

All Asia Turned Away

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They all turned away from Paul. The cities of Asia include Ephesus, Colossae, and Laodicea. Can you imagine how that might have happened? We are considering 2 Timothy 1:15 and Paul's astounding statement to Timothy that he was aware that all who were in Asia turned away from Paul, among whom were Phygelus and Hermogenes. The notable exception was Onesiphorus (whose name meant "profitable") who cooled and refreshed Paul when he was "under fire" or being persecuted.

Remember the glory days. On his second journey, the Holy Spirit would not permit him to stop in Asia but required him to go directly to Philippi of Macedonia and on to Achaia to establish the church in Corinth. On his way back to Antioch, he stopped by Ephesus briefly and clearly was excited to finally bring his message to Asia's capital. He hurried back and labored three years. So many were turning from the magic arts that they had a massive book burning destroying books worth 50,000 pieces of silver. Paul cast out so many demons that a band of con-artists tried to cast out demons in the name of "Jesus, whom Paul proclaims" and the fun really began. The demons turned on the exorcists and they fled out of that house naked and wounded. Fear fell on them all and the name of the Lord Jesus was praised. The local idol shrine business was fading. The silversmiths panicked, called a guild meeting, and started a riot to stir up the old feelings for the goddess Diana.

The church of Ephesus received an epistle from Paul that is in the New Testament bearing the name of that church. The first church of the seven in the Book of Revelation was Ephesus.

How disappointing that the Asian brethren, who turned away from Paul, could have forgotten the great things that God had done through him in those glory days! But the glory days pass and God's instruments are quickly forgotten. God brings great joy and strength to the lost and dying; He teaches them how to walk in the Light, rebuild their lives and share in the divine nature; but there is always someone who can step in with more charm, who, out of weakness or jealousy, is willing to turn the affections of brethren against the heroes of God.

The context is that of the shame and reproach of Paul's imprisonment as well as the dangers and chaos of Nero's lunacy. So few have the courage of Onesiphorus to be kind and supportive when the tide is against them. tp