

## The gospel frees us to live in the light of the truth

John Bunyan, in his *Pilgrim's Progress*, tells about a place where all pilgrims must travel through on their way to the Celestial City. It's a town by the name of Vanity, and it has a year-round fair that takes place there, called Vanity Fair. Bunyan writes, "*at this fair are all such merchandise sold as houses, lands, trades, places, honors, preferments, titles, countries, kingdoms, lusts, pleasures; and delights of all sorts, as harlots, wives, husbands, children, masters, servants, lives, blood, bodies, souls, silver, gold, pearls, precious stones, and what not.*" Christian and Faithful are passing through this city, and as they do they stand out as very different from it. They were different in the way they dressed, the way they spoke, and different in that they didn't take much interest in the goods being sold at the fair. In fact, one of the merchandisers even pushed his goods a little more than others. He asked them what they would buy. They responded by saying that they buy the truth. **Proverbs 23:23** "*Buy truth, and do not sell it; buy wisdom, instruction, and understanding.*" *To fail to acquire truth leaves us believing in all sorts of lies, and with these lies come all sorts of entanglements.* When we believe lies we look for pleasure in things that can only bring it momentarily, but in the end bring a harvest of greater pain. We look for comfort in things that can only burden us further. We look for forgiveness in things that can only condemn. But **the gospel frees us to live in the light of the truth.**

**Scripture Passage: Acts 19:21-41**

### The Truth Will Order Your Way (vv.21-22)

1. **v.21** "*Now after these events Paul resolved in the Spirit to pass through Macedonia and Achaia and go to Jerusalem...*" - At this point in the book, Luke now tells us that Paul has his eyes set on Jerusalem, and ultimately Rome. This marks a new section in the book of Acts, and Jerusalem, and ultimately Rome, will become more and more of a focus.
2. **v.22** "*And having sent into Macedonia two of his helpers...*" - Preparing for this trip, Paul sends two of his helpers, Timothy and Erastus, ahead of him into Macedonia. These two men are called *deacons* by Luke. Not as an title of church office, as we later in 1 Timothy and Philippians, but in the informal sense of servants, ministers, helpers. These were two men who were ministered to by Paul, transformed by the powerful gospel, and living lives oriented toward service to others. But this is the normal Christian life, according to Scripture. It stands in contrast to the life of the non-believer, oriented primarily toward self-service, which we have illustrated throughout our passage this morning.

**Transition:** In contrast to the clarity and conviction of Spirit that Paul and his friends show us is the confusion of the non-believers in Ephesus. First, we see the Deceitfulness of Riches

### Riches Deceive (vv.23-27)

1. **vv.23-25** "*About that time there arose no little disturbance concerning the Way.*" - Demetrius, a silversmith, used his skill to make and sell miniature replicas of the Temple of Artemis, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world, with little versions of the goddess Artemis inside. This temple was massive, larger than a football field, with 60 foot columns all around it supporting the roof structure. *Note: when Paul writes to Timothy that the church is a pillar and buttress of the truth (1 Tim. 3:15), Timothy was in Ephesus.*
  1. Luke tells us that this was big business. Demetrius gathers the other tradesman together and shares his concern. What is his primary concern? It's economic. "*From this business we have our wealth.*" Demetrius, and the other tradesmen, had been deceived by riches.
  2. **The fact they were tradesman isn't spoken ill of, but the trade they were engaged in was wrong. God gives gifts to workmen, and we should use those gifts for his purposes and glory. Exodus 36:1-2** "*Bezalel and Oholiab and every craftsman in whom the Lord has put skill and intelligence to know how to do any work in the construction of the sanctuary shall work in accordance with all that the Lord has commanded.*" *And Moses called Bezalel and Oholiab and every craftsman in whose mind the Lord had put skill, everyone whose heart stirred him up to come to do the work.*"
3. How do you get the world to rise up against you in opposition? We've come across two cases in Acts where the Gentiles oppose Paul, here and in **Acts 16:16-24**. In both cases the opposition was because of monetary interests.

1. How is the Christian to think about finances, about wealth? We shouldn't ignore it, but we've been called to be stewards of it. We don't trust riches, but we use them for kingdom purpose. The gospel had made such progress in Ephesus that it was actually impacting the economy. Demetrius and his friends were concerned for their livelihoods because those being converted to the Christian faith, the Way, were so careful with their finances, using them in ways that would glorify God. **1 Timothy 6:17-19** "As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life."

2. **v.27** Demetrius now moves past his economic concern and includes a religious concern. If this movement is going to gain momentum it must be based on more than the tradesmen's concern for their pocketbooks. That was enough for them, but they needed to get the whole city behind this anti-gospel movement. He says that the gospel might make Artemis be regarded as nothing, and she may even be deposed from her magnificence.

**Transition:** With Demetrius working this angle he get the whole city, in their confusion, to rally behind him.

### **Darkness Confuses (vv.28-34)**

1. We first note the city's confusion by noticing their chant that bookends this section. In **v.28** and **v.34** we see them crying out, "*Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!*" These were a people still living in darkness, refusing the light of the truth, rejecting the gospel. But man is always finding an object of worship. And, as John Calvin writes, the human heart is a factory of idols. We will find an object of worship. The question begs to be asked, is that object worthy of worship? Couldn't they see the logic of Paul's argument (**v.26**) that gods made with hands are not really gods? Any god that can be deposed by the efforts of men is no god to be worshiped. But darkness confuses.

1. The irony of the Way is that our God, the true God, did make himself of no reputation. He wasn't removed or deposed from his throne, but left it willingly to die a redemptive death for those whom he set his affection on. **Phil 2:5-11**

2. **vv.28-29** "*When they heard this they were enraged and were crying out... So the city was filled with the confusion...*" - The group involved in this confusion is growing. It started with Demetrius, then he gathered the guild of craftsmen, and now it's out into the city streets and gathering hateful momentum.

1. As the crowd gets worked into a frenzy they begin their march to the theater, probably along the Arcadian way, a road over 30 feet wide and paved with marble. The theater in Ephesus is said to have a capacity of 25,000. Along their way they grab Gaius and Aristarchus, who were two of Paul's travel companions.

3. **vv.30-31** We're told that Paul wanted to go in and address the great crowd gathered, but wise counsel from disciples of his, as well as Asiarch friends, restrained him.

4. **v.32** Confusion is prevailing over this assembly. Luke adds this comical, yet sad, note that most didn't even know why they were gathered.

5. **vv.33-34** The Jews put forward a man named Alexander, probably in hopes that he would be able to tell the Ephesians that it wasn't their fault and that Paul was not associated with them. But they wouldn't even hear him, and his attempt incited the crowd even more. But no amount of excitement, chanting, or crying out was going to make Artemis great.

**Transition:** Their hearts were darkened and their minds were confused. Into this confusion the town clerk speaks, and in so doing clears Paul's friends, and so Paul.

### **Clerk's Clearing (vv.35-41)**

1. **vv.35-36** "*And when the town clerk had quieted the crowd, he said...*" - The town clerk was like the mayor/CEO of Ephesus. He speaks and the townspeople listen. Unfortunately, his concerns seem to be mostly political. He speaks more nonsense about Artemis, and how her greatness is undeniable. Several commentators believe that the sacred stone he speaks of was a meteorite and that this was somehow tied into the worship of Artemis.

2. **v.37** The town clerk clears Gaius and Aristarchus, saying they are neither sacrilegious (temple thieves) or blasphemers (slanderers) of Artemis.

3. **vv.38-39** He urges them to go through the normal process if they want to bring charges against the Christians.

4. **vv.40-41** And here his concern comes through. If the city CEO can't keep his town in order, if they have rioting and commotion without just cause, his position would be in jeopardy. So he dismisses the assembly and sends them back to their homes.

1. Miraculously, God worked in and through this legal system to deliver his servants. The town clerk vindicates them, clearing them of any wrongdoing, and frees them that they might continue ministering the gospel of Jesus and exposing the darkness to the light of the truth.

**Conclusion:** The gospel frees us to live in the light of the truth. We can walk in the light as children of light. **2 Corinthians 4:6** *“For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”* Church, do you recognize the great freedom that has been granted to you in the gospel? Do you thank God for it? Do you, as Christian and Faithful did as they traveled through Vanity Fair, keep your eyes on Jesus Christ, so as to not become enslaved again to the weak and worthless elementary principles of the world?

1 John 5:20-21

# Family

## Table Talk



January 20, 2019



## GOD'S TRUTH

**The gospel frees us to live  
in the light of the truth**



### Key Verse

**"The sum of your word is truth, and every one  
of your righteous rules endures forever."**

**Psalm 119:160(ESV)**

## Family Discussion ?s

1. As we read through Acts, we learn that Paul had several close friends. Search Sunday's passage to find the names of some of them.
2. Let's learn more about a few of these friends of Paul. First let's look at Timothy. Where in Acts do we first learn of Timothy? How did Paul regard Timothy?
3. Second, let's look at Gaius. From Scripture, what can we learn about Paul's relationship with him?
4. What about Aristarchus?
5. How were these relationships mutually beneficial? How did these relationships serve to further the work of the gospel?
6. Now, consider your friendships. Are your friendships mutually beneficial? Do your friendships serve to further the work of the gospel, perhaps even in the life of a non-believing friend?

### TABLE READING

Lead your kids further into God's  
Word...

1. Acts 19:22, 29, 31
2. Acts 16:1-3; Romans 16:21; 1 Cor. 4:17;  
Phil. 1:1; 2:22; 1 Tim. 1:2; 2 Tim. 1:2
3. 1 Cor. 1:14; Acts 20:4
4. Acts 20:4; 27:2; Col. 4:10; Philemon  
23-24
5. discuss
6. 1 Thessalonians 5:9-11; 1 Peter 1:22;  
3 John 1-8



### Scripture Memory: Acts 20:32

**"And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates." - Deuteronomy 6:6-9 (ESV)**