
Resolved to Live – As a Witness for Jesus

“...about all that Jesus began to do and teach” (Acts 1:1).

R₂L – Resolved to Live: With Compassion for People’s Spiritual Condition

Acts 19:23-41 (Part 1)

23 About that time there occurred no small disturbance concerning the Way. 24 For a man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of Artemis, was bringing no little business to the craftsmen; 25 these he gathered together with the workmen of similar trades, and said, “Men, you know that our prosperity depends upon this business. 26 “You see and hear that not only in Ephesus, but in almost all of Asia, this Paul has persuaded and turned away a considerable number of people, saying that gods made with hands are no gods at all. 27 “Not only is there danger that this trade of ours fall into disrepute, but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis be regarded as worthless and that she whom all of Asia and the world worship will even be dethroned from her magnificence.” 28 When they heard this and were filled with rage, they began crying out, saying, “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!” 29 The city was filled with the confusion, and they rushed with one accord into the theater, dragging along Gaius and Aristarchus, Paul’s traveling companions from Macedonia. 30 And when Paul wanted to go into the assembly, the disciples would not let him. 31 Also some of the Asiarchs who were friends of his sent to him and repeatedly urged him not to venture into the theater. 32 So then, some were shouting one thing and some another, for the assembly was in confusion and the majority did not know for what reason they had come together. 33 Some of the crowd concluded it was Alexander, since the Jews had put him forward; and having motioned with his hand, Alexander was intending to make a defense to the assembly. 34 But when they recognized that he was a Jew, a single outcry arose from them all as they shouted for about two hours, “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!” 35 After quieting the crowd, the town clerk said, “Men of Ephesus, what man is there after all who does not know that the city of the Ephesians is guardian of the temple of the great Artemis and of the image which fell down from heaven? 36 “So, since these are undeniable facts, you ought to keep calm and to do nothing rash. 37 “For you have brought these men here who are neither robbers of temples nor blasphemers of our goddess. 38 “So then, if Demetrius and the craftsmen who are with him have a complaint against any man, the courts are in session and proconsuls are available; let them bring charges against one another. 39 “But if you want anything beyond this, it shall be settled in the lawful assembly. 40 “For indeed we are in danger of being accused of a riot in connection with today’s events, since there is no real cause for it, and in this connection we will be unable to account for this disorderly gathering.” 41 After saying this he dismissed the assembly.

Have you ever wondered why some people come to receive, embrace and live in light of God’s Word and the teaching of the gospel and then there are others who, even having heard the same truth, reject, excuse and ignore the claims of God’s Word and the demands of Jesus? What is it that causes such divergent responses? How is it that some are moved to tears, repentance and a resolve to put into practice the words of the preacher; while others may sit unmoved and as determined as ever not to see his or her life changed? Why is it that some see God’s Word as truth, truth for everyone in every place for every time, while others see God’s Word as either optional, relative, or simply not true at all? How is it that some see every moment of their lives as belonging to Jesus, wanting to serve Jesus and His people while others are either half-hearted in their service or more concerned about serving themselves?

Over my years in ministry, I have talked to a multitude of people who have shown an initial interest in the Word of God, only later to dig in their heels and reject it. I know a number you have had this same experience. You have shared the truth of Christ with a family member or a

Resolved to Live – As a Witness for Jesus

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neighbor or a fellow student. You sought to bring them to the most priceless gift you possess, the message of God's own Son, in the flesh; the message of eternal life, only to be met with a blank stare, perhaps hearing something like, “I am glad that works for you, but I'm not interested. Thanks but no thanks.”

Have you ever wondered why people resist Christ? Why are some so quick to ignore, neglect or refuse Christ while others see him alone as having the words of eternal life? (John 6:68). Let me tell you what the issue is. At issue is an internal battle of the heart and mind. And if we who would share the gospel with them do not keep this in mind, we will get discouraged and give up on seeking to reach them, even as we have been commanded. But as we keep this knowledge of a battle raging inside of them before us, we will not give up proclaiming Christ even when we face initial rejection.

In our text before us we have an example of this very thing taking place in the city of Ephesus. As Paul took the Word of God to the Ephesians, great things began to happen. What great things? Remember that Paul had daily discussions in the lecture hall of Tyrannus, discussions that lasted for two years, and according to verse 10 of Acts 19, everybody who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord. They *all* heard the truth, but did they all believe it? As we have seen, there were many who did believe, including former magicians and exorcists who, after coming to faith in Jesus, confessed their sin and burned up their magic scrolls, scrolls that would be worth some five million dollars in today's terms (19). But there were many, in fact most who did not believe. They all heard the same message, yet some not only resisted it, they were repelled by it, becoming hostile and fostering up a city-wide riot against the Christians.

Listen people, when the gospel is truly and boldly preached, there are two inevitable results. Are you ready for this? Some will believe and change their lives, and others resist and refuse to be changed. And mark this well; when those who do not like the message; a message that calls them sinners who need to change their thinking and lifestyle; not to match the mandates of a church, but to mimic the thinking and lifestyle of Jesus Himself; since they cannot disprove the message, they will attack the messengers, calling them bigoted, narrow-minded, unloving, hurtful, hateful people. If my message of the gospel, calling people to repent from the sins that Jesus marked out as hurtful to humanity, and calling them to follow the ways of Him who promised abundant life is hate speech, then there is a wrong definition of what constitutes hate; and Jesus was then the most hateful person on the face of the earth; something that relatively few would be to demonstrate from the historical evidence.

Yet, here we are today, just like in Ephesus of Paul's day, with the messengers of the historic, orthodox, biblical teaching of Scripture being attacked. Today and at this moment is it more verbal than physical; but it is coming, my friends. Jesus predicted this would happen. Peter, James, John, and the rest of the apostles experienced it and so did Paul. Everywhere Paul went, and perhaps nowhere more intensely than on this particular day in Ephesus, we see why it is that people refuse Christ and the inevitable outcome of such a refusal. This account of the Ephesian riot in Acts 19:23-41, reveals why people resist the message of Christ. And it can all be boiled down to two fundamental problems. So interwoven into the very fabric of humanity are these two problems that we will address each one separately, one this week and one next week. We need to be aware of these problems or flaws of humanity so that we will not be discouraged or disheartened in our resolve to continue to share the Word of God with the lost. In other words, you will run into these problems and if you know that upfront, you will tend to have compassion as

Resolved to Live – As a Witness for Jesus

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well as tenacity when it comes to continuing to preach the gospel. What are these two problems? The first is an issue of the heart, which we will explore this week; and the second is an issue of hearing, which we will discuss next week.

I. **Problem #1: An Issue of the Heart (Acts 19:23-28)**

We cannot begin to overstate that humanity, whether they are aware of it or not, have a spiritual heart disease. God states it clearly in Jeremiah 17:9 saying,

The heart is more deceitful than all else And is desperately sick; Who can understand it?

Beloved, humanity has a heart condition. Jesus said something similar in John 3:19 declaring:

This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil.

People resist and reject God's Word for a very simple reason. The Bible says they are dead in their trespasses and sins (Ephesians 2:1). And such spiritually dead people, those whom D. Martyn-Lloyd Jones referred to as “spiritual zombies”, apart from the gracious life regenerating work of the Holy Spirit of God simply won't respond. Beloved, they *can't* respond because they are dead. Now before you assume that being spiritually dead to God means that a person is passive in their deadness, let me tell you that being spiritually dead is an active condition. The spiritually dead, those who want nothing to do with following the will of God as revealed in the Bible, actively refuse to love Christ because they already love something else. Such a dead heart is enamored with all kinds of false, deceptive and hell-damning loves, two of which are revealed in our text in the lives of the Ephesians. The Ephesians loved their income and they loved their identity.

A. **The Ephesians loved their income (19:23-25)**

First, notice with me that the Ephesians loved their income. We read in verses 23-25,

23 About that time there occurred no small disturbance concerning the Way. 24 For a man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of Artemis, was bringing no little business to the craftsmen; 25 these he gathered together with the workmen of similar trades, and said, “Men, you know that our prosperity depends upon this business.”

The story takes place “**about that time.**” What time? This would be the time after Paul had taught the Word for two years and people started applying the Word of God to their lifestyles. Because of the changed lives via the preaching of the Gospel, there “**occurred no small disturbance concerning the Way.**” The “Way” is a reference to living according to the stand of Jesus who is the Way, the truth and the life. Morality was on the rise in Ephesus and because of this, the economy was down, an economy built on immorality. Imagine if people in large numbers stopped gambling, drinking and taking in questionable shows in Las Vegas. That would cripple the city's economy. Here in Ephesus, after seeing two-years of a downturn, one businessman

Resolved to Live – As a Witness for Jesus

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decided to do something about it, a silversmith named Demetrius who devised a plan of attack against the Christians.

Again, we must remember that the economy of Ephesus depended on idol worship. Ever since Paul had come and set up shop, preaching the gospel, the economy went flat. The great goddess and chief idol of Ephesus was Artemis, the ancient mother goddess of Asia Minor. She was seen by the people as the mother of both gods and men. The Romans called her Diana and there were no less than 33 shrines to Artemis scattered throughout the Roman Empire, making the worship of her the leading cult. Her temple at Ephesus was regarded as one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. Her image was a multi-breasted figure that symbolized sexual fertility and her followers worshiped her by engaging in base and lewd sexual practices.

Demetrius convened his fellow craftsmen for what amounted to a town-hall meeting with just one item on the agenda. We see it there in verse 25, *“Men, you know that our prosperity depends upon this business.”* What he was saying was, “We used to make a great income making idols, but our profits are down.” We do not know the extent of the down turn. Was it 15%, 25%, 50%? But it was enough to concern these silversmiths who sold small replicas of Artemis and her temple for the people to take to their homes. They had made good money doing this. But now they were angry because Paul’s message had had undermined their cash cow. They loved their income.

Before you start thinking that none of this applies to you; let me remind you of a couple of things. For one thing, *you do not have to have money to love it.* It’s not money that’s the root of all evil. It’s the *love of money* (1 Timothy 6:10). You can be below the poverty line and have a heart that loves money as much as the fellow that’s sitting on a billion.

Something else is true; *if you love money, if your focus is your income, you cannot love God.* I did not make this up; Jesus said it was true in Matthew 6:24 saying, **“No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.”** Before you rule out the possibility of having this problem, let me ask you, are you more concerned about making money, paying the bills, affording something for the house or for play than you are serving the Lord, fellowshiping with the saints, or telling others about Jesus? Consider that carefully, because if it does, you have a heart problem.

One day a certain old, rich man of a miserable disposition visited a rabbi, who took the rich man by the hand and led him to a window. “Look out there,” he said. The rich man looked into the street. “What do you see?” asked the rabbi. “I see men, women, and children,” answered the rich man. Again the rabbi took him by the hand and this time led him to a mirror. “Now what do you see?” “Now I see myself,” the rich man replied. Then the rabbi said, “Behold, in the window there is glass, and in the mirror there is glass. But the glass of the mirror is covered with a little silver, and no sooner is the silver added than you cease to see others, but you see only yourself.” Let us be careful that just a little bit of silver is causing us a heart problem. This is why some people reject Christ. They have an infected heart with a viral love, the same disease that plagued Demetrius and fellow craftsmen. But there is another false love and thus a second reason why people reject Christ.

Resolved to Live – As a Witness for Jesus

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B. The Ephesians loved their identity (Acts 19:26-28)

The **second**, reason why the Ephesians rejected Christ was because they loved their identity. They loved who they were apart from Christ. We see this in verses 26-27 where we read:

26 “You see and hear that not only in Ephesus, but in almost all of Asia, this Paul has persuaded and turned away a considerable number of people, saying that gods made with hands are no gods at all. 27 “Not only is there danger that this trade of ours fall into disrepute, but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis be regarded as worthless and that she whom all of Asia and the world worship will even be dethroned from her magnificence.”

Demetrius knew exactly what he was doing. He had a love for income or money along with all the power that came with it. But like many in such a position, he knew it would sound selfish to admit that so he appeals to the people by claiming that Paul is attacking the very identity of the Ephesians. He purposed that Paul was attacking their very religion. In effect, Demetrius was saying here, “We must stop Paul because if we don’t, what will happen to the worship of our great goddess, Artemis? We must do something to stop this attack on our worship! Our poor goddess will be regarded as nothing if we do not act.” Of course, therein lies the very fallacy of idolatry. What good is a god that cannot defend itself? But already having a heart problem makes it hard for people to see the delusion of their sin.

So, even though Artemis was weak, the Ephesians loved and identified themselves with her. It is interesting that the love of gold and of false gods keep many people from loving and serving the true and living God. The same is true today. If you want to know if you truly loves the God, show me your checkbook; show me what you spend your money on and such will be a good indicator as to your love of God. Many talk the talk, loving a Jesus that makes life monetarily and by popularity better. These will join a church that worships such a Jesus, a Jesus that makes life comfortable.

But is this the Jesus of the Bible? The Jesus who made such bold statement as these:

Luke 18:24-25

24 And Jesus looked at him and said, “How hard it is for those who are wealthy to enter the kingdom of God! 25 “For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.”

Luke 9:23-25

23 And He was saying to them all, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me. 24 “For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it. 25 “For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses or forfeits himself?

To be clear, Jesus is not condemning riches; but He is stating that riches often get in the way of coming to and serving Jesus. Check your heart. While on hand it costs *nothing* to receive Jesus, for salvation is free, a gift God gives to those who repent from themselves and believe in Jesus for forgiveness of sin; believing that Jesus paid it all on the cross; on the other hand,

Resolved to Live – As a Witness for Jesus

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receiving Jesus does cost you something; it costs your life; a changed life; a life that seeks to know and live the life and attitudes of Jesus. But it is a true statement that we do not like to change right? We love the status quo!

Let me remind you that by nature, our flesh, does not like change. If we are making a good living; if we have some identity with a profession, a kind of church, or any idol; who needs a Jesus that wants to change us?

And yet, to be saved is a very willingness to be changed; to have your life affected and altered by the transforming influence of Jesus Christ via the Word of God. This is what salvation is; a change from one state, from one condition; from one way of thinking to another state and another manner of life. And no one, not one single person can change himself. It is a work that only Jesus can and Jesus will do. But you must come to Him, asking him to change you, willing to be changed; asking the Potter to remold the sin-twisted clay of your life into something that honors Him. Ask the Lord to remove from you the very attitudes and actions His Word prohibits be it greed, jealousy, lust, or selfish habits. And God replaces such things with a willingness to be generous, loving and willing to serve. Does this describe your heart, a changed heart; or are you sitting here today with a heart problem? In his book, “Radical: Taking Back Your Faith from the American Dream,” David Platt wrote:

“Radical obedience to Christ is not easy... It’s not comfort, not health, not wealth, and not prosperity in this world. Radical obedience to Christ risks losing all these things. But in the end, such risk finds its reward in Christ. And he is more than enough for us.”

This is why some people resist Christ; because their heart longs for income or identity in things like income or worldly status rather than in the riches of Christ as His follower. By way of application, I would have you notice what Paul did to affect the moral fiber of a sinful culture. Paul did not boycott the silversmith shops. He did write letters to Rome complaining about the idolatry and immorality in Ephesus. What did Paul do? Rather than spending his time in such endeavors, we find that he taught the Word of God daily and urged his disciples to boldly live for Christ. What was the result? One by one the gospel took away the customers from the marketplace of sin.

Beloved, we bemoan the moral decay of our culture, and rightfully so. The cesspool of culture continues to deepen in depravity. However, there is a greater distress that lies before us, even in this room and that is the moral decay of the *church*. Let me ask you, what would happen if everyone who called themselves “Christian” in this country took holiness seriously? Let me remind you that we have not been called to get unsaved people to act like saved people because they cannot. We have been called to evangelize them, to share the message, the community and the mission of the gospel of Jesus Christ; that Christ died for the sins of those who believe so that they might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again for their sake, being part of His body, the church, of which He is the head. Our responsibility is to evangelize, we know that, but it is also to ensure that the church is pure, living according to the standards of God’s Word.

According to an ABCNEWS/Beliefnet poll conducted in July of this year; “eighty-three percent of Americans identify themselves as Christians.”¹ Can you imagine what would happen if 83% of Americans who call themselves “Christian” stopped watching television shows, going to

¹ <http://abcnews.go.com/US/story?id=90356>

Resolved to Live – As a Witness for Jesus

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movies, and listening to music that promote ungodliness and sensuality? Would it affect the income and identity of a number of entertainment silversmiths? What would happen if that same percentage populated their churches on Sunday, inviting others to join them? Can I tell you something that would happen; there would not be enough seats to hold all the people.

So why is it that we do not see this happening? Beloved, in large part it is because those who call themselves Christian *do not differ* from the non-Christian audience in their entertainment choices. There is a moral decline in the church that allows some of you to check your convictions at the church door. One commentator put it well, (Kent Hughes), “It is impossible to be filled with the Spirit *and* watch a drama that feeds the base appetites of the flesh.” Let us make sure that we address any heart problems we have in the church and then know that all people suffer from a heart problem that only Christ can repair. This is why some resist Christ.

So what can we do if we suspect a heart problem with in us? What if we find the lures of Demetrius, the lust for income and worldly identity rather than the riches and spiritual connection of Christ? I know it sounds simply, but it boils down to a resolve to cry out to God; first for yourself and then for others. How often to you pray for salvation? While it is true that a believer, once saved by God, eternally belongs to God, do we not yet need to be “saved” from the influences of the world and from the inclinations of our own flesh to move away from the truth of God? Consider the prayer of David, the man after God’s own heart in Psalm 141:3-4;

3 Set a guard, O LORD, over my mouth; keep watch over the door of my lips. 4 Do not incline my heart to any evil thing, to practice deeds of wickedness with men who do iniquity; and do not let me eat of their delicacies.

Do you pray this kind of prayer of salvation daily for yourself and for others? David knew that apart from the daily engaging influence of the Lord in his life, his mouth would utter curses rather than blessings; his heart would long for evil rather than good; that he would practice wicked things with other who prefer sin over the blessings of salvation; and that he would thus begin to consume that which would condemn rather than that which would consecrate him to the Lord. Is this the prayer of your heart? It was a kind of praying we Christians need to learn: not just “Lord, keep me safe,” but “Lord, keep me pure,” because we abhor sin even more than suffering.

Some of you here resist Christ because you don’t want to concern yourself with whether what comes out of your mouth honors the Lord; your heart is content with your own understanding of life rather than with God’s understanding; and you allow yourself to run alongside of those who have no desire to be biblically right with God, but rather you, in accordance with 2 Timothy 4:3-4, do not want to ***“endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have [your] ears tickled, [you] will accumulate for [yourselves] teachers in accordance to [your] own desires, 4 and will turn away [your] ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths.”***

That is a heart problem. Let us come to the great Physician, who is Jesus Christ. Jesus stands ready and is willing to save; for all who call upon the name of the Lord will be saved. Let me close with the words of Joseph Hart, who penned these words that speak of both the heart condition of humanity as well as the one true heart surgeon who is Jesus:

Resolved to Live – As a Witness for Jesus

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*Come, ye sinners, poor and wretched, weak and wounded, sick and sore;
Jesus, ready, stands to save you, full of pity, joined with power.
He is able, He is able; He is willing; doubt no more.*

*Come ye needy, come, and welcome, God's free bounty glorify;
True belief and true repentance, every grace that brings you nigh.
Without money, without money come to Jesus Christ and buy.*

*Come, ye weary, heavy laden, bruised and broken by the fall;
If you tarry 'til you're better, you will never come at all.
Not the righteous, not the righteous; sinners Jesus came to call.*

*Let not conscience make you linger, nor of fitness fondly dream;
All the fitness He requires is to feel your need of Him.
This He gives you, this He gives you, 'Tis the Spirit's rising beam.*

*Lo! The Incarnate God, ascended; pleads the merit of His blood.
Venture on Him; venture wholly, let no other trust intrude.
None but Jesus, none but Jesus, can do helpless sinners good.*

None but Jesus can do helpless sinners good. Do you believe this? No one needs to leave this place with a heart problem. Let it be healed by Jesus.

Soli Deo Gloria

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