

## 69. The Businessmen Are Told to Follow the Law

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to expect opposition from people who use false teaching or other sin to make money. Such individuals do not like anything that will hinder them from getting richer. As a result, they will certainly oppose the Gospel when they see that it begins to change and transform the lives of those who are placing their faith in Christ. We saw that the silversmiths had seized Gaius and Aristarchus when they could not find Paul. Today, we will learn more about the opposition that Paul and the other Christians faced in Ephesus.

In Acts 19:30-32, we read, “And when Paul wanted to go in to the people, the disciples would not allow him. Then some of the officials of Asia, who were his friends, sent to him pleading that he would not venture into the theater. 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.” Here, we see that Paul wanted to go out and speak to the people of Ephesus who had stirred up the uproar against the Christians. However, the other Christians pleaded with Paul not to go into the theater, because they were afraid that he would be immediately killed.

The word translated “officials” is the word that meant the president of Asia. A man from among the most prominent people in the city would be given this title and he would preside over the games that were held in the city that year. Then, he would continue to have that title for life. Those men who had been given this title were the men who promoted the interests of the Roman government among the people. Here, we see that some of the men who had been given this title had a great respect for Paul and they pleaded with Paul not to go into the theater. The fact that these men had become friends of Paul showed that they did not feel that Paul had committed any crime or that his teachings were false. As a result, Paul did not enter the theater.

Meanwhile, the people in the theater were crying various things. This resulted in great confusion among the people who had gathered, because most of the people who had come together did not even know why they had gathered. The word translated “confusion” means *to disturb the mind or to stir up tumult*. Acts 21:27 says, “Now when the seven days were almost ended, the Jews from Asia, seeing him in the temple, stirred up the whole crowd and laid hands on him.” In this verse, the word is translated “stirred up”. Just four verses later, Acts 21:31 says, “Now as they were seeking to kill him, news came to the commander of the garrison that all Jerusalem was in an uproar.” Here, the word is translated “was in an uproar”. In the same way, the city of Ephesus was in an uproar and would have been quick to kill Paul if he had entered the theater. The interesting thing that we see is that most of the people did not even realize why they had come together.

Acts 19:33-34 says, “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. 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!’” Here, we see that a man by the name of Alexander was selected by the Jews to speak for them. The book of Acts does not say whether Alexander was a Christian or not. It is

possible that the non-Christian Jews were fearful that the mob would attack them and they did not want to be associated with Paul. In contrast, it is possible that he was a Jewish Christian and was chosen to speak to protect the Christians from the mob.

Alexander held up his hand to get the attention of the crowd. If he was not a Christian, he probably wanted to inform the Ephesians that the Jews also rejected Christ in order to protect himself and the other Jews that were not Christians. If he was a Christian, he probably wanted to share that no one was being forced to become a Christian, but that each person had a choice. Whether he was a Christian or not, when the Ephesians recognized that he was a Jew, they began to shout, ‘Great is Diana of the Ephesians!’” They continued to shout this statement over and over for a period of two hours.

Finally, after two hours, the city clerk spoke to the people. The first words of the clerk are recorded in Acts 19:35-37 which say, “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? Therefore, since these things cannot be denied, you ought to be quiet and do nothing rashly. For you have brought these men here who are neither robbers of temples nor blasphemers of your goddess.’” The clerk assured the people of Ephesus that their city was the guardian of the temple of Diana. The clerk (mayor of the city) then reminded the people of their tradition of how they had received the goddess Diana. They believed that Diana had fallen from the sky. This probably explains why meteorites were incorporated into the worship of Diana.

After saying these words to soothe the angry mob, the clerk went on to tell the people that day that they should be quiet and do nothing rashly. The clerk gave the people two reasons why their actions that day were out of order. First, the Christians had never robbed the temples of any of the idols that were worshipped in Ephesus. Second, the Christians had never blasphemed Diana. Here, we see an important lesson about effective witness to those who are not Christians. The word translated “blasphemed” means *to speak evil of*. Instead of spending their time speaking evil of lifeless idols, the Christians spent their time teaching about the true and living God.

The Christians spent their time teaching about the death and resurrection of Christ. As a result of spending their time talking about Christ, Acts 19:10 says, “And this continued for two years, so that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.” The concern of Paul, the rest of the team with him and of those who became Christians was to make certain that everyone heard about Christ and not to fight against lifeless idols. In 1 Corinthians 2:2, Paul wrote, “For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.” We need to remember that the message of Christ is our message. We need to know what we stand for and how to explain what we stand for much more than we need to know what we stand against.

Acts 19:38-41 says, “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. But if you have any other inquiry to make, it shall be determined in the lawful assembly. 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.’ And when he had said these things, he dismissed the assembly.” The city clerk then told the mob the proper way to bring their complaints rather than try to use the power of a mob to carry out their own opinions.

The clerk said that if Demetrius and the other silversmiths had a case against anyone there was a court system to deal with any violations of the law. Later, Paul would write to the Christians in Rome in Romans 13:3-4, “For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to *execute* wrath on him who practices evil.” God has established governments to control evil. Those who do evil will be judged. In most cases, those who do what is good and right do not have to fear governments, because they are established to maintain order in the various countries of the world. Here, we see that the city clerk became a protector of the Christians whether he knew what they taught or not.

In fact, the city clerk made it clear that Demetrius and the other silversmiths were actually violating the law by starting a riot. He said that any violation of the law that they saw must be decided before a lawful assembly. In saying that, the clerk made it clear the gathering of the crowd to riot and their actions definitely was not considered a lawful assembly. He said that the use of proper judicial procedure was necessary in order to settle any dispute. The word translated “determined” means *to settle or to decide*. This meant that the silversmiths were forced to use the judicial system rather than to try and show their opposition by starting a riot.

The city clerk also warned that the city was in danger of being called into question by the Roman government, because of the riot that had been started by the silversmiths. He said that the city leaders would not have any reason they could give to the Roman officials for the disorderly way the people acted that day. The clerk knew that this riot could produce serious consequences for the city of Ephesus if it was reported to the government in Rome. The silversmiths were given a similar warning to Romans 13:4 which says, “For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to *execute* wrath on him who practices evil.” The clerk was actually protecting the silversmiths from the Romans by encouraging them to follow the law.

We also want to help our physical and spiritual children understand the importance of being in submission to the governments that God has allowed in each country. Those governments may be evil, but God will still use them to maintain civil authority in a country. The maintenance of order in a country will usually help Christians to be able to share the message of the Gospel more easily. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children why it is important to submit to and even respect evil governments.