

# FIG TREE WATCHERS

*Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender  
and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. Even so,  
when you see all these things, you know that it is near, right at the door.*

*Matthew 24:32-33*



## Figtreewatchers Podcast Episode 143: Ephesians - Victory In Christ Jesus - Violence, Paganism and The Gospel

June 29th, 2023

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**Episode Summary:** Today the Christian who follows the "Way" of Christ will face violence and paganism as they share the Gospel. The reaction must be bound in love saturated with the Holy Spirit and stained with the redemption of Christ's blood. Fear must be replaced with reconciliation.

Scan the QR code below to go to the podcast episode.



### Review

In the Past three episodes we have been covering the city and church of Ephesus and the biblical imperatives for living in a pagan world, while abiding in Christ. We first discussed the importance of living out a sanctified life separate from paganism, so that we can keep our selves from being polluted

by the world. Then we discussed 11 biblical imperatives of being grounded in the life that abides in Christ and how these imperatives keep us from the pollution of paganism. In the last episode we discussed 5 key to the church plant of Ephesus and what an active church should look like as it engages a hostile pagan world.

In each podcast we are asking a question. This question is to self examine our heart before God.

### **The Question of Ephesians:**

***So the question to ask yourself is this: Can you as a Saint, made Holy by the blood of Jesus, live sufficiently under the blessings of God; while boldly proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus with incorruptible love, in a hostile pagan world?***

In this Episode we will focus on the hostility an active church will face. We will examine how their obedience to the biblical mandate of discipleship and ministry led to persecution and suffering. We will examine the response Christians should make when faced with hostility.

Let's begin in Acts 19:21-44 NKJV. So open your bibles.

***21When these things were accomplished, Paul purposed in the Spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, "After I have been there, I must also see Rome." 22So he sent into Macedonia two of those who ministered to him, Timothy and Erastus, but he himself stayed in Asia for a time.***

Paul has a desire to go to Rome, interesting fact, the gospel when everywhere first and went to Rome last. Christianity went to Africa first and then to Asia. Paul wants to bring Christianity to Rome the capital of the empire. He wants to visit Jerusalem before the war takes place between Jews and the Romans. Paul sends his disciples Timothy and another Erastus to Macedonia, which is in Northern Greece. The churches planted there included Philippi, Thessalonica and Berea. ((ESV Study Bible 2008 by Crossway Bibles)) Timothy may have been as young as 14 to 15 years old and later would become the pastor of Ephesus. Erastus was a Corinthian and may have been carrying the 1st letter to the Corinthians, while Paul remained in Turkey, close to Ephesus.

***23And about that time there arose a great commotion about the Way. 24For a certain man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of Diana, brought no small profit to the craftsmen. 25He called them together with the workers of similar occupation, and said: "Men, you know that we have our prosperity by this trade. 26Moreover you see and hear that not only at Ephesus, but throughout almost all Asia, this Paul has persuaded and turned away many people, saying that they are not gods which are made with hands. 27So not only is this trade of ours in danger of falling into disrepute, but also the temple of the great goddess Diana may be despised and her magnificence destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worship."***

Early Christianity was called the Way, as prophesied by the prophet Isaiah.

And a highway shall be there,

and it shall be called the Way of Holiness;

the unclean shall not pass over it.

It shall belong to those who walk on the way;

even if they are fools, they shall not go astray.

(Isaiah 35:8)

If you were a follower of Jesus you followed the "Way". Today Christianity has been so corrupted by wicked individuals that many people including myself prefer the term, "Follower of Jesus". We walk the Way of Holiness, that Jesus made for us. We are made righteous by Christ, based upon His works on the cross not on ours. Being a follower of Jesus, who is the One Way to heaven, should always cause disruptions. No one is righteous on their own accord. When one realizes their transgression, they quickly turn away from the wants of the world and look to the hope that is in Jesus. They go from darkness to the light, rejecting the idols and deceptions they once believed in. This is why the claim made by Demetrius was absolutely correct. The wealth made by the worship of Artemis was being threatened by an invisible God that did not have icons or images or things made by human hands.

Listen to a quote by Clement of Alexandria

**[W]hat is made is similar and the same to that of which it is made**, as that which is made of ivory is ivory, and that which is made of gold golden. Now the images and temples constructed by mechanics are made of inert matter; so that they too are inert, and material, and profane . . . **Works of art cannot then be sacred and divine.** (Stromata 7.5 ANF) ((<https://anabaptistfaith.org/church-fathers-icons/>))

Demetrius was concerned that tourism would drop and sales to the temple gods would hurt the local economy. The Temple to Artemis was a huge boom for tourism and souvenir sales as well as worship memorabilia. The silver smith was concerned about His bottom line. His guild of artisans and silversmiths would lose huge money if people turned to Jesus. Luke the writer, who is Roman is giving no distinction between Diana and the goddess Artemis, to him it's the same deity and he is just using the name known by Roman citizens. Luke is making it clear that Paul is persuading people to turn away from idolatry.

*Are you willing to pay the cost in your business to turn away from idolatry. Are you willing to let people know that you follow Jesus. What price are you willing to pay?*

This is in conflict with the world. When our sins grip us and enslave us with such deception, we as humans are outraged to give up that which torments us, because it has become normal and comfortable. The Gospel shakes us, it convicts us of our sin, our self-righteousness and our impending judgment, leaving the sinner confused and outraged over his own guilt.

Today we live in a world of rage and hostility towards the Gospel. Transhumanism is a huge profitable business from augmentations to reconstruction surgeries. It celebrates Satan and indulges in sexual perversion often engaging in pagan worship. Is it any wonder that the politicians and corporations are in favor of trafficking children and perverting God's laws, it fills their coffers with the wealth of greed and exploitation.

The wicked have perverted the natural with the unnatural for the lust of the flesh, for the greed of wealth and for the worship of the god of this world. Listen to the crowds of Ephesus, listen closely and you will hear the same crowds in your city today, this is why we must read and study Ephesians and live in the victory of Jesus.

**28***Now when they heard this, they were full of wrath and cried out, saying, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!"* **29***So the whole city was filled with confusion, and rushed into the theater with one accord, having seized Gaius and Aristarchus, Macedonians, Paul's travel companions.* **30***And when Paul wanted to go in to the people, the disciples would not allow him.*

Do you hear the words are they relevant for today? They became violent by seizing the followers of Jesus. Were the believers afraid? Of course not!

When greed supersedes the love of God, morality fails and turns to civil unrest and anger. The merchants became wrathful declaring Diana as their goddess of the Ephesian people. Great resentment broke out for even questioning the status quo. But so did confusion, many were there not even knowing why they were upset.

Satan is the author of confusion, sin confuses us and blinds us to the truth that we are lost, redemption from sin is our only hope. The message of the Gospel frees the enslaved from the bondage of sin, washing away our guilt and shame by the blood of Jesus, who was crucified for our sin, our trauma, our guilt and our shame. Christ died for all of our afflictions.

Lets read on..

**31***Then some of the officials of Asia, who were his friends, sent to him pleading that he would not venture into the theater.* **32***Some therefore cried one thing and some another, for the assembly was confused, and most of them did not know why they had come together.* **33***And they drew Alexander out of the multitude, the Jews putting him forward.* **34***And Alexander motioned with his hand, and wanted to make his defense to the people.* **34***But when they found out that he was a Jew, all with one voice cried out for about two hours, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!"*

Can you hear the crowd for two hours screaming? Does the insanity of the crowd remind you of any pagan group today? Do you understand the rage they have? They are slaves to a master who is cruel and who victimizes them into self-mutilation so that he can abuse them with sexual trauma, guilt and shame, leaving them empty of true joy and love.

**35***And when the city clerk had quieted the crowd, he said: "Men of Ephesus, what man is there who does not know that the city of the Ephesians is temple guardian of the great goddess Diana, and of the image which fell down from Zeus?"* **36***Therefore, since these things cannot be denied, you ought to be quiet and do nothing rashly.* **37***For you have brought these men here who are neither robbers of temples nor blasphemers of your goddess.* **38***Therefore, if Demetrius and his fellow craftsmen have a case against anyone, the courts are open and there are proconsuls. Let them bring charges against one another.* **39***But if you have any other inquiry to make, it shall be determined in the lawful assembly.* **40***For we are in danger of being called in question for today's uproar, there being no reason which we may give to account for this disorderly gathering."* **41***And when he had said these things, he dismissed the assembly.*

For the believer God can silence the hearts of foolish individual. Today so many self proclaimed christians walk in weakness, not realizing that they can walk in the power of God.

Churches have either nurtured the Holy Spirit to an object that is controlled at will by our purposes or the Holy Spirit is declared dead and that the gifts of the Holy Spirit do not work for today. Both of these beliefs are false are deceptive lies encouraged by Satan.

The Holy Spirit is God and works powerfully in the lives of those who believe and are filled with the Spirit.

I propose to you today, that the Spiritual warfare that engulfed Ephesus in the past is engulfing every large city today, so we must then walk according to the Spirit and not according to the flesh.

My Brothers and sisters I beg you, We must walk victoriously in the life of a disciple who follows Jesus. Let us be saturated in the fruits of the Spirit, strengthened in the knowledge of Gods word and stained with the preciousness blood of Jesus that has given us freedom. We are free! Free from sin.

In the last episode we discussed the role of effective discipleship for the church of Ephesus. A disciple fully puts his trust in Jesus, they should never live in fear; but in the victory of what God has already, futuristically, accomplished. Now there are dangers that the Christian needs to be aware of when living in a pagan world. We must be wise to them.

- Do not let your temple fall in disrepute by engaging in pagan customs that seem innocent. We do not use icons or images or engage in seductive behaviors that lead to sexual disobedience before our Holy and Righteous God. Despite what the Catholic Church teaches the early church understood this, both from scripture and from early church leaders, which dispute catholic doctrine. ([Click on this Link to read more](#))
- The second danger is that often Christians and especially pastors will dismiss current paganism as ineffectual and not relevant to the warfare that is going on. This is dangerous. Christians need to be on alert and be aware. The scripture warns us, **“Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.”** (1 Peter 5:8 ESV)
- The third danger is that Satan uses the threat of violence to subdue Christians into inactivity or apathy or worse laziness. Persecution is to be expected for the follower of Jesus. he warned us, **“And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force.”** b(Matthew 11:12 NKJV.)

We enter spiritual warfare with boldness leaving fear behind us, with Christ before us. God prepares the way of the righteous, leading us by the Holy Spirit empowered by truth. We do not walk in fear, but in the assurance of victory that is already accomplished by the resurrection of Christ and the faithfulness of God our Father. As Jesus encourages us in Matthew, **“And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.”** (Matthew 10:28 NKJV)

The disciple of Jesus must continue to engage the darkness with the light of Christ not fleeing from it. We don't fear violence or the darkness, as Christians we boldly engage it. We flee from false doctrine

but plant our selves where satan sits shining the light of gospel message wherever his lies and hate prevail.

Why? Because Christ is the way the truth and the life. We must be active in hope, Love, and doing good works of discipleship and ministry. We must be active in the Holy Spirit. Finally, we must be active in breaking down the strong holds of satan through corporate prayer and the engagement of spiritual warfare through the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

### **Sources**

Interpretation of The Acts of the Apostles, by R.C.H Lenski, 1944 Wartburg Press

Acts by H.A.Ironside Reprinted 2007 By Kregal Publications.