

The Church of the Holy Apostles;
A Bible Study on the Book of Acts
Based upon the Homilies of St John Chrysostom (SJC)
Study Guide – January 27, 2016, Acts 19.21-41 - Homily 42

Prayer before reading of the Holy Scriptures: Shine within our hearts, loving Master, the pure light of Your divine knowledge, and open the eyes of our minds that we may comprehend the message of Your Gospel. Instill in us also reverence for Your blessed commandments so that, having conquered sinful desires, we may pursue a spiritual life, thinking and doing all those things which are pleasing to You. For You, Christ our God, are the light of our souls and bodies, and to You we give glory, together with Your Father who is without beginning and Your all holy, good and life giving Spirit, always now and forever and to the ages of ages.

Chapter 19 v. 21-22 *When these things were accomplished, Paul purposed in the Spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, "After I have been there, I must also see Rome." So he sent into Macedonia two of those who ministered to him, Timothy and Erastus, but he himself stayed in Asia for a time.*

Paul prophesies his arrest and trial in Rome. Providential so the Church doesn't panic when it happens

Chapter 19 v. 23-27 *And about that time there arose a great commotion about the Way. For a certain man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of Diana, brought no small profit to the craftsmen. He called them together with the workers of similar occupation, and said: "Men, you know that we have our prosperity by this trade. "Moreover you see and hear that not only at Ephesus, but throughout almost all Asia, this Paul has persuaded and turned away many people, saying that they are not gods which are made with hands. "So not only is this trade of ours in danger of falling into disrepute, but also the temple of the great goddess Diana may be despised and her magnificence destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worship."*

The Church has gained notoriety. SJC *"They contradicted, it says: (then) came miracles, twofold: (then) again, danger: such is the way the threads alternate throughout the whole texture (of the history).*

There is always money at the bottom of idolatry. SJC *"It was not for their religion, because they thought that in danger; no, it was for their lucrative craft, that it would have nothing to work upon."*

Demetrius incites a riot. Otherwise the people would have continued to go about their business.

Paul had persuaded many, but not by violence as opposed to Demetrius. SJC *"For if this (Paul being) man is strong enough to turn away all, and the worship of the gods is in jeopardy, one ought to reflect, how great must this man's God be.... Observe how he showed Paul's power to be the greater, proving all (their gods) to be wretched and miserable creatures, since a mere man, who was driven about, a mere tentmaker, had so much power. Observe the testimonies borne to the Apostles by their enemies, that they overthrew their worship."*

Demetrius piles lie on top of lie. SJC *"For, lest they should consider within themselves (how strange), that a human being should have such power as this, and if a human being has power to effect such things, why then one ought to be persuaded by that man."*

Just as the Jews did to Jason, they also drag Alexander into the crowd.

Chapter 19 v. 28-34 *And about that time there arose a great commotion about the Way. For a certain man named Demetrius, a silversmith Now when they heard this, they were full of wrath and cried out, saying, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!" So the whole city was filled with confusion, and rushed into the theater with one accord, having seized Gaius and Aristarchus, Macedonians, Paul's travel companions. And when Paul wanted to go in to the people, the disciples would not allow him. Then some of the officials of Asia, who were his friends, sent to him pleading that he would not venture into the theater. Some therefore cried one thing and some another, for the assembly was confused, and most of them did not know why they had come together. And they drew Alexander out of the multitude, the Jews putting him forward. And Alexander motioned with his hand, and wanted to make his defense to the people. But when they found out that he was a Jew, all with one voice cried out for about two hours, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!", who made silver shrines of Diana, brought no small profit to the craftsmen. He called them together with the workers of similar occupation, and said: "Men, you know that we have our prosperity by this trade. "Moreover you see and hear that not only at Ephesus, but throughout almost all Asia, this Paul has persuaded and turned away many people, saying that they are not gods which are made with hands. "So not only is this trade of ours in danger of falling into disrepute, but also the temple of the great goddess Diana may be despised and her magnificence destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worship."*

A riot breaks out over trivial matter of clay statues. SJC *"Such is the way with vulgar minds, any trivial occasion shall hurry them away and inflame their passions."*

Paul's humility is so great that he allows Alexander to speak in his place

The followers of Diana were so childish they cried for two hours without interruption. Paul had been teaching for two years and NOW suddenly the riot breaks out...as if the loud shouts could be strong enough against the Holy Spirit. All this because Demetrius lied so he could make money.

Chapter 19 v. 35-41 *And when the city clerk had quieted the crowd, he said: "Men of Ephesus, what man is there who does not know that the city of the Ephesians is temple guardian of the great goddess Diana, and of the image which fell down from Zeus?" "Therefore, since these things cannot be denied, you ought to be quiet and do nothing rashly. "For you have brought these men here who are neither robbers of temples nor blasphemers of your goddess. "Therefore, if Demetrius and his fellow craftsmen have a case against anyone, the courts are open and there are proconsuls. Let them bring charges against one another. "But if you have any other inquiry to make, it shall be determined in the lawful assembly. "For we are in danger of being called in question for today's uproar, there being no reason which we may give to account for this disorderly gathering." And when he had said these things, he dismissed the assembly.*

Only three assemblies were aloud per month.

Since the riot was started out of something trivial, it was easy to end. SJC *"That which is easily kindled, so also is it easily extinguished."*

The image that fell which was supposed to have fallen down from heaven, was the image of Diana which was in the great temple at Ephesus. This was the superstitious belief of the people as is clear from the many instances in classic mythology in which statues are famed to have fallen from heaven. The image was of wood and was probably found there by the Greeks when they colonized Ionia. (according to George B Stevens)

Teaching on "Affliction and Sober Living" – (see Homily 42)

1. Nothing draws people together as much as affliction

Nothing so makes friends, and rivets them so firmly, as affliction: nothing so fastens and compacts the souls of believers: nothing is so seasonable for us teachers in order that the things said by us may be heard. For the hearer when he is in ease is listless and indolent, and seems to suffer annoyance from the speaker: but when he is in affliction and distress, he falls into a great longing for the hearing.

2. Affliction cuts us off from worrying about worldly things

Afflictions cut us off from the sympathy we have for the present world, as appears in this, that we wish for death immediately, and cease to be loving of the body: which very thing is the greatest part of wisdom, to have no hankering, no ties to the present life. The soul which is afflicted does not wish to be concerned about many things: repose and stillness are all it desired, content for its part to have done with the things present, even though there be nothing else to follow

3. Being overly comfortable brings sin

Moreover, that our greatest faults arise out of overmuch pleasure, any one may see. Come, if you will, let us represent to ourselves two houses, the one where people are marrying, the other where they are mourning: let us enter in imagination into each: let us see which is better than the other. Why, that of the mourner will be found full of seriousness (φιλοσοφίας); that of the marrying person, full of indecency. For look, (here are) shameful words, unrestrained laughter, more unrestrained motions, both dress and gait full of indecency, words fraught with mere nonsense and foolery: in short, all is ridicule there, all ridiculous... Shall we take for another contrast the prisons and the theatres? For the one is a place of suffering, the other of pleasure... Shall we examine other scenes of laughter also, I mean the feasts, with their parasites, their flatterers, and abundance of luxury, and (compare with them) places where are the halt and blind? So too in the case of the soul, that which leads an easy, luxurious life, has its impulses quickly swayed to sin: for such a soul is next neighbor to folly, to pleasure, to vainglory also, and envy, and plottings, and slanderings.

Life Application Challenge – (Homily 42) **Do not sink low because of affliction!**

Then let us not sink in our afflictions, but in all things give thanks, that so we may get great gain, that we may be well-pleasing to God, who permits afflictions. A great good is affliction: and we learn this from our own children: for without affliction (a boy) would learn nothing useful. But we, more than they, need affliction. For if there, when the passions (as yet) are quiet, (chastisement) benefits them, how much more us, especially possessed as we are by so many! Nay, we behoove rather to have schoolmasters than they: since the faults of children cannot be great, but ours are exceeding great. Our schoolmaster is affliction. Let us then not draw it down willingly upon ourselves, but when it has come let us bear it bravely, being, as it is, always the cause of numberless good things; that so we may both obtain grace from God, and the good things which are laid up for them that love Him, in Christ Jesus our Lord, with Whom to the Father, together with the Holy Spirit, be glory, might, honor, now and evermore, world without end. Amen.