Ephesus—
the Challenge of Today

#3314 26 1115A wds1505

Introduction

Written almost 2,000 years ago—Ephesians still reads like it was written today!

The story begins with informing the believer of their new identity—who we are and *what* God has done for us when we believe, accept His Son, and walk by faith in His sacrifice.

The story tells *who* the *real enemy* is and *why* it is such a *serious issue*. We may have wondered: "*Would God accept me and give me the gift of His Spirit after all the wrong I've done and after ignoring the many warnings in Scripture?"*

Ephesians reminds us that we are *valuable* as an eternal soul. God really *loves* His creation—and we are *part* of it.

God wrote the Bible to tell us the Truth. He wants to fulfill His promise to us, so He *"Bears patiently with you, His desire being that no one should perish but that all should come to repentance* WEY **2 Peter 3:9.**

Conversion of the Apostle

Before his conversion, the apostle *Paul* was *Saul*—knowledgeable of Scripture, respected in Ephesus, and convinced he was loyal to God.

But he was not a follower of Christ and he relentlessly pursued Christians to bring serious charges against them.

Thinking he was doing the right thing, he dragged believers in Christ off to prison; tried to silence their witness; and treated the name of Jesus as a threat to the community.

Then came the road to Damascus—and that changed everything. God stopped the apostle's ruthless efforts to silence the followers of Jesus. And God didn't ask permission before converting him.

A sudden and brilliant light knocked Saul off his steed and on to the ground. A voice from Heaven cuts through the silence—**Acts 9:3** "*Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting **Me**?*"

Jesus doesn't say "Why are you persecuting ***them*** but why are you persecuting ***Me***? Saul was personally rejecting and attacking Jesus in persecuting and attacking His followers.

Saul immediately asks **Acts 9:5** "*Who are You, Lord?" Then the Lord said, "I am **Jesus**, whom **you** are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads."*

In that moment, the man who *thought he saw* was actually *spiritually blind*—to the *truth!*

Saul did *not* know who spoke to him—but it was the only One who could save his soul from his head-long dash on a road leading him to eternal destruction.

After the light from Heaven, Saul lost his sight and spent three days in darkness, silence, and depression.

Saul desperately needed God's grace—so the Lord sent Ananas, a believer, who had every reason to be afraid to visit Saul—as by this time he had a reputation of being an enemy of Christ and a persecutor of those who believed in Him.

Ananas obeys, visits Saul, lays hands on him, and prays for the person who had spread anxiety, fear and dread among the followers of Jesus.

Saul's sight came back, but the old Saul did *not*. It was an ***Off with the Old and On with the New*** attitude so Ananas calls him *Brother* Saul.

Acts 9:6 *So [Saul], trembling and astonished, said, "Lord, what do You want me to do?" Then the Lord said to him, "Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do*."

God's Grace had rewritten his name; changed his future; and gave him a new assignment.

Saul the prosecutor is now Paul the apostle—the author of Ephesians and many other NT Books.

All this is undeniable evidence that Jesus forgives the repentant and He transforms the willing. Jesus wants us to be humble; be ready to learn; be willing to listen; to obey His instructions; and then act in faith on their trust on God.

The apostle Paul was *willing* and he experienced all the above, so he continued to "*Strengthen the disciples and encouraging them to remain **true** to the faith. 'We must go through many hardships to **enter** the kingdom of God'"* **Acts 14:22.**

The persecutor became the preacher. Saul now Paul is the *evidence* that no one is *too lost* or has made *too many mistakes*—not the doubter; not the faithless; not the resentful; not the angry; not the revengeful—and not even those who *quote* Bible verses but do not *live* them.

If God's grace could reach Saul on the Damascus Road, God's grace can reach anyone anywhere! That is encouraging to know when Satan causes doubts.

Culture of Ephesus

This city was not a quiet and sheltered church town—it was a major Roman port city; crowded, influential, and buzzing with trade, money, and cultures from everywhere.

One write says, Ephesus was a massive metropolis in the 1st century—it was like New York City, Wall Street financial district, and Las Vegas all rolled into one.

On the outside, Ephesus looked bright and impressive, but on the inside, it was spiritually dark with many churches speaking false doctrines.

Ephesus didn't need more religion—it already had enough of the wrong type—the churches were ***not*** giving the "*full counsel*" of God—as the apostle went there to do.

However, anyone *speaking the true Gospel of Christ* faced serious opposition from those who did not. Jesus had warned **Matthew 7:15** "*Watch out for false prophets."* There were many *ferocious wolves* in wool suits ministering in Ephesus.

At the center of Ephesus stood the temple of Artemis—massive, famous, corrupt, and celebrated as one of the wonders of the ancient world.

People traveled long distances to worship there; they bought idols; They joined festivals to celebrate all the things God calls an abomination.

Artemus wasn't just a statue—she was the economy; an identity, a very unscriptural and wicked lifestyle—no one should bow to or worship her as an idol.

When a city is proud of its false god, darkness gets celebrated with a pride parade. And Ephesus was known for its magic spells and occult practices.

People had no interest in knowing God or hearing His Truth—they would not accept the Messiah or listen to the apostle who could tell them how to be saved by accepting the Lord Jesus.

The people were in complete rebellion to what the apostle Paul was speaking. They did not know God—and they did not care what Jesus had done for them.

When the apostle Paul preached about Jesus in this pagan city, however, there was a spiritual awakening among a small group of believers.

NIV **Acts 19:18** "*Many of those who believed now came and openly confessed their evil deeds.* **19** *A number who had practiced sorcery brought their scrolls together and burned them [at a public bonfire* NLT*]. When they calculated the value of the scrolls, the total came to [several million dollars]*."

Such a spiritual revival can take place anywhere when God's mercy touches the human soul and converts their rebellious heart.

Those willing souls in Ephesus encountered the divine power of the living God. As one writer put it: *You stop negotiating with counterfeits; and you don't just put a book on a shelf to gather dust, you set the whole shelf on fire!*

Ephesus may look different from our world today—but the pride; the spiritual darkness; the rebellion; the depraved lifestyles; and total rejection of God's Truth in Ephesus *then*, is the same and worst in cities *today*!

The *names* have changed—but the *rebellion* remains to expose the guilty—and to reveal the desperate need to repent and turn to Jesus for the saving of their souls.

Modern cities today, Chicago, Los Angeles, Tampa, and New Orleans may *not have* a temple of Artemis, but they *do* worship money, success, sports; entertainment; social status, and financial security.

Too many people fear losing their job, their home, and their business, but do not fear God or losing eternal life.

Ephesians was written for anyone willing to believe; willing to learn; and wanting to stay clean in the filth of a corrupt city environment.

God includes all believing Jews and Gentiles who will accept His Son and live His Truth—under mounting pressure to reject it. God wants us to stand strong when temptation seems too much to resist.

God wrote His Gospel Truth in a Book for everyone to read and heed; because He does *not* want anyone to perish "*but that all should come to repentance*" **2 Peter 3:9.**

The Book of Ephesians is not only for those in Ephesus, but it is written for all of us *today* who need to fully understand the Gospel Truth in the Bible.

Anyone can be saved—but they will have to respond to His calling by sincerely *accepting* Christ into their heart, *repenting* of their sins, and *surrendering* their life totally to Him as a true and faithful follower of the Lord Jesus Christ.

†✝†

www.fcgchurch.org

***Receive free Tracts** email:*
fcgchurch1@gmail.com
Or write to: PO Box 143
Cheltenham, PA 19012
#3314 26 1115A