

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 152: Ephesians - Jesus and Ephesus

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These show notes were created and edited by Stephan Caraway and Ayo Shosanya of Figtreewatchers

Episode Summary: In this episode,

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Review

In past episodes we have been covering the city and church of Ephesus and its foundation. We examined how the early Christians engaged pagan society, while abiding in Christ. We 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 dug into five successful keys that the church incorporated into their faith as they actively engaged the city of Ephesus. In the last episode we investigated the role Jesus expects of the church, while engaging the

pagan world. We examined the letter written to the Church of Ephesus by Jesus, which is found in the book of Revelation.

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 and the next two we will examine the private briefing Paul gave the elders of the Church of Ephesus. This is Paul's final instructions to the leaders at Ephesus. In one sense it is heartbreaking because of where the Church ends up. In this episode we will examine the word of Paul and how they instruct the elders to be a living Example of Christ Himself. *A pastor, teacher, a leader or an elder in the church must have the DNA of Jesus imprinted in their behavior 24 hours a day.* Paul instructs the elders of Ephesus with the reminders of his own life, as an example, similar to what he wrote to the Church of Corinth, ***"Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ."*** (I Corinthians 11:1 NKJV)

So let's dive into God's Word and let us allow the Holy Spirit to guide us to all truth. Please as we read the scripture let it transform your heart and renew your mind. Please as we read this remember the chastisement, Jesus gave the Church of Ephesus. The future church of Ephesus long after Paul had died, forgot their first love and failed to remember that they too were fallen sinners in need of Grace. This is why they lost their Lamp stand. With this in mind, please turn in your Bibles to: **Acts 20:17-24 NKJV**

Be A living Example for the Next Generation Acts 20:17-24

"From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called for the elders of the church. And when they had come to him, he said to them: "You know, from the first day that I came to Asia, in what manner I always lived among you, serving the Lord with all humility, with many tears and trials which happened to me by the plotting of the Jews; how I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house, testifying to Jews, and also to Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. And see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me. But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.

The manner a Christian should live. Remember your first Love. Don't forget that you were also fallen.

Paul reminds the elders that from the first day that he came to Asia, he lived in a certain manner. What was this manner in which he always lived?

Paul lived with love and the assurance of that love. *Love is a fruit of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23). Love must be infused into our DNA as a believer through the Holy Spirit, only then can one demonstrate the patience, kindness and gentleness of Christ.* John describes the manner as such:

“In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us. By this we know that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit. And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him.” (1 John 4:10-13, 16) NKJV

Because of God's love we can comprehend grace. *For the believer who follows Jesus, we understand that love and grace are not feelings but actions fully dependent on Jesus, who is God and who became flesh and sacrificed himself on a cross of sin to save all man kind from the wrath of God; because of our lawlessness.* It is through the grace of Jesus that we are saved because of love. In this love we serve others with grace, because of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in our lives. The infused DNA of God's grace brings about true humility that is grounded in love through the sacrificial blood of Jesus.

“For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.” (Romans 12:3) NKJV

It is in this soberly thinking, that we ponder the death of Jesus that we understand the first example that Paul gives the elders. Paul instructs the elders to remember how he lived. He lived out the life of a servant. Paul demonstrated servanthood through a life of humility born from the very DNA of Jesus Christ.

This brings us to the first point.

1. A Living example of Christ is to live, with all humility.

The Christian, whether in leadership or not should clearly understand that he has a living inheritance in Jesus, but he also has the same duty as Jesus did, and that duty is to serve others. Paul would later write these word to the Church of Ephesus as a reminder of what he told the elders.

“I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” (Ephesians 4:1-3) NKJV

True humility can then best be described, biblically, in the following manners for the one who abides in Jesus as a disciple.

A. The Christian who is humble should have a deep sense of ones own moral deficiency and littleness in the spectrum of how he serves others. He should think soberly about how God dealt with him. ***“Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering;” (Colossians 3:12) NKJV*** Another word for long-suffering is patience. To love is to be patient.

B. The Christian who seeks humility in Christ, should esteem others better than themselves, because of the forgiveness we have received, ourselves, from God. ***“bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do.” (Colossians 3:13) NKJV***

C. The Christian who desires to abide in Jesus, desires the humility of Christ perfected in the love of Jesus with thankfulness and gratitude. ***“But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection.***

And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful.” (Colossians 3:14-15) NKJV

D. Finally the Christian who lives as a disciple, humbles himself as a disciple by denying self and picking up their cross for Jesus, becoming a living sacrifice for Jesus.

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”(Romans 12:1-2) NKJV

It is in this idea of self death, the living sacrifice, that we understand Pauls second example to the elders of Ephesus.

2. A living example of Christ is to endure heartache, trials, persecution and offense with out distraction.

Paul reminds the elders, that despite pain and sufferings, tears and threats, he held nothing back. Paul wanted to finish his race with joy, and the ministry which he had received from the Lord Jesus. He had endure trials, faced persecution, and had suffered heartaches due to betrayal. Paul would later remind Timothy years later when he wrote:

“But you have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance, persecutions, afflictions, which happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra—what persecutions I endured. And out of them all the Lord delivered me. Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.” (II Timothy 3:10-12) NKJV

Paul promises Timothy that anyone who desires to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution and afflictions. Satan hates the follower of Jesus. Suffering the wrath of Satan is the normal occurrence for the one who abides in Christ. In fact Paul states that things will get only worse.

“But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.” (II Timothy 3:13) NKJV

Wow that's encouraging!

Peter agreed with Paul when he wrote, ***“Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you;” (I Peter 4:12) NKJV***

So what is the Christian to do?

Paul gives us two solutions

A. Do not dwell on the circumstances of the Spiritual warfare that you are enduring.

In other words don't worry, Jesus has your back. In fact this is exactly what Jesus told us, ***“Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.” (Matthew 6:34) NKJV***

Paul told the elders of Ephesus, that even though he knew, from the Holy Spirit, that chains and tribulations awaited him, he would not be moved by these thing; nor did he count his life dear to himself. Paul reiterated this to Timothy, the future pastor of Ephesus, when he wrote:

“But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them,” (II Timothy 3:13-14) NKJV

So just as Peter, took his eyes of Jesus to look at the storm, he began to sink. Why? because he became overwhelmed by the storm and its afflictions. He became fearful. We must then fixate our eyes on Jesus. We must have an immovable faith. Which is the second solution.

B. Fixing your gaze on Christ and His Word.

If the Christian is fixed on Jesus, they are not looking at the storm. They can't be afraid, because they know that Jesus is the one who makes the storm quiet and who has the way of escape all planned out. Jesus is there extending his hand ready to lift us out of the mire of doubt, guilt and shame. Paul would later write in The book of Hebrews,:

“Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls.” (Hebrews 12:1-3) NKJV

Doesn't this verse just say it all. Jesus dit it all.

So let us add joy to our race. Why? Because we are not alone.

“but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy. If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified.” (I Peter 4:13-14) NKJV

It is through a centralized faith with Christ that one needs to keep moving forward in the faithfulness and duty of the Gospel that now save us. It needs to be a faith that is constantly growing in love, saturated with the fruit of the spirit and never waivers. The living faith of a Christian need to be immovable, grounded in scripture and discernment.

In this understanding we understand the third example. We see Paul be a living proclamation of the Gospel.

3. A living example of Christ is to proclaim the truth of the Gospel.

Paul understood that those who preach the Gospel should live from it. This means that daily the individual who preaches the truth of the Word must also walk and work in a manner that glorifies Christ. There are profound truths that we learn from Paul in his briefing to the elders.

A. Teaching the Gospel is a public mission.

The Gospel must be preached to the whole world.(Matthew 28:19). God wants all men everywhere to repent, because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness. (Acts 17:30-31)

B. The Gospel message was for the home, the neighborhood and the world. (Acts 20:20)

Paul went house to house with the Gospel. Families were critical in order to change a pagan city to Christian city. Strongholds are brought down by bringing the Gospel message into the home, neighbor by neighbor, door to door. God knows the timing in which the seed of the gospel message might sprout and bloom. In Acts it says, ***“And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us;” (Acts 17:26-27) NKJV***

C. The Gospel proclaims repentance towards God (The Father) and faith in Jesus Christ.

The Holy Spirit convicts each individual in the world of their sin, their righteousness and their impending judgment. The individual who is listening to the conviction of the Holy Spirit will have a godly sorrow, a remorse for their sin, this sorrow produces repentance that leads to a Salvation found only in Jesus (2 Corinthians 7:10). <https://www.figtrewatchers.com/the-biblical-congruency-of-godly-sorrow/>

Paul literally proclaimed and taught the elders, the city, jews and greeks that repentance was necessary towards God and to have faith in Jesus.(Acts 20:20-21) In fact he told King Agrippa, the very same thing, when he said, ***“Therefore, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, but declared first to those in Damascus and in Jerusalem, and throughout all the region of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent, turn to God, and do works befitting repentance.”(Acts 26:19-20) NKJV***

Later Paul instructed Timothy how a servant who presents the Gospel must behave.

“And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will.” (II Timothy 2:24-26) NKJV

The life of a Christian is embodied in the death and blood of Jesus. Due to the covenant, that God made with us, by the cross, the focus of our life needs to be always heavenly centered on Jesus and not on the things of this world (Colossians 3:1-4). We need to seek the things above and live with the promise that we will be brought by Jesus to God (1 Peter 3:18). This Christian life must always abound in love, always growing through knowledge of God and discernment, filled with the fruits of righteousness that are from the Holy Spirit, by Jesus to the Glory of God.