

The Awakening at Ephesus

Message 02 of 02 in the series: "Awakening"

A. The spiritual awakening in Ephesus was the work of the Holy Spirit.

"...Paul traveled through the interior regions until he reached Ephesus, on the coast, where he found several believers. 'Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?' he asked them. 'No,' they replied, 'we haven't even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.' 'Then what baptism did you experience?' he asked. And they replied, 'The baptism of John.' Paul said, 'John's baptism called for repentance from sin. But John himself told the people to believe in the one who would come later, meaning Jesus.' As soon as they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then when Paul laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in other tongues and prophesied. There were about twelve men in all. Then Paul went to the synagogue and preached boldly for the next three months, arguing persuasively about the Kingdom of God. But some became stubborn, rejecting his message and publicly speaking against the Way. So Paul left the synagogue and took the believers with him. Then he held daily discussions at the lecture hall of Tyrannus. This went on for the next two years, so that people throughout the province of Asia—both Jews and Greeks—heard the word of the Lord. God gave Paul the power to perform unusual miracles. When handkerchiefs or aprons that had merely touched his skin were placed on sick people, they were healed of their diseases, and evil spirits were expelled." Acts 19:1-12 (NLT)

- The Holy Spirit convicts the world of sin. "...when he comes, he will convict the world of its sin, and of God's righteousness, and of the coming judgment." John 16:8 (NLT)
- The Holy Spirit guides us into all truth so we can boldly teach God's Word. "When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth." John 16:13a (NLT)
- The Holy Spirit empowers us for ministry. "...God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him." Philippians 2:13 (NLT)

Life Application: If we want to see a spiritual awakening, we can pray that the Holy Spirit will empower believers. "I pray that from his glorious, unlimited resources he will empower you with inner strength through his Spirit." Ephesians 3:16 (NLT)

B. The spiritual awakening in Ephesus involved a spiritual battle.

"A group of Jews was traveling from town to town casting out evil spirits. They tried to use the name of the Lord Jesus in their incantation, saying, 'I command you in the name of Jesus, whom Paul preaches, to come out!' Seven sons of Sceva, a leading priest, were doing this. But one time when they tried it, the evil spirit replied, 'I know Jesus, and I know Paul, but who are you?' Then the man with the evil spirit leaped on them, overpowered them, and attacked them with such violence that they fled from the house, naked and battered. The story of what happened spread quickly all through Ephesus, to Jews and Greeks alike."

Acts 19:13-17a(NLT)

Life Application: If we want to see a spiritual awakening, we can take spiritual warfare seriously and prepare for battle. "...Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on all of God's armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies of the devil. For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places. Therefore, put on every piece of God's armor so you will be able to resist the enemy in the time of evil. Then after the battle you will still be standing firm. Stand your ground, putting on the belt of truth and the body armor of God's righteousness. For shoes, put on the peace that comes from the Good News so that you will be fully prepared. In addition to all of these, hold up the shield of faith to stop the fiery arrows of the devil. Put on salvation as your helmet, and take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." Ephesians 6:10-17 (NLT)

Life Application: If we want to see a spiritual awakening, we need to pray for protection from the evil one. "I'm not asking you to take them out of the world, but to keep them safe from the evil one... Just as you sent me into the world, I am sending them into the world... I am praying not only for these disciples but also for all who will ever believe in me through their message." John 17:15, 18, & 20 (NLT)

C. The spiritual awakening in Ephesus caused many people to repent.

"A solemn fear descended on the city, and the name of the Lord Jesus was greatly honored. Many who became believers confessed their sinful practices. A number of them who had been practicing sorcery brought their incantation books and burned them at a public bonfire. The value of the books was several million dollars. So the message about the Lord spread widely and had a powerful effect."

Acts 19:17b -20 (NLT)

Life Application: If we want to see a spiritual awakening, we can speaK the truth in love. “I am not sorry that I sent that severe letter to you, though I was sorry at first, for I know it was painful to you for a little while. Now I am glad I sent it, not because it hurt you, but because the pain caused you to repent and change your ways. It was the kind of sorrow God wants his people to have, so you were not harmed by us in any way. For the kind of sorrow God wants us to experience leads us away from sin and results in salvation. There’s no regret for that kind of sorrow. But worldly sorrow, which lacks repentance, results in spiritual death.” 2 Corinthians 7:8-10 (NLT)

D. The spiritual awakening in Ephesus caused a riot.

“About that time, serious trouble developed in Ephesus concerning the Way. It began with Demetrius, a silversmith who had a large business manufacturing silver shrines of the Greek goddess Artemis. He kept many craftsmen busy. He called them together, along with others employed in similar trades, and addressed them as follows: ‘Gentlemen, you know that our wealth comes from this business. But as you have seen and heard, this man Paul has persuaded many people that handmade gods aren’t really gods at all. And he’s done this not only here in Ephesus but throughout the entire province! Of course, I’m not just talking about the loss of public respect for our business. I’m also concerned that the temple of the great goddess Artemis will lose its influence and that Artemis—this magnificent goddess worshiped throughout the province of Asia and all around the world—will be robbed of her great prestige!’ At this their anger boiled, and they began shouting, ‘Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!’ Soon the whole city was filled with confusion. Everyone rushed to the amphitheater, dragging along Gaius and Aristarchus, who were Paul’s traveling companions from Macedonia. Paul wanted to go in, too, but the believers wouldn’t let him. Some of the officials of the province, friends of Paul, also sent a message to him, begging him not to risk his life by entering the amphitheater. Inside, the people were all shouting, some one thing and some another. Everything was in confusion. In fact, most of them didn’t even know why they were there.”

Acts 19:23-32 (NLT)

Life Application: If we want to see a spiritual awakening, we can expect persecution for proclaiming the Good News. “If the world hates you, remember that it hated me first. The world would love you as one of its own if you belonged to it, but you are no longer part of the world. I chose you to come out of the world, so it hates you. Do you remember what I told you? ‘A slave is not greater than the master.’ Since they persecuted me, naturally they will persecute you. And if they had listened to me, they would listen to you.”

John 15:18-20 (NLT)

Life Application: If we want to see a spiritual awakening, we can pray that God will help us proclaim the Good News with courage. “And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord’s people. Pray also for me, that whenever I speak, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel...” Ephesians 6:18-19 (NIV)

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Connect Group Discussion Questions

Read Acts 19 and then discuss the following questions:

1. How would you have felt if you had lived in Ephesus during the time Paul was there?
2. Discuss the following ways the Holy Spirit helps us:
 - The Holy Spirit convicts the world of sin. (John 16:8)
 - The Holy Spirit guides us into all truth so we can boldly teach God’s Word. (John 16:13)
 - The Holy Spirit empowers us for ministry. (Philippians 2:13)
3. Read Ephesians 6:10-18. How equipped do you feel in facing spiritual battles? What would help you get better equipped?
4. Discuss the following things we can do if we want to see a spiritual awakening:
 - We can pray that the Holy Spirit will empower believers. (Ephesians 3:16)
 - We can pray that God will help us proclaim the Good News with courage. (Ephesians 6:18-19)
 - We can expect persecution. (John 15:18-20)
 - We can speak the truth in love. (Ephesians 4:15, 2 Corinthians 7:8-10)
 - We need to pray for protection from the evil one. (John 17:15-20)

With these statements in mind, are you prepared for a spiritual awakening in the River Region? Why? Why not?