

Sustaining Revival: A Study on Ephesians  
Lesson 1 “Introduction to Ephesians”

I. Introduction - The Revival in Ephesus, which *Acts 18-20* discusses is the greatest revival in the New Testament. Paul wrote *Ephesians* to the church in Ephesus about five years later to establish them in truth after the goosebumps had worn off so they could have a sustained experience with God and continue to increase.

A. Historical Setting - Ephesus in 53 A.D. Ephesus the 2nd largest city in the Roman Empire. It had about 300,000 people living in it. It was a wealthy port city in the Roman province of Asia. It sat on the Aegean Sea and was a major center of commerce. It was also near several key land routes.

Ephesus was a center of learning and also one of the most ungodly cities in the world at this time. It was known for Pagan worship, specifically of the goddess Diana. When sailors came in to port and came to worship they would have sex with temple prostitutes.

The temple of Diana (Artemis) is one of the 7 wonders of the ancient world. It was a site to behold and very visible within the community. According to Greek mythology, Diana was the mother of all living things both man and nature. The demonic force behind Diana was the governing principality in Ephesus at the time.

As Paul travelled to Ephesus, its most probable he observed this temple and knew he had a date with destiny. He came to reveal the true Lord who is the creator of all things.

B. Background - Paul traveled to Ephesus in 53 A.D. and began to minister in a Jewish synagogue as was his custom. Interestingly, something weird happened. He was received well in the synagogue. The Jews wanted him to stay. This was highly unusual because Paul was usually run out of the synagogue and/or beaten when he ministered there. This happened because God opened a door for Paul there. **1 Corinthians 16:8-9**.

Paul leaves Ephesus and went back to his home church in Antioch for a season and then Apollos came in and ministered. He ministered John's Baptism (Essentially the Old Covenant that focuses on the Messiah who is to come). Many people heard and believed. Then a couple Paul had met (Priscilla and Aquilla) took Apollos aside and explained the way of truth more accurately (The message Jesus had already come and they also explained the infilling of the Holy Spirit).

Apollos left as Paul returned to Ephesus. When Paul arrived he met 12 disciples. Paul asked them if they received the Holy Spirit when they believed and they had not because they had only received John's baptism as they sat under Apollos's ministry. Paul then baptized them in the name of the Lord Jesus and they were all filled the Holy Spirit and spoke in tongues and prophesied.

After this Paul went into the synagogue and ministered for three months, but some did not believe and Paul was forced to leave. He then took his disciples to the school of a medical doctor named Tyrannus and **taught them for 2 years. During this time all those in Asia Minor (modern day Turkey) heard the gospel. Acts 19:10.**

This most probably occurred through the ministry of miracles that accompanied Paul's preaching and teaching. People took handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched Paul's body and laid them on the sick and they were made well. When this happened it created the opportunity to share the gospel.

Eventually, Satan counter-attacked by sending in raising up the seven sons of Sceva (a Jewish chief priest), who tried to exercise demons in the name of Christ who Paul preached. **Satan will always try to raise up a counterfeit or create chaos in the midst of any significant move of God.** The seven sons of Scevas' ministry ultimately had no power, because when they tried to exercise the demon he said, "Jesus I know and Paul I know. Who are you? They then fled the house wounded and naked. After this many in the city believed and they began to bring their magic books and silver idols together and burned them. The value was over 50,000 pieces of silver. The word of God grew mightily and prevailed.

Satan then raised up more adversity. Demetrius, who was a silversmith that made silver shrines of the goddess Diana got all of trade union together and begin to make accusations against Paul. This stirs up a riot and the people began to chant, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians." Paul tries to confront the crowd, but his friends pull him back to safety. Ultimately an Ephesian official, Alexander put the riot down, because he reminded the crowd the Romans don't look kindly on towns that have riots. He then said if Demetrius wants to bring up charge against Paul, he needs to take him to court. This calmed everything down and he dismissed the assembly.

After this Paul left to go to do ministry in Macedonia for a while. He returned a few months later to a nearby resort town called Miletus and met with the Ephesian elders. **Acts 20:27-32** He commended them to the grace of God and warned them that after his departure savage wolves would come in and teach wrong things deceiving the flock. He also said some of the men in this meeting would speak perverse things deceiving others.

C. Aftermath - Interestingly, the Goths destroyed the temple of Diana in 262 A.D. Paul won! Ephesus went from one of the most ungodly cities in the world in the first century to a center of revival. Missionaries were sent all around the world from Ephesus. The 6 other churches in **Revelation 2-3** were planted out of this church.

1. Paul wrote **Ephesians** in 60 A.D. from a Roman prison to strengthen this church in their faith. He wanted them to know how to live after the goospebumps

of revival wore off. **Ephesians** summarizes the whole gospel story and then explains how to live it out practically. The book is divided into two main parts:

a. **Ephesians 1-3** This focuses on who we are in Christ, how we are seated in heavenly places, and filled with the same power that raised Jesus from the dead right now.

b. **Ephesians 4-6** describes how we live this out practically through apostolic government, everyone taking their place, all of us walking in godly character, the importance of family, and the importance of prayer in spiritual warfare.

2. Takeaway verses - **2 Timothy 1:15** *This you know, that all those in Asia have turned away from me, among whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes.* Many in Asia had disassociated with Paul when he was imprisoned in Rome because they feared for their safety. This also led to some turning away from their faith because they believed heretical doctrine including myths, endless genealogies, legalism, and gnosticism. This emphasizes the importance of knowing sound doctrine even in and especially in churches that emphasize the miraculous.

3. **Revelation 2:1-5** *“To the angel of the church of Ephesus write, ‘These things says He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands: 2 “I know your works, your labor, your [b]patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars; 3 and you have persevered and have patience, and have labored for My name’s sake and have not become weary. 4 Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love. 5 Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place—unless you repent.* This church heeded Paul’s teachings and warnings in **Ephesians, 1st & 2nd Timothy** and was established in sound doctrine, however, they lost their passion for Jesus. Sound doctrine isn’t supposed to diminish our passion for Jesus. It is supposed to invite us into a deeper encounter, which this church missed because it got so busy doing works for Jesus.

D. Conclusion - Our goal for this series is to get established in sound doctrine that invites us into a deeper relationship with Jesus. We will learn how to live and get involved in the church so we see it expand (not just experience revival for a short season, but see it sustain and accelerate into the next generation.) This will lead to increased revival so Greensboro is better for our children and grandchildren than it is today.

II. Offering - **Psalms 126:1-6** This is a psalm about a revived people. People who had been carried off into captivity that the Lord returned to their land. The key to this passage is we reap in joy! We need to get happy! We get happy when we meditate the promises and see the harvest!

### III. Discussion Questions

1. What are your biggest takeaways or aha moments from this teaching?
2. Tonight Brian spent a lot of time laying out the historical, cultural, and geographic context of *Ephesians*. Does this give you better understanding of the book and what Paul was trying to communicate? How important is learning historical and cultural context before studying a book of the Bible? What are some ways you can implement this in your personal Bible study?
3. **1 Corinthians 16:8-9** say that God opened a door for Paul at Ephesus. How do you discern doors God has opened for you in your life?
4. Do you think it's possible for God to send a revival that a community sustains and it accelerates in the next generation? Why or why not? If yes, what are things we need to do to see the revival sustained?
5. Tonight we saw that Satan raised up adversity against Paul when God was moving to bring revival to Ephesus. What are some biblical ways we can respond to the adversity Satan brings when God is moving in our life?
6. Brian said one of the main reasons Paul wrote *Ephesians* to the church in *Ephesus* was to establish them in truth (sound doctrine) after the goosebumps of revival wore off. Have you ever experienced a touch from God that wore off? If so, how did you handle it?
7. How do you think being immersed in the truths of scripture would help walk in truth when the goosebumps wear off and you don't "feel the presence of God in your life"?