

“RELIGIOUS FANATICS”

Acts 19:28-41

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INTRODUCTION

We do not need to look far to see evidence of religious fanaticism in our world today:

- Muslims shouting “Allah Akbar” to the top of their lungs while rejoicing over the slaughter of many innocent victims in the name of their religion.
- Boko Harim in Nigeria slaughtering school children in the name of intolerance of western education.
- Hindu devotees torching Baptist pastors and other Christians because they converted from Hinduism or converted others.
- Tribesmen in Ecuador slaughtering missionaries because they brought in a strange religious message.
- There are literally thousands of such incidents every year—most of them in the name of religion or some god or goddess.

This is exactly what we see here in Acts 19:28-41. For **two solid hours** the devotees of Artemis shouted: “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians.” A full riot was underway that endangered Gaius and Aristarchus and the entire Christian movement in Ephesus.

However, in the midst of this confusion and fanaticism, we see the sovereign hand of God at work to protect the fledgling Christian movement and to silence the fanaticism of the crowd. Yes, **God even uses secular leaders to accomplish His work.**

DO NOT FEAR RELIGIOUS FANATICS; FAITHFULLY SERVE GOD AND TRUST HIM TO PROTECT YOU.

*[Some will die like Stephen; some will be spared like Paul in this incident. **But all must be faithful!**]*

- I. THE TROUBLE CAUSED BY FINANCIAL FANATICS (28-32)
 - A. The anger of those who are ignorant of the truth (28-29a; 32)
 - B. The attack upon innocent believers (29)
 - C. The protection given to Paul by his friends (30-31)
 1. The disciples (30)
 2. The Asiarchs (31)
- II. THE TROUBLE CAUSED BY RELIGIOUS FANATICS (33-34)
 - A. The Jews were involved (33)
 1. Likely to clear their own name and association with Christians
 2. Likely also to put the blame fully upon the Christians.
 3. This could well be the same Alexander the coppersmith of II Tim. 4:14; I Tim. 1:20.
 - B. The Pagan worshippers of Artemis were involved (34).
- III. THE CALMING BROUGHT BY THE POLITICAL LEADER (35-41)
 - A. The importance of the “town-clerk”

- B. The universal popularity of the worship of Artemis (35)
1. Ephesus is her “temple-guardian.”
 2. Ephesus guards her image fallen from heaven—i.e. from Zeus.
 3. “Everyone” knows this to be true (36).
- His advice is good even for us to follow: **We really do hold to undeniable facts; we ought to remain calm and not do anything rash.***
- C. The innocence of the Christians (37)
1. They have not robbed temples—their deeds were not blameworthy.
 2. They are not blasphemers of the goddess
 - **Note the significant lesson we can learn from this statement: Paul did not make a frontal scurrilous attack on Artemis!**
 - We accomplish more by preaching the truth forcefully than by ridiculing and blasting false religions.
 - This does not mean that we should not expose error and seek to dethrone it—Paul did so (see v. 26).
- D. The effectiveness of appropriate legal proceedings (38-39)
1. Personal complaints can be settled at court (38).
 2. New laws can be issued by the lawful assembly (39).
- E. Riots and “lynch mobs” are not the right way to settle issues (40-41).

CONCLUSION

The wisdom of God is far greater than the foolishness of men!

Look how God used even an unsaved political leader to preserve the safety of Christians.

We have nothing to fear when we serve Him.

DO NOT FEAR RELIGIOUS FANATICS; FAITHFULLY SERVE GOD AND TRUST HIM TO PROTECT YOU.

And remember the advice given by a pagan—but left here by the Holy Spirit for us to learn from: ***we ought to remain calm and not do anything rash.***