

The Good News about God's Jealousy
Acts 19:11-20
2/4/24

Main Idea: *Believers express their faith in God's divine security by wholly devoting themselves to the gracious care of the Lord Jesus.*

Introduction: Good morning! Please open your bibles to Acts 19. If you are new to the Bible, you can find Acts 19 following the gospel accounts (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John)...

Orienting the Text: Where we are in the story

Last week Pastor Michael took us into a new city: Ephesus. If you recall from Acts 16, Paul's long held desire had been to take the gospel into Asia Minor (not to be confused with modern day Asia – this region is actually modern day Turkey). However, God had different plans for Paul and his companions. Instead of Asia Minor, God sends them to Macedonia – the modern-day continent of Europe – wherein they plant the first church on European soil in Philippi. So, we trace our faith lineage all the way back to Acts 16. However, the Lord is good, and He grants the desires of our hearts as we align ourselves with His purposes and Paul finally gets to enter Asia Minor and goes to the great city of Ephesus. In this great city, Paul spends two years and the whole of "Asia" hears the word of the Lord. So that we know this wasn't just hyperbole on Luke's part, the seven churches we read about in Revelation were all in Asia Minor – fruit of Paul's ministry. Also, Asia Minor was the stronghold of early Eastern Christianity for several centuries until the Muslim conquests.

Background to Ephesus: An "Enchanted City"

But getting back to Ephesus – something important to note in relation to today's text is that Ephesus was an enchanted city. By "enchanted" I mean that it was a highly superstitious environment where the magic arts were regularly employed and people lived in great fear and spiritual bondage to evil spirits, the wrath of Greek gods, and survival was dependent on the favor and good fortune brought about by magic, sorcery, and spells.

The Purpose of "Magic": obtaining *divine security* from the "gods" for oneself and/or family through *divine manipulation*

Now, you might wonder: why would anyone engage in these kinds of superstitions? Well, let's keep in mind that the ancient world was one of great insecurity – financial, political, social. It was a difficult place to survive – and without the help of the "gods", you place yourself at great risks. In other words, to survive in the ancient world, you needed to know how to use the "magic" of your *security-idols*.

So, in Ephesus, there were scrolls called "the Ephesian documents" which were used by both common people and trained magicians to manipulate the gods and gain them favor. As you can imagine, an environment shaped by fear and superstition and idolatry also leads to other social problems like greed, manipulation, forms of abuse, and taking advantage of those who are poor, weak, or vulnerable.

The Good News of God's Jealousy: Jesus will have no rivals! Jesus is our divine security!

Today, we are going to learn about the good news of God's jealousy! Last week Pastor Michael shared how God is jealous for His name. Michael distinguished between our kind of jealousy (sinful, petty) vs. God's jealousy (the integrity, the magnificence). Now, we saw that the name of God is now revealed by and tied to the person of Jesus Christ. What this means practically is that God and the Lord Jesus will tolerate no rivals in our lives.

Now, imagine what it would have been like for these new believers, new followers of Jesus, who grew up in this kind of a fear-based, superstitious, "enchanted" environment, to all of a sudden make the switch over to Jesus, and learn to trust Him, rely on Him, pray to Him, as the supreme being in the universe. It would likely take some time to untangle all the knots, false-teaching, and superstition that would have clouded their minds.

However, God uses Paul to make a dramatic statement to this young, fragile church, about the supremacy and all-sufficiency of the name of the Lord Jesus – who is jealous for the affection and devotion of His people, and who will not tolerate any rivals. Building on what Michael said last week, I want us to consider that the fact that God’s jealousy for our devotion and worship is *good news* - the best news actually – because it means that He is totally and completely for us, and is worthy of our trust and being the treasure of our lives. In being jealous for His name, God doesn’t want His people to turn to idols, trust in idols, look to idols, but to Him!

Exposition of Acts 19:11-20: How the Fame of the Name of Jesus Spreads

Miracles vs. Magic - Acts 19:11-12

- God working through Paul (miracles as release, setting free, liberation from Satan’s rule – see Acts 26, Colossians 1).
- Differences between Paul’s approach and magicians (formula vs. grace)
- Uniqueness of Paul’s ministry in Ephesian context (God’s accomodation)
- Power is in the word, miracles are application: sign of inbreaking of God’s kingdom, Paul’s social ministry

Sons of Sceva - Acts 19:13-14

- Jewish exorcism tradition influenced by Solomon
- However, expressly forbidden by Deut. 18 and Mishnah
- Could be rebellious sons or rebellious priest?
- But use Jesus’s name like an incantation they see in their magic books

Demonic beat-down - Acts 19:15-17

- Evil spirits recognize Jesus and Paul, but not them (root for evil spirits?)
- Every time we see magic in Acts, it always goes bad (Luke is saying something here).
- Jesus is to be worshipped and extolled, not used for personal or manipulative gain
- The result is that the name of Jesus is magnified and feared (possible conversions, but great respect, maybe even intimidation).

But watch what happens with the believers... *Ephesian believers repent, burn their magic books, and devote themselves to Jesus.*

Acts 19:18-20 - These young believers come forth, bringing out their magic books and burn them. Why? Because they are all in for Jesus. Not that they weren’t before, but a new level of commitment, devotion, and surrender is happening here. So, some details to help you understand the significance of this account:

- Magic spells are supposed to be secret, if they become public they no longer have power. These believers publicly give away all their spells, rendering them useless now. Why? Because they have Jesus and they entrust their lives to Him, not to some ritual or spirit or other god.
- Now, the fact that they burned them up and Luke gives us how much money was lost is also significant. According to some scholars say it was equal to a days pay, over 137 years. Another said it was enough to feed over 100 families for almost a year. So this is no small amount by standards of the ancient world. Think about this – they could have put these on the first-century eBay and sold them and made some money! But they didn’t – it was a public display of the worth of this Jesus, whom everybody feared.

What a powerful witness these Ephesian believers are *giving to the good news of God’s jealousy about the security promised to us in Jesus Christ!*

Main Idea:

02-04-24

Pastor Grant Clay

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Exposition of Acts 19:11-20: How the Fame of the Name of Jesus Spreads

Miracles vs. Magic

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Sons of Sceva

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Demonic beat-down

Acts 19:15-17

Ephesian believers repent

Acts 19:18-20

Application: What security-idols are you trusting in?

Formula vs. Faith

Fear vs. obedience

Control vs. Trust

Questions for Small Groups:

- 1) Why weren't the Jewish exorcists successful in driving out demons?
- 2) What is the significance of the Ephesian believers burning their magic books? What was "magic" used for in Ephesus?
- 3) What kind of "security idols" do you think people are trusting and relying on in our culture today?
- 4) What "security idols" might the Lord Jesus be calling you to let go of right now?