

Acts

OF THE APOSTLES

[25]

AN ANGRY MOB

Acts 19:21-41



Take a moment and think of a few words that might describe life in your community and nation if there were no laws. Chaos, disorder, violence, confusion, and many other words may enter your mind. Laws restrain behavior in a society and establish consequences when they are broken. Without laws, people would do whatever they felt like doing. Anarchy would follow, and society as we know it would collapse.

The Romans saw the importance of laws. In this lesson, we will see how God used Roman laws to once again protect Paul and his companions.



THE LOVE OF MONEY

Silversmiths in Ephesus were upset that Paul's teachings were putting their profits at risk. They earned their income making silver shrines of the goddess Artemis, and people who heard the Gospel were no longer buying them.

The love of money sometimes gets in the way of people believing the good news of the Gospel. In I Timothy 6:9–11, Paul writes to the young pastor Timothy and warns against the temptation of becoming obsessed with getting rich and falling away from the faith. Paul tells us to flee from an obsessive pursuit of money and to instead pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance, and gentleness.

Hebrews 13:5 reminds us to be free from the love of money. What promise has God made that allows us to be content with what we have, no matter how little or how much?

Into

THE WORD

Acts 19:21–41

The city of Ephesus was home to one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. The massive Temple of Artemis was dedicated to the Roman goddess of the hunt and drew crowds of worshippers from around the Roman world.

We read in verses 21–22 that Paul was planning his future travels from Ephesus when a great disturbance arose in the city concerning what Paul and the new Christians were doing. Complete the statements in the story that follows:

1. The first characters in this story are the silver tradesmen. Their spokesman was named _____ (v.24). These men were defending their incomes and the goddess Artemis, whom they worshiped. A disturbance occurred because as people in Ephesus heard Paul teach the Gospel, they were (v.26) _____



Naturally, the tradesmen were afraid their businesses would fail. They also were concerned that the Temple of Artemis might lose its worth as people would stop worshipping the goddess.

2. In verse 29, two more characters are introduced: the friends of Paul, _____ and _____. The angry crowd rushed into the amphitheater. Chaos and confusion erupted, and the mob dragged the two friends of Paul with them.
3. Paul wanted to go help his two friends, but other friends protected him from the angry mob and (vv.30–31) _____

4. The theater in Ephesus could hold 25,000 people. Describe what was strange about this gathering (v.32).

Note verse 33. In the midst of the confusion, a man named Alexander motioned for silence. The crowd recognized that he was a Jew and was not a worshiper of Artemis. They shouted for the next two hours, “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!”

5. The last character of this story is introduced in verse 35. He is the _____, a leader in the city. Somehow he managed to calm the crowd and reasoned with them to not do anything foolish. He reminded the people that Gaius and Aristarchus were neither _____ nor _____. In other words, these men had done nothing wrong (vv.36–37).

The town clerk told the crowd they must make a legitimate complaint and take it to court, according to the laws of the city (v.38). He warned them that they could be accused of (vv.39–40) _____ since they had gathered without any real cause or complaint. The clerk then dismissed the assembly.





MEMORY VERSE

Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil. *Ephesians 5:15–16*

Extra Memory Challenge: Romans 12:18

NEW IDEAS

Civil Obedience

The people of Ephesus nearly started a riot because of Paul's teachings. Can riots ever serve a good purpose? One might argue that in some extreme cases of total government failure or other such breakdown of civil order, a riot might be acceptable. However, any potential benefit a riot might bring about doesn't justify the chaos, damage, and injury done. There are better ways to deal with social injustice or other societal problems effectively than the uncontrolled damage done by an unruly mob.

What does God's Word teach that can be applied to the question of riots?

- I Corinthians 14:40 _____

- Romans 12:18 _____

- Romans 13:1 _____

discussion questions

As time allows, discuss one or more of the following:

1. Acts 19:32 tells about a mob of people who were filled with rage and ready to riot, even though they did not know what they were upset about. Can you give an example of a situation where a group of people have reacted in a similar way? Talk about why it is important to think through all the facts before getting swept along with a crowd.
2. The people of Ephesus had built their whole identity around the false goddess Artemis, who wasn't even real. There was nothing more important to them than protecting her reputation and her importance to the town. Consider the First Commandment: "Thou shalt have no other gods before Me." It's easy to allow things to displace our fear, love, and trust in God. Things like sports teams, TV shows, or gaming are only a few of the pastimes that can displace the really important things: faith in Christ, family and friends, and living a godly life. What can each of us do in our own lives to keep a biblical perspective in all our activities?

DAILY DEVOTIONS

Sunday	Isaiah 44:13–20
Monday	Psalms 115:1–9
Tuesday	Jeremiah 10:1–7
Wednesday	Jeremiah 10:8–16
Thursday	I Chronicles 16:8–14
Friday	I Chronicles 16:15–27
Saturday	Psalms 96:1–13

The Lutheran Church

AND ITS CHURCH YEAR

- *What is worship?*

The word “worship” comes from the Old English word “worthship,” so it reminds us of how worthy God is of our adoration. Worship is a mutual interaction where God comes to us in His Word and Sacrament, and we respond to God through confession, prayer, and praise. Believers are encouraged to engage in personal worship every day. In the local congregation, the word “worship” is used to identify the formal times of gathering for the hearing of the Word, the singing of praises, the partaking of the Sacraments, and prayer. God directs believers to not neglect gathering together for worship.

1. What does Psalm 95:1–6 teach us about how the Old Testament people of God worshiped? How does Colossians 3:15–17 describe New Testament worship?
2. How important is gathering together for worship according to Hebrews 10:19–25?

