

The Rest of the Story

Studies in the Book of Acts

“We will move the world not by criticism of it, nor conformity to it – but by combustion within it of lives ignited by the Spirit of God”

Vance Havner

Text

Acts 19:21-41

Topic

The silversmiths who craft shrines to the goddess Diana stir-up the crowd against the Christians when their business drops off because the Gospel is turning people to God from idols

Title

Every Crowd Has a Silver Whining

Acts 19:21 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."

Acts 19:22 So he sent into Macedonia two of those who ministered to him, Timothy and Erastus, but he himself stayed in Asia for a time.

Acts 19:23 And about that time there arose a great commotion about the Way.

Acts 19:24 For a certain man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of Diana, brought no small profit to the craftsmen.

Acts 19:25 He called them together with the workers of similar occupation, and said: "Men, you know that we have our prosperity by this trade.

Acts 19:26 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.

Acts 19:27 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."

Acts 19:28 Now when they heard *this*, they were full of wrath and cried out, saying, "Great *is* Diana of the Ephesians!"

Acts 19:29 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.

Acts 19:30 And when Paul wanted to go in to the people, the disciples would not allow him.

Acts 19:31 Then some of the officials of Asia, who were his friends, sent to him pleading that he would not venture into the theater.

Acts 19:32 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.

Acts 19:33 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.

Acts 19:34 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!"

Acts 19:35 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?"

Acts 19:36 Therefore, since these things cannot be denied, you ought to be quiet and do nothing rashly.

Acts 19:37 For you have brought these men here who are neither robbers of temples nor blasphemers of your goddess.

Acts 19:38 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.

Acts 19:39 But if you have any other inquiry to make, it shall be determined in the lawful assembly.

Acts 19:40 For 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."

Acts 19:41 And when he had said these things, he dismissed the assembly.

Introduction

Christians are starting to use a new catchphrase. They're saying, "I want to make a difference." It seems to capture a heartfelt desire to help change the world.

The question is, "How do I make a difference, a real difference, and change the world?"

Our text today describes the difference biblical Christianity made in a city and in a region. An entire pagan business venture was put in jeopardy. *I'd say it qualifies as making a difference!*

How did the Christians accomplish such an amazing feat? They simply behaved like Christians. When we simply behave like Christians we make a real difference in our world.

We will behave like Christians if we do two things that the believers in Ephesus did: **find** the Lord's business and **mind** the Lord's business. I'll organize my thoughts around those two points: #1 Find The Lord's Business For Your Life, and #2 Mind The Lord's Business With Your Life.

#1 Find The Lord's Business For Your Life (v21-22)

When Jesus was twelve he made an insightful comment. He said to Joseph and Mary, **Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?** (Luke 2:49). Later, in a parable, Jesus would tell His disciples, **Do business till I come** (Luke 19:13). He was talking about the spiritual 'business' of daily living out the Christian life.

If we are to do 'spiritual business' until Jesus returns for us then we need to find the Lord's business for our lives. We get some insight into how to do just that as the apostle Paul makes his future plans.

Acts 19:21 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."

The **things** which **were accomplished** look back on the earlier events in Ephesus: the conversion of the twelve disciples of John the Baptist, the two and one-half years of daily teaching God's Word in the lecture hall, the miraculous healings and exorcisms, and the burning of the occult literature.

The word **accomplished** also reminds us Paul knew God's overall business for his life. His work in Ephesus was accomplished; it was time to move forward. He was to be about the business of church planting. He never stayed in one place too long.

You are probably not called to be a church planter, or a missionary, or a full-time minister. You are probably right where God wants you. You need to find and do the Lord's business right where you are.

Paul **purposed in the Spirit**. It means he sought for God's purpose and plan for his next move. He prayed; he read the Word; he asked for prayer. He did all the normal things you'd do to discover the will of God.

Your next 'move' may not involve going anywhere. But even if you're not going anywhere God has a next move for you. You are the 'Jesus' people around you see; you are the 'Paul' sent to reach them. God can show you new, fresh ways to engage them for the sake of the Gospel.

Once Paul knew his immediate purpose he set a plan in motion. He sent **Timothy** and **Erastus** ahead.

Acts 19:22 So he sent into Macedonia two of those who ministered to him, Timothy and Erastus, but he himself stayed in Asia for a time.

I suggest that when we realize that we've been placed right where we are by God's design we will be more apt to set a plan in motion to reach the folks around us.

You have spiritual business at home, at school, in the work place, or even while retired. You are there to make a spiritual difference in the lives of others around you. Seek and then set a plan in motion to reach them. Find the Lord's business for your life!

#2 Mind The Lord's Business With Your Life (v23-41)

Wouldn't it be great if we could put certain businesses out of business? Adult bookstores and fortune tellers come to mind, as do cocktail lounges and bars. Gambling establishments should be on that list. Drug trafficking and prostitution are businesses that we would like to see shut-down.

The Christians in Ephesus were putting a dent in the silversmith trade. How'd they do it? By simply behaving as Christians. All the other things we might want to do to fight against society are really secondary to living-out the Christian life in its power.

Ephesus was home to a magnificent temple to the fertility goddess Diana. It was believed that a stone fell from the sky. It may have been a meteor. The people speculated it was from Zeus and roughly carved it to resemble a many-breasted woman.

There was a lucrative and thriving business of selling silver shrines to the devotees of Diana and the millions of tourists who would visit what was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world.

Without firing a single shot the Christians were affecting the idol trade.

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Acts 19:27 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."

Demetrius' god was money. Trafficking in silver shrines was preying upon people's superstitions.

How sad that greed motivates people to become involved in all sorts of businesses that prey upon and abuse other people.

What was Paul doing to affect the business of the silversmiths? Back in verses nine and ten we learned he was teaching the Bible everyday. As he taught thoroughly and systematically he came across passages in Isaiah and elsewhere that put idols in proper perspective. The biblical principle was that **they are not gods which are made with hands**.

A Christian had no business purchasing silver shrines. Their sale dropped-off dramatically as more-and-more people were saved.

Demetrius couldn't take it anymore and started a campaign against Paul and the Christians.

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Acts 19:29 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.

Idolatry and the idol trade was a significant evil. But it wasn't the Christians taking action against the silversmiths. **The silversmiths were taking action against the Christians!** The everyday witness of the believers had transformed people from within thus changing the world around them one heart at a time.

Acts 19:30 And when Paul wanted to go in to the people, the disciples would not allow him.

The amphitheater where they were assembled held upwards of twenty-five thousand people. *Paul saw it as a spontaneous crusade!* You know that he wanted to preach the Gospel. The Christian **disciples would not allow him**. They feared for his life. God used them to spare Paul.

Acts 19:31 Then some of the officials of Asia, who were his friends, sent to him pleading that he would not venture into the theater.

This is an interesting biographical note. There are no indications these **officials** were Christians but they were nevertheless Paul's **friends**. There is a friendship evangelism that takes place as we are out and being about the Lord's business. It's OK to have nonbelieving friends - as long as we keep trying to introduce them to our best friend.

Acts 19:32 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.

People are easily swept along by peer pressure. Most of them could not explain their hostility toward the Christians. It can be the same in our encounters with people. They've been swept along by various pressures to reject Jesus Christ without ever really understanding the

Gospel. Most people have a completely false idea of what it means to follow Jesus.

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Acts 19:34 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!"

It seems that the local Jews were worried the Gentiles would see Christianity as an offshoot of their religion and eventually take out their frustrations on them. It reminds us that anti-Semitism was alive and well in Ephesus.

It also reveals the powerlessness of religion. Judaism was able to peacefully coexist with pagan idolatry. The lives and lifestyles of the Jews had zero effect on the silversmiths. They weren't seeking to reach the Gentiles for God at all. They just wanted to be left alone.

Things were getting seriously out of hand.

Acts 19:35 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?"

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The **city clerk** was more like a modern-day mayor. The gist of his message was that this was an unlawful assembly which could bring upon them the wrath of Rome. If the silversmiths had a gripe they

should pursue it legally by bringing a lawsuit against someone. They should contact the A.C.L.U.

What is most intriguing to me is the city clerk's commentary on the Christians. He said (in verse thirty-seven) they **are neither robbers of temples nor blasphemers of your goddess.**

The Christians had not mounted a campaign of any kind against the worship of Diana. They had organized no protests; no boycotts. They had initiated no legislation. They certainly had done nothing that was against Roman law.

What **did** they do? They minded the Lord's business with their own lives. Earlier in the chapter, just prior to these events being told, we saw that the believers were themselves still purchasing and consulting occultic literature. God used a failed exorcism to break them of their fascination with the occult. The Christians confessed their own sins and publicly burned millions of dollars worth of dark materials. Then you read in verse twenty, **the Word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed.**

When the believers minded the Lord's business with their own lives; when they came clean of their carnal diversions; then a new power was released in and through them.

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The byproduct of minding the Lord's business with their lives was evangelism. People got saved; they quit purchasing shrines.

Look at it this way. Once a person understood his or her body was the temple of the Holy Spirit they had no need for a man-made shrine that enclosed a representation of Diana.

Once a person knows his or her body is the temple of God, and that their body belongs to Jesus, they will have no need for the many industries that prey upon and abuse them. They will discover the power within them to turn to God from idols.

Protests and boycotts and legal action and legislative acts all have their place in a free society. We live in a great nation and should utilize our freedoms. But before we engage in any of those activities

we should be sure we are minding the Lord's business with our own lives:

1. We should be like the Ephesian Christians who rid themselves of the hindrances to a powerful witness. *It's hard to be against something when we are involved with it ourselves!*
2. We should be like Paul in that we are willing to put our lives on the line for the sake of the Gospel. Maybe not in the sense we will be martyred, but certainly in the sense that it could cost us something.

The greatest effect we can have on society and on the world comes from **finding** and then **minding** the Lord's business for our lives.

When people see a believer living a transformed life in the power of the Holy Spirit – that is when we truly “make a difference.”



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