

Letter to the Church at Ephesus

Lesson #1, Gerald Cumby, Teacher

To understand the reason Paul wrote one of his most heart-felt letters to the church at Ephesus, one must understand the history and conditions of Ephesus at the time of writing.
Ephesus—Considered the greatest city in Asia.

A Roman writer stated that it was the "Lumen Asiae"..Light of Asia

Factors which made it the greatest city:

- ***Greatest Harbor in Asia***
  - ***Sturbo..ancient geographer, called Ephesus "the market of Asia" and "the gateway of Asia"***
  - ***It was the highway to Rome.***
  - ***Ignatius (another philosopher) stated Ephesus was the "Highway of the Martyrs"...Ephesus to Rome***
  - ***Wealthiest city because of the position***
    - ✓ ***Called the "Vanity Fair" of the Ancient World***
    - ✓ **Carried the title as "*The First and the Greatest Metropolis of Asia*"**
    - ✓ **The governor of the Roman province made his home in Ephesus.**
    - ✓ ***Favorite city for all of the Roman elites.***
- ***Certain Important Political Distinctions***
  - ***Called the "Free City"...because of their services to the Empire***
  - ***Own limits of self-governing***
  - ***Exempted from having Roman troops garrisoned there.***
  - ***Annual Games held in Ephesus (like our Super Bowl, World Olympics, World Cup in one place).***
  - **Work-out centers, bath houses,**
  - **Extraordinary library**
- ***Center of Worship of Artemis, "Diana of the Ephesians"***
  - ***Temple of Artemis...one of the seven wonders of the ancient world....425' long; 220' wide; held 24,000 people; center portion was roofed over with cypress wood.***
  - ***Famous temples to Roman Emperors***

(In Ephesus, Pagan religion was at its strongest)

- ***Notorious Center of Pagan Superstition***
- ***Amulets and Charms worshipped.***
  These man-made god-like things supposedly cured illnesses, brought children to the childless couples… (they had to believe or touch the charm to ensure success)

- ***People came from all over the world just to get to Ephesus.***
  - ***Very diverse population mix…Jews, Greeks, original citizens, those that came from Athens…other parts of the world***
  - ***The temple possessed the right to asylum (any criminal was safe there if he could reach it)…like our sanctuary cities.***
  - ***100s of priestesses in the temple (supposedly sacred prostitutes)***
  - ***Center of immorality.***
  - ***Anything goes…so long as it was bringing in the money. The battle cry was "it's the economy, stupid!" Have we heard that quote before??***

Yet Paul stayed in this city longer than he did any other…

- ✓ ***Timothy was there….***
- ✓ ***Priscilla and Aquilla were there.***
- ✓ ***Appollos was there….***
- ✓ ***Legend has it…that John took Mary to Ephesus…and that she was buried there!***

Why? Why in this God-forsaken city?

- ***Where sin is rampant…and evil is thriving…the preachers find that people are hungry for a change…***
- ***Sin is fun…for a while…….and then, it is devastating on minds and hearts (body, soul, and spirit)***

Where there is sin…there are people seeking something better…there are people that will listen to a better way…

And where people are, God wants the gospel preached and taught. He wants his children to be bold…and offer the sinners something better…something satisfying.

"The fields were white unto harvest."

Ephesus….Today

- ✓ ***Little left of Ephesus but ruins.***
- ✓ ***6 miles from the sea***
- ✓ ***Unapproachable by ship…silt from the Caester River***
- ✓ ***What was once the Gulf of Ephesus is now…. "A marsh of reeds."***

However, many covered treasures have been uncovered/discovered and restored to some extent at Ephesus, Turkey. Although you can't reach the old city by sea, there are tours available and Ephesus is one of the most toured ruins of biblical times in Turkey today.



The Church of Ephesus was planted by Paul on his second missionary journey about A.D. 53.

- *On his third missionary journey he was led by the Holy Spirit to remain for three years where he taught the Word and preached in the synagogue as well as in the Hall of Tyrannus.*
- *As a result of the fruit he bore, the harvest was that Ephesus became the center from which all of Asia heard the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

Paul's letter to the Ephesians is different compared to many of the other New Testament letters he wrote. Like Romans, Ephesians was not written so much to address problems in a particular church; more so, it was written to explain some of the great themes and doctrines of Christianity.

Positive Attributes of the Church at Ephesus…

The Risen Christ praises the church for:

1. ***Their Toil***
   "Hard work" …"labor". Even if physical toil is impossible, he/she can still toil in prayer.

2. ***Their Steadfast Endurance***
   It is the courageous gallantry that accepts suffering and hardship and turns them into grace and glory.
3. ***Their Testing of Evil Men and Proving Them to Be Liars.***

Evil men…what kind?

- ✓ *Wolves in sheep's clothing*
  Paul warned of the grievous wolves that would attack and invade the flock (the church at Ephesus), Acts 20:29
- ✓ *Jews who tried to undo Paul's teaching (saved by grace)*
- ✓ *Those who tried to turn liberty into a "license…to do as they please."*
- ✓ *Professional beggars who preyed on the charity of Christian congregations.*

The Lord was and is pleased with the believers in the Church who do not grow weary in well-doing.

Something happened between the time that Paul planted the church at Ephesus (53 A.D.) and when John wrote the Book of Revelation (around 68 A.D.). From Commendation to Condemnation: "THEY LEFT THEIR FIRST LOVE!"

Great cities, great men and women, and great countries fall when man tries to please self…where money is God…and God is mocked!

It has fallen…and any city or man will fall when God is not in the plans!

What is the Spirit saying to the Churches…In America today?
Stop playing church…Time is running out!

But the Lord gives the church reason to breathe!

Correction: Remember, Repent, and Do what you did at first!

Challenge: Listen to the Spirit of God!

He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit is saying to the Churches!