

Ephesians

Lesson Twenty The Challenge in Ephesus

1 & 2 Timothy

Introduction:

1. The record of the church at Ephesus began in Acts 18, when Paul visited the city briefly on his way to Jerusalem.
 2. Paul left Aquila and Priscilla in Ephesus where they soon heard (and corrected) the teaching of Apollos.
 3. When Paul returned to Ephesus (Acts 19), he found a congregation in existence and worked with them for over two years.
 4. Following a conflict with the worshippers of Diana (Artemis), Paul left to travel into Macedonia.
 5. On his way back to Jerusalem, he stopped on the island of Miletus and met with the elders of the church at Ephesus (Acts 20).
 6. After warning them of trouble that would come upon the church, he departed.
 7. About 5 years later, Paul – while imprisoned in Rome – wrote a letter back to this congregation, the Book of Ephesians.
 - a. Chapter 1 - Jesus the Christ: *The Head of the Church*
 - b. Chapter 2 - Grace and Faith: *The Salvation of the Church*
 - c. Chapter 3 - Inspiration: *The Revelation of the Church*
 - d. Chapter 4 - Truth: *The Unity of the Church*
 - e. Chapter 5 - Family: *The Purity of the Church*
 - f. Chapter 6 - Armor: *The Warfare of the Church*
 8. About 5 years after this epistle was written, Paul penned a letter to Timothy who was working with the church at Ephesus (1 Timothy; cf. 1:3).
 9. About 3 years later, he wrote another letter to Timothy – his final inspired epistle (2 Timothy; cf. 1:18; 4:12).
 10. In these two letters, more of the history of the church at Ephesus is revealed, giving a glimpse into the challenges being faced by that congregation.
- I. The Challenge in Doctrine
- A. Paul's purpose in sending Timothy to Ephesus was to stop the teaching of false doctrine (1:3-7).
 1. Fables are myths, fictitious tales that are not grounded in reality (cf. 4:7; 2 Tim. 4:4; Titus 1:14 [*Jewish fables*]; 2 Pet. 1:16).
 2. Endless genealogies refers to the Jewish practice of elaborate record-keeping concerning one's ancestry – no longer necessary since the Messiah had come.
 3. These things serve only to create questions, not to give answers or teach truth – thus, it is “vain jangling” or empty talking.
 - B. The Gospel of Christ is doctrine and it is law (1:8-11).
 - C. Thus, Timothy was to fight for the Truth (1:18-20).
 - D. He was to teach others to do the same (2 Timothy 2:1-4).
 - E. The inspired Word of God is all-sufficient; thus, it must be handled correctly and preached urgently (2 Timothy 3:14 – 4:5).

II. The Challenge in Discipline

- A. False teachers must be disciplined – resisted and corrected (1:20; cf. Matt. 18:17; Rom. 16:17-18; 1 Cor. 5; 2 John 1:7-9; etc.).
 - 1. Their words were not of faith (1:19).
 - 2. Their words destroyed the faith of others (1:19).
 - 3. Their words were blasphemy (1:20).
 - 4. Their words were vain (2 Tim. 2:16).
 - 5. Their words produced ungodliness (2 Tim. 2:16).
 - 6. Their words caused spiritual cancer (2 Tim. 2:17).
 - 7. Their words were error (2 Tim. 2:18).
 - 8. Their words opposed Truth (2 Tim. 4:14-15).
- B. The members of the church must practice discipline in their own lives and in the congregation (1 Timothy 3:15).
 - 1. In prayer (2:1-4)
 - 2. In maintaining proper roles in worship (2:8-15)
 - 3. In selecting and serving as elders (3:1-7)
 - 4. In selecting and serving as deacons (3:8-13)
 - 5. In rejecting error and obeying Truth (4:1 – 6:2)
- C. Without discipline, sin and error would take root and spread, causing the church to apostatize from the truth.

III. The Challenge in Devotion

- A. The Ephesians needed to remain devoted to Christ and His church.
- B. They must not be swayed by error (6:3-5).
- C. They must not be swayed by materialism (6:6-10, 17-19).
- D. They must remain committed to the fight (6:11-16).
- E. They must not be swayed by persecution (2 Tim. 1:11-13; 2:7-13).
- F. They must not be swayed by perilous times (2 Tim. 3:1-9).
- G. They must not be swayed by death (2 Tim. 4:6-8).

Conclusion:

- 1. Clearly, the church at Ephesus was facing grave threats.
- 2. In only ten years, error had begun to infiltrate the church – from the eldership to the worship services to the lives of the individual members.
- 3. Yet, these challenges could be met, resisted, and overcome.
- 4. Next, we will examine the record of the church at Ephesus in the book of Revelation.
- 5. What was their response to these challenges?