

# Figtreewatchers Podcast Episode 133: Ephesians - Victory In Christ Jesus - Introduction Part 1

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**Episode Summary:** In this first episode in our Ephesians series, Victory in Christ Jesus, we examined how Paul prepared himself to live in a pagan society. In the same way, we as Christians must each day, know our battle field, recognize the dangers, empower ourselves with prayer, separate ourselves from the world and live in Christ Jesus.

## Introduction

Cambridge dictionary defines a miser as an individual who has a great desire to possess money and hates to spend it, sometimes living like a poor person because of this desire. One famous miser was “Hetty” Green. She died in 1916 with an estate valued at \$100 million dollars, yet she lived as though she was impoverished. Her own son lost his leg to infection because she could not find a free clinic to take care of him. Today many Christians do not understand that they have an incredible spiritual wealth that comes from relying solely on the sufficiency of God. They have become spiritual “misers” relying on religion, religious acts, churches, pastors or even saints for their help instead of God. They far too often blame God for their situation instead of relying on God himself.

They often fail to recognize 3 important factors of their Christian life.

1. First, they fail to recognize the spiritual blessings they have inherited because of their Salvation in Jesus.
2. Secondly they fail to trust the Holy Spirit for their guidance in all aspects of their lives.
3. Thirdly they fail to fully grasp how deep and vast the love of their heavenly Father truly is for them.

## This brings us to the Question Ephesians asks the believer:

***Can you as a Saint, made Holy by the blood of Jesus, live sufficiently under the blessings and provisions of God; while boldly proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus with incorruptible love (provided by the fruits of the Holy Spirit), while residing in a hostile pagan world?***

This is the dilemma that both the Christians of Ephesus and we, the readers currently find ourselves pondering.

To find the answer to this enigma, we need to believe that we have Victory in Christ Jesus, and live accordingly; under the blessings provided by the Father through the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

To understand our victory, we need to examine and study Ephesians, for throughout this book it explains how our Victory In Jesus, supersedes all things, it explains our living inheritance, and it grants us wisdom to sufficiently live in the eternal provisions of the Godhead.

To begin with Ephesians, one needs to start with the City...

The city Ephesus was well known as a commercial trade center. But it was also a city of political importance and religious center that dominated Asia Minor. The city was originally founded by Amazons, a tribe of formidable female warriors. The name is derived from the word "Apasas". This is the name of a city that existed in the Hittite Period. The name means Mother Goddess (worldhistory.org) Ephesus became the religious center for the Pagan Goddess.

### **Paul Comes to Ephesus--**

It was in the spring of 52 AD that the Apostle Paul arrives at Ephesus, just after staying in Corinth for a year and a half. He travels to the city, with friends Priscilla and Aquila. This is considered part of what is called Paul's second evangelistic or missionary journey. Although they stay briefly they manage to start the first Christian church in the city. Paul walked in the confidence of his Salvation in Christ, and he walked according to the Spirit and the will of God.

The scripture tells us...

***18So Paul still remained a good while. Then he took leave of the brethren and sailed for Syria, and Priscilla and Aquila were with him. He had his hair cut off at Cenchrea, for he had taken a vow. 19And he came to Ephesus, and left them there; but he himself entered the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews. 20When they asked him to stay a longer time with them, he did not consent, 21but took leave of them, saying, "I must by all means keep this coming feast in Jerusalem; but I will return again to you, God willing." And he sailed from Ephesus. (Acts 18:18-21) NKJV***

Here we learn from Paul our first point on living in the Victory of Christ and trusting in the sufficiency of the God Head.

**A) Paul Trusted in Gods timing and foreknowledge, by being prepared in Scripture, engaging in prayer, and being accountable to those he fellowships with.**

Imagine Paul entering into this city for the first time.

- It was the second largest city in the Roman Empire, Rome was the largest City.

- It was the premier city of Asia Minor's western region (known as proconsular Asia)The Roman Empire considered it a second capital city. Yet it was heavily greek in origin.
- The largest outdoor theater in the world of its time was built in Ephesus. It could hold 25,000 spectators. All sorts of Gladiator Sports were held here.
- In the first century B.C. the city had a population of more than 250,000, making Ephesus the second most populated city in the known world. By Paul's time it was even larger in population. Only Rome had a larger population.
- Ephesus also contained one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. The massive Temple dedicated to the goddesses Artemis. Also known as Diana, Cybele, Ishtar and Isis.
- Temple of Artemis ("Diana"): 220 years in the building: 418 ft x 239 ft.; 127 56-ft columns; 4X larger than the Parthenon; stood until 262 A.D. when ruined by the Goths.

It was in this mother of God Cult, that Paul recognized with horror an old nemesis of Israel, the queen of heaven. As a Jew, from the tribe of Benjamin, Paul knew who Artemis clearly was. She was the same goddess under a different name, that had deceived Israel and seduced his people into idolatry.

Here is the second point of living victoriously in Christ Jesus.

## **B) The Holy Spirit guides the believer, who is fully surrendered, through the pitfalls of his enemy.**

Paul learns sins failures and recognizes the traps.

He remembers the sins of Israel in relation to Paganism,

Satan all ways sticks to the playbook, same old gimmicks, just new faces.

***16"Therefore do not pray for this people, nor lift up a cry or prayer for them, nor make intercession to Me; for I will not hear you. 17Do you not see what they do in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem? 18The children gather wood, the fathers kindle the fire, and the women knead dough, to make cakes for the queen of heaven; and they pour out drink offerings to other gods, that they may provoke Me to anger. (Jeremiah 7:16-18)***

Read also Jeremiah 44:15-25. Count the phrase Queen of Heaven

In ancient Israel, the people abandoned the God of Israel for Goddess worship. They revered her with titles of worship, such as, "The Virgin," "The Holy Virgin," "The Virgin Mother," "Goddess of Goddesses," and "Queen of Heaven and Earth. Ishtar was the evolved into the Egyptian goddess Isis and was the model for the Grecian Aphrodite, Roman Diana, Assyrian Nina, Phrygian and Roman Cybele, the Phoenician Astarte, which evolved into Artemis the goddess of Ephesus. In essence they were the same mother-goddess.

The people of Israel had taken the wood offering, which was commanded by God, (Leviticus 6:12) (Nehemiah 10:34) and turned into an abomination for their "Mother of Gods." The wood offering was meant to point to our self death and picking up our cross for Jesus. Israel had taken what was holy and twisted it into a rebellious

defilement of God. They even took the manna, which represented Christ (The Bread of Life), and distorted it into cakes for their Gods.

Paul knew he had entered a battlefield, the spiritual war of a lifetime. It was here in Ephesus that we can begin to understand Paul's thinking and dependency on God in the midst of warfare. Paul understood there could be no compromise.

The rabbi in Paul remembered the word of the torah.

### **C) Paul did not compromise Biblical Imperatives**

***29“When the Lord your God cuts off from before you the nations which you go to dispossess, and you displace them and dwell in their land, 30take heed to yourself that you are not ensnared to follow them, after they are destroyed from before you, and that you do not inquire after their gods, saying, ‘How did these nations serve their gods? I also will do likewise.’ 31You shall not worship the Lord your God in that way; for every abomination to the Lord which He hates they have done to their gods; for they burn even their sons and daughters in the fire to their gods. (Deuteronomy 12:29-32)***

The imperatives, that God instructs us to live by, are always based on Love, the Shema.

- Be Separate
- Destroy and dispose of all idolatry in our lives.
- Do not be ensnared to follow them in any form or manner. (1 Timothy 4:1-3)
- Do not inquire after the practices of worship of the false gods.
- Do not add their abominations into your worship of God

Nothing in his Pharisee traditions of purity and the law prepared him for this. His reliance on The triune God had to be absolute. He needed the Authority of God the Father, the Guidance of the Holy Spirit, and the covering of the Blood of Jesus.

It was here that Paul knew where his real struggle was with. It was not with humanity, but with evil forces of wickedness in high places. It was arial, in the principalities of heaven. It was terrestrial, battling the demons on this earth.

***12For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. 13Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. (Ephesians 6:12-13)***

It was here that Paul understood not to rely on self but on God, for the weapons of man were futile. Paul had to be In Christ Jesus. Nothing else mattered. No human weapon would work. No amount of anger and rage would

assist him. Paul had to embody the wonder workings of God. He had to be mighty in God and leave everything else behind him.

**3For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. 4For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, 5casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, (2 Corinthians 10:3-5)**

## **APPLICATION**

We are living in a Pagan world. Are you prepared? One needs to ask the question, "How is paganism influencing your life and the health of your church? Are you defiling your relationship with God through pagan practices that God hates?

Listen to the writings of the Catholic Encyclopedia regarding easter eggs and the rabbit.

Regarding easter eggs it states: "*The symbolic meaning of a new creation of mankind by Jesus risen from the dead was probably an invention of later times. The custom may have its origin in paganism, for a great many pagan customs, celebrating the return of spring, gravitated to Easter. The egg is the emblem of the germinating life of early spring.*" ((Easter by Herbert Thurston, Catholic Encyclopedia 1913 Ed. Vol 5.))

Later on the Easter Rabbit it states: "*The Easter Rabbit lays the eggs, for which reason they are hidden in a nest or in the garden. The rabbit is a pagan symbol and has always been an emblem of fertility (Simrock, Mythologie, 551).*"

This is a problem for the church and the believer. We are condoning practices that are pagan and then defending them with excuses that God hates.

For the Christian believer can we afford to add to our faith paganism in any form? Jeremiah 10:2 tells us, " Do not learn the ways of the Gentiles." Paul warns us as Christians to take heed.

**14Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? 15And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? 16And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said:**

***"I will dwell in them***

***And walk among them.***

***I will be their God,***

***And they shall be My people."***

**17Therefore**

***"Come out from among them***

***And be separate, says the Lord.***

***Do not touch what is unclean,***

***And I will receive you.”***

***18“I will be a Father to you,***

***And you shall be My sons and daughters,***

***Says the Lord Almighty.”(2 Corinthians 6:14-18)***

This is the clearest condemnation in scripture not to yoke yourself with pagan practices, symbols, traditions and celebrations. We want God to bring revival, but we do not listen. We have ears to hear, but our hearts are stubborn. We must be in Christ alone separate from the world and its practices, we cannot commune with darkness. We are not to touch or engage in any aspect of paganism.

***“And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? 16And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God...” (2 Corinthians 6:15-16)***

Do you believe that you have a victorious life in Jesus?

Then why do so many believers add pagan practices to their faith in Jesus? It's not just Catholicism! Bethel is the Protestant version of Catholicism. They have added Angel card readings to their faith and justify it by the very traditions of the Catholic Church. They add the word of faith doctrine and are ironically believe that they are the one true church and they advancing a kingdom now theology.

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### **Sources**

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8. The Book of Ephesians Expository Commentary *Compiled by Dr. Chuck Missler* © 2009 Koinonia House Inc.

