want to offer three exhortations and one question that I believe will help push us toward knowing and more faithfully serving Jesus.

Start with this crowd. When you look at this crowd and how they defend their cause versus the way Paul defended his you learn a valuable lesson about what faithfully advocating for Christ in the public square looks like.

(1) As you witness for Christ, remember that passion is never a substitute for reason.

32 "Now some cried out one thing, some another, for the assembly was in confusion, and most of them did not know why they had come together." Folks here me, it's easy to look at them and say man that's stupid, please make sure when it comes to the way you engage our religious and especially our political climate, that it's not you. Like we live in a day where it's more important to be passionate about something than it is to be knowledgeable about it. If we're ignorant about it we'll still scream for it. It's like some people turn politics and religion into a sport. Where there not interested in understanding and reasoning. They're just here to cheer and watch their team win and wear the jersey.

DeYoung, "We live in an age where passion is often considered an adequate substitute for precision. Many of us, even Christians, have little patience for rigorous thinking and little interest in careful definition. We emote better than we reason, and we describe our feelings better than we define our words... We like to shame people on social media more than we want to produce evidence and facts and actual arguments."

And we talk a lot about hurting our witness through bad behavior I think just as many people have hurt their witness through political commitments that are every bit as blindly loyal as what we see here. (People saying socialism and capitalism is the worst but don't know what it is). I believe one reason this is in the Bible is to give us an example of what we shouldn't do when it comes to defending our cause in the public square. Especially when you contrast it with how Paul advanced his cause "vs 8 And he entered the synagogue and for three months spoke boldly, reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God. 9 But...he withdrew from them and took the disciples with him, reasoning daily in the hall of Tyrannus." He reasoned, he listened, he discussed. That takes way more effort and time than posting a meme. It takes way more effort that saying that what someone else believes is stupid.

When it comes to engaging in religious or political conversation, please make sure you're thoughtful and intelligent and part of that means being willing to critique your own tribe. If you can't offer thoughtful critiques of your team your party, your denomination, your just drinking the Kool-Aid. No party is above critique and if you give blind passionate loyalty to your preferred ideology you look like these people here just cheering for your team and it's embarrassing for Christians.

(2) Because our God is invincible, our disciple-making is unstoppable.

Now as Paul has been traveling around planting churches, the Gospel is spreading like wildfire. In the words of Demetrius Paul has persuaded people not only in Ephesus but in almost all of Asia—that gods made with hands aren't gods. But it's not without its opponents. We've read over and over again how Paul was kicked out he was stoned yelled at. There was human opposition and there was formidable spiritual opposition.

If you're a believer in Ephesus and you're constantly surrounded with witchcraft and demonic powers that are serious. Just from the episode in vs14-16 we know that (1) They exist—This isn't make believe. (2) Intelligent—they have minds and can understand and comprehend they know people's names (3) They can communicate (4) They are very powerful.

If you're a believer in Ephesus, you've seen god doing miracles through Paul, you've heard that when people misuse the name of Jesus they get worked, but you may still be wondering how Jesus' power stacks up against all the other powers. And Paul knows this and that's why when he writes the book of Ephesians he wants to remind them that it's a blow out. He specifically reminds them in 2:14. Christ was been raised and seated far above all rule authority, power, and dominion and every name that is named—now and forever. Our God is invincible and no one stands a chance against his infinite power and glory. **His dominion is an eternal dominion; his kingdom endures from generation to generation. All the peoples of the earth are regarded as nothing. He does as he pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth. No one can hold back his hand or say to him: "What have you done?"** (Dan 4:34-35)

And this God has unzipped you and placed himself inside of you in the Holy Spirit so that whether you take the gospel to the Buddhist temples of Tibet, or the Shamans of Mongolia, or the VooDoo priests in New Orleans 1 Jn. 4:4 says greater is he who is in you than he who is in the world. Yes there are battles, to fight but Jesus has won the war. So put on the helmet of salvation and the belt of truth and breastplate of righteousness. Take up the shield of faith and sword of the spirit—and in the power of the Holy Spirit make an impact for Christ in such a way that the demons have heard of your name. Because you're advancing the Gospel, and there's nothing they can do to stop it.

(3) Repentance is the fuel for revival.

And if you look back at the book barbeque in vs 19 you see a picture of true genuine repentance looks like. **19 And a number of those who had practiced magic arts brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. And they counted the value of them and found it came to fifty thousand pieces of silver.** And when this kind of repentance is present what happens: **"So the word of the Lord continued to increase and prevail mightily."** This is how revival! Without exception every time you see revival coming in the Bible among God's people or even throughout the history of the church it comes after repentance. When people are honest about how they haven't been devoted to Jesus it increases people's devotion to Jesus. Honestly about a lack of devotion catalyzes further devotion. This is what genuine repentance looks like 3 characteristics:

(1) Voluntary—they didn't get caught! (2) Total—burned their books. Too many Christians are in the business of managing their sin rather than destroying their sin.

(3) Costly—money, the pile was a ton of money. Reputation—it was public not a secret. Man how can I do that?

People are attracted to authenticity. And nothing empowers authenticity than the Gospel. Because it's only in the gospel that you're able to be completely honest with yourself about how broken you really are. You can you can be brutally honest about your sin because you're completely safe in the grace that rescues you from it. Keller says it this way, "The gospel is this: We are more sinful and flawed in ourselves than we ever dared believe, yet at the very same time we are more loved and accepted in Jesus Christ than we ever dared hope." And when we're simultaneously honest about our sin and covered in God's grace we show the world something it can't offer itself—and the gospel advances.

Man I want this for our churches. People just being brutally honest and confessing their sin yea I've been doing my devotions and then watching porn been going to church and then cheating my employer M-F, I've been praying in the morning and then using drugs at night. You say Chase wouldn't people think we're hypocrites? No they'll think we're hypocrites if we do those things and act like we're not. They'll see that we're taking our sin seriously, being honest about our brokenness, and relying someone else to do for us what we can't do for ourselves.

How Will We Respond To The Glory And Power of God?

3 Different Groups of people here respond three different ways to Christ's power. As demons are being exorcised by handkerchiefs that have come in contact with people united to Christ, and as miracles are being done and as people are coming to faith there's no denying God's power. Each group of people recognize what's happening and they respond differently.

Exorcists—Manipulate God for personal gain. They're using the name and power of Jesus, to their own ends. They perceive that God's power could make their life go better so they try to access it without giving their lives to him. There is a way to come to God not because you want him, but because his power may be useful to you.

God I pray that I would achieve all of my goals and dreams, in Jesus name Amen. God I pray that you'd give me all the things I want and none of the things I don't want, in Jesus name. Advance my name, in Jesus name, Amen. You want the blessing of God's power without the burdens of Christ's cross. You want to be rescued by Christ, but not ruled by Christ. And you want his power to be available to full obedience to be optional.

Artisans—Oppose God to protect yours idols. People get upset really fast when you threaten their idols. Idols something you look to in order to satisfy you. You worship something else. It has your heart. Now it's not Artemis. But it may be family. It may be work. It may be comfort. It may be autonomy. 3 tests (1) If I can't live without it (2) I'm willing to sin in order to keep it or get it (3) I feel like God is a threat to it.

Believers—Submit to God for eternal life.

Exorcists: There's something better than the most ideal circumstances. Artisans: There's something more satisfying than your idol.