

GATE School of Ministry [DC] Bible Study Notes

Reach | Resource | Reform

Module : The Primacy of the Word of God

Session 11 : First Love – Part 2

Focus : The Ephesus Case Study



In this session, we explore the biblical concept of 'first love', in which we will demonstrate that it refers to the high prioritisation, esteem and love for the Word of God.

- This includes:
- One's attitude towards the Word.
 - Honour and respect for those who bring the Word to you.
 - Active positioning of oneself to hear the Word.
 - Regular and consistent engagement and interaction with the Word.
 - Obedience to what you have heard as proof of your love for God and His Word.

Rev 1:9-20

- 9 I, John, your brother and fellow partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and perseverance which are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos **because of the word of God** and the testimony of Jesus.
- 10 I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like the sound of a trumpet,
- 11 saying, "Write in a book what you see, and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea."
- 12 Then **I turned to see the voice** that was speaking with me. And having turned **I saw seven golden lampstands;**
- 13 and in the middle of the lampstands I saw one like a son of man, clothed in a robe reaching to the feet, and girded across His chest with a golden sash.
- 14 His head and His hair were white like white wool, like snow; and His eyes were like a flame of fire.
- 15 His feet were like burnished bronze, when it has been made to glow in a furnace, and **His voice was like the sound of many waters.**
- 16 In **His right hand** He held seven stars, and **out of His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword;** and **His face was like the sun shining in its strength.**
- 17 When I saw Him, I fell at His feet like a dead man. And He placed His right hand on me, saying, "Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last,
- 18 and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades.
- 19 "Therefore **write the things which you have seen,** and the things which are, and the things which will take place after these things.

20 "As for the mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.

HIS VOICE WAS THE SOUND OF MANY WATERS

Water is a symbol of the Word of God (See John 15:3; Eph. 5:25-27; John 3:5; 1 Peter 1:22-23; John 17:17). The voice of the Lord is likened unto **MANY WATERS**. This refers to the many multi-faceted dimensions of the speaking of God or the many varied expressions of His voice or different emphases of His Word. The completeness of 'HIS VOICE' is to be found in the collective expression of 'MANY WATERS'. No one specific grouping/church/network/etc. has a total understanding of the entirety of the 'whole purpose or counsel of God' (see Acts 20:27).

The injunction to 'HEAR' declared to each church in Revelation chapters 2 and 3, is specifically to what the Spirit says to the churches (plural – not singular), i.e. all the churches collectively.

Ezek. 43:2 And, behold, the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the east: and **his voice** was like a **noise of many waters**: and the earth shined with his glory

Rev 14:2a And I heard a **voice from heaven**, as the **voice of many waters**

Psalms 46:4 There is a **river whose streams make glad the city of God**, The holy dwelling places of the Most High

Psalms 36:8 They **drink their fill of the abundance of Your house**; And You give them to drink of the river of Your delights

Psalms 65:9 You visit the earth and cause it to overflow; You greatly enrich it; **The stream of God is full of water**; You prepare their grain, for thus You prepare the earth

Thus being positioned by the stream of water alludes to one whose hearing has developed to a place of great acuteness and capacity to receive the totality of truth without rejecting a specific stream or principle of truth. In Psalm 1, other trees may suffer the effects of drought because they are not positioned by the many streams of the truth of God's Word. Their condition is one of famine and wilderness – which are images of an inability to hear truth (**Amos 8:11** "Behold, days are coming," declares the Lord God, "When I will send a famine on the land, Not a famine for bread or a thirst for water, But rather for hearing the words of the Lord"). Contrary to this, the tree positioned by the water then has an ability to hear the fullness of God's Word. The imperative is to hear wholly and not selectively. This would include receiving and embracing every Word from one's spiritual father in the Lord – both corrective and edifying words (cf. **2 Tim. 4:2** "Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction.")

[**Aside**: See also 'many waters' in Ezek 43:1-2 where it produces a shining glory in the earth; Rev.14:2].

SEVEN LAMPSTANDS ARE WORD-CENTRED CHURCHES, WHICH TOGETHER REPRESENT PERFECTED APOSTOLIC DOCTRINE WHICH BRINGS LIGHT - ILLUMINATION - REVELATION

The seven lampstands are the seven churches, representing a broad cross-section of the global Body of Christ. Each is commended for various and different things. The number seven indicates perfection. Collectively these churches together as a corporate expression represent perfection in the area for which they are commended. Also, since 'lampstand' is a picture of apostolic doctrine, these seven churches as a whole represented perfected doctrine. We taught previously that the WORD OF GOD must characterise the HOUSE OF GOD (Isaiah 2:1-5; Micah 4:1-4; refer to Sessions 9 and 10 also).

Many apostolic streams collectively constitute the river of God's voice. The 'new wine' is in the cluster of the bunch of grapes and not vested in one specific grape. We, the corporate church, have the mind of Christ.

Isaiah 65:8a Thus says the LORD, "As the new wine is found in the cluster

Wine is a picture of the revelation of the Word. At the wedding at Cana, Jesus turned water into wine. Since water symbolically represents the Word of God in its cleansing and purifying function, wine too represents the Word, but more in its revelatory character in enlightening and illumining our understanding. In the prophecy on Judah recorded in Genesis 49:8-12, it is said that his eyes would be red with wine (v.12) – indicating that his perspective would be coloured by the revelation from the Word of God. Revelation and illumination causes us to walk with knowledge, understanding and certainty. Where there is no light or understanding, ignorance and darkness persists, thus causing us to walk in uncertainty (John 12:35). Where there is knowledge and understanding, there is light cast upon how we should navigate our lives through the darkness of the world. The most complete and substantial understanding of God's Word and will becomes possible when various apostolic streams converge into one mighty river of truth.

SEVEN STARS = SEVEN ANGELS = PERFECTION IN APOSTOLIC SPIRITUAL FATHERS/MESSENGERS

The seven stars are the seven angels or messengers (Rev.1:20) - spiritual fathers heading each church. These bring light from the Word to those under their oversight. The characteristic of the Word of God as a light to our path and a lamp to our feet, is actually realised and becomes operative when spiritual fathers connected to a valid and authentic apostolic fathering grace, provide entrance into the Word of God. These leaders, who truly embody what they teach, themselves function and represent the light of God's Word to their people. David was viewed as the lamp of the Lord by his people.

2 Sam. 21:17b Then the men of David swore to him, saying, You shall not go out again with us to battle, so that you **do not extinguish** the lamp of Israel.

[Consider also: 1 Kings 11:36]

True spiritual fathers represent LIGHT to their people. Their light is the WORD OF GOD which they teach and speak.

Rev. 1:16 In **His right hand** He held seven stars, and **out of His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword**

These stars or spiritual fathers are held in the right hand of God.

The '**right hand**' represents:

- A position of strength power and executive authority.
- Powerful capacity to execute and do the will of the Lord.

God's strategic will is effected through His specially endowed and graced apostolic spiritual fathers, who are empowered to give momentum to His vast purposes for the church by their proclamation of His powerful Word to those under their care and oversight.

A SHARP two-edged sword is in His mouth:

Sharp = oxus = sharp, swift.

This word is derived from a word meaning 'acid'. Acid has a disintegrating effect on that to which it is applied. This refers to the power of the word to literally dissolve that which is erroneous.

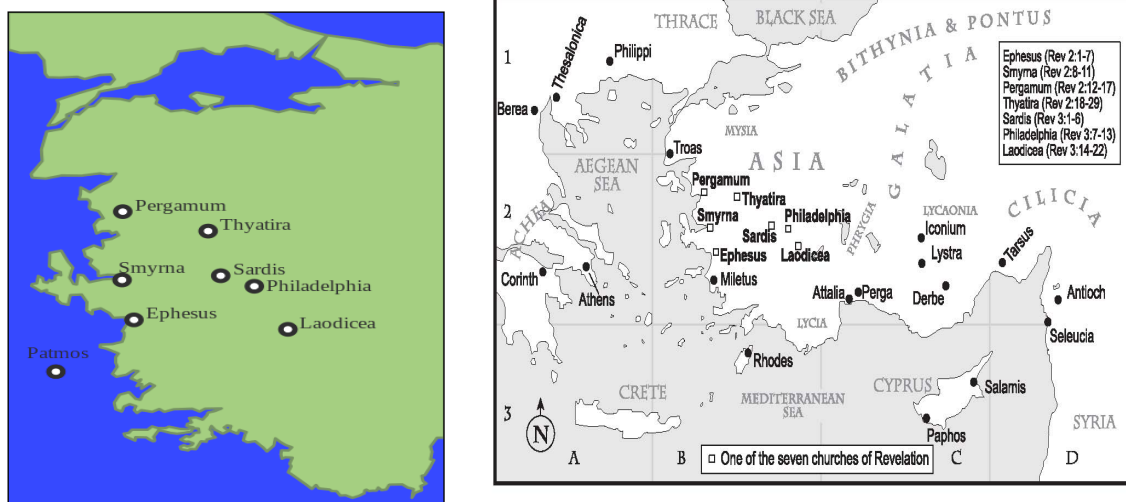
LEAVING YOUR FIRST LOVE : THE EPHESUS CASE STUDY

The name EPHESUS means the following : Desirable; A Giving Away; To Relax; Permitted; Loosening; Full Purposes; Throwing At

Revelation 2:1-7

- 1 "To the **angel of the church in Ephesus write**: The One who holds the seven stars in His right hand, the One who walks among the seven golden lampstands, says this:
- 2 'I know your **deeds** and your **toil** and **perseverance**, and that you **cannot tolerate evil men**, and you put to the **test those who call themselves apostles**, and they are not, and you found them *to be* false;
- 3 and you have **perseverance** and have **endured for My name's** sake, and have **not grown weary**.
- 4 'But I have *this* against you, **that you have left your first love**.
- 5 'Therefore **remember from where you have fallen**, and **repent** and do the **deeds you did at first**; or else I am coming to you and **will remove your lampstand** out of its place - **unless you repent**.
- 6 'Yet this you do have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.
- 7 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who **overcomes**, I will grant to eat of the tree of life which is in the Paradise of God

Maps indicating the Geographical Position of the Seven Churches in Asia



Of the seven churches, Ephesus is listed first. The ‘first position’ is an apostolic position. This is an apostolic position that leads the way into the fullness of God’s purposes.

Note how that in each of the letters to the seven churches, Christ is introduced in a specific way:

<u>Ephesus</u>	:	The One who holds the seven stars in His right hand, the One who walks among the seven golden lampstands	[Rev 2:1b]
<u>Smyrna</u>	:	The first and the last, who was dead, and has come to life	[Rev. 2:8b]
<u>Pergamum</u>	:	The One who has the sharp two-edged sword	[Rev. 2:12b]
<u>Thyatira</u>	:	The Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet are like burnished bronze	[Rev 2:18b]
<u>Sardis</u>	:	He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars	[Rev 3:1b]
<u>Philadelphia</u>	:	He who is holy, who is true, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, and who shuts and no one opens	[Rev 3:7b]
<u>Laodicea</u>	:	The Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God	[Rev 3:14b]

These self-revelations of Christ to each church represent specific aspects of deity which are disclosed to each church. They highlight a unique component of the nature of God accentuated in that specific context and bears strong reference to the content of the message revealed to each church.

To the church at Ephesus, Christ is introduced as “**the One who holds the seven stars in His right hand, the One who walks among the seven golden lampstands**”. This indicates that the church at

Ephesus had a view of Christ as one who both empowers and controls all seven stars – or leaders over each church; and He, Christ walks among each church (lampstand) – inspecting and appraising their effectiveness and representation of Himself. This church has an understanding of the operations of all the other churches, both their strengths and weaknesses. This church does not simply understand the revelation and message of Christ for itself but also for the entire spectrum of the church, and knows exactly where each church is in reference to where they should be.

In this sense the church at Ephesus is depictive of the apostolic principle, which amongst others, embodies the principle of being ranked first – not for qualitative superiority, but for functional effectiveness (Eph. 2:20; 3:5; 4:11; 1 Cor.12:28). One of the main emphases of the apostolic is a concern that churches be Christo-centric and be built and function with accuracy.

Ephesus sees the complete picture. It therefore cannot endure evil – it is intolerant. They hate the spirit of the Nicolaitan spirit (Nicolaitan = ‘destroyer/conqueror of the people’; the nicolaitans were a sect that held to the teaching of Balaam – which has the effect of (amongst many things) eroding the purity of God’s people through inaccurate relationships; it destroys the power of God’s people to represent His image accurately; it wants to conquer people to adapt to the culture of its day). The Ephesus church has apostolic zeal and passion – and they challenge people and systems that are inaccurate.

The church at Ephesus is commended for their diligence and perseverance in labour, their intolerance of evil, their discernment of false apostles and false apostolic expressions, their indomitable disposition, endurance and persistence. Yet, they are chided for one important reality that is vital to their role and function as a leader amongst the seven churches, viz. they have left their first love.

This church is then instructed to: “Therefore **remember from where you have fallen**, and **repent and do the deeds you did at first**” (Rev 2:4,5).

The language used to describe their error was ‘LEAVING their FIRST LOVE’; and ‘FALLEN’.

Left = aphiemi = forsake, lay aside, leave, omit, to disregard, etc.
To let go from one’s further notice, care, attendance, occupancy, i.e., to leave or let alone

Fallen = pipto peto = to fall from a higher to a lower place, to fail

The church at Ephesus LEFT their first love and this is described as a place from which they have fallen. When you fall, you lose elevation that affords you greater sight. Whenever you move away slightly or marginally from your FIRST LOVE (which is a love for God’s Word), you lose spiritual altitude and your perspective and appraisal of events and people becomes inaccurate.

Note the following: they departed from or left their first love because they had stopped ‘doing the deeds’ they ‘did at first’. They have ‘fallen’ from this position – indicating they had lost their elevated position that afforded them sight and accurate perception of themselves and the state of the other churches. The important question is, what was the first deeds of the church at Ephesus. To answer this, we need to examine the history of this church and its specific emphasis on the accuracy of the PROCEEDING WORD OF GOD as recorded in the book of Acts.

UNDERSTANDING THE CHURCH AT EPHESUS

Ephesus was an illustrious city on the west coast of the Roman province of Asia Minor. It was noted for the worship of the goddess Diana. It was the capital of the province and exerted great influence in the entire region.

Note the beginnings of spiritual activity in Ephesus:

Acts 18:19-28

- 19 They came to **Ephesus**, and he (*i.e. Paul*) left them there. Now he himself entered the synagogue and **reasoned with the Jews**.
- 20 When they asked him to stay for a longer time, he did not consent,
- 21 but taking leave of them and saying, "**I will return to you again if God wills**," he set sail from Ephesus.
- 22 When he had landed at Caesarea, he went up and greeted the church, and went down to Antioch.
- 23 And having spent some time *there*, he left and passed successively through the Galatian region and Phrygia, **strengthening all the disciples**.
- 24 Now a **Jew named Apollos**, an Alexandrian by birth, an eloquent man, **came to Ephesus**; and he was mighty in the Scriptures.
- 25 This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he was **speaking and teaching accurately the things concerning Jesus, being acquainted only with the baptism of John**;
- 26 and he **began to speak out boldly in the synagogue**. But when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and **explained to him the way of God more accurately**.
- 27 And when he wanted to go across to Achaia, the brethren encouraged him and wrote to the disciples to welcome him; and when he had arrived, he greatly helped those who had believed through grace,
- 28 for he powerfully refuted the Jews in public, **demonstrating by the Scriptures** that Jesus was the Christ.

The 'first deeds' of the church at Ephesus are recorded in Acts 19. They placed the highest value on the Word of God.

Acts 19:1-20

- 1 It happened that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the upper country and came **to Ephesus**, and found **some disciples**.
- 2 He said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" And they said to him, "No, we have not even heard whether there is a Holy Spirit."
- 3 And he said, "Into what then were you baptized?" And they said, "Into John's baptism."
- 4 Paul said, "John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in Him who was coming after him, that is, in Jesus."
- 5 When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

- 6 And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking with tongues and prophesying.
- 7 There were in all **about twelve men.**
- 8 And he entered **the synagogue** and continued speaking out boldly **for three months, reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God.**
- 9 But when some were becoming hardened and disobedient, speaking evil of the Way before the people, he withdrew from them and took away the disciples, **reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus.**
- 10 This took place **for two years**, so that **all who lived in Asia heard the word of the Lord**, both Jews and Greeks.
- 11 God was **performing extraordinary miracles** by the hands of Paul,
- 12 so that handkerchiefs or aprons were even carried from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out.
- 13 But also some of the Jewish exorcists, who went from place to place, attempted to name over those who had the evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, "I adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preaches."
- 14 Seven sons of a Jewish high priest named Sceva were doing this.
- 15 But the evil spirit answered them, Jesus I know, and Paul I recognize, but who are you?
- 16 And the man in whom was the evil spirit leaped on them, mastered all of them and overpowered them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded
- 17 **This became known to all, both Jews and Greeks, who lived in Ephesus; and fear fell upon them all and the name of the Lord Jesus was being magnified.**
- 18 Many also of those who had believed kept coming, confessing and disclosing their practices.
- 19 And many of those who practiced magic brought their books together and began burning them in the sight of everyone; and they counted up the price of them and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver.
- 20 So the **word of the Lord was growing mightily and prevailing.**

Points to Note Concerning the Events and Activities in Ephesus:

1. Ephesus, a Place of Upgrade and Transition:

At Ephesus, the disciples of John are upgraded into the current emphasis or season of God. Paul met twelve of John's disciples here and introduced them to the baptism into the Holy Ghost, an experience they never even knew existed. They were unaware of this experience because of the doctrine they subscribed to. John's teachings only encapsulated repentance and baptism in water. In the previous chapter, Appollos, who was well-versed in John's teaching, allowed himself to be upgraded by Aquilla and Priscilla, two of Paul's spiritual sons in the Lord. He proceeded from an 'accurate' way to a 'more accurate way'. However, these twelve disciples of John, who were probably now disciples of Apollos, were not exposed to current apostolic doctrine until they met Paul, who quickly gave them entrance into the new phase of God's dealings with the church. The point I want to stress here is that all this happens at Ephesus. Ephesus is a place of upgrade and transition into the current speaking of God. Part of the

meaning of 'Ephesus' is 'desirable' and 'full-purposed'. Ephesus represents a desirable location in the spirit to attain, a place where the fullness of divine purpose could be realised because of one's willingness to embrace a new season in God.

Sceva, a Jewish High Priest, together with seven of his sons, refused to be upgraded and transitioned into God's current emphasis. The death of Jesus signalled the end of the Old Covenant Levitical priestly order, and yet this man was still practising as a High Priest. His spiritual activity was irrelevant. He had seven sons (indicating perfected sonship in an inaccurate environment) and thus fulfilled a spiritual fathering role as well. His fathering was inaccurate. Spiritual fathering in itself does not guarantee accuracy. Fathering is to be relevant to the current speaking of the Lord. Sceva, whose name means 'left hand', has no 'right' hand authority or recognised authority in the realm of the Spirit. He and his sons attempted to exercise spiritual authority in a bid to attain the results attendant with Paul's ministry. The domain of the demonic gave no recognition to them, and they suffered public humiliation. All this happens at Ephesus. At Ephesus, those who refuse to migrate into the current speaking of God become exposed in their attempt to attain the successes and results of the present apostolic season, and they lose spiritual stature, authority and recognition.

Please bear in mind that Ephesus was a place where the Word of God was given the highest value and priority. In Revelation 2:2, they are commended for their capacity to recognise a false apostolic expression. We see the early indication of this capacity here, in that a false apostolic order represented in Sceva is exposed. The basis for their exposure was their failure to transition into the current Word preached by Paul - a word to which they were obedient, would have given them weight and stature in the realm of the spirit.

2. Ephesus, a Place of Reasoning and Persuading regarding the Kingdom of God.

Acts 19:8-9

- 8 And he entered the synagogue and continued speaking out boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God.
- 9 But when some were becoming hardened and disobedient, speaking evil of the Way before the people, he withdrew from them and took away the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus.

Paul spoke boldly for three months in the synagogue concerning the Kingdom of God. His modus operandi was one of REASONING AND PERSUADING about the Kingdom of God. Some were unresponsive to his teaching, becoming 'hardened' and 'disobedient' and began to malign the 'Way' - a description coined for what was construed as a new religious teaching of the day - something different to what was. Every new move of God will be persecuted by those who do not fully understand it.

Paul decided to withdraw from using the synagogue as the venue from which to proclaim his teachings, and proceeded to use the School of Tyrannus for the next two years. Here too, his methodology employed to deliver his message was one of REASONING.

Reasoning = dialegomai = To speak back and forth or alternately, to converse with, reason,
 present intelligent discourse
 To *say thoroughly*, that is, *discuss* (in argument or exhortation)
 To converse, discourse with one, argue, discuss

Persuading= peitho = To persuade another to receive a belief,
 To move or affect by kind words or motives
 To convince

This methodology of reasoning and persuading demanded that Paul be well versed in what he sought to teach and proclaim. There is a serious demand in the present season for us to be well-versed in the Scriptures, and especially in that which God is currently emphasising. Apollos was ‘mighty in the Scriptures’ and ‘instructed in the way of the Lord’ and hence spoke ‘boldly in the synagogue’. A cursory reading of Peter’s sermon in Acts 2 and Stephen’s defense in Acts 7 illustrates that they both had a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures. In our next session in this series we will highlight the need for diligent study of the Word, so that we can be able to intelligently REASON and PERSUADE people regarding God’s current proceeding Word in whatever time period we live.

3. Ephesus, a Place of Intensive Encounters with the Word of God from an Authentic Apostolic Source.

After his three month stint of teaching in the synagogue, Paul taught DAILY for two years in the school of Tyrannus. There was a DAILY encounter with the Word of God for two solid years – non-stop. This may even have been up to three years (see Acts 28:31). There was extreme devotion and love for God’s Word, and specifically for the new emphasis and understanding that Paul brought.

The Amplified Bible suggests that for two years, every day from 10 am in the morning until 3pm in the afternoon, Paul taught in the School of Tyrranus. There was a deep hunger for the Word of God!

Acts 19:9b “ he separated himself from them, taking the disciples with him, and went on holding daily discussions in the lecture room of Tyrannus from **about ten o'clock till three.** (Amplified Bible)

We today give far too scant and fleeting focus and attention to God’s Word. We are neglecting the very thing designed to bring transformation to our cities. For most believers, their exposure to God’s Word is reduced to about 30 minutes on a Sunday morning. There needs to be an almost obsessive word-focussed culture in the present day church. The early church continued ‘steadfastly’ in apostolic doctrine – see Acts 2:42.

After some time when Paul left Ephesus, whilst at Miletus, he called for the elders of the churches at Ephesus, and gave them his final address:

Act 20:15-31

- 15 Sailing from there, we arrived the following day opposite Chios; and the next day we crossed over to Samos; and the day following we came to Miletus.
- 16 For Paul had decided to sail **past Ephesus** so that he would not have to spend time in Asia; for he was **hurrying to be in Jerusalem, if possible, on the day of Pentecost.**
- 17 From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and **called to him the elders of the church.**
- 18 And when they had come to him, he said to them, "You yourselves know, from the first day that I set foot in Asia, how **I was with you the whole time,**
- 19 **serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials** which came upon me through the plots of the Jews;
- 20 how **I did not shrink from declaring** to you anything that was **profitable**, and **teaching you publicly and from house to house,**
- 21 solemnly testifying to both Jews and Greeks of **repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.**
- 22 "And now, behold, bound by the Spirit, I am on my way to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there,
- 23 except that the Holy Spirit solemnly testifies to me in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions await me.
- 24 "But I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, so that I may finish my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God.
- 25 "And now, behold, I know that all of you, among whom I went about **preaching the kingdom,** will no longer see my face.
- 26 "Therefore, I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men.
- 27 "For I did not shrink from declaring to you the **whole purpose of God.**
- 28 **"Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.**
- 29 "I know that after my departure **savage wolves will come in among you,** not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves men will arise, **speaking perverse things,** to draw away the disciples after them.
- 31 "Therefore be on the alert, remembering **that night and day for a period of three years** I did not cease to **admonish** each one with tears.

After from his methodology of reasoning and persuading, Paul reveals also that he 'declared', 'testified' and 'taught'.

Declared	=	anaggello	=	to <i>announce</i> (in detail): - declare, rehearse, report, show, speak, tell.
Testifying	=	diamarturomai	=	to <i>attest</i> or <i>protest earnestly</i> , religiously to charge; to confirm a thing by testimony, to testify, cause it to be believed
Teach	=	didaskō	=	to hold discourse with others in order to instruct them, deliver didactic; Discourses; to impart instruction; instil doctrine into one; to explain or expound a thing.

Paul dispensed the Word publicly and from house to house. 'House to house' is literally read from 'family to family'. This does not allude to physical domestic dwellings/houses, but to a church which met as a family unit – a household of faith. Where these met was not the important issue. Some were probably large and some smaller. The important thing is that throughout the city of Ephesus, Paul moved from household to household. But he also taught publicly – in the synagogue, and the School of Tyrannus – here probably elders or spiritual fathers of these 'households of faith met to receive apostolic doctrine from the apostle Paul. They would then go to their respective households and dispense of this to their people. This highlights the need for each local church or household of faith within a city or region to be connected to a valid and authentic apostolic fathering grace – from which they would receive doctrine.

4. Ephesus, a Place Where Nations Converge to hear the Word of God, Where the Word of God Grows Mightily and Prevails.

The effect of an intense focus on the Word of God at Ephesus was that all of Asia heard the Word of God. From this we see that Ephesus was a highly strategic city for the spread of the gospel. It was a 'gate' city. It was the point from which God's Word found great and rapid acceleration into all of the surrounding regions. Ephesus type cities need to emerge today – places from which God can launch significant aspects of His global purposes that will have far reaching impact in the geo-spiritual landscape.

5. Ephesus, a Place where Human Ideology and Inaccurate Religious Systems Opposed to God's Will is Destroyed because of God's Word.

The resultant effect of Paul's intense focus on the teaching of God's Word at Ephesus, was the burning of at least 50 000 pieces of silver worth of books of magic, and displacement of the worship of the goddess Diana (Artemis). This was evidenced by a severe loss in income from the sale of silver shrines of the goddess in the city. The silversmith who made these shrines, Demetrius, and other similar workmen, protested to no avail.

Books to the value of 50 000 pieces of silver were burnt. This equates to about 50 000 drachmas, a drachmas being the equivalent of one days labour. Hence 50 000 drachmas would be approximately 137 years of daily labour. Paul's teaching and daily intense focus on the Word of God literally affected the economy of the region. No more was the devil's work being financed.

By installing principles of the Word of God into the Ephesian people, Paul daily consolidated and entrenched the values or principles of the Kingdom of God. Diana, the goddess, was the ruling evil principality over Ephesus. An evil principality over a territorial region is given power and authority in that jurisdiction as people in that domain subscribe to and operate by certain principles associated with it. To break the power of that principality, simply destroy the principles by which it functions - by displacing it through the presentation, teaching and instalment into the heart and mind of people - principles of the Kingdom of God. This is done through the Word of God. At Ephesus, a whole city and the entire province of Asia was positively affected and infused with God's ways and values through the

daily focus and declaration of the Word of God. The Word of God needs to be loved and prioritised to a significant degree if we are to change the culture of our cities to that of the Kingdom of God. Also, the Word that needs to be proclaimed has got to be relevant apostolic doctrine received through reliable, credible and authentic Apostles of Christ.

CONCLUSION: The first love that the church at Ephesus LEFT – the position from which they had FALLEN - was their love for and devotion to the WORD OF GOD. For reasons unknown to us, in time, they strayed away from the primacy and priority of the WORD OF GOD. Thus they lost their effectiveness. Other aspects of the meaning of 'Ephesus' includes, 'a giving away; to relax; loosening'. Perhaps they became relaxed and lost their zeal for the Word of God; they 'loosened their tight grip of intense devotion to the Word, and hence lost their sharpness. May we never FALL from our position of high priority and commitment to obey the proceeding Word of God. The mandate of the apostolic church is intrinsically linked to the primacy accorded to the Word of God. Where the Word is given secondary focus, apostolic mandate is aborted.

Paul's last strategic act toward the church at Ephesus was to commend its leadership, the Ephesian elders, to the WORD of God's Grace.

Acts 19:32 "And now **I commend you** to God and to the **word of His grace**, which is able to **build you up** and to give **you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified**.

Paul COMMENDS them to the WORD of HIS GRACE. The word, 'commend' (paratithemi) means to 'place near'. Paul encouraged them never to lose their proximity to the Word of God – and Paul referred to it as the WORD of HIS GRACE. Grace is imparted primarily through the Word of God. To be deficient of the WORD is to be deficient of grace that actually configures your identity in God and empowers the execution of your function in the Kingdom. Paul said further that the WORD is able to BUILD UP and grant us access to our inheritance in God.

Paul takes his best son – Timothy – and appoints him as the leader in Ephesus. Timothy had to appoint elders there and rout out strange doctrines (see 1 Tim 1:3).

The verses which describes the power of a WORD-FOCUSSED CHURCH as Ephesus was is Acts 19:20 and 9:10.

Act 19:20 So the **word of the Lord** was **GROWING MIGHTILY** and **PREVAILING**.

Acts 9:10b **ALL in ASIA heard the WORD OF THE LORD**

Consider also:

- Act 6:7** The **word of God** kept on **SPREADING**; and the number of the disciples continued to increase greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were becoming obedient to the faith.
- Act 12:24** But the **word of the Lord** continued to **GROW** and to be **MULTIPLIED**.
- Act 5:42** And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they **kept right on TEACHING and PREACHING** Jesus as the Christ.
- Act 13:5** When they reached Salamis, they began to **PROCLAIM the word** of God in the synagogues of the Jews; and they also had John as their helper.
- Acts 13:48,49** When the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and **glorifying the word of the Lord**; and as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed. And the **word of the Lord was being spread through the whole region**
- Acts 18:5** But when Silas and Timothy came down from Macedonia, Paul *began* **DEVOTING HIMSELF COMPLETELY TO THE WORD**, solemnly testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ.
- 2 Thess. 3:1-2** Finally, brethren, **pray** for us that **THE WORD OF THE LORD** will **SPREAD RAPIDLY** and **BE GLORIFIED**, just as **it did also with you**; and that we will be rescued from perverse and evil men; for not all have faith

QUESTIONS AND ISSUES FOR PERSONAL REVIEW AND GROUP DISCUSSION

1. Explain the symbolic meaning as well as the significance of the seven stars and seven lampstands in Revelation chapter one.
2. Explain the significance of the placement of the church at Ephesus first among the seven churches. What application does this have on our time in the modern day church?
3. Biblically, what does 'FIRST LOVE' refer to? Demonstrate your answer using the church at Ephesus as an example.
4. What methodology did Paul use in spreading God's Word in Ephesus? What was his preferred modus operandi in declaring the message? In your answer to this, discuss both his method and degree of intensity or regularity.
5. What effects and outcomes were attendant with Paul's intense focus on the Word of God at Ephesus?
6. Have you 'left' your 'first love'?

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