



For from you the word of the Lord has sounded forth... in every place. (1 Thessalonians 1:8)

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Burn the Books

-Renn Ferguson

In Acts 19 we read of the apostle Paul in Ephesus. Verses 11-20 record a very interesting event. In verse 11-12 we are told that Paul was doing many miraculous works. One in particular that is highlight, is that even the handkerchiefs or aprons that touched Paul, if taken to the sick, would heal them. This undoubtedly drew a great deal of attention to Paul and ultimately to the message he brought to them (Hebrews 2:4). However, there were these other men called the sons of Sceva. They were sons of a Jewish High Priest (v. 14). When they encountered one who was possessed by an evil spirit, they tried to invoke the name of Christ to cast the demon out (v. 13). Yet, they were unable to do so successfully (v. 15). In fact, the people of Ephesus recognized that the power to cast out demons only belonged to Christ (v. 17). This also lead them to recognize that Paul had been sent by God and to believe the message of the gospel. (v. 18).



Notice what is recorded in verse 19, “And a number of those who had practiced magic arts brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. And they counted the value of them and found it came to fifty thousand pieces of silver.” Talk about a big change! Many of these people had spent their lives dedicated to this type of work. Not only that, they had used a great deal of funds in purchasing their books, specifically 50,000 pieces of silver! That was no small amount back then, and it would likely be considered a considerable amount today. What would cause them to do that? Well, they saw the error in their ways and the truth of Christ. Upon following Christ, they wanted no more to do with their past life.

What a great example for you and me. When we obeyed the gospel, we became dead to sin (Romans 6:1-6). That means that we’re to cut all ties to the former sins of our life. Notice Peter’s words on this, “For the time that is past suffices for doing what the Gentiles want to do...” (1 Peter 4:3). The time we spent in sin was time enough. We need to rid ourselves of it and join ourselves to God. As God’s children we can no longer walk in darkness (1 John 1:6-7). Paul likewise wrote in Colossians 3:5, “put to death therefore what is earthly in you...” Everything that goes against the law of God can no more be a practice to us. We must put those things to death.

Those in Ephesus set forth a great example for us. They were willing to destroy everything they once practiced and worked so hard that they may be pleasing to God. We should be willing to do the same. Let us burn the proverbial books of sin.