

Seasons of Grace.
Acts 19:8-10.
Sunday, July 17, 2011.

I. A good start.

- A. When Paul got to Ephesus and reasoned with the Jews in the synagogue, there was an initial openness, so much so that they asked Paul to stay longer and speak further with them when Paul intended to go on to Jerusalem to pay his vow.
- B. Paul did not stay, but did promise to return to Ephesus if the Lord permitted.
- C. These were Jews who displayed the kind of openness Paul had encountered in Berea where his listeners daily searched the scriptures to see whether these things were so. Acts 17:11.
- D. Paul does return to Ephesus, and for three months he reasons and seeks to persuade the synagogue worshippers concerning the things of the kingdom of God.

Application:

Here we see a principle at work that is always characteristic of God's kingdom. Those who sincerely seek light and truth regarding the kingdom of God always are given grace in the form of light and truth by way of the operations of the Holy Spirit in their lives. Here we look back at the things spoken of last week from Luke 11:9-13. All those that ask and seek and knock on the Lord's door are answered, and none are sent away empty handed. As such Paul had to return to Ephesus to be the instrument of additional measures of grace in the lives of the Ephesian seekers.

Will you not draw courage from this passage if you are sincerely seeking the Lord and His grace for your own life?

And if you are not presently seeking the Lord, will not the promise imbedded in this passage induce you to do so?

"God is the rewarder of those who diligently seek Him." Hebrews 11:6.

II. Seasons of grace.

For three months the Lord, in the person of Paul, stood at the door of the hearts of these Ephesian Jews and proselytes, speaking, reasoning, persuading and pleading.

- A. The result seems to have been that many believed. Those who did not believe are referred to as "some" in vs. 9. The remainder, those who believed together with those who were perhaps still sitting on the fence, are referred to as "the multitude."
- B. There are those who harden their hearts; they are not going to bow before King Jesus. As a matter of fact, they are going to speak evil of Him and His followers. And with that the season of God's grace, displayed inside the synagogue of Ephesus, comes to a close.
- C. Paul withdraws himself from the synagogue; no more will the sounds of gospel grace be heard in that building, and no more grace will be given to those who continue to gather there.
- D. Paul takes the believers with him; they need to separate themselves from those who oppose the Lord Jesus Christ, and speak evil of Him.
- E. For all those who are still on the fence it is decision time. "Choose for

yourselves this day whom you will serve..." Joshua 24:15.

Applications:

1. There are seasons to the Lord's grace in our lives. There are times when the Lord invades our lives with His grace; seasons when He enlightens us to His truth; seasons when He inclines our hearts to consider the things concerning His kingdom.

When we harden our hearts against these things, willfully opposing them, or if we treat them with indifference: "interesting, but not for me; at least not now," or if we are somewhat persuaded, thinking "Yes I need to act on that and make these things my own, but not now; I will get around to that later."

You need to understand that at some point the Lord withdraws the gracious influence of His Spirit and leaves you to your devices and your own desires.

"My Spirit will not strive with man forever..." Genesis 6:3.

"Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts." Hebrews 4:7.

2. On the other hand, grace obeyed and embraced always brings more grace. That is why we are exhorted not to grieve the Spirit, or worse, not to quench the Spirit. Do not put the Holy Spirit in a position where His bringing you more grace would constitute casting pearls before swine. An example of that would be the spending of the answers to our prayers on our own pleasures as referred to in James 4:3.

3. There are times of separation. For Paul to have stayed in the context of that synagogue, with a number of men openly opposing and speaking evil of the Lord and His kingdom, would have constituted casting pearls before swine. We do well to understand that the gospel brings separation between friends; between families; even in churches.

III. The gospel given to others.

- A. Having withdrawn from the synagogue, the Apostle continues his ministry for two more years in Ephesus. He does so daily in the school of Tyrannus.
- B. Most likely Tyrannus' school (or lecture hall) was a local school for rhetoric and philosophy of which there were many in those days.
- C. Visiting lecturers would use halls or schools like these to teach their particular philosophies to those who were interested. As such Tyrannus allowed Paul to use his facilities for his teaching ministry.
- D. It was an intense ministry, for it was carried out daily, for over two years; publicly and privately; in the lecture hall of Tyrannus, but also from house to house; day and night, and with tears. Acts 20:20, 31.
- E. The results of this ministry were remarkable. "All that dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks." Acts 19:10.
- F. Ephesus was the capital of the Roman province of Asia. Many of those coming to Asia, for business and otherwise, were exposed to the gospel. Many of those took the gospel with them and proclaimed it in their own cities, leading to the formation of churches there. One such church seems to have been that of the Colossians; founded by Epaphras. Colossians 1:7. Others would include six of the seven churches of Revelation 2 and 3, all located around Ephesus.

Application:

When a person, city, nation or people reject the gospel; the Lord will take it to those who will embrace it, leaving the others to their own devices.