

False Religion - Acts 19:23-41

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[0:00] Tonight's message, if you want to give it a title, would be False Religion. Remember, Paul's in Ephesus. He has had a wonderful season at Ephesus. He's been there about three years in this place.

Remember, Ephesus meaning permitted or acceptable or anything's permitted. Anything's acceptable. And Paul had about three years there, two and a half of them, being in the school of Tyrannus. Didn't remember to load my picture of him again.

I'm sorry. But Tyrannus lent him his school or whatever, and he just used that space to preach God's word. And he's coming to the end of that.

So if you remember, where are we on the big picture on this map? Here's Paul's third missionary journey. That's the one with the green line where he shoots up from Antioch and then comes all the way back into Asia.

If you remember, it's his first time in Asia. He comes down into Ephesus, and this is where he has spent a good deal of his time. And that puts us towards the end of his third missionary journey.

[0:57] He's about to go to Corinth. We're going to read about how that's his plan. And then he kind of wraps some things up in Ephesus. When we get to chapter 20, is when he will leave to go back to Corinth and to Macedonia.

So let's dive right in. Let's back up to verse 21. And after these things, after what? Verse 20, So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed.

And after these things were ended, Paul purposed in the spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, After I've been there, I must also see Rome. So he sent into Macedonia two of them that ministered unto him, Timotheus and Erastus, but he himself stayed in Asia for a season.

And I thought it was interesting, the wording there. It said, After these things were ended, they were accomplished. It was done. So this season of special miracles, if you remember, that were happening, and this season of like three years or two and a half years teaching in Ephesus at this school, it was just time to be done and to move on.

And the temptation would be to be like, Oh no, I got to hold on to this. God's doing no work. We got to keep it going. Something must have gone wrong. Did I sin? What happened? But Paul allowed himself to be used by the spirit.

[2:12] And also to be led by the spirit, right? And Galatians, one of my favorite scriptures, among many, is in Galatians 5, 25, and 26, where it says, If we live in the spirit, because we all say, Okay, I'm alive in the spirit.

Well, there's more than just living in the spirit. It says, Then let us also walk in the spirit. And that's a choice. That's something that we participate in. The life comes through faith. We're saved by grace through faith. But then there's a part of choosing to walk in that.

Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another. And that's going to come into play with what we're going to see is going to happen here in Ephesus. So spirit-led ministry.

Paul has just kind of finished this spirit-led ministry. And what are some characteristics of that? How does that show up? It's a little more jumbled than I want it. But a spirit-led ministry's focus and time is the word.

That's what they focus on. That's what they spend their time on. That's what Paul did. He taught. That spiritual gifts and miracles are never the focus, and they're never self-directed. There's a lot of miracles.

[3 : 16] There's a lot of spiritual gifts, and there are a lot of things happening, but it was never the focus. The focus was God's word, and those things followed after to confirm it. And it was never self-directed. Paul didn't say, Well, you know what?

Kind of like we were talking about. That pastor I told you about had a stack of handkerchiefs he would pray over and then send them all out. This just happened to be something God was doing. He didn't decide, I feel like it's a season of special miracles.

God did that. He did what? He continued in the word. And then this last part is very applicable. A spirit-led ministry, its location and duration are determined by the Lord. And that's just how it is. And for Paul, what do we see? He's just as happy to move on to the next place as he is to stay for as long as God would give him. And so then in verse 23, So Paul's plan is to head back to Corinth, to go back into Macedonia.

He sends Timothy and Erastus ahead of him to prepare. He's like, Hey, you guys, go ahead. Prepare the way. I'm planning on coming back. You know, go as like an advanced team and let them know I'm coming.

[4 : 23] That's what Derek does every time he disappears. He's going out to prepare as an advanced team for the work God wants to do. But here we have this description of Christianity.

And they didn't say they were Christians. And it doesn't say that, you know, they were religious folk. The specific thing about them, that Christianity, believers were known for at this time, was this identification with a singular direction.

It's like, there's no small stir about the way. Like, man, these Christians, they're always just going this one way. You know, why can't they just get along with everybody? Why can't they be more considerate of others?

It's always about this one way. And King James saying it's no small stir just means it was a big stir. So the culture of this world, we looked last time at a changed culture and how, what changes the culture?

Well, it has to be a change that's a culture of the heart. The word of God changes the culture of the heart, which then can actually change the culture around us. As we change and live lives that are different, it changes the way we live and it changes the world around us.

[5 : 30] But the culture of this world is never going to go the same way as the church. So just because people are changing and just because hearts are changing, there's a big move of God, you can start to think, well, maybe the world's going to get on board.

Maybe we're going to change the direction of this country, of this city, of this administration, of this, but the world's never going to go the same way as the church. Jesus warned us. So they're going to hate you.

They're going to hate you. For a certain man named Demetrius, that means literally of Cyrus, it's the goddess of fertility and agriculture. A certain man named Demetrius, a silversmith, which made silver shrines for Diana, brought no small gain unto the craftsmen.

So here is this guy in Ephesus. So Ephesus, this Diana, there's the Diana that was known as a goddess of the Romans. This is not. This is a different Diana. This is Artemis.

A-R, and here's her definition. Artemis. And her name means like complete light. Complete light. And here was her temple.

[6 : 35] It was one of the seven wonders of the world. It was said about this by Antipater of Sidon around 140 BC. He said, I've set eyes upon the wall of lofty Babylon, of which lies a chariot road, and the statue of Zeus, and the hanging gardens, and the colossus of the sun, and the huge labor of the high pyramids, and the vast tomb of Masulus.

But when I saw the temple of Artemis, which rose to the clouds, these other marvels lost their brilliance, and I exclaimed, Lo, apart from Olympus, the sun has never looked upon aught so grand. And so here is this grand temple. And so these silversmiths are essentially making little souvenirs, right? You go to Niagara Falls, you can get all kinds of little souvenirs of Niagara Falls for a whole lot of money, but it's a little magnet you can put on your fridge.

So they're just making these temples. And here's that temple today. And that is the ultimate end of all false religion, is it not?

So this is this temple, and he's complaining here. He says, A silversmith, he made silver shrines for Diana, and he brought no small gain onto these craftsmen, who he called together, in verse 25, with the workmen of like occupation, and said, Sirs, you know that by this craft we have our wealth.

[7 : 53] So here we have false religion, this false religiosity based around this worship of this goddess. Now this Diana, she was, the one in Rome was like the queen of the hunt.

This one, this Artemis, she was the fertility goddess. And while there's no known prostitutes that went along with the temple like that were in Corinth, you can use your imagination, it wasn't a very good religion at this time.

But this false religion, the false religion is nothing but counterfeit of the real thing, is it? So here are these men using this for their gain, and this is the definition of religion. It's a little long, but I thought it would be instructive.

Religion is any system of faith and worship. This is from Noah Webster's 1820, whatever, 1828 or 23 dictionary. Any system of faith and worship, any religion consisting in the belief of a superior power or powers governing the world, and in the worship of such power or powers.

Thus we speak of the religion of the Muslims, of the Hindus, of the Indians, etc., as well as of the Christian religion. We speak of false religion as well as of true religion. And so that's what we're going to look at tonight.

[9 : 01] We see this false religion and the characteristics of it, and then as opposed to true religion. And Ecclesiastes 1.9, Solomon writes in a very dark period of his life.

It doesn't mean he wasn't writing truth. It was just from a perspective of a man who is no longer walking with the Lord at this time. He says, The thing that has been, it is that which shall be. And that which is done is that which shall be done.

And there's no new thing under the sun. Which is true. That man's systems aren't going to produce something new. Like, out of nothing. Because God is the only one who creates out of nothing. So there's nothing new.

The same system we're going to see in Ephesus is the same one that exists today. But true religion, or pure religion, as James tells us in chapter 127, he says, Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.

There's a few characteristics we can see there about true religion. One is generous. I mean, just by the very nature of reading that. To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction. It's to give of your time. Possibly of your goods.

[10 : 08] It's generous. It's holy. To keep oneself unspotted from the world. And lastly, it's personal. It's generous. It's holy. And it's personal. And there's other characteristics.

But these are just the ones in James. The world, they make it impersonal. Right? Go and drop off your goods over here. Would you like to donate a dollar while you buy your groceries?

It's very impersonal. We don't need to actually interact with the fatherless and the afflicted any longer and the widows.

We can do this very impersonally. In verse 25, we read that he called then all these men together. And he brought all the guys of like occupation. He said, you know that by this craft we have our wealth.

And so here we see false religion. False religion is what? It's false worship. It's false gain. And it's false fellowship. They come all together. It's this false fellowship. That yeah, we're all in this religion together.

[11 : 05] And it's this false worship. They're not really worshipping this goddess Diana. Look at verse 26. Moreover, you see and hear that not alone at Ephesus, but almost throughout all Asia, this Paul has persuaded and turned away much people, saying that they be no gods, which are made with hands.

Like we need to defend our man-made gods. When you need to defend your god, find another god. He can defend himself. But this is a fantastic commendation to Paul and his ministry.

Remember, Paul wasn't allowed in Asia at first. He couldn't go into Bithynia. He couldn't go into Asia. He wanted to. And now the testimony by these heathens, by these men who are perpetrating their falsehood is, Paul's persuaded and turned away much people.

Throughout all Asia, this has happened all over the place. Remember, back in verse 10 of chapter 19, when Paul tells us that he continued by the space of two years at the school of Tyrannus, and that all they that dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.

And now here you have Demetrius saying the same thing. False religion makes merchandise of the masses. False religion is all about gain.

[12:19] And false religion is also all about unity. You know, we think we all need to come together. We need to work together. The church needs to work together. They need to be united. No, they do not.

We never seek unity for the sake of unity, right? Jesus said in Luke 12, 51, Do you suppose that I came to give peace on the earth? I tell you no, but rather division.

And false worship and false religion always seeks unity above all else. But we can set aside our differences. We can work together. We can't set aside our differences.

We are of the way, and there's only one way, and it's the way, the truth, and the light. Now, we're told to keep the unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace. We don't break that bond to go for the sake of unity, to keep that.

And how do we have peace? Well, we have peace with God through His word. So we stand on the word, and that usually means we divide. We divide over holiness. We divide over righteousness.

[13:16] We divide over truth. And the world looks at us and goes, what are you crazy? We could do such great big things if we could all work together. If we could all have one language. If we could all have one religion. Sounds like Babel.

Sounds like what's shortly to be on the horizon as well. But true religion divides. Verse 27. And here he says, So that not only this our craft is in danger to be set at naught, but also that the temple of the great goddess Diana should be despised, and her magnificence should be destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worships.

And here is that false worship. See, false worship puts the focus on my gain. True worship puts the focus on God's glory. The Demetrius thing is this whole front.

And you see that the world hides its true motives, doesn't it? Behind a pretty package of lies. Oh, no, no, no, no. We're just worshipping Diana. Are you kidding? This isn't called marketing. This isn't worshipping.

This is marketing. We want to sell our trinkets. How are we going to do that? I know. We'll convince people. This goddess is, oh, she's real. You go to pray to her. And then if you take one of these little trinkets home, put it under your pillow at night.

[14:32] If you put your hand on the TV, God will plant seeds. And, you know, come on. It's called marketing. It's called deception. It's called false worship. And I think it's worth talking about this idea of false worship, where the focus is on gain instead of on God's glory.

You know, we live in a world where worship has become an industry. I mean, you can get rich off of writing songs for Jesus? That doesn't make a lot of sense.

And there are those who would say, you know, the unholy trinity of worship, elevation, hillsong, and Bethel, right? And say, oh, if you do a song by them, well, then you just let, you know, the same spirit that was written in into your church.

Well, thankfully, we have the word that gives us guidance. John 4, 24 tells us that God is a spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.

I'm not responsible for how the people at Bethel or Hillsong or Elevation worship. I'm responsible to worship God in spirit and in truth. So when I listen to a song, whether it's on the radio or wherever, in my mind, it's, is this truth?

[15:45] Is this doctrinally correct? Is it worship? Is it directed towards God? Like, you know, when Kitty's preparing songs to do worship, we talk about, like, we always say, as long as they're not life-focused songs.

You know, songs that are about, like, God's going to bring me through. God's done good to me. And it's just so, like, life-focused. And it's like country music with Christian words. Those are great, and God can use those to speak to you.

But they're not worship songs. But just because somebody wrote a song, and maybe their doctrine wasn't correct, if the words within that are, I can worship God in spirit and in truth.

It's the same principle where if someone says, do you know what they used your money for? Well, I can't see anywhere in Scripture where I'm responsible how somebody else uses my money. I'm responsible how I use it, what I do with it.

Once they take it, I'm not responsible then for how they choose to use it. So false worship puts the focus on gain. And so then we can usually check ourselves as we worship the Lord.

[16:47] Is it about my gain, my blessing, my joy, my fulfillment? Or is it worship to God? Is it his glory? And then we can also check, are we worshipping him according to spirit and truth?

So that's kind of my take because I've had people, you know, say, have you got that? It's like, come on. Do you know the theology of the guy who wrote, It is well in my soul? I don't know his doctrine. Do you know how many people we quote? Luther and Spurgeon. Spurgeon was a Calvinist. Calvinism. Augustine, who is the father of predestination, has done more to wreck the church. It's the root of antisemitism is Calvinism, if you want to go down that rabbit trail. I can't be responsible for what everybody says, right? But I can be responsible for is it spirit and truth. Now, that's why we stick to the word, isn't it? Yes, we're careful who we quote and the things we do and use. But, you know, Scripture also tells us that to the pure, all things are pure.

[17 : 44] So if you want to find corruption, you're going to find corruption. And there's leaven in the church. So, anyway, that was my little tangent on false worship and where I kind of view all of that.

I don't really get hung up over it. It doesn't really bother me because I just bring it back to the word. You know, if somebody comes to me and gives me their viewpoint on something, I'm going to check it by the word. And if it's a correct viewpoint, I'm like, well, that's very interesting.

I'm not going to go, now tell me what you think about every other area of doctrine in life. Oh, you're off on that? I won't listen to you about this. I just base it on the word at face value of what comes my way.

And what comes our way, that's what we want to do here, keeping everything in spirit and in truth, the Holy Spirit. And when they heard these things, these saying, verse 28, so all of his men there, all of his group, this false fellowship, when they heard these things, they were full of wrath.

Why were they full of wrath? Because it hurt the bottom line, right? If they were making oodles of money and Diana wasn't being worshipped, I don't think they really care.

[18 : 51] Because right from the beginning, it tells us that the whole thing Demetrius is upset about is because he made no small game over this. And so now he has his boys here and they all begin to cry out, full of wrath, saying, great is Diana of the Ephesians.

Like, we need to double down on our marketing strategies here. And so false worship hides its true motives behind a pretty package of lies. And false worship also breeds wrath.

They were full of wrath. James, James was just a wealth of information for this study. James 3.17 says, But the wisdom that is from above is first pure and peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and of good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.

And his true religion is gentle. It's easy to be entreated. It's peaceable. It doesn't lead to wrath. And the whole city, in verse 29, was filled with confusion.

False religion breeds confusion. And having caught Gaius and Aristarchus, men of Macedonia, Paul's companions in travel, they rushed with one accord into the theater.

[19 : 59] And that's not like they wanted to go see the latest movie. It's just the arena in which they would have their public forum. James 3.16 says, For where envying and strife is, there's what?

Confusion and every evil work. Remember we had looked at a scripture in Galatians. If we live in the Spirit, let us walk in the Spirit.

Walking in the Spirit is the opposite of what? Do not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another. So how can you test if it's a true religion or a false religion?

Is there envy? Is there wrath? Is there strife? Because we see that the wisdom that is from above is peaceable and pure.

And then 1 Corinthians 14.33 tells us, God is not the offer of confusion, but of peace, as in all the churches. Now again, the false piece of false religion is unity. We all get along because we choose not to divide over anything.

[21 : 02] Nobody ever makes waves. We get along with everybody. The true peace is according to holiness and according to God's Word. So here we have these two four dudes that are with Paul, Gaius and Aristarchus.

And they actually pop up in Scripture in a couple other places. Gaius means Lord. Aristarchus means the best ruler. These are pretty upstanding dudes. These are men that you would want to know.

The only thing they have against them. The only thing they have that they could check that box that they're bad, according to the world, is they're associates of Paul. They're part of the way. Acts 20 verse 4.

We will get to that next time in Acts 20. It tells us that their accompanied Paul, Paul into Asia, Sopater of Berea, and of the Thessalonians, Aristarchus and Secundus.

And that's that Aristarchus from Macedonia. So he's from Thessalonica, which was in the region of Macedonia, Thessalonica being the city. And then Gaius of Derb, and Timotheus of Asia, Tychicus and Trophimus.

[22 : 09] And so they're going to be heading back with Paul into Macedonia. And then we also see later on in Acts, Acts 27 verses 1 through 2. And when it was determined that we should sail into Italy, they delivered Paul and certain other prisoners unto one named Julius, a centurion of Augustus, excuse me, band.

They're going to get on the ship to sail to Rome. And entering in a ship of Adramatium, we launched meaning to sail by the coast of Asia and one Aristarchus, a Macedonia of Thessalonica being with us.

And so here he gets to enjoy the shipwreck with Paul. We just kind of think of it as Paul jumping on the boards with a bunch of Roman soldiers and prisoners. Well, Luke was there because he says us, so he's including himself in that.

And we have our friend Aristarchus is with Paul again. I just think it's cool to see these people that just kind of keep coming back around. I just met a guy again that I worked with like five years ago on another site.

We were talking and I realized, I'm like, did you work on this site? He's like, yeah. You know, and he kind of took his sunglasses off and I took mine off. I'm like, hey, I recognize you. But he's not a believer, but it was still, it was like, it was so cool to meet someone that you kind of knew before.

[23 : 20] But, and yet there was that, that part of me that, you know, when that happens, but they're not a believer. And it doesn't quite send that next, thing connect. You know, it's like, I just want to be like, praise the Lord, which I was, but I mean, he wasn't.

But it's just cool to see how Paul continued to associate with these guys. So these two men, Aristarchus and, what was his name, Gaius, they're dragged in.

They're just minding their business, right? And maybe they were thinking, this is a little unfair. Where's Paul? It wasn't us. We're just with Paul. And I think it's, are we willing to bear the consequences of association?

You know, these men, because of their association, are being dragged before this mob. And they could have said, well, wait, wait, wait, wait, wait, we didn't say all this stuff. This is Paul. I mean, but instead of trying to disassociate themselves, they just kind of went with it.

And I think, am I willing to bear the consequences of association? I wish I always was, but sometimes I find myself drawing back or being quiet. And usually after the fact, I think, oh, opportunity.

[24 : 29] I could have been more, you know, overt or forthright. But of course, these men really didn't have a choice. They just kind of came and grabbed them. And so maybe the application is, are we so associated with the Lord that someone could come and grab us when they're looking for a Christian?

And when Paul would have entered in under the people, he's like, I'm coming boys. The disciples suffered him not. You know, remember in chapter 18, Paul was just coming from being beaten and left for dead.

And he enters into Corinth. And we have this little section here where the Lord comes and speaks to him in a vision of the night. He says, be not afraid, but speak and hold not your peace. For I am with you and no man shall set on you to hurt you.

For I have much people in this city. And so Paul's had this word from the Lord. This isn't that Corinth. He's now in Ephesus. And I think for Paul, he's just like, man, I have the Lord behind me, all caution to the wind.

I don't need to be afraid. I just need to go and speak. Ephesians 6, 10 to 12 says, finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

[25 : 41] For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness, against spiritual wickedness in high places. And so for Paul, as he rushes in, it's not the people.

He recognizes there's a greater battle taking place here. It's a battle for the truth. And then verse 31. And certain of the chief of Asia, which were his friends, sent unto him, desiring him that he would not adventure himself in the theater.

Paul, acting's not for you. Find another career. You're not going to be in movies. Ephesians 5, 21 says that we are to submit ourselves one to another in the fear of God.

And here you see Paul. Paul's not like, what are you telling me to do that? I'm Paul. You don't tell me what to do. If I need to get in there, I'm going to go in there. The word adventure means to give or to commit. The thing, Paul, don't give yourself to this.

Don't commit yourself to this. We, we desire you not to. True friends draw near in trouble. Proverbs 18, 24 says, a man that has friends must show himself friendly.

[26 : 45] And there is a friend that sticks closer than a brother. Instead of distancing themselves, instead of like being like, this is crazy. Did you hear about what's going on? I heard. They got a gays and a ristarchist. Then Paul went running in there. Let's pray for them.

Father. But true friends draw near in trouble. They don't pull away because it's awkward or uncomfortable or for their own safety. And then here we see the world system of justice.

And the world system of justice is a theater. It's nothing but a show. And it's no place for the church. And so they said, Paul, don't go in there. Some therefore cried one thing and some another for the assembly was confused.

And the more part knew not where they were come together. Why are we here? I don't know, but this is fun. Woo. I can't tell you how many videos I've watched of these demonstrations. People demonstrating for the Palestinians, you know, those poor oppressed Palestinians.

And the guy goes up to him with a microphone. He's got his camera and he's like, and it's this like college student or whoever. And they got their Palestinian flag draped around them. And like, no, why, why are you marching?

[27 : 50] Oh, for the rights of the Palestinians. Okay. Now, what are your thoughts about what happened on October 7th? I don't know. What happened on October 7th? Oh, no, you're chanting from the river to the, to the sea.

What river is that? And one person's like, I think it's the Nile. What sea is that? And one person goes, I think like the, the, the, the, the black sea.

I think it is. These people don't even have a clue. They're just jumping on board the latest, the latest thing. Why? Because it gives them a sense of value. That's what false religion does. It gives us a sense, gives the world a sense of value of something that they can be a part of.

They don't care what it is. It gives them a sense of purpose. And that's the culture that the world loves. The world loves that culture. They say, yes, come and be a part of this.

Just unite with us around a purpose. And so they drew Alexander out of the multitude. The Jews putting him forward. Paul's ready to run in.

[28 : 46] The Christians ready to run in. And his guys are like, no, Paul, this is not the time for that. You know what? You know, just being sensitive in the spirit and it's what God's doing. This is not the time for it. The Jews are like, just throw their dude in there.

Here you go. They throw Alexander in, putting him forward. And Alexander beckoned with the hand and would have made his defense unto the people. And then what happens?

But when they knew he was a Jew, they all with one voice about the space of two hours cried out, great is Diana of the Ephesians. When they knew he was a Jew, religion expects reason to do what only renewal and regeneration can accomplish.

So here goes in, here, this Jew goes in, right? He would have been up to synagogue. He would have been up to the religion of the Jews. He would have been one who would have rejected Paul and his message.

And he goes in and he expects by reason to do what the scripture tells us only renewal and regeneration can accomplish. I didn't put the verse in here, but it's the one in Titus that talks about being renewed by the Holy Spirit.

[29 : 57] And that is the only thing that has any effect. Religion does not. And false religion, what does it do? It makes men who have no real substance, think they're actually relevant.

Joel Osteen makes men who have no real substance, thinks they're actually relevant. And here's this guy, Alexander, he doesn't have anything to offer, but he has puffed himself up thinking that he's relevant.

And he is to this culture for as long as they can use him. And false religion, what else does it do? It creates a culture that encourages people to act like monsters.

Look at these people just dragging people in here, chanting. They don't know what they're doing or why they're there. And then the culture is surprised or the people are surprised when the monsters turn on their creators.

So false religion creates this culture that encourages people to act like monsters. And then they're surprised when those monsters turn on them. It's like, you know, here's Alexander.

[30 : 58] He's probably like, I've been in this town for years. I've been in the synagogue for years. You know me. And now they're dragging him in there. And so for two hours, they cry out, great is Diana of the Ephesians.

Because false religion has no respect for the things of God. This is God's people. These are the Jews, God's chosen people. And when they find out he's a Jew, there's essentially, they are mocking him and throwing this in his face for two hours.

You know, just jumping around. Great is Diana of the Ephesians. Because false religion has no respect for the things of God. So the town clerk now, he's roused from, I don't know, whatever he was doing.

And he comes out and here for two hours, he's hearing these people just do this. And it says, when he had appeased the people, the word appease means to pacify or reduce to a state of peace, one who has been incensed.

And the word is used twice in this chapter. And it's the only two times used in scripture. It's used here in verse 35. And the next verse, he's going to say to them, you ought to be quiet. You ought to be appeased.

[32 : 03] You ought to pacify yourself and reduce yourself to a state of peace. And so the town clerk, he comes out and he appeases the people. And he said, I read a bunch about this or some about this.

Nobody knows for sure what that is. Now, in the circles of teachings that I've always heard over my lifetime as well, it was a meteorite that fell down and it looked like this woman.

And so they worshiped it at that. But those that were writing at this time, you know, in the early centuries, there's differing opinions. One said it was ebony. It was carved.

Another one said that it was like molten, like gold. But whatever it was, the idea that it fell down from Jupiter, it had supposedly outlasted like three iterations of this temple.

And so it was like, this is from heaven. This is so divine. And that's what the clerk here is saying. But false religion, it needs appeasing, doesn't it? It must be appeased.

[33 : 07] That idea to pacify it, reduce it to a state of peace. And false religion, it permeates all levels of society. Here's this clerk, and what's he spewing out?

Lies. It makes liars of the most respectable people. This guy's actually pretty good. Like, he would be a pretty good dude to vote for. This town clerk, he does a pretty good job of upholding the law here.

But he's trying to appease the mob. He's trying to go along with them, and not truth. And it's making a liar out of him.

He's just spitting out the lies of this false religion, that this idol fell down from Jupiter. You wonder who found it. Like, you know, the Mormons.

Huge religion, millions of dollars, gold, angel statues on top of their temple. Where we used to live in New York, in Phelps, New York was near there. That's where Joseph Smith was from. So there's a Mormon temple.

[34 : 06] Driving down this one road, you could look, and if the sun hit it, you'd see that golden angel out over the trees. You know, it seems like, wow. But you go back to the roots, and it's just some kid in the woods, drugged out of his mind, you know, seeing vision.

And so here is this clump of something that fell down from Jupiter, or someone found, and now they have one of the seven wonders of the world built around it. What nonsense.

Verse 36. Seeing then that these things cannot be spoken against, you ought to be quiet, and do nothing rashly. What does false religion do? It's rash.

It's emotion-based, isn't it? The world is okay with religion that knows how to behave according to its standards. They can handle a mob.

They can handle someone rash. They can handle it if we're emotion-based. What they cannot handle is the way. These peaceable men who just talked to other people, taught the word, and changed the world.

[35 : 07] They couldn't handle the fact that what? People were turning from sin. Demetrius essentially saying, guys, we got a problem. Sin is not selling in this town anymore, and we need to change that.

We got to do something about this. Because there's so many people turning to Jesus, they don't want to be entertained with sin. What are we going to do? So the world is okay with a religion that knows how to behave.

You've probably heard this phrase before if you've been in the South long. I've heard it a lot. One of the guys I used to work with down here, he's a Lutheran, older guy, and he would say this all the time.

That's going from preaching to meddling. That's going from preaching to meddling. I always wanted to say to him, except we've been really rude and snarky, be like, if it's not meddling, it's not preaching. If you're not meddling, it's not preaching.

Then it's just a bunch of nonsense. The Bible is not just a book. The Bible is not just for information and lectures.

[36 : 06] The Bible is a message. And you can never separate that out. Yeah, we want to have understanding because the scripture puts a great emphasis on that, that we should understand the word. But it's for the purpose of understanding God.

Remember, Jesus said to the Pharisees, man, you search the scriptures because you think in them you have life. You've divorced them from what they're meant to be. These are they which speak of me. So that's going from preaching to meddling.

And the world doesn't like that. They're like, I don't care if you want to, you want to have your Bible, but just don't have it affect anything, especially not me. And again, Paul, if you remember, had that vision with the Lord.

And I don't think he's too concerned anymore about what anybody thinks. For you have brought hither these men, which are neither robbers of churches, nor yet blasphemers of your goddess. Great response. Town clerk. Really good response. 2 Corinthians 6.3 says, that as believers, we have a certain conduct we should uphold.

[37 : 17] Lost my spot. Giving no offense in anything, that the ministry be not blamed. In other words, we can tell the truth without being jerks. He's saying, you've brought these men here.

They're not, they didn't rob your church. I mean, you're complaining that it's their fault that you lost your business, but they didn't take anything from you. And they didn't even blaspheme your goddess. Isn't that something?

Paul's been in Ephesus this whole time, two years teaching, and it didn't get around that, over there, you know what they're saying against Diana? He just, he ignored that. He just taught the truth. We can tell the truth without being jerks.

Wherefore, if Demetrius and the craftsmen, which are with him, have a matter against any man, the law is open, and there are deputies, let them in plead one another.

Great response. But false religion has no proof. He's like, okay, well, let's go to the law. We don't want to go to the law. We've just been dancing for two hours and chanting, great as Diana is Ephesians.

[38 : 16] I mean, isn't that something? Doesn't that have some kind of relevance? Maybe if we march in the streets and take over part of Portland, maybe that'll make us relevant. No, it doesn't. Because there are laws and there are deputies, let them in plead one another.

But if you inquire anything concerning other matters, it shall be determined in a lawful assembly. In other words, he's saying, if it's outside the law, okay, that's fine, but you need to do this in a lawful assembly.

You can talk about these things and you can discuss them, but you're not going to do it with a mob. You realize that the world's culture today is even worse than the Ephesian culture? We wouldn't do that.

Nobody says that today. Nobody says, hey, if there's any other matters you need to inquire over, it shall be done in a lawful assembly. It's the opposite. Hey, you know what? Let's determine this in the streets with a mob by burning and looting.

I sent a video through our family group chat today. I saw this video in California, in Oakland. This dude runs into an Apple store. Someone in there is videotaping him.

[39 : 18] He just starts ripping the display phones off the stand and shoving them down his pants. He has pants tucked into his shoes so they're filling up. It was funny. But he was doing it for like four or five minutes, just ripping them off.

And everybody's just standing there, watching, going about their business. He runs out and there's a cop car in front of the store. He gets in his own car and takes off. Nobody does anything. And that's the world we're in.

My contractor just told me that he was in Gastonia in the Home Depot and some guys came up, cut the lock on the cage that has all the power tools, grabbed a bunch of power tools and went out. He was in one of the aisles. He saw a guy take a bunch of tools and shove them in his coat and then walk out. And nobody does anything. They have a no chase policy. So I was like, why should we pay? Why should we follow the laws?

Nobody else has to. That's crazy. The world's culture today is worse than the Ephesian culture. They could still respond to this. He expected them to respond to what he told them when he said, guys, the law is open.

[40 : 17] If you have a matter that's legal, take them to the court. If you don't, there's a way, there's a proper way to handle this. Lawfully in a lawful assembly. You see, matters in today's culture are not settled in a lawful assembly but by mob rule.

Verse 40. And he says this where he kind of goes from being like, wow, what a great response to kind of being like, ew, okay, he's showing kind of his motive. For we are in danger to be called in question for this day's uproar, there being no cause whereby we may give an account of this concourse.

He says, hey, man, if they hear about this, you know, we could get in trouble. But for us, we're not judged at the bar of popular opinion. We don't, the standard isn't, well, we don't want Rome to come down on us.

We don't want the government to come down on us. So we need to appease. We need to get along. Because we're in danger to be called into question for this day's uproar because there's no way we can give an account for the reason.

We have no reason for this. We're going to be in trouble. Romans 14, 12 says, so then every one of us shall give an account of themselves to God. That our accountability is not to the law.

[41 : 31] It's not even to one another. It's to the Lord. And then because of that, we can be accountable to one another. We can be accountable to the law. But without that, we're kind of like this town clerk where his reasons are, we don't want to cause problems because we want to save our own skins where we live by a higher standard.

And when he thus spoken, he dismissed the assembly. False religion is easily dismissed for the chaff that it is. Jeremiah 23, 26, and 28. The Lord is saying, how long shall this be in the heart of the prophets that prophesy lies?

Yea, they are prophets of the deceit of their own heart, which think to cause my people to forget my name by their dreams, which they tell every man to his neighbor, as their fathers have forgotten my name for Baal.

The prophet that has a dream will let him tell his dream. And he that has my word, let him speak my word faithfully. He's like, sure, let's compare those two. For what is the chaff to the wheat, saith the Lord?

That's false religion. Easily dismissed for the chaff that it is. This whole uproar. These men thinking, we're going to change this situation, and in the end they just kind of go home with their tail between their legs.

[42 : 42] Nothing comes of it. Where's BLM today? Right? Where's all that culture shaking that was going to happen and change the world?

Where are all these people? The names that were so big at one time. They fade. They fade. The Lord tells us that the wicked will have their day of judgment. That God will never allow injustice to stand.

You know, we're seeing that as we go through Genesis with Jacob. That Esau will eventually, when Jacob comes back, Esau is blessed. He's living a blessed life.

And at the time when Jacob and Esau come together, the picture you get is, who's got greater peace? Whose life is experiencing the greater blessing? And it seems like Esau at that point in his life where Jacob is still wrestling and struggling with so much.

But yes, Jacob will have his blessing, but God will not let an injustice stand. And so as we close, you know, we said the church is subject to God. Ephesians 5, 23 through 24 says, for the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church and he is the savior of the body. [43 : 49] Therefore, as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. Not to emphasize the family, husband and wife relationship, the emphasis for this study is as the church is subject unto Christ.

That's who we're subject to. The church is subject to Christ. We live for Christ because we're subject to God. That's why we live for Christ. Colossians 3, 17, and whatsoever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and Father by him.

Why do we do that? Because we're subject to God. We assemble because we're subject to God. Hebrews 10, 25, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another and so much the more as you see the day approaching.

So the world will say, hey, don't meddle. Don't rock the boat. Let's just get along. Stop being so set on going that way. But we say, no, well, see, I'm subject to God.

The Colossians tell me, tells me that I have to do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus. I have to. Hebrews tells me that I can't forsake this assembling together. Even when the world says, shut your building, don't gather, don't fellowship, well, I'm not subject unto you.

[45 : 06] We didn't go into it, but in Romans 13 where Paul talks about that we are to be subject to the higher authorities and to the, he then tells what those are. And he says that they exist for the purpose of putting down righteousness and encouraging, I mean, putting down unrighteousness and encouraging righteousness.

Right? So, the point is, if they are not doing that, that's not my fault or my problem. So, the institution that's been put in this country, the office of the president, that is his purpose according to Romans 13, that he is to uphold righteousness and put down wickedness.

And I'm to subject, subjugate myself to that. If he turns around and decides that he's going to put down righteousness and uphold wickedness, I still respect him, but I do not follow him because he is now broken faith with his calling.

But I can't break faith with my God because I'm subject to God. So is he, but he's chosen not to walk accordingly. No different than within the church. If some dude goes off the rails, if I start preaching nonsense and say, hey, let's go, you know, every week before church, we're going to go down and cleanse ourselves in the McCaddenville Lake and anybody who can't hold their breath for 30 seconds is not saved.

Right? You don't follow that. You say, I'm sorry. I can't. It doesn't matter who you are. I have to be subject to God. It's no different. So we do not forsake the assembling of ourselves together, not because it's convenient or because it doesn't bring the government down on us, but because we're subject to God.

[46 : 37] And again, finishing with that text in James. What is true religion? It's undefiled. There's nothing defiling about it. Diana was very defiling.

It's to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction. Not about me. Not about my comfort. And it's a very personal thing. I visit them in their affliction.

And to keep himself unspotted from the world. We're not going to have unity with the world. We're not. And so Paul, as he closes out his time here in Ephesus, the first one of chapter 20 will say, and after the uproar was ceased, it says, Paul will call the disciples and they'll embrace.

And you just see where Paul, he's not affected at all by this. He's like, well, whatever. I've got my own timetable. Remember spirit-led ministry? It's God's timetable.

It's God's direction and God's vocation and God's duration. So, I thought it was really instructive for us in this season we're in as we're up and down and topsy-turvy and thinking of just leaving, you know, Mount Holly.

[47 : 43] And we're not going to ultimately get along with the world. We're eventually going to have to go a different direction. And it's interesting even as we're here, it's like, it's almost like the Lord's like, look, I took you through that part of the wilderness to learn that lesson.

You're not going to be able to work with the world. And then it's like he brought us here and it's almost like, okay, these are God's people but how can two walk together unless they be agreed? And a house divided cannot stand.

We don't want to be divided. We don't want to be having that division. We want to make sure that we, like I said here by the town clerk where he said that these men, they're not robbers of churches or blasphemers.

We want to leave that a good testimony behind in that good witness. So, let's pray. Lord, we thank you for this encouragement tonight in your word. We thank you for this picture, Lord, as we saw last time we were together the culture changing effect of the word of God being believed and holiness being lived out and men turning from sin and then we see how the world reacts just when we think maybe the culture at Ephesus is going to be changed.

Maybe the world is turning around and we see the world pushing back and getting angry because they can't make money on sin anymore. And then we see this clerk who says a lot of good things but ultimately who does he side with?

[49 : 00] He says, oh yeah, we know, we know that this is acceptable, that money is made off the temple of Diana. And so, Lord, help us to be those that live pure lives and live out our pure religion, Lord.

It's focused upon you, it's not for gain, not self-focused. That, Lord, we are willing to identify with you and those that you have come to seek and to save, Lord.

We thank you for this space, Lord. We pray that for as long as we are here, Lord, we would not be a cause for division. We would not be a cause, Lord, that the ministry would be blamed. But Lord, just like the ark that rested in the house of Obed-Edom, that as long as it was there, the house was blessed.

We pray that our presence here, Lord, would be a blessing, Lord, for this church. And then, Lord, for us, here we are. We're at your disposal, Lord. We give our lives to you. We ask you to do whatever you want to do, whatever you purpose to do, Lord, those good works you foreordained before the foundation of the world, Lord.

We pray that one of those, Lord, is to see this church grow and thrive in such a way, Lord, that everybody in this area would know that the word of God, they follow the way there.

[50 : 09] And that we love you and thank you in Jesus' name. Amen.