

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 140: Ephesians - Victory In Christ Jesus - The Active Church

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

Episode Summary: The early church of Ephesus was active in Ephesus. So we must be active in a pagan world. We, the church, must be built upon the foundation Christ and sound biblical doctrine. We must be active in hope, Love, and doing good works of discipleship and ministry. We must be active in the Holy Spirit. Finally, we must be active in breaking down the strongholds of satan through corporate prayer and engagement of spiritual warfare.

The church of Christ must continue to engage the darkness with the light of Christ not fleeing from it. We flee from false doctrine but plant ourselves where satan sits shining the light of gospel message wherever his lies prevail. Because Christ is the way the truth and the life.

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(1) **A Church built on Christ must be active, in hope, love and doing the works of discipleship and ministry**

The Church of Ephesus was living victoriously in the community by loving the sick actively ministering to the sick and needy. It was not Paul, it was the members of the congregation who were faithfully trusting in the promises of God and doing the works of their faith. They were loving the sick and those afflicted with demonic spirits, they were doing works worthy of repentance.

Is this not what a church should be like?

Scripture instructs us,

23Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. 24And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, 25not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching. (Hebrews 10:23-24)

This scripture gives us some amazing understanding as to how a Godly church behaves.

1. It holds on to the Confession of our hope. Our hope that we confess is Jesus and it is in Christ that we live out the victory of the cross. A gathering of believers should always provide hope to the lost and a light in the darkness.
2. A sound church never waives in its biblical truth and it holds fast to Christ Jesus in all things.
3. It considers others as important to the body, it stirs up love, by loving those the world rejects and by being patient, kind, and forgiving.
4. A Godly church is active in storing up good works in the community. It feeds the poor, clothes the naked, visits the sick, plants more seeds, waters those seeds, and casts out demons.
5. A godly church does not close its doors it always gathers together loving one another because its awaiting Jesus to call her home.

As a church holds to these values, inevitably satan will send in the deceivers and disruptors to confuse and alienate. this brings us to the next point.

(2) A Church built on Christ is Active in the Holy Spirit.

Last episode I mentioned that the faith of a disciple is built upon the word of God in which the Holy Spirit guides the believer to all truth and convicts the believer of sin, righteousness, and judgment.

Love, which should embody any church is a fruit of the Spirit, therefore the church needs to function with patient endurance towards the lost. A spirit-filled church is one in which the congregation of believers walks in the spirit and learns according to the Holy Spirit.

16 This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. 17For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. 18But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law. (Galatians 5:16-17)

The most important part of a Christian life is to walk out ones faith in the fruits of the Spirit. Many churches today emphasize the gift of the Spirit, but have no visible fruits. They seek vain glory for themselves, and so bring disaster to other believers. The growing churches walk in humility, they desire the fruits of the Spirits more than the gifts.

22But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, 23meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. 24And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.

25If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. 26Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another. (Galatians 5:22-26)

When a church is obedient to Christ and walking according to the spirit it will not fall for the deception of wicked men and women, who masquerade as religious Holy leaders. In verse 13, we see the phony deceivers in action.

13Then some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists took it upon themselves to call the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying, "We exorcise you by the Jesus whom Paul preaches." 14Also there were seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, who did so.

The Christian casts out demons in the name of Jesus by the power of His blood in the authority of the God head.

15And the evil spirit answered and said, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?"

Why, because the name of Jesus is the name above all names. They knew Paul because he was sealed by the Holy Spirit bough with the blood of Jesus and adopted by God the Father.

16Then the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, overpowered them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded.

The demons were so angry they turned on their own because of the work that the church was doing. The news of this spread all over Ephesus and Asia Minor.

17This became known both to all Jews and Greeks dwelling in Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified. 18And many who had believed came confessing and telling their deeds.

This is amazing! This led to repentance because the world recognizes a victory. Why is it then that so many churches deny the power of Christ to transform?

This leads to our third point.

(3) A Church built on Christ is Active in breaking down strongholds.

Satan is always active in building supernatural strongholds. Most Christians live in weakness, doubting the truth of God's word. If the world believes in the supernatural, why do we deny the ultimate supernatural power of God, who already has been victorious over satan.

3For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. 4For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, 5casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, 6and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled. (2 Corinthians 10:3-6)

The Christian must understand this God is pulling down the stronghold by the faith and prayers of of a faithful congregation. Listen to this quote from a disciple of John:

"For if the prayer of one or two possesses such power that Christ stands in the midst of them, how much more will the prayer of the bishop and of the whole church, ascending up in harmony to God, prevail for the granting of all their petitions in Christ! ((Letter to the Ephesians, Ignatius. The Research Library of Ancient Text: Volume Two Pg 48))

Remember God was breaking down the strongholds of the supernatural through the prayers and Activity of an obedient church committed to its mandate of making disciples.

When God's people are obedient to corporate prayer, loving others, stirring up good works, and giving God the glory. Satan can not stand.

Remember what happened.

19Also, many of those who had practiced magic brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. And they counted up the value of them, and it totaled fifty thousand pieces of silver. 20So the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed

Ignatius is exhorting corporate prayer in the Church. An idea that has gone extinct among believers today. Later he argues,

"Take heed, then, often to come together to give thanks to God, and show forth His praise. For when ye come frequently together in the same place, the powers of Satan are destroyed, and his "fiery darts" urging to sin fall back ineffectual. For your concord and harmonious faith prove his destruction, and the torment of his assistants. Nothing is better than that peace which is according to Christ, by which all war, both of aerial and terrestrial spirits, is brought to an end. "For we wrestle not against blood and flesh, but against principalities and powers, and against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in heavenly places." ((Letter to the Ephesians, Ignatius. The Research Library of Ancient Text: Volume Two Pg 51))

Here Ignatius sounds like Paul reminding the Church of Ephesus to come frequently to gather, pray give thanks, and give praise when they battle the spiritual forces of evil both aerial and terrestrial.

The church of Christ must continue to engage the darkness with the light of Christ not fleeing from it. We flee from false doctrine but plant ourselves where satan sits shining the light of gospel message wherever his lies prevail. Because Christ is the way the truth and the life.

The early church of Ephesus was active in Ephesus. So we must be active in a pagan world. We, the church must be built upon the foundation of Christ and sound biblical doctrine. We must be active in hope, Love, and doing good works of discipleship and ministry. We must be active in the Holy Spirit. Finally, we must be active in breaking down the strongholds of satan through corporate prayer and engagement of spiritual warfare.