

Acts 19 “No Small Disturbance”

Acts 19:21-41

March 8, 2026

Acts 19:21-41

21 After these events, Paul resolved by the Spirit to pass through Macedonia and Achaia and go to Jerusalem. “After I’ve been there,” he said, “It is necessary for me to see Rome as well.” 22 After sending to Macedonia two of those who assisted him, Timothy and Erastus, he himself stayed in Asia for a while.

23 About that time there was a major disturbance about the Way. 24 For a person named Demetrius, a silversmith who made silver shrines of Artemis, provided a great deal of business for the craftsmen. 25 When he had assembled them, as well as the workers engaged in this type of business, he said, “Men, you know that our prosperity is derived from this business. 26 You see and hear that not only in Ephesus, but in almost all of Asia, this man Paul has persuaded and misled a considerable number of people by saying that gods made by hand are not gods. 27 Not only do we run a risk that our business may be discredited, but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis may be despised and her magnificence come to the verge of ruin—the very one all of Asia and the world worship.”

28 When they had heard this, they were filled with rage and began to cry out, “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!” 29 So the city was filled with confusion, and they rushed all together into the amphitheater, dragging along Gaius and Aristarchus, Macedonians who were Paul’s traveling companions. 30 Although Paul wanted to go in before the people, the disciples did not let him. 31 Even some of the provincial officials of Asia, who were his friends, sent word to him, pleading with him not to venture into the amphitheater. 32 Some were shouting one thing and some another, because the assembly was in confusion, and most of them did not know why they had come together. 33 Some Jews in the crowd gave instructions to Alexander after they pushed him to the front. Motioning with his hand, Alexander wanted to make his defense to the people. 34 But when they recognized that he was a Jew, they all shouted in unison for about two hours, “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!”

35 When the city clerk had calmed the crowd down, he said, “People of Ephesus! What person is there who doesn’t know that the city of the Ephesians is the temple guardian of the great Artemis, and of the image that fell from heaven? 36 Therefore, since these things are undeniable, you must keep calm and not do anything rash. 37 For you have brought these men here who are not temple robbers or blasphemers of our[g] goddess. 38 So if Demetrius and the craftsmen who are with him have a case against anyone, the courts are in session, and there are proconsuls. Let them bring charges against one another. 39 But if you seek anything further, it must be decided in a legal assembly. 40 In fact, we run a risk of being charged with rioting for what happened today, since there is no justification that we can give as a reason for this disturbance.” 41 After saying this, he dismissed the assembly.

“Gods made by hand are not gods.”

Acts 17:24. 24 The God who made the world and everything in it—he is Lord of heaven and earth—does not live in shrines made by hands.

Acts 17:29. 29 Since, then, we are God's offspring, we shouldn't think that the divine nature is like gold or silver or stone, an image fashioned by human art and imagination.

Real belief creates a new lifestyle.

Every culture is dominated by idols.

Acts 19:27

Not only do we run a risk that our business may be discredited, but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis may be despised and her magnificence come to the verge of ruin—the very one all of Asia and the world worship.”

Why does the removal of an idol cause such a disturbance?

Exodus 20:3

3 Do not have other gods besides me.

Ephesus was protecting its autonomy.

Idols fall under the weight of our worship.

1 Corinthians 8:4-6

We know that “An idol is nothing at all in the world” and that “There is no God but one.” 5 For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as indeed there are many “gods” and many “lords”), 6 yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live.

Life Group Discussion Questions

- 1.) What did God say to you through His Word during our Sunday gathering?
- 2.) The gospel ministry had a tipping point in Ephesus that impacted the city's economy. Discuss the idea that real belief creates a new lifestyle. Have you ever seen the gospel move from a few individuals to reshaping a community, school, workplace, or city?
- 3.) Paul ministered and hoped for change over a period of years in Ephesus. Where are you ministering and what changes are you hopeful? When have you seen the gospel make a difference in someone's life over a longer period of time?
- 4.) Every culture has idols. What are our culture's idols? When can an idol appear virtuous and noble? Why is it so hard to discern an idol?
- 5.) Exodus 20:3 says “Do not have other gods besides me.” How do you make sense of God's desire for our relationship with him to be so exclusive?
- 6.) How might worshipping God alone reveal and replace hidden idols?
- 7.) How can your Life Group encourage you this week as you apply this passage to your life?