

**THE CHURCH ON OFFENSE IN
CONFLICTED DAYS
FALL/WINTER 2020/2021
“ENGAGING THE CONFLICT WITH THE
STRATEGIC WEAPONS OF OUR WARFARE”
NOVEMBER 11, 2020
ACTS 19, 20:17-38 and other selected support Scriptures**

MISSION: To announce to all peoples of the world the coming kingdom of God and its King; to call out a people to serve the king and rule with Him in His Kingdom and to train them as His disciples

CONFLICT: The lands to which we are called to evangelize are ruled by principalities, powers, rulers of the darkness of this present age, and spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenlies. Joining them in this rebellion are their willing but ignorant human servants

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

TACTICS: Enter a region and find those who could have some knowledge of the True God. Announce to them and those who are around them the Lordship of Christ as prophesied by the Hebrew Scriptures and the kingdom of God. Continue teaching them and those who will hear until they clearly reject or receive Christ. Teach those who have put faith in Jesus as the Christ how to live the new godly life by observing all Jesus commanded His followers. Organize a church around the Messiah and the teaching of the Scriptures. Count fully on the Holy Spirit of God to transform people.

RULES OF ENGAGEMENT: Avoid worthless arguments about philosophies, genealogies, quarrels about the Law, and binary debates and contentions that demand you chose sides. Avoid divisive people, rebuke those who speak against the gospel, teach those who are confused,

help the weak. Pray continuously. Practice humility and teach every chance you get.

I. PAUL BRINGS THE GOSPEL TO EPHESUS

- A. This is a city and territory under the spell and rule of one of the principalities going by the name and reputation of Diana or Artemis. Artemis is “the goddess of wild animals, the hunt, and vegetation and of chastity and childbirth; she was identified by the Romans with Diana. **Artemis** was the daughter of Zeus and Leto and the twin sister of Apollo.” “She is the helpers (sic) of midwives as a goddess of birth.” *She is the goddess of fertility but also virginal purity. She is very popular among the rural people but there she looks much different from the urban Artemis of Ephesus though she carries out many of the same responsibilities and shares the same mythology.**
- B. Looking for the ones God has been working with and declaring the Gospel to them - the Spirit is present in power!*
- C. Finding the others who should know the Scriptures and the teaching of the kingdom of God and the Messiah - the synagogue*
 - 1. Primarily Jewish but included interested Gentiles (these will be the pre-evangelized people with whom God has been working)*
 - 2. Spent 3 months through the Scriptures clearly demonstrating His point that Messiah must come and suffer, die for the sins of the people and be raised again to be the King of the kingdom of God. He spoke with Holy Spirit confidence and some were persuaded.*
 - 3. However, some in the synagogue became stubborn, hard-hearted, recalcitrant and unbelieving. He left there and regrouped at a Gentile’s school where he continued for 2 years.*
- C. God used signs and wonders and miraculous conversions to confirm the work of God*
 - 1. Miraculous healings were taking place*
 - 2. Demonic liberation was taking place. Demonic spirits were quite prominent here.*
 - 3. False exorcists tried to use the name of Jesus and were beat up! Great fear came upon the whole community.*
 - 4. Many magicians were saved and ultimately burned their books of potions and incantations. These had been used to keep people under the spell of the magicians. This had some important social, political and economic changes.*

5. Ultimately the city broke out in a riot over the threat Paul's gospel was to the economic stability represented by the cult of Artemis.
- D. Powerful social, economic and religious changes were happening during the 2 years that Paul ministered here. It must be noted that it was NOT Paul's mission to create social change in Ephesus. From what we can see of his message, he made no mention of changing anything in Ephesus other than with the people who turned to Christ. But once people have been genuinely born again by Christ, the liberty and freedom found in Christ have social, economic and religious impact built into them by the Holy Spirit's invasion of their lives. His convicting work creates in people a change in values, in what is important. It changes their motivations, their habits, their vision of the future and their relationships with deities, people and agencies of society.

II. PAUL REVIEWS HIS STRATEGY WITH THE ELDERS AT EPHESUS ACTS 20:17-38

- A. Tireless humble and trying work vv. 17-20
- B. He held back nothing that was PROFITABLE v. 20
- C. He testified that the gospel was about REPENTANCE TOWARD GOD and FAITH TOWARD THE LORD JESUS CHRIST. That means that they would have to change their mind about who the Sovereign One was and put their trust in the Son of the Sovereign One, the Lord Jesus Christ v. 27
- D. He testified of the GOSPEL OF THE GRACE OF GOD v. 24
- E. The main focus of his preaching was PROCLAIMING THE KINGDOM OF GOD. The kingdom of God is the reuniting the two rebellious divisions of heaven and earth into one reconciled kingdom under one King, the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus was the reconciler and redeemer of both kingdoms. He is the King of all kingdoms of earth and the Lord over all the "lords" of the heavens. His Kingdom is the last earthly kingdom ever but it unites heaven and earth again in a single kingdom, the Kingdom of God. This is what Paul preached and proclaimed. v. 25
- F. He declared to them the WHOLE COUNSEL (WILL, PURPOSE, INTENT, DESIRE) OF GOD. When he completed his ministry with them he was innocent of the blood of all the people of Ephesus, especially of those elders gathered there.
- G. He could see the storm brewing for them with his departure and it brought great sadness to him. But he trusted God with them,

encouraging them to guard themselves against the false teachers and false teaching that was going to come. From Revelation 2:1-7 they apparently took his counsel to heart but lost something in their heart along the way.