



# UNSTOPPABLE: God's Work in the World

Counter Revolution – Acts 19:21-41

Tim Badal | January 6, 2019



We'll pick up our series "Unstoppable" in Acts 19. Paul was working his way through Asia Minor (modern day Turkey) and Macedonia (modern day Greece), sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ in city after city. This journey was incredibly fruitful, with many churches being planted and many lives being changed. In Acts 19:20, where we ended our last study, we saw a snapshot from Luke of what was taking place in Ephesus: *"So the word of the Lord continued to increase and prevail mightily."*

What an answer to prayer! This should also be our prayer for the Fox Valley area, that the Word of God and the power of God would be working in a mighty way. As the believers in Ephesus were being faithful to the gospel of Jesus Christ, living holy and upright lives and declaring to the world their love for the Lord Jesus Christ, people's lives were being changed in dramatic ways. Earlier in chapter 19, we read about the sorcerers in Ephesus giving up their practices and burning their sorcery books, a costly sacrifice worth 50,000 pieces of silver. But they made this sacrifice willingly in order to better serve and honor God.

We can take a lesson from Isaac Newton's Third Law of Motion, which says that for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction. As the church was moving forward and began to storm the gates of hell, the devil didn't sit back and take his loss. Rather, the gates of hell fought back. Today we'll see how the advance of the gospel in Ephesus produced a counter revolution. With every move the city took toward God, the devil did everything in his power to return it to darkness.

Ephesus was a significant city and a commercial hub. It wasn't the largest city in the region, but it was known for its idol worship and immorality. Its prestige also came because of its large theater that sat over 20,000 people—about the size of the United Center—the ruins of which can still be seen today. But what Ephesus was most famous for was the temple of the goddess Artemis, also known as Diana. This huge temple was one of the Seven Ancient Wonders of the World. It dwarfed the better-known temple called the Parthenon in Athens, Greece, being almost seven times larger. People loved to visit the temple, worshiping Artemis through great debauchery, because she was known to be the goddess of fertility, love and sensuality. The male and female prostitutes that were part of the temple worship numbered in the thousands. The people believed their immoral activities actually honored the goddess Artemis. Then before they would return home, they would purchase a little statue of Artemis so their worship could be continued.

The reason this temple was located in Ephesus was because at some point in the past, a rock—probably a meteor—fell near the city and the people took this as a sign from Artemis demonstrating her power, especially over fertility and indicating that she deserved their worship. This worship continued undisturbed until Christianity began to make inroads into the region and the city. As we know, the impact of the ministry of Paul and his companions caused many people to turn from worshiping Artemis to worshiping the one true God and His Son, Jesus Christ. This created a problem that is the context for our story today. We'll start by thinking about what is taking place in Ephesus and why it matters, after which we'll look at two responses and two reasons why the incidents in Ephesus have huge implications for us today.

# The situation in Ephesus

Let's start reading in Acts 19:21:

<sup>21</sup> Now after these events Paul resolved in the Spirit to pass through Macedonia and Achaia and go to Jerusalem, saying, "After I have been there, I must also see Rome." <sup>22</sup> And having sent into Macedonia two of his helpers, Timothy and Erastus, he himself stayed in Asia for a while.

<sup>23</sup> About that time there arose no little disturbance concerning the Way. <sup>24</sup> For a man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of Artemis, brought no little business to the craftsmen. <sup>25</sup> These he gathered together, with the workmen in similar trades, and said, "Men, you know that from this business we have our wealth. <sup>26</sup> And you see and hear that not only in Ephesus but in almost all of Asia this Paul has persuaded and turned away a great many people, saying that gods made with hands are not gods. <sup>27</sup> And there is danger not only that this trade of ours may come into disrepute but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis may be counted as nothing, and that she may even be deposed from her magnificence, she whom all Asia and the world worship."

<sup>28</sup> When they heard this they were enraged and were crying out, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!" <sup>29</sup> So the city was filled with the confusion, and they rushed together into the theater, dragging with them Gaius and Aristarchus, Macedonians who were Paul's companions in travel. <sup>30</sup> But when Paul wished to go in among the crowd, the disciples would not let him. <sup>31</sup> And even some of the Asiarchs, who were friends of his, sent to him and were urging him not to venture into the theater. <sup>32</sup> Now some cried out one thing, some another, for the assembly was in confusion, and most of them did not know why they had come together. <sup>33</sup> Some of the crowd prompted Alexander, whom the Jews had put forward. And Alexander, motioning with his hand, wanted to make a defense to the crowd. <sup>34</sup> But when they recognized that he was a Jew, for about two hours they all cried out with one voice, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!"

<sup>35</sup> And when the town clerk had quieted the crowd, he said, "Men of Ephesus, who is there who does not know that the city of the Ephesians is temple keeper of the great Artemis, and of the sacred stone that fell from the sky? <sup>36</sup> Seeing then that these things cannot be denied, you ought to be quiet and do nothing rash. <sup>37</sup> For you have brought these men here who are neither sacrilegious nor blasphemers of our goddess. <sup>38</sup> If therefore Demetrius and the craftsmen with him have a complaint against anyone, the courts are open, and there are proconsuls. Let them bring charges against one another. <sup>39</sup> But if you seek anything further, it shall be settled in the regular assembly. <sup>40</sup> For we really are in danger of being charged with rioting today, since there is no cause that we can give to justify this commotion." <sup>41</sup> And when he had said these things, he dismissed the assembly.

## The riot that broke out

Luke first shares with us a description of the riot that broke out in the streets, which he calls "no little disturbance." There is a great commotion and the crowds gradually make their way to the theater.

## The reason for the riot

The riot was initiated by a group of tradesmen—silversmiths—led by a man named Demetrius. They had an issue with the Christians, who were also called the people of the Way. We're not sure why they were called this. It might have been derogatory, or it could have been something the believers called themselves based on John 14:6, where Jesus said, "*I am the way, and the truth, and the life.*"

Luke spells it out this way to make clear that the issue wasn't a personal one. These people were opposed to Christianity itself. Why were they so mad at Christians? It wasn't because of their political views or their moral stance. Rather, we're told the reason why they were upset is that Paul was teaching people that gods made with human hands were not gods at all. Instead, he taught them that they were only to worship Jehovah, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and His Son, the Messiah, the Savior of the world, Jesus Christ. He also taught that people can have a real relationship with the invisible God and any god who is not the God of the universe is not a god at all.

Why would the silversmiths especially have such an issue with this? Because it hit their bottom line. These guys made a living off people buying silver shrines, relics and statues of the goddess Artemis. But so many people were coming to know Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior that their market share was getting smaller and smaller.

The trade union got together to figure out what they could do, because as Jehovah, the God of the Way got bigger, Artemis and her following was getting smaller—and so were their profits. They incited a mob, which soon became irrational as most mobs do. In the confusion, two of Paul's traveling companions were grabbed and dragged into that 20,000-seat theater, which resulted in an even larger commotion which concerned the Jews.

We know there were Jews in Ephesus, because there was a synagogue there. One of the reasons the Jews in the first century were concerned is that they did not want to be associated with the Christians. They knew Jesus was a Jew and they knew Jews were the first Christians. That's why they gave Alexander the job of clarifying that the Jews were not responsible for this situation. But as soon as he started to speak, the crowd realized he was a Jew and would not let him speak. For two hours a chant broke out, "Great is Artemis! Great is Artemis!" As the chaos increased, an unnamed clerk, who somehow represented the government, was able to calm the crowd by reminding them of two things.

- First, he pointed out that they wouldn't lose their position as the city of Artemis. As great as the gospel is, nowhere is it promised that the whole world would be saved. Wisely he told them, "No matter how powerful the Christian message is, there will always be a need for a temple for Artemis. There will always be a market for idols."
- Second, he reminded them that the Christians had not said or done anything against Artemis in particular. It was their opinion that gods made with human hands were not gods at all, but there was nothing in Roman law that prohibited that belief. Actually, the only thing that would get the Christians in trouble with the Romans in the days to come was their unwillingness to say Caesar was their god. The Romans were less concerned about the Macedonian's Greek gods.

The clerk was warning the crowd to be careful. If they needed to, they could take their issue to the courts.

## The responses to the riot

The first response of the crowd to the apostles was rage. They were ready to kill Paul's two companions and if Paul had entered the theater, they would have probably killed him too. Their response also included great confusion. It was mob rule.

We also need to consider the response of the Christians. For almost half a chapter, no Christian has spoken, which is unique in the book of Acts. This is a fully secular event, although we get a few glimpses of the Christians' response. Paul wants to address the crowd himself. Other Christians disagree with him.

In summary, there was an angry crowd, there were people trying to calm the crowd, and there were varied responses from the Christians. That was the situation. We don't know exactly what took place afterward, but secular sources indicate that, contrary to the clerk's argument, the worship of Artemis began to decrease and within 200 years it had stopped altogether. And, of course, now nothing remains but the ruins of the temple and theater.

On the other hand, the church in Ephesus grew stronger for another 500 years. In fact, one of the great church councils in the fourth and fifth centuries probably was held in Ephesus, in which the doctrines of the faith were discussed. The church Paul planted and the people to whom he wrote the book of Ephesians stood strong. In fact, many people visit the city today because they're aware of its Christian history. This is another example of the unstoppable work of the gospel.

Going back to our story, let's look at the counter revolution in Ephesus that was raised up against the gospel. In our day as well, if the church is doing its job of bringing people into a knowledge of Jesus Christ, there will be opposition. With every spiritual action comes an equal and opposite reaction. Be aware that the devil will not sit idly by and watch God's people building the Kingdom of God. He's going to push back. But notice that he doesn't push back through phantoms or ghosts. Rather, he uses people to oppose the spread of the gospel. In the case of the riot at Ephesus, he used Demetrius to rile up a group to stop Christianity. Satan did not want to lose his control over Ephesus.

There is a similar battle going on for our own cities today. There's a battle going on for the city of Sugar Grove. There's a battle going on for the city you live in. Sometimes the gospel makes inroads. Yesterday in my city of Hinckley, I had an opportunity to speak in front of hundreds of people on the occasion of the death of a young man in our community. I was able to push back the darkness in a time of great sadness by preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ to them. But when in faith we do what God calls us to do, the devil isn't going to say, "Well, I guess we lost Hinckley." Rather he sends forces in to stop the progress of the gospel. Our church has spent the past month dedicating ourselves to being "all in for Christ." Do you think the devil is going to let that go without any opposition? No, he'll throw everything hell has at us—and he'll do it through evil people.

I don't know what that's going to look like in your life, but I can't tell you how many times I've been sideswiped by the works of the devil after I've taken a step of faith for Christ or I've seen God work. We need to be ready. On the other hand, we need to not make enemies of the people the devil uses against us.

Paul told the Ephesian Christians in Ephesians 6:12, "*For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood.*" I wonder if he had Demetrius in mind when he wrote that. Here was a man who wanted to incite a city against him. However, Paul understood that the battle was against "*the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the*

*heavenly places.*” Just as we only do great things for God when we’re filled with His Spirit, so the devil does evil things through people who are filled with his spirit. We are dealing with individuals who have allowed themselves to be filled with the power of hell itself. Thus, Paul reminds us it’s not the people we’re fighting, but the power behind them. Rather, we need to love them, while not being drawn into their thoughts and ways.

What can we learn from a story that isn’t really much about Christians, other than mentioning them being dragged into the theater and Paul and his companions discussing what to do? I have two applications I want to spend the rest of our time on.

## **The sin of idolatry**

It makes total sense that the people in Ephesus would struggle with idolatry. In fact, it makes total sense that all unbelievers struggle with idolatry. Notice in Acts 19:26 the reason the riot broke out in Ephesus. Demetrius said, *“And you see and hear that not only in Ephesus but in almost all of Asia this Paul has persuaded and turned away a great many people, saying that gods made with hands are not gods.”*

The central issue wasn’t a business issue—that was a symptom of the problem. Rather, it was an idolatry issue. They believed the statues they made were actually gods. The Christians argued that the God they worshiped was the only true God and that He was without equal. As we speak this truth today to a world filled with idolatry, we too run into the risk of buying into what they’re selling rather than their buying into what we’re selling. The world continually calls us to find idols. Artemis was only one among hundreds of gods the people believed in and worshiped in that day; today there are hundreds of idols available to us as well. You might say, “Tim, I don’t have idols in my house. There aren’t any statues anywhere. There’s no golden calf like the one the children of Israel created during the Exodus. I don’t bow down to anything. As a follower of Christ, I have no idolatry in my heart.” But I must tell you that you’ve bought into a lie. I’m going to say some things that may cause you to bristle, but I pray that I can show you through my own life that we all have idols.

The reformer John Calvin called the human heart “a factory perpetually making idols.” So what exactly is idolatry? If it’s not just the worship of statues, what is it? John Piper, a well-known pastor in Minnesota, put it this way: “An idol is the thing that is loved or the person loved more than God.” It’s the thing or person that is desired and treasured and enjoyed more than God. Idolatry is actually a common theme throughout Scripture:

- From the Garden of Eden to the Garden of Gethsemane, we are an idolatrous people. Adam and Eve were given everything they needed, but they turned from God to worship something created because of the serpent’s persuasion.
- We read about how God loved and cared for the nation of Israel. He caused Pharaoh to release them and then fed them with manna, but it wasn’t long before they built an idol to replace Him.
- There were idols in the life of Samson and in the lives of the patriarchs and kings.
- The prophets continually warned the people to turn from their idols.
- Joshua specifically called the people to make a choice about who they were going to serve. Either they could serve the world’s idols, or they could serve the one true God.

That question, “Who will you serve?” is the question we must also answer today, for there are many idols tempting us in our world today. In Romans 1 Paul specifically says people have turned from the Creator to worship created things.

What idols were being worshiped by the silversmiths in Ephesus? The easy one to identify, of course, was Artemis. But, also, their businesses had become idols. They were going to protect their businesses at all costs. They wanted their wealth to remain. And they wanted to protect the greatness of their city, so that, too, was an idol.

In our day, some of our idols don’t look the same as those. I want to give you four descriptions of idols that will help us identify our modern-day idols.

### **Idols are usually good things that we make into gods.**

Rarely do our idols become idols overnight. How do we enter into idolatrous practices? We begin by devaluing the God of the universe in our lives. Maybe you haven’t bowed the knee to something else yet, but you’ve made God smaller and smaller in your life. We know from experience that every heart desires to worship something. When that desire is directed away from God, something else will fill it.

Maybe in 2018 your relationship with God began to diminish, but you need to realize you didn't live in a vacuum—other things began to fill it. Other priorities took over in your life. The people in Ephesus had given themselves to Artemis, to their money and to their pride in their city.

John Piper offers some thoughts on what our idols might be. It could be a girlfriend or boyfriend. It could be good grades. It could be a retirement plan. It could be your kids. It could be the approval of other people. It could be your success in business or even in your church. It could be sexual stimulation. It could be possessions. It could be hobbies. It could be a musical group or a sports team you're following. It could be your immaculate yard or a dress you just put on. It could be almost anything. Then he cites John Calvin, who says, "The mind and heart of man are very good at creating idols." How do you know if you have an idol?

### **Idols engage our deepest emotions.**

Consider the spectrum of emotions that were exhibited by the Ephesians. Twice we read that they cried out, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!" For two hours they chanted this over and over. Then we're told that when Artemis was challenged, they responded with rage. They dragged two men to a place where they intended to do them harm, offended that these men would dare to hinder the worship of their goddess. Their emotions regarding their idol spanned from ecstasy to rage.

You might be thinking, "I don't have any kind of idol like that." Now I'm going to hit really close to home and will expect to receive some emails tomorrow. Tonight we will watch a sports team and some of you—including your pastor—have been thinking about, dreaming about, wishing, hoping and listening to other people talk about a game that will take place. Thousands of people will watch it live in a temple that cost nearly a billion dollars. It will be a raucous crowd that will focus its attention on the event. And you will hear the cries, "Great are the Bears! Great are the Bears! Great are the Bears!" In America, we always outdo the Ephesians. In this case it will last three hours instead of two.

When the Bears score, all across our city there will be great enthusiasm. It won't be just unbelievers who have bought into the idol of professional football. There will also be Christians—people who have never given an enthusiastic cheer about the name of Jesus Christ—but when a man scores a meaningless touchdown in a meaningless game, we will celebrate enthusiastically the greatness of the Bears.

Here's the problem. We say we're followers of the one true God. Do you want to know if you have an idol? What brings you the greatest happiness? The women here might be thinking the men are stupid to get so excited about dumb football, but I've seen how you watch your cooking shows. I've seen you watch your Fixer Upper shows. Some of you would rather go to the Magnolia House in Waco, Texas, than go into the presence of almighty God.

I want you to know I'm not immune to this. When things don't turn out as we want, we become angry. If the Bears lose tonight, the city of Chicago will be in a deep depression. We'll turn on our radios and hear the most ungodly things about the coaches and the teams we were celebrating 20 minutes earlier. Our adoration will turn to hatred.

Are football or Magnolia House bad? No. God says they're good gifts from Him. But we make them bad when we elevate them to a place higher than Him. We might say the Bears—or that thing or that person—are not higher than God. But be honest—what engages your deepest emotion? Does God inspire your greatest celebration? Does your spiritual walk with Him bring you the greatest joy? Is God in your thoughts as you go through your life—or is it that thing or that person or that desire? Does that thing or person or desire cause you either anger or ecstasy? You can say whatever you want about your idol, but your emotions reveal what is actually most important to you.

I know this is a hard conversation, so let me help you by sharing something with you. As a father, it's really easy to make your children into idols. Your children are gifts from God, as the Bible says numerous times. But especially in our world of social media, it's easy to make them idols. We want our kids to do things we've never done before. But I want to get real with you, because I hope my honesty will help you see how subtle and insidious our idolatry can become. My idol started growing back in June. I'll never forget the day, as it was one of the prouder days of my time as a father. The varsity basketball coach came to my son Noah, who was a freshman at the time, and said, "We love how you're playing, Noah." He told me, "Noah is a great teammate and a great leader on the team. He's a great athlete. What I'd like to do is send him up to the varsity level." How many dads would consider that news as being heaven on earth? The coach continued, "I also want him to play sophomore basketball as well. So while most guys play one game each night, Noah will play two." I'm thinking, "How awesome this is going to be." The season started and I was loving it. When people asked how things were going in my life, I'd lead with, "Man, this is what Noah is doing. I'm a proud dad."

I should be proud because Noah is a great kid. All my kids are great kids, and your kids are great kids. We should talk about them like that. But I started to sense that the excitement was gradually getting the best of me. On Tuesday nights and Friday nights and anytime there was a game, I wanted to be there. Noah was going to play in a Christmas tournament, something like eight or nine games in a four-day period. Our Christmas vacation was going to consist of watching Noah play basketball. That is, until on his 16<sup>th</sup> birthday, Noah defended a man who was about to get a charge and he got knocked over. In the process of falling, he broke his wrist. We knew it right away. I need to interject here that Noah didn't break his wrist because his dad had an idol, but this is how I came to realize it had become an idol in my life. I was devastated. I think I was more devastated than he was. He said, "It's okay, Dad. It's okay." Noah turned 16, he broke his arm and he still hasn't gotten his driver's license because his arm is in a sling—poor guy. What I want you to know is that I learned in those next few days—when I couldn't concentrate on anything, when I couldn't find joy, when I couldn't find peace, when I got angry with God—that high school Class A basketball was more important to me than I ever thought.

What idols do you have in your life, that you have allowed, little by little, to get bigger and bigger—and you don't even know it? Be careful. Idols engage our deepest emotions.

### **Idols are passionately protected.**

The rioting group in Ephesus was ready to do everything in their power to protect their idol. Even if it meant hurting someone else, they were ready to protect what they worshiped. "You mess with Artemis, we're coming after you. We'll drag you in here, beat you up and maybe even kill you. We're dealing with this threat to our goddess."

Some of us right now are passionately protecting something. I know this because I was there with my own idols. I thought, "Really, is this an idol? Hey, idol, stand behind me; that big bald guy isn't going to get to you. No, it's just a football game. It's just TV. It's just a dress. It's just a car. It's just a house. It's just a way of life. No, idol, you stay back there. I'll protect you. Don't let God or that big ugly bald guy get in your way. You're okay. What do you need? Do you need a little money? Here's some money. Do you need more of my time? I'll serve you. My schedule's too busy? Okay, idol, I'll free up my schedule. If that means I've got to miss church once in a while, that's okay—I'll do that."

We sacrifice and sacrifice and sacrifice. Right now some of you are not heeding the Word of God, but instead you're protecting your idol. You'll do it because that idol is more important than life itself.

### **Idols demand way more than they deliver.**

Nothing is said about what Artemis gives the Ephesians. Nothing. They're fighting for this goddess. All that happened was a rock fell from the sky, they said. Nothing changed them. Nothing impacted their lives, but they were willing to protect it.

We make idols out of things that promise us they'll deliver, but they never do. How many of us went into Christmas this year saying, "It's going to be the best Christmas ever; I'm going to get such and such a gift"? Then you open it, "Yes, I got what I wanted!" But by January, you're not using it. It's lost its luster.

Some of us are pursuing our idols, thinking at some point they will deliver—but they never do. That relationship never delivers. Some of you have made an idol of your spouse and you're in perpetual sadness because your idol-spouse has never been able to do what only God can do. Some of you are idolizing your kids. One of these days those idols are going to get up and walk away, then you're going to be devastated because you didn't walk with the Lord—you walked with your kids and they moved on with their lives without you. We refer to this with the nice words "empty nest," but there's a depression many empty nesters have. When you build your kids into being something they're not, remember, kids come and go, but your relationship with Jesus remains steadfast.

You might be thinking, "Tim, this sounds legalistic." Brothers and sisters, we are a perpetual factory of idols. We have to be careful because idols steal our joy. God wants us to have joy.

## **The strategy of engagement**

One final truth I want you to see in this story is that there is a strategy for engaging the world. How should we engage a world that's hostile toward us?

## **Mob rule is antithetical to our calling—don't follow the world.**

The way things got done in Ephesus is they made a lot of noise, got people screaming about stuff and when they worked them up into a fever pitch, things would get accomplished. Ironically, that seems to be the way things get done here in America today. Let's get people together, let's all start yelling and screaming about a problem, let's demonize the person we think is responsible for the problem and let's hate everyone who agrees with that person. If we do this, we have mob rule.

I'm not saying we can't protest or speak up in the culture, but what does the Bible say? Regarding our approach to mob rule, the Bible says mobs are inherently sinful because they're filled with sinful anger. They're irrational. They have sinful tactics and demeaning speech.

By contrast, our calling as believers is to believe the best and hope the best. We're to show love and speak in love. We're to forgive and love our enemies, seeking to live at peace with all men. That doesn't work in a mob, so be careful. There is no issue in Washington, D.C. that is worth losing your Christian testimony over.

Don't follow the ways of the world. Mob rule is on our radios, on our televisions, in our legislatures and in our judicial systems, including the executive branch. We as Christians need to model to the world what it means to be as gentle as doves.

## **Approaches to the world will vary greatly—be flexible.**

Acts 19:30-31 shows us a little glimpse into what was going on outside the theater where Paul and his companions were considering what they should do. They knew Gaius and Aristarchus had been dragged into the theater and they had to do something. Paul told them he wanted to go in there to talk to the people. He wanted to deal with the situation head on. But his disciples disagreed. "No, Paul. We need to step back. This is not a good place for us to preach the gospel."

We live in a time when there are also varying views within the church regarding how we should engage the world. Somewhere within the walls of the church we need to come to a consensus. As we're flexible with one another, we can then in unity respond together. There are varying ways the church can deal with the world and we need to be open to other views. But when it's time to act, we need to act in solidarity and not be fractured. The gates of hell will always defeat a fractured church, but when we unite under the banner of Christ in love and unity with one another, nothing will be able to stop us—not even the gates of hell.

## **The antidote for all idolatry is the gospel—stay focused.**

There are idols all around us that seek to tempt us away from God and to become more and more devoted to them. Paul told the church at Corinth to flee from idols. John told the church in 1 John 5:21, "*Keep yourselves from idols.*"

How do we do this? We need to see the gospel of Jesus Christ as being beautiful and great. The crowd said, "Great is Artemis!" The only way you'll stop calling the things of this world "great" is when you can say, "The Bears are good, but God is great." Let's keep going. "Our dreams and our desires are good, but God is great. Our kids are good, but God is great. Sex is good, but God is great. Our pursuits are good, but God is great." If we worship like that, the idols will begin to be stripped out of our lives.

Use discernment about what I've said today. I'm not telling you not to root for the Bears—but root greater for God. Live greater for God and you won't fall into the trap the Ephesians did. Sadly, the reason they were trapped is because they were blind, dead and held captive by the devil. We have life in the One Whom God sent, Jesus Christ. There is no one equal to the great I Am.