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Unstoppable: The Book of Acts
Idols and Riots

4 Corners Church
January 18, 2026

Acts 19:21-22 ²¹Now after these events Paul resolved in the Spirit to pass through Macedonia and Achaia and go to Jerusalem, saying, “After I have been there, I must also see Rome.” ²²And having sent into Macedonia two of his helpers, Timothy and Erastus, he himself stayed in Asia for a while.

Acts 19:23-27 ²³About that time there arose no little disturbance concerning the Way. ²⁴For a man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of Artemis, brought no little business to the craftsmen. ²⁵These he gathered together, with the workmen in similar trades, and said, “Men, you know that from this business we have our wealth. ²⁶And you see and hear that not only in Ephesus but in almost all of Asia this Paul has persuaded and turned away a great many people, saying that gods made with hands are not gods. ²⁷And there is danger not only that this trade of ours may come into disrepute but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis may be counted as nothing, and that she may even be deposed from her magnificence, she whom all Asia and the world worship.”

Acts 19:28-34 ²⁸When they heard this they were enraged and were crying out, “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!” ²⁹So the city was filled with the confusion, and they rushed together into the theater, dragging with them Gaius and Aristarchus, Macedonians who were Paul's companions in travel. ³⁰But when Paul wished to go in among the crowd, the disciples would not let him. ³¹And even some of the Asiarchs, who were friends of his, sent to him and were urging him not to venture into the theater. ³²Now some cried out one thing, some another, for the assembly was in confusion, and most of them did not know why they had come together. ³³Some of the crowd prompted Alexander, whom the Jews had put forward. And Alexander, motioning with his hand, wanted to make a defense to the crowd. ³⁴But when they recognized that he was a Jew, for about two hours they all cried out with one voice, “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!”

Acts 19:35-41 ³⁵And when the town clerk had quieted the crowd, he said, “Men of Ephesus, who is there who does not know that the city of the Ephesians is temple keeper of the great Artemis, and of the sacred stone that fell from the sky? ³⁶Seeing then that these things cannot be denied, you ought to be quiet and do nothing rash. ³⁷For you have brought these men here who are neither sacrilegious nor blasphemers of our goddess. ³⁸If therefore Demetrius and the craftsmen with him have a complaint against anyone, the courts are open, and there

are proconsuls. Let them bring charges against one another.³⁹ But if you seek anything further, it shall be settled in the regular assembly.⁴⁰ For we really are in danger of being charged with rioting today, since there is no cause that we can give to justify this commotion.”⁴¹ And when he had said these things, he dismissed the assembly.

How Idols Worked Then And Still Work Today

1. Idols Promise Security and Joy Apart from God

Idols say: “If you have me, you’ll be okay.”

Test: If you lose it and are sad, it may have been a “good thing.” If you lose it and are devastated, it may have become a “god thing” to you.

2. Idols Engage Our Deepest Emotions

Threaten Artemis → people riot.

Diagnostic questions: What makes you panic?

What makes you despair?

Who can you not forgive?

3. Idols Must Be Protected

Irony in Acts 19: The “protector” goddess needs protection.

Modern examples: Marriage → obsession or fear of missing out

Kids → control or anxiety

Money → inability to give

Reputation → hypersensitivity to criticism

4. Idols Demand Sacrifice

Idols always say: “If you want me, you must sacrifice.”

What gets sacrificed: Integrity, Obedience, Family, Faithfulness

Good things become cruel masters when they become ultimate.

5. Idols Are Not Just Psychological—They Are Spiritual

Behind idolatry are spiritual forces.

Same old lie: “If you obtain this, you’ll be like God and you won’t die.”

HOW THE GOSPEL DESTROYS IDOLS

The True God Alone Gives Life

Not made with hands

Creator, sustainer, and satisfier

The True God Does Not Need Protection—He Protects You

God is: Rock, Refuge, Fortress, Strength

You can rest instead of obsess.

The True God Offered Himself as the Sacrifice

Other gods say: "If you fail me, you'll be destroyed."

Jesus says: "You failed me—and I was destroyed for you."

At the cross, Jesus took our shame and idolatry.