

Forsaking The Old Idols

*"Many of them also which used **curious arts** brought their books together, and **burned them before all men**: and they counted the price of them, and found it **fifty thousand pieces of silver**." (Acts 19:19)*

This was quite an enormous amount of money. The new church in Ephesus could have sold those books as a "fundraiser", but they put the LORD first and rather obeyed His commandment, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me". That is why we find this account of the conjuring books being burned. The 19th chapter of the book of Acts gives us an astounding account of a New Testament church being established through a mighty ministry of preaching, miracles, godly zeal, and also persecution. Ephesus was a totally heathen environment. There was the cult of the fertility goddess Diana (also called Artemis). Only by powerful preaching accompanied with signs and wonders could the indifference and the error of the Ephesian people be broken. Those who got saved had to renounce their involvement in heathen cult worship. What are some of the miracles that happened? *"And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul: So that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them."* (Acts 19:11,12) Jewish exorcists who vainly used the name of Jesus to cast out devils, but did not believe on the name of Jesus, were beaten by a man possessed with devils. All this shows that if you want to use the name of Jesus then you have to believe on it and have faith in it.

Here in Acts 19 we can see God working as a deliverer. He delivered the heathen from their curious arts - occult worship - also called witchcraft in the Bible. Those who received that deliverance voluntarily brought their occult books and burned them. They cleaned up before the LORD! They could not go on and credibly say they are Christians without first removing all items out of their living environment that would dishonor God. It is not possible to be an overcoming Christian when your house is full of stuff that does not reflect God's standards of love, righteousness and holiness.

Let me explain that: a few weeks ago a missionary from Trinidad visited our church here in Carthage, Tennessee and told us about his work. Trinidad is a small island off the coast of South America in the Caribbean which is dominated by Hinduism. The missionary told us about the conversion of a Hindu priest. This priest had a temple and in the temple were a multitude of statues and images of Hindu gods. Once the Hindu priest realized the error of his way and the deception that he was under when the missionary publicly preached near the Hindu temple, he turned to Christ and got saved. Whenever a person gets saved he has to *"cast off the works of darkness"* and *"put on the armour of light."* (Romans 13:12) The renunciation is the best evidence of one's salvation besides a feeling of joy and peace. We can not take the sinful practices from our old life without Christ into the new life! So what did the Hindu priest do when he got saved? He removed all the statues and images out of the temple and burned them. Then he put a pulpit into the temple and from then on this place was used for the preaching of Christ. The Hindu temple actually became a Christian church building later on.

I can relate very much to Acts 19:19 because I made a similar experience when the Lord saved my soul. Before I became a Christian I read a lot of books by Stephen King. These horrible books contain huge amounts of violence, murder, witchcraft, involvement with demon spirits, cruelty toward women. It is a shame that these books were bestsellers in the US as well as in Europe. There is no telling how many lives were misled or destroyed by this filthy literature. Even worse, Stephen King became so

popular in Germany that we read one of his books in public school. Then God had enough of it and later on I turned to Him and got saved. Immediately the Holy Spirit laid on my conscience those Stephen King books that I had. Back then I didn't even know about what the church in Ephesus did according to Acts 19:19. It was as if God told me that these evil books had to go or there won't be a happy Christian life. The mere presence of these evil books would hurt my testimony for God. If I serve a holy God, then the unholy things need to disappear or they will cast a bad reflection on the holy. So I took the Stephen King books and put some in the trash and some had to go through a shredder - each page torn out and shredded separately. I still remember the joy of getting rid of these filthy books that do nothing but ruin a person's imagination and stuffing the mind with images and ideas of evil. I could have sold the Stephen King books and they probably would sell good in a yard sale, but I did not want to pass on the moral filth contained in those books. It would be like selling used toilet paper. Yes, I believe in Acts 19:19.

I also had an emptied bottle of Jack Daniel's whiskey standing on a shelf as a collectible. When I got saved, immediately the presence of that bottle disturbed me and it went out to be recycled! I believe Acts 19:19 is for today!

Some critics might compare this Biblical practice with "book burning". But let us look at the facts: when we use the term book burning today it usually refers to the actions in tyrannical regimes and totalitarian governments where the state confiscates the private property of its subjects, inspects it, and destroys any item that is considered subversive or oppositional. The Nazi regime and the Communist regimes of the 20th century practiced this militant book burning. The libraries of the opposition were stormed and suspicious books were confiscated, actually stolen, - taken from the rightful owner against his will - and burned. But this is definitely not what happened at the Ephesian church. The Bible tells us of a completely **voluntary** action. The new Christians brought their own books that were harmful and ungodly and burned them of their own free will in order to testify of their dedication to God and to renounce sin. The new Christians at Ephesus did not militantly ride all over town confiscating the books of their former associates in heathen worship. They did not establish censorship. They did not establish a rule of despotism and ignorance. All this did not happen. So the argument of totalitarian "book burning" is pretty ill-founded.

As you see, this scripture in Acts 19:19 has a very practical meaning for today. Sometimes people do not pay much attention to this event. Some folks wish it was not in the Bible. Some condemn it as intolerance. Some think it was good only for "back then". No, I believe it is for today. Christians need to clean up. They need to check what books are in their book shelves. Books about astrology, horoscopes, yoga, etc.? These things will alienate you from God and from the plain truth of His word. These things are an abomination unto God. What if a lost person walks through your Christian home? What will he/she see? Will your children read Harry Potter witchcraft while your wife is reading the latest gossip tabloids? Always remember what those faithful servants of the Lord Jesus did in Ephesus. They did not want to have a bad conscience before God. Anything that would hinder them from a deep fellowship with God was done away with. They did not burn those books because they hated anybody. They did it because they loved God and they also loved their fellow men by removing this source of deception out of their midst. I wish I had never read those Stephen King books that defiled my own mind with images of perversion. But there was nobody who cared and warned about the danger of filthy literature. Nobody was concerned about the moral dilemma contained in those books. I pray that this fervency of the early Ephesian church will captivate every heart. We ought to be fervent in spirit! Romans 12:11.

Now you know the truth about what happened at the church in Ephesus. Consider my question to you:

What will you do about this truth? It is wrong to “have“ the truth and do nothing about it. Let's be doers of the word. Let's not be as dead as a door nail. Some churches have services where they collect all the godless stuff and burn it up. Praise the Lord!

Write down what you will do about the truth just learned?
