
Words of Truth

Those In Asia Turned Away From Paul

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The Apostle Paul put forth a lot of effort in teaching in Asia. When Paul first set himself to head to Asia, the Holy Ghost forbade him from going (Acts 16:1-10). Later though, Paul finally made his way there. We read this: *“And it came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts came to Ephesus: and finding certain disciples, He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost. And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism. Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied. And all the men were about twelve. And he went into the synagogue, and spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God. But when divers were hardened, and believed not, but spake evil of that way before the multitude, he departed from them, and separated the disciples, disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus. And this continued by the space of two years; so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks. And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul: So that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them. Then certain of the vagabond Jews, exorcists, took upon them to call over them which had evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth. And there were seven sons of one Sceva, a Jew, and chief of the priests, which did so. And the evil spirit answered and said, Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye? And the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, and overcame them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. And this was known to all the Jews and Greeks also dwelling at Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified. And many that believed came, and confessed, and shewed their deeds. Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all men: and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver. So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed” (Acts 19:1-20).*

If you were to keep reading through where I left off above, you will find that the work Paul had been doing caused an uproar with the advocates of idolatry (Acts 19:21-41). Paul

then left Asia and headed to various places and then finally to Troas (Acts 20:1-11). Paul wasn't done with Asia though. In Miletus he sent and requested a meeting with the elders in Ephesus. We learn a lot from their meeting (Acts 20:17-38). Among those many things, we learn that Paul had taught them for about three years. We see his warning to them night and day with tears about false brethren from within and without. We also see how sad he was that he was not going to see them again.

Paul was clearly in love with the saints in Asia. He wrote a later letter to Ephesus. He wrote a letter that the congregation in Colosse was expected to share with the congregation in Laodicea (Colossians 4:16). In that letter he also spoke of saints in Hierapolis (Colossians 4:13). When you look at a man named Epaphras (Colossians 1:7 and Colossians 4:12) you can tie him to Philemon to see that Philemon was connected to Colosse (Philemon 1:23). I say all of that to get to our point. What did it matter to those saints and congregations that Paul did all this work for them and among them?

Paul Didn't Matter To Them As Much As They Did To Him

Near the end of Paul's physical life (cf. II Timothy 4:6-8), he wrote this: *"This thou knowest, that **all they which are in Asia be turned away from me; of whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes**"* (II Timothy 1:15). How sad is that? After all that Paul did, they turned from him. Sadly, this was the norm for Paul (II Corinthians 12:15). Beyond this personal desertion of Paul, what more does this say about the churches in Asia? Since saints were/are expected to follow the teaching of the Apostles (Acts 2:42), what does their turning away from Paul say about the faith in Asia?

Well, when you turn to the book of Revelation, you find that Ephesus left their first love (Revelation 2:1-7). You find that Laodicea was so carnal they made the Lord want to vomit (Revelation 3:14-22). You don't read about Colosse or Hierapolis at all. Of the seven congregations addressed in Asia, only two were faithful. When faithful teachers of the Gospel were turned away from, the Lord was turned away from too (Luke 10:16). Therefore, when we see that they didn't care about Paul that was also a statement about how they felt towards our Lord (Matthew 10:40). What could have been different had they not turned away from Paul? How could esteeming him for his work of love among them (I Thessalonians 5:12-13) kept them in the faith?

Conclusion

When we examine the lives of faithful men of God we see that people turned away and even against them (I Kings 18:1-4, Nehemiah 9:26, Jeremiah 20:1-10, Matthew 19:16-22, Mark 14:43-50, John 6:60-71, II Timothy 4:10-16, etc.). From the days of old, many have worked to help us be saved. Let's not turn our backs on them!