

How A Great Church Goes Bad *THE CHURCH AT EPHESUS*

Acts 19

AN AMAZING START

Acts 19

- Go where the **harvest** is. Ignore the **weeds**.
Acts 19:1-10
- Real deal **miracles** & shabby counterfeits.
Acts 19:11-17/ 2 Thessalonians 2:9-10 & 2 Corinthians 11:14-15
- From savior to **Lord**.
Acts 19:18-20/ Matthew 5:29-30
- An open door doesn't mean **smooth sailing**.
Acts 19:21-41/ 1 Corinthians 16:8-9

EARLY WARNING SIGNS

1 Timothy/ Ephesians

BANKRUPT BUT STILL WRITING CHECKS

Revelation 2:1-7

- They had lots of **passion** for God – but little **love**.
1 Corinthians 13:1-3
- ✓ If I love God...I **obey his commands**.
All of them, not just the ones I agree with!
John 14:15/ 1 John 2:3-5/ 1 John 5:3
- ✓ If I love people...I'm **patient, kind, humble** (not **angry** or **resentful**).
Especially to those I disagree with.
John 13:35/ 1 Corinthians 13:4-8/ 1 John 2:9-10/ 1 John 3:16-18/ 1 John 4:8-11/ Philippians 2:3-5

Food for Thought

For the week of December 7, 2008
(Questions and Scriptures for further study)

This week we explored the story of a great church (the church in Ephesus) that grew and thrived, yet ended up in a spiritually bad place. No one plans on starting strong and ending weak, so this week we'll see what we can do to avoid the trap they fell into. We'll use insights from the book of Ephesians to discover what we can do to be sure that we stay on track as individuals and as a church.

1. When challenges hit, we can easily forget all that we have received through God's spirit working in us. In the following passages, the Apostle Paul points out what we've received because we are followers of Jesus. Jot down these verses in your own words.

Ephesians 1:3

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. [NIV]

Ephesians 1:7-9

In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace [8] that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding. [9] And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, [NIV]

Ephesians 2:10

For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. [NIV]

Ephesians 2:19-21

Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, [20] built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. [21] In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. [NIV]

Ephesians 3:20-21

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, [21] to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen. [NIV]

Which of these Scriptures are most encouraging to you and why?

2. One of the key issues the Ephesians seemed to lose sight of was who they were *before* they knew Christ. How does Paul describe their state (and ours) prior to coming to Christ.

Ephesians 2:1-4

As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, [2] 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. [3] All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath. [4] But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, [NIV]

Ephesians 2:11-13

Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called "uncircumcised" by those who call themselves "the circumcision" (that done in the body by the hands of men)-- [12] remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. [13] But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ. [NIV]

Verse 4 and 13 above refer to our condition before knowing Christ as “objects of wrath” and being “far away” from God. These statements point toward our absolute need of God’s forgiveness and grace in our lives. Have there been any times in your life when the realization of your own sinfulness and God’s forgiveness particularly caught your attention? How could remembering this help you continue to show the same kind of love and grace toward others?

3. Paul gave the Ephesians a number of specific guidelines to not only obey, but also help them live out God’s character and love toward others. As you read the passages below, jot down what Paul says to do and circle anything you sense God trying to get your attention on. Take some time to pray about how to apply it in your life.

Ephesians 4:1-3

As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. [2] Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. [3] Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. [NIV]

Ephesians 4:25-28

Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body. [26] “In your anger do not sin”: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, [27] and do not give the devil a foothold. [28] He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need. [NIV]

Ephesians 4:29-32

Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. [30] And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. [31] Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. [32] Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. [NIV]

Ephesians 5:3-5

But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God’s holy people. [4] Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving. [5] For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person--such a man is an idolater--has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. [NIV]

Ephesians 6:7

Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men, [NIV]