

“Casting Down Idols”
Acts 19:18-41
(Preached at Trinity, October 10, 2007)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. As we entered into **Chapter 19** we found that Paul had left Apollos to minister at Corinth while he went to preach the Word at Ephesus. The work began quickly. He immediately found 12 disciples who only knew the baptism of John, a baptism of repentance looking forward to the atonement of Christ. Christian baptism looks back to the accomplished work of Christ.
Paul brought them the Gospel of Christ and they believed and were baptized and were filled with the Holy Spirit. These were the first 12 laborers in Ephesus, but not the last.
2. After ministering to these twelve Paul continued preaching the Word.
 - A. In **Verse 8** we read that Paul went to the synagogue as was his custom. The Word was not well received so he moved on.
 - B. He then went to a school run by a certain Tyrannus where he was allowed to teach for two years. As men came to faith in Christ they then went forth as witnesses so that the word spread throughout all Asia.
 - C. In **Verse 20** we read, “So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed.” The Word of God always prevails, is always victorious – It will always accomplish the will of God. God's Word will not be hindered from His divine purpose.
3. As we come to the final half of this chapter we find an uproar taking place among the Ephesians.
 - A. This was testimony to the powerful effect the Gospel was having upon the city of Ephesus. Had there been a small handful of believers meeting in a private home we wouldn't see such a riot occurring.
 - B. The truth is there were so many Christians it was having an effect upon the whole city. It is testimony of how the Gospel had spread and a testimony of how it was changing the lives of the people.
4. One of the most profound changes that the Gospel has upon a person is it crushes idolatry. No place can we see it clearer than in this passage.
 - I. First, I want you to see that the idolatry in the lives of the Ephesians is the same as the idolatry in the lives of all lost men
 - A. They worshiped self-made gods instead of the one true God
 1. Paul says in Romans 1 that all men have an inner understanding of God but rather than serve and worship Him they deny Him.

Romans 1:21-23 – “Because that, when they knew God, they glorified *him* not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, ²³ And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things.”

Romans 1:25 – “Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen.”

2. Ephesus was the center of the cult of Diana also known as Artemis
 - a. Artemis was the goddess of fertility. The idols that have been found today are these strange multi-breasted figures.
 - b. There were shrines dedicated to her everywhere and people were fervent in her worship
In **Verse 27** we read of how upset they were that the worship of Diana might be harmed.
Acts 19:27 – “So that not only this our craft is in danger to be set at nought; but also that the temple of the great goddess Diana should be despised, and her magnificence should be destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worshippeth.”
 - c. Notice also **Verse 34**
Acts 19:34 – “all with one voice about the space of two hours cried out, Great *is* Diana of the Ephesians.”
3. Do we not see the same thing with religious idolatry today. Are not people everywhere fervent in their religion?
 - a. Hindus strive diligently to discover the higher self
 - b. Buddhists seek the true reality, being awakened
 - c. Muslims give themselves to serving Allah - there is no god but Allah, and that Muhammad is God's messenger. They are willing to kill those who disagree.
4. It isn't the fervency or even the sincerity of a person that makes his religion correct – it is truth! It is Christ.
5. It also isn't numbers of followers that make a religion true.
Notice this is the appeal of the town clerk in **Verse 35**
Acts 19:35 – “And when the townclerk had appeased the people, he said, Ye men of Ephesus, what man is there that knoweth not how that the city of the Ephesians is a worshipper of the great goddess Diana, and of the *image* which fell down from Jupiter?”
 - a. The followers of Christ at times have been few in number. Genuine Christianity today is considered fanatical.
 - b. The true Gospel will prevail. We must be followers of God, not followers of what is popular.

- c. There is not a single worshipper of Diana in the world today. Millions worship Christ.
All of the false religions of today will someday end.
The words of Christ will prevail.
Luke 21:33 – “Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away.”
John 14:6 – “. . . I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”
 - B. Idolatry goes beyond the worship of false gods – it involves anything that draws your affection from the one true God.
 - 1. The main issue with the Ephesians is the loss of income – Christianity was affecting their business.
 - 2. There was a guild of silversmiths in Ephesus. They began to find their customer base shrinking. Their anger was not so much the dishonor to Diana as their reduced income
 - 3. People scream loudest when you begin to affect their idols.
 - a. In our generation such idols include homosexuality and abortion.
 - b. For some its power. We can see this in partisan politics.
 - c. For others its their wealth.
 - 4. People are not willing to give up their idols and fall completely before God – to worship and serve Him completely.
The lost man is most interested with self-interests. He is self-centered.
- II. Second, I want to point you to the effect the Gospel has upon idolatry
- A. The Gospel brings us to worship the one true God
 - 1. The Ephesian Christians quit worshipping Diana – completely! No matter how devoted they were to the worship of Diana it all ended when they came to Christ.
 - 2. This is consistent with genuine Christianity
1 Thessalonians 1:8-9 – “For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing. ⁹ For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God;”
 - 3. Notice in **Verses 18-19** – They parted with all that pertained to their former way of worship. The problem we see today is people wanting to incorporate their own appetites into the worship of God. We can see this in some of the contemporary worship.
 - B. The Gospel brings us to cast aside anything that dishonors God
 - 1. These early Christians were serious about following God – they had been transformed.
 - a. They were convicted of sin, confessed it, and actually destroyed those things that dishonored God.
 - b. Nothing was too precious to part with.
They brought their magic books containing incantations that they might be destroyed.
 - c. The interesting thing is the value of these books.
 - (1) The word can refer to money in general or silver coins

- (2) It can also refer to a drachma which is the way the NIV translates it.
 - (3) A drachma was a day's wages. Some think Jesus was betrayed for 30 pieces of silver or 30 drachma's which was the price of a good slave.
 - (4) If this is referring to a drachma or day's wage and if in our day a day's wage is \$100-200 then these books would have been worth 5-10 million dollars!
2. What are you willing to part with for the sake of Christ?
- Luke 14:33** – "So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple."
- a. What treasures do you have that you hang on to?
 - b. What effect would Christianity have upon the world if all who professed it actually lived consistently with it?

III. Idolatry is a sin we must all guard against – it can be very subtle

- A. Idolatry is a class of sin specifically stated to be so contrary to Christianity that those who indulge in it shall be excluded from our Lord's kingdom.
- Galatians 5:19-20** – "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are *these*; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told *you* in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God."
- Ephesians 5:5** – "For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God."
- 1 Corinthians 6:9** – "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind,"
- Revelation 21:8** – "But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death."
- B. We are so prone to satisfy self before God
1. We are prone to direct our attention to earthly things
We are bound by the physical world – led by visible objects
The natural man is governed only by his five physical senses
He seeks gods he can see – material gods – materialism reigns
 2. God demands that we love Him with all of our being – heart, soul, mind
Matthew 22:37-40 – "Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second *is* like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."
 3. God demands that He alone be the chief object of our affection
 4. God will never share His glory with another
Exodus 34:14 – "For thou shalt worship no other god: for the LORD, whose name *is* Jealous, *is* a jealous God:"

Conclusion:

1. What things have you allowed into your life? For the Christian it demands great caution. We must avoid anything which might expose the soul to danger
Colossians 3:5 – “Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry:”
2. The work of mortification is a hard and painful work. Do you think it was easy for them to dispose of these valuable books
3. We must understand just how dangerous sin is. We must understand just how prone we are to idolatry.
2 Corinthians 7:1 – “Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.”
4. Serving God is an all or none proposition
 - A. Christianity is not just a religion – it is a complete dying to self
 - B. God demands that we love Him with all of our being – heart, soul, mind
It demands finding our total satisfaction in Him, to desire nothing else, to be willing to part with all else.

