

Week 6—Ephesus: Religion and Politics

Paul Boldly Preaches the Truth about Jesus to both Jews and Gentiles

Acts 19-20

And he entered the synagogue and continued **speaking out boldly** for three months, reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God.

For I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God...night and day for a period of three **years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears.**

this Paul has persuaded and turned away a considerable number of people, **saying that gods made with hands are no gods at all.**

Demetrius, the silversmith made this an issue that led to a riot in the Great Theater.

Paul taught in his letters that:

- God created the world
- Homosexuals will not inherit God's kingdom
- Adultery and fornication are forbidden
- There is only one way to God
- Hell is real

These statements would have been highly offensive to the audiences he was speaking to.

Nero AD 54-68

Nero was 17 years old when he became Caesar. The first five years of Nero's rule are customarily called a period of good government under the influence of his mother, Seneca, and the praetorian prefect.

It is not excessive to say that he was one of the worst of Rome's emperors in the first two centuries.

Whatever talents he had, whatever good he may have done, all is overwhelmed by three events:

- the murder of his mother
- the fire at Rome
- his savage treatment of the Christians.



I Timothy 2

First of all, then, I urge that **entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings**, be made on behalf of all men, **for kings and all who are in authority**, so that we may lead **a tranquil and quiet life** in all godliness and dignity.



This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, *who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.*

For there is **one God, and one mediator** also between God and men, the man **Christ Jesus**, who gave Himself as a ransom for all, the testimony given at the proper time. For this I was appointed *a preacher and an apostle*...Therefore I want the men in every place **to pray**...

Ephesus: Neokorus (Temple Warden)

It was customary for cities to compete for the honor of neokorus because of the benefits it brought them. This meant the whole world competed to determine who would honor the deified ruler the most.

Caesar Augustus—Pergamum

Tiberius—Smyrna

Nero—proposed Ephesus but died before it happened.



**Domitian
AD 81-96**

“Because the Emperor was the head of the Roman state, and the state was the basis for all of life, to reject the emperor was to be unpatriotic, un-Roman. It was not one's allegiance to Jesus as Lord that was considered dangerous, but the insistence that he must be **the only Lord of all.** All other gods are not gods at all (Acts 19:23-26) but demonic counterfeits.”

What seemed religious to the Christians was political to the Romans. There was no middle ground. Either Caesar was Lord or Jesus was.

Ephesians 6 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.

Pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the **opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness** the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in **proclaiming** it I may **speak boldly**, as I ought to speak.