

Ephesians: Faith Under Pressure

World Outreach Church
Sermon Discussion Guide
Sunday Sermon: **August 18, 2024**



We are beginning a session to examine some spiritual principles found in the book of Ephesians, the apostle Paul's letter to the Ephesian church. This church and its group of Christ-followers had emerged from great pressure, which is particularly meaningful for what we are doing in this season. Truthfully, the book of Ephesians is a recruitment letter, not just for people to come into the Christian faith but to become disciples of Jesus of Nazareth. Now, that's a bit of a false distinction because there is no such thing as a Christ-follower who is not a disciple. But it's important because the Church has become deeply emersed in a gospel presentation that declares you need to be born again, but then once you've done that, you're "good to go"—your God-business is done. Folks, *that* is a false gospel. There is no such thing as a hyper-disciple or super-disciple. If you're born again, you become a disciple, or your new birth is incomplete. So, we are going to try to understand that more clearly as we look at the backstory and the outworking of the faith of the Ephesians.

*** Who or what has made the biggest impact on your beliefs about spiritual things?**

I. RECRUITMENT (OF DISCIPLES)

Ephesians 6:10–12 ¹⁰Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. ¹¹Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. ¹²For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

Ephesians 6:19–20 ¹⁹Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that **I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel,** ²⁰for which I am an ambassador in chains. **Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.**

2 Timothy 4:16–18 ¹⁶At my first defense, no one came to my support, but everyone deserted me. May it not be held against them. ¹⁷But the Lord stood at my side and gave me strength, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed, and all the Gentiles might hear it. And I was delivered from the lion's mouth. ¹⁸The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom. To him be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

***Share a time when no one was willing to stand with you on a matter of God's Truth. How would you encourage others to stay strong when they feel deserted?**

II. A PRISON LETTER

2 Timothy 4:9–12 ⁹Do your best to come to me quickly, ¹⁰for Demas, because he loved this world, has deserted me and has gone to Thessalonica. Crescens has gone to Galatia, and Titus to Dalmatia. ¹¹Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, because he is helpful to me in my ministry. ¹²**I sent Tychicus to Ephesus.**

Ephesians 6:21–22 ²¹**Tychicus, the dear brother and faithful servant in the Lord, will tell you everything, so that you also may know how I am and what I am doing.** ²²I am sending him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are, and that he may encourage you.

III. AN EMERGING COMMUNITY OF FAITH

Acts 19:1–3 ¹While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul took the road through the interior and arrived at Ephesus. There he found some disciples ²and asked them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" They answered, "No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit." ³So Paul asked, "Then what baptism did you receive?" "John's baptism," they replied.

Belief & Unbelief

Acts 19:8–10 ⁸**Paul entered the synagogue and spoke boldly there for three months, arguing persuasively about the kingdom of God.** ⁹But some of them became obstinate; they refused to believe and publicly maligned the Way. So Paul left them. He took the disciples with him and had discussions daily in the lecture hall of Tyrannus. ¹⁰This went on for two years, so that all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord.

***Describe a situation where you needed to tell a difficult truth to someone very close to you (i.e. family, friend). What was the outcome?**

Supernatural Assistance

Acts 19:11–12 ¹¹ *God did extraordinary miracles through Paul, ¹² so that even handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched him were taken to the sick, and their illnesses were cured and the evil spirits left them.*

***Have you ever witnessed a demonstration of God’s power through a miracle? If so, what was it?**

Supernatural Resistance

Acts 19:17–20 ¹⁷ *When this became known to the Jews and Greeks living in Ephesus, they were all seized with fear, and the name of the Lord Jesus was held in high honor. 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 publicly. When they calculated the value of the scrolls, the total came to fifty thousand drachmas. ²⁰ **In this way the word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power.***

Acts 19:23–27 ²³ *About that time there arose a great disturbance about the Way. ²⁴ A silversmith named Demetrius, who made silver shrines of Artemis, brought in no little business for the craftsmen. ²⁵ He called them together, along with the workmen in related trades, and said: “Men, you know we receive a good income from this business. ²⁶ And you see and hear how this fellow Paul has convinced and led astray large numbers of people here in Ephesus and in practically the whole province of Asia. He says that man-made gods are no gods at all. ²⁷ There is danger not only that our trade will lose its good name, but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis will be discredited, and the goddess herself, who is worshiped throughout the province of Asia and the world, will be robbed of her divine majesty.”*

Acts 19:29, 32-34, 20:1 ²⁹ *Soon the whole city was in an uproar. The people seized Gaius and Aristarchus, Paul’s traveling companions from Macedonia, and rushed as one man into the theater. ...³² The assembly was in confusion: Some were shouting one thing, some another. Most of the people did not even know why they were there. ³³ The Jews pushed Alexander to the front, and some of the crowd shouted instructions to him. He motioned for silence in order to make a defense before the people. ³⁴ But when they realized he was a Jew, they all shouted in unison for about two hours: “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!” ...¹ When the uproar had ended, Paul sent for the disciples and, after encouraging them, said good-by and set out for Macedonia.*

***What are some examples, that you know, where a deception is sprinkled with some truth? List some practical ways you can be better discerning of spiritual conflicts around you?**

The Division of Jesus

Matthew 21:43–44 ⁴³ *“Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit. ⁴⁴ He who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces, but he on whom it falls will be crushed.”*

Luke 12:51–53 ⁵¹ *“Do you think I came to bring peace on earth? No, I tell you, but division. ⁵² From now on there will be five in one family divided against each other, three against two and two against three. ⁵³ They will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law.”*

***We will not experience a significant “move of God” without disruption, difficulty, and determination. In what ways are Christian voices being diminished in our culture giving power to evil?**

PROCLAMATION

¹⁶ I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, ¹⁷ so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, ¹⁸ may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, ¹⁹ and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. ²⁰ Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, ²¹ to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen. Ephesians 3:16–21 (NIV®)