

ACTS 19

EASY? NOPE. WORTH IT? YES!

THE STRUGGLE FOR SPIRITUAL BREAKTHROUGH

MISSION EPHESUS

- ▶ A.D. 53: Paul arrived in Ephesus and made the synagogue the platform for his ministry
- ▶ After 3 months of minimal effectiveness, Paul moved to the lecture hall of Tyrannus where he held daily discussions
- ▶ During this time, Paul:
 - ▶ sent Timothy to Macedonia
 - ▶ wrote to the church in Corinth
 - ▶ received a delegation from Corinth
 - ▶ wrote *1 Corinthians*
 - ▶ followed-up with a trip to Corinth
 - ▶ wrote a third letter to Corinth and sent it with Titus who stayed to address problems
- ▶ A.D. 53-55: through Paul's efforts, the entire province of Asia heard the gospel
- ▶ Churches established, including: Colossae, Laodicea, Hierapolis, Philadelphia, Sardis, Smyrna, Thyatira, and Pergamum



THE BATTLE FOR DOMINANCE

For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

EPHESIANS 6.12

- ▶ rulers (KJV: *principalities*) - first place, eminence; a prince, of spiritual existence
- ▶ authorities (KJV: *powers*) - liberty; dominion, jurisdiction; full power
- ▶ powers (KJV: *rulers*) - monarch of the world; a power paramount
- ▶ spiritual forces (KJV: *spiritual wickedness*) - evil spirits; superior in process to the natural course of things
- ▶ At Ephesus, Paul recognized specific spiritual dynamics in operation—
 - ▶ There are spiritual principalities, who dominate institutions and geographical areas.
 - ▶ Therefore, Ephesus was the key to impacting the entire province of Asia.
 - ▶ Spiritual forces determine the mindsets and behavior of people.
 - ▶ Therefore, whoever is most powerful in the spiritual realm, will dominate the physical realm.



- ▶ The heart of Ephesus' identity was the Temple of Artemis, one of the Seven Wonders of the World.
- ▶ The cult of Artemis attracted thousands of worshippers from far-off lands. They would all gather at the site and worship her.



The wealth and splendor of temple and city were taken as evidence of Artemis Ephesia’s power, and were the basis for her local and international prestige: despite the successive traumas of Temple destruction, each rebuilding – a gift and honor to the goddess – brought further prosperity. Large numbers of people came to Ephesus in March and in the beginning of May to attend the main Artemis Procession.

The Ephesian Artemisia festival was increasingly promoted as a key element in the pan-Hellenic festival circuit. It was part of a definitively Greek political and cultural identity, essential to the economic life of the region.”



Ephesus' strategic position made her the "Treasure House of Asia" and the mother of materialism and ambition. She was the site for the temple of Artemis, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world.

Ephesus became a collecting place for superstition and the dark arts—a cesspool of the occult. . . . the waterhole for every kind of magician, witch, clairvoyant, and criminal. Con artists, murderers, and perverts all found the climate of Ephesus unusually agreeable. That city was the Dark Castle of Asia Minor.

-R. Kent Hughes



Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great!

She has become a dwelling for demons

and a haunt for every impure spirit,

a haunt for every unclean bird,

a haunt for every unclean and detestable animal.

For all the nations have drunk the maddening wine of her adulteries.

The kings of the earth committed adultery with her,

and the merchants of the earth grew rich from her excessive luxuries.”

REVELATION 18.2-3



As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath.

EPHESIANS 2.1-3



Therefore, my dear friends, flee from idolatry. I speak to sensible people; judge for yourselves what I say. Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all share the one loaf.

Consider the people of Israel: Do not those who eat the sacrifices participate in the altar? Do I mean then that food sacrificed to an idol is anything, or that an idol is anything? No, but the sacrifices of pagans are offered to demons, not to God, and I do not want you to be participants with demons. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons too; you cannot have a part in both the Lord's table and the table of demons. Are we trying to arouse the Lord's jealousy? Are we stronger than he?

1 CORINTHIANS 10.14-22

NO EASY WAY

You know how I lived the whole time I was with you, from the first day I came into the province of Asia. I served the Lord with great humility and with tears and in the midst of severe testing by the plots of my Jewish opponents. You know that I have not hesitated to preach anything that would be helpful to you but have taught you publicly and from house to house. Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears.”

ACTS 19.18-20, 31

- ▶ The Apostle Paul knew that spiritual victory was not gained through “business as usual” –
“we wrestle against principalities and powers . . .”
 - ▶ struggle (KJV: *wrestle*) - to struggle (as wrestlers) for superiority
- ▶ Paul’s intense effort to gain the spiritual “upper hand” –
 - ▶ Humility - self-support so that no one could accuse him of using the gospel for profit
 - ▶ Witness - house to house; every day between work for five hours in the lecture hall
 - ▶ Prayer - “with tears” was also the characterization of Jesus’ prayer life (cf. Hebrews 5.7) and the reason for supernatural healing and deliverances at Ephesus (cf. Mark 9.28-29)

- ▶ The priesthood that is the most powerful in the spiritual realm will have the greatest control over the mindsets and behavior of people. For centuries, the demonic powers behind the idolatrous priesthood and worship of Artemis had influenced the mindsets and lifestyles of people across a wide geographical area. When Paul came to Ephesus, he went to war against the principality and the spiritual forces controlling Ephesus and therefore, Asia. He would not settle for a spiritual detente with the powers of darkness.
- ▶ When Paul gained the upper hand or greater dominance in the spiritual realm, it was manifested in the physical realm—
 - ▶ extraordinary healings through handkerchiefs taken from his body (19.11-12)
 - ▶ Jews and Greeks alike holding the name of Christ in high esteem (19.17)
 - ▶ people repenting and destroying everything related to their previous lifestyle (19.18-19)
 - ▶ all of the province of Asia hearing the gospel in two years (19.10, 20)
- ▶ Gaining dominance in the spiritual realm is the key to every revival. Through the supernatural weapons of prayer and witness, darkness is weakened, and people are transformed.



Dear friends, I wanted very much to write you about the salvation we all share. But I felt the need to write you about something else: I want to encourage you to fight hard for the faith that was given the holy people of God once and for all time.

But dear friends, use your most holy faith to build yourselves up, praying in the Holy Spirit. Keep yourselves in God's love as you wait for the Lord Jesus Christ with his mercy to give you life forever. Show mercy to some people who have doubts. Take others out of the fire, and save them. Show mercy mixed with fear to others, hating even their clothes which are dirty from sin. God is strong and can help you not to fall. He can bring you before his glory without any wrong in you and can give you great joy.

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