

About that time there arose a great disturbance about the Way.  
Acts 19.23.

Those of you who managed to stay awake last Sunday might be thinking to yourselves, 'Hold on! That's the same text Brian used last Sunday. Is he trying to work the same sermon on to us?' There's a lovely story of a preacher in the Australian outback who preached the same sermon two Sundays running. He explained to his congregation, 'I'm preaching it again, because I can see no improvement among you from last week!'

We saw last week how Christ was violently resisted in Ephesus, because he was a threat to the vested interests of the worshippers of Diana. As Demetrius the silversmith admitted, the more people converted to Christ, the less income the silver-smith makers of Diana-bling would make. We noted the general principle that most people don't believe in Christ not because they *can't*, but because they *won't*. It's a choice.

But I want to revisit Acts 19 because twice in this chapter Christianity is called 'The Way'. In fact, as I have said many times before, the word 'christianity' never occurs in the Bible. It is only ever called 'The Way', and I for one am glad of that, because the word 'Christianity' sounds too much like an abstraction, some 'ism' or 'ology', whereas 'The Way' sounds like a whole way of life. Let's examine it now.

Now as you all know, there are two ways of doing anything - my way, and the wrong way! If you drive recklessly, disregarding the Highway Code, you will crash. The right way isn't optional; do it the wrong way, and you'll crash. (By the way, it is part of the Christian's duty to love thy neighbour

to drive carefully. It is a loving act). If you take no exercise, smoke, eat garbage, drink too much, you will wreck your body. Again, the right way isn't optional. It's because people live the wrong way that we have so much obesity.

Abuse your relationships, live selfishly and you'll lose your friends and wreck your marriages. Again, the right way isn't optional. The wrong way doesn't work. I'm talking here about individuals, but as a nation our society long ago abandoned God and rejected the Bible. The 10 Commandments may be 3000 years old, but they have never been bettered. Since rejecting them as old-fashioned, our society today, though never so rich, is having a massive nervous breakdown. We're doing things the wrong way, and we're paying for it. If the bricks are no good, the house will be no good. If personal relationships are weak, society will be weak. I don't know whether our politicians are blind, or if this is their plan, but their constant undermining of family life has led to broken homes, with all the consequent social breakdown, criminality, vandalism, drugs epidemic. Why do we have knife-crime? Because we have gangs. Why do we have gangs? Because young lads have no fathers and no families to belong to. So they join gangs and look up to their leader. When the lads become Junior Soldiers at the AFC they feel immense pride when they finally belong to something. Their Regiment is now their family and their corporal their father. We all need families.

If social policy has become confused by abandoning the Bible, so has the whole human rights ideology. Human Rights were designed after WW2 to protect vulnerable individuals like

Jews, homosexuals, the disabled, from a tyrannical, over-mighty State. They were not designed to make lawyers rich by ensuring criminals have a cushy number in jail and terrorists, who want to blow us up, can stay here at our expense. This is the wrong way. It doesn't work. Who decides whether the criminal's rights outweigh the victim's rights? And how? It's all incoherent.

There's a right way of doing things, and there's a wrong way, and God's way in the Bible is the right way. We need to regain our confidence in the rightness of God's Word. And God's Word speaks about the primacy of love, of forgiveness, kindness, respect. This is the only way we can make daily life work. Aggression, selfishness, keeping grudges going, greed, telling lies, spin - this way does not work.

God's way is a whole way of life. It isn't just singing a few hymns on a Sunday, and then forgetting it on a Monday. Our secular state graciously allows us to be Christians in private, but warns us we must shut up about our faith in public. But I can as well stop being a Christian in the office as I can stop being a ginger-nut (sorry, 'strawberry-blond) in the office! It's your whole way of life. Being a Christian affects the whole way you look at things. It's your entire set of values and priorities. You can't shut that all down when you come to politics, business, work, the golf-course.

It is your daily walk with God. And that is the main reason I love this phrase, 'The Way'. It's a journey, a daily walk. Sometimes it's a sunny day, sometimes it rains. But we walk with Christ, the same risen, living Lord who walked with the two to Emmaus that first Easter Day.

It always saddens me when I see people just drifting through life with no sense of purpose, bored and tired. Life isn't any easier when you're a Christian. It isn't all play-time, but at least we know there is some purpose to it. The fact that Jesus suffered pain on the Cross of Calvary tells me that God himself knows pain. Christ's suffering was not wasted. God used it to work the salvation of this sinful and fallen world. My suffering, then, is not futile. God is on the throne, and there is a purpose to all this. We're going somewhere, and we're not going alone. Christ is walking with you.

'Christianity', as I say, sounds like an 'ism', a philosophy. But 'The Way' is a whole way of life. It's a journey with a purpose, a journey through some rocky place, but a journey towards God, a daily walk taking us nearer to heaven.

And here we come to the heart of it all. What we're doing each Sunday in church is not more moralising and advice and philosophy. It's about a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. It's about you knowing him in your daily life; you knowing him as your personal Saviour who has died to save you from your sinful ways, from your guilt, from hell. You can know Jesus because he's still alive. You can know him by talking to him in prayer. You can know him by reading his words in the Bible. And in the Bible, he once said, '*I am the Way, the Truth, and Life*'. He never said he was *A Way*; he said he was *The Way*, the *only Way* back to God, the *Way* to proper living. Christianity isn't called in *Acts A Way*. It is *The Way*. There's a right way and a wrong way. And I know which is Christ's Way. Start walking with him today.