

TIMOTHY'S WORK IN EPHEBUS (PART 1)

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The Apostle Paul's third missionary journey began in the city of Ephesus with the baptism into Christ of about 12 men (Acts 19:1-7). This represented the establishment of the church of Christ in that city of the Roman province of Asia Minor. Paul then spent three months preaching in the Jews' synagogue there, followed by two years of daily teaching in the school of Tyrannus (Acts 19:8-10). As a result of this work, "all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks" (Acts 19:10). Paul did many miracles there, resulting in many converts to Christ, and the word of God mightily grew and prevailed (Acts 19:11-20). Paul spent a total of three years on that journey in Ephesus (Acts 20:31). Paul's third missionary journey concluded in Jerusalem, where Paul was taken prisoner by the Romans (Acts 21). He then spent more than two years in prison in Caesarea (Acts 24:27). After that Paul was taken to Rome to have his appeal heard by Caesar, and he spent another two years as a prisoner at Rome (Acts 28:30). After Paul was released from prison in Rome, Paul went to Macedonia (1 Tim 1:3). Paul then urged Timothy to continue his work in Ephesus (1 Tim 1:1-3). The work started by Paul in Ephesus, and continued by Timothy, endured and bore fruit for the Lord for many years.

Opposing false doctrine

Timothy had been with Paul in Rome (Php 1:1; Col 1:1; Phm 1), and Paul sent him from there to Philippi (Php 2:19-23). Evidently, Timothy went from there to Ephesus. One of Timothy's main jobs in Ephesus was to "*charge some that they teach no other doctrine*" (1 Tim 1:2-7). Paul had warned the Ephesians about false teachers for the three years he was with them, night and day with tears (Acts 20:31). Paul then warned the elders at Ephesus of grievous wolves that would enter in now that he would no longer be with them (Acts 20:29-30). From Rome, Paul wrote the Ephesians and warned them not to be "*tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive*" (Eph 4:14). Now it was Timothy's job to put a stop to the doctrinal error in Ephesus. He was to give attendance to doctrine (1 Tim 4:13). He was instructed to take heed to the doctrine and continue in it, both to save himself and those who heard him (1 Tim 4:16), which in this case would apply specifically to the Ephesians. False teachers were not to be fellowshiped (1 Tim 5:22). Rather, they were to be withdrawn from (1 Tim 6:3-5). Materialism had also become a problem in the church at Ephesus, and was at the root of some of the doctrinal errors in the church (1 Tim 6:3-19). There were

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also Judaizers among them (1 Tim 1:4-8), as well as “oppositions of science falsely so called,” which Timothy was told to avoid (1 Tim 6:20-21).

Elders and deacons in Ephesus

Though the church at Ephesus already had had elders for several years (Acts 17-38), Timothy apparently needed to appoint more (1 Tim 3:1-7), along with deacons (1 Tim 3:8-13). The elders who ruled well were worthy of double honor, including financial support by the church if they labored in the word and doctrine (1 Tim 5:17-18). Paul had warned the elders of Ephesus that of their *own selves* men would arise “speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them” (Acts 20:30). This may be why more elders were now needed at Ephesus. Also, if the elders had done their job as God through Paul had instructed them (Acts 20:28-31), Timothy should not have been needed to be the primary one to stop the false doctrine in Ephesus. Paul even wrote Timothy how to deal with elders who were guilty of sin (1 Tim 5:19-21), indicating that his prophecy in Acts 20:30 had already come to pass.

Asia rejects Paul

At this time, Timothy had to be around 30 at the youngest, but some in Ephesus evidently despised his youth, which Paul told Timothy not to allow (1 Tim 4:12). In 67 or 68 A.D., Paul wrote his second epistle to Timothy who was still in Ephesus, from one to three years after the first epistle was written. Between the writing of these two epistles, Paul had been taken prisoner again and was sent back to Rome, but this time faced execution (2 Tim 4:6-8). We do not know where Paul was or the particular circumstances involved in his being taken into custody by the Romans for the final time. The last scriptures given through Paul were written to Timothy in Ephesus. Paul had previously encouraged the Ephesians not to faint not at his tribulations for them (Eph 3:13), but now nearly everyone was turning away from Paul to avoid suffering persecution for associating with him and acknowledging him. Timothy was told not to be ashamed of Paul, but to partake of affliction with him (2 Tim 1:8). Sadly, Paul wrote that “all which are in Asia be turned away from me, of whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes” (2 Tim 1:15). They had done this because they were ashamed of Paul’s chain (2 Tim 1:16). Onesiphorus was an exception, and he was worthy of God’s mercy for his good treatment of the afflicted apostle Paul when he had recently visited him in prison in Rome (2 Tim 1:16-17). Onesiphorus had also served Paul diligently in Ephesus before (2 Tim 1:18). Timothy was urged by Paul to remind the other brethren to endure suffering and not be ashamed (2 Tim 2:8-13).