

The Power above All Powers **Acts 19:8-41**

On his third missionary journey Paul arrives in Ephesus. What happens there tells us why the gospel spread as it did.

From the lecture hall of a local philosopher, Paul 'reasoned daily', interacting with the surrounding world-view. The impact was remarkable – the whole of Asia heard the gospel. As a result the gospel came into confrontation with the powers of darkness.

Dark Powers

We all believe something. More than that, we all worship something: we look to things to give us our significance, we sacrifice for things that we think will 'make us'. They become ultimate things in our lives – idols.

You can tell when something is an idol in your life when it is taken from you, as happened to Demetrius in Ephesus. The riot that follows demonstrates the power of idols. But beneath our surface idols are deep idols. For Demetrius it was wealth and prestige. For us it may be the need to be loved, or belong, or to prove oneself that lies under other, more obvious, desires and behaviours.

Even atheists are idolising something – their personal freedom. Like Demetrius they oppose Christianity because a deeper idol is being threatened.

In Ephesus we see that behind the power of idols lie darker powers. When we give ourselves to idols, whether possessions or power or porn, we can find ourselves in the grip of a power greater than us and we're trapped.

Impotent Powers

Paul told people that idols were not gods at all: they never give you what you are searching for. In Ephesus the crowd were rioting because they were afraid Ephesus would lose its prestige – but according to the city clerk it was precisely their behaviour that put Ephesus at risk. Idols don't just let you down – they will destroy you.

So where can you and I find the power to live free of these dark powers?

The Power Over Every Power

The real power in Ephesus was the power of the gospel – which was 'prevailing mightily.' The gospel is the one thing that can transform our hearts. The Ephesian Christians confessed and divulged their magic practices – demonstrating their power had been broken. They burned their spell books – because they realised that Jesus was of far greater value. They turned from idols because when you love Jesus more, you'll love your idols less.

And the gospel also has the power to change societies – by changing hearts. It undermines all the reasons why we don't want to share the good news. So the gospel makes us outward looking. The society and economy of Ephesus was transformed because the hearts of Christians were transformed. May the same happen in our day.