

THE LORD'S WORKER ACCEPTS OPPOSITION AS A CHALLENGE
THE LORD'S FAITHFUL WORKER – PART 3 OF 5
1 CORINTHIANS 16:9

THE POWER OF THE GOSPEL OVERCOMES

1. Any **authentic**, gospel-based ministry is going to be **opposed** by satanic forces.
2. In fact, it seems the greater the **work** being done in Jesus' name, the greater the **opposition** that comes from the antagonistic forces of evil.
3. The reason Paul remained in Ephesus was due to an open door of opportunity as people **responded** to his **preaching** (Acts 19:1-20).
4. The Word of God was "mighty" and **effective** and began **changing** lives (Acts 19:20; 1 Cor. 16:9).

KEY THOUGHT: The explosive power of the **gospel** is sufficient to overcome any **opposition** (Rom. 1:16; Heb. 4:12).

I. EFFECTIVE GOSPEL MINISTRY DRAWS ADVERSARIES (1 COR. 16:9; EPH. 6:12).

- A. The **Ephesian** church received tremendous opposition (Eph. 6:12).
 1. Paul was willing to **adjust** his plans to remain in Ephesus until Pentecost to help **fight** these spiritual adversaries (1 Cor. 16:8).
 2. The Temple of Diana, in Ephesus, was famous in the region and was the center of a great system of **organized idolatry**.
 3. The religious animosity that existed towards Christians was **intense** and considered **normal**.

B. The presence of opposition kept the gospel at the forefront of **conversation** (Eph. 6:10-13).

1. Upon his arrival in Ephesus, Paul addressed the **misguided** theology of some of the **believers** (Acts 19:1-7).
2. Paul **preached** in the synagogue and at the school of Tyrannus (Acts 19:8-10).
3. Paul performed **miracles**, cast out evil spirits and challenged false **teachers** (Acts 19:11-19).

KEY THOUGHT: Paul wrote that he did not view opposition a **hindrance** but as an opportunity to share the gospel with **power** (2 Cor. 4:7-10).

II. FIERCE OPPOSITION WILL BE **OVERCOME** WITH THE GOSPEL (ACTS 19:20).

- A. The utter **failure** of the false exorcists brought greater **conviction** upon the Ephesians (Acts 19:13-16).
- B. **Fear** of a Holy God and the conviction of grievous **sin** brought confession and repentance (Acts 19:17-19).

KEY THOUGHT: All the Satanic forces marshaled against the gospel **could not** overpower it, and the name of Jesus was magnified (Acts 19:20).

FOR FURTHER STUDY AND PERSONAL GROWTH

July 3, 2011

SUNDAY: *The ministry of the gospel will overcome satanic forces (Rom. 1:16; Heb. 4:12)!*

Any authentic, gospel-based ministry is going to be opposed by satanic forces. In fact, various Christian authors through time have stated that it seems the greater the work being done in Jesus' name, the greater the opposition that comes from the antagonistic forces of evil. G. Morgan Campbell said, "If you have no opposition in the place you serve, you're serving in the wrong place." Paul encountered great opposition to the gospel in Ephesus (1 Cor. 16:9). However, the reason Paul remained in Ephesus was due to an open door of opportunity as people responded to his preaching (Acts 19:1-20). The power of the Word of God was changing lives (Acts 19:20). The explosive power of the gospel is sufficient to overcome all opposition (Rom. 1:16; Heb. 4:12). Pray today for the community around our church. Ask the Holy Spirit to direct us to those that He is stirring to conviction and salvation. ***May we be tools in that hand of a sovereign God who is bringing people to salvation!***

MONDAY: *The church at Ephesus was opposed by these satanic forces (Eph. 6:12)!*

Ephesians 6:12 uses the word "wrestle" to describe the conflict between the gospel and satanic forces. Wrestle is a word that carries the connotation of hand-to-hand combat involving trickery and deception. Paul was leading Christians to cope with the deceptive temptations with truth and righteousness (Eph. 6:12). Paul listened to the Holy Spirit's leadership and remained in Ephesus until Pentecost to continue the battle (1 Cor. 16:9). The opposition was highly organized around the Temple of Diana. The religious animosity between pagans and Christians, Jews against Christians, as well as pagans and Jews against each other was intense and considered normal. Paul saw this battle was against the spiritual forces of evil and identified four different strata of demons they were battling (Eph. 6:12). The lesson is that every ministry is a spiritual battle. It is not the craftiness of man but the power of the Holy Spirit that brings victory in the spiritual battles of ministry. Decide to pray more and rely less on your wits. Commit to give more time to prayer every day and sharpen your prayers to be as specific as possible. ***May spiritual opposition be the impetus to your dependence on divine power!***

TUESDAY: *The gospel was kept at the forefront of conversations because of the intense opposition (Eph. 6:10-13)!*

The turmoil between pagans, Jews, and Christians was prominent in the lives of the citizens of Ephesus. Paul's instructions to the Ephesian Christians were to turn their eyes and focus to the power and might of God (Eph. 6:10). The theme of spiritual warfare was the backdrop for the description of the armor of God. Paul admonishes believers to wear this spiritual armor as our permanent garment in the battle against the deceptive, underhanded war with the devil (v. 11). The powers against which Christians fight are too much for us without the supernatural empowerment of God and the protection of His spiritual armament (v. 12). It is armed with the power of God as symbolized by this armor that Christians will prevail against evil and overcome (v. 13)! That is exactly what happened in Ephesus when Paul stayed to preach and lives were miraculously changed (Acts 19:1-20). Become convicted and empowered by the Holy Spirit to pray vigorously for the overthrow of evil and the salvation of our community members. ***May the empowerment of the Holy Spirit be our desire!***

WEDNESDAY: *The opposition to the gospel was a blessing in disguise (2 Cor. 4:7-10)!*

One response to opposition is depression and defeat. Paul wrote to the Corinthians from Philippi that opposition to the gospel is an opportunity to evoke the power of the gospel (2 Cor. 4:7-10). Paul describes himself as a humble and easily replaceable servant of the Lord (v. 7). It is the power of God, and not our own, that brings spiritual victory. Paul's flesh was weak, and he lists four ways he could easily have been overwhelmed in his own strength (vv. 8-9). Through Paul's weakness, Christ was displayed (Gal. 2:20). It was Christ's power that brought absolute victory (v. 10). Read through Galatians 2:20, and pray for the courage and strength to surrender completely to the Lord's leadership in your life. ***May the power of Christ become the rule of the day in your life for His glory!***

THURSDAY: *The false exorcists created a stage on which God demonstrated His power (Acts 19:13-16)!*

These opportunists saw the power of the name of Jesus and began invoking His name to perform exorcisms (Acts 19:13). However, the demonic spirits did not recognize their power. These demonic spirits used the man he indwelt to attack these false healers and wounded them (v. 16). It was upon this stage that God would choose to demonstrate His power of conviction and call many to salvation (v.17). Praise God today for His holiness. Bless His name for His love for the unsaved and His benevolence for their salvation. ***May the Lord be held high and lifted up for holiness!***

FRIDAY: *Fear of a Holy God brought conviction of sin and salvation to the Ephesians (Acts 19:17-19)!*

Legitimate fear brought the people of Ephesus to bow before an omnipotent God (Acts 19:17). Conviction of their sin and rebellion against His holiness resulted in many confessing their deeds (v. 18). The repentance was widespread. The depth of the repentance was demonstrated by the burning of the expensive magic books from which so many derived their livelihood (v. 19). The fight for the spiritual high-ground had shifted. The gospel has overcome all the forces of evil that marshaled against it. What are you thinking right now about the power of prayer and what God would do if we only joined Him in what He was doing? Pray now for a holy fear of a holy God. Ask Him to reveal sin and rebellion in your life. Wait on the Holy Spirit to do so and record His findings in your spiritual journal. ***May the purifying movement of the Holy Spirit elevate the name of the Lord in our community!***

SATURDAY: *The gospel overcame the forces of evil that gathered to oppose it (Acts 19:20)!*

All the satanic forces marshaled against the gospel could not overpower it, and the name of Jesus was magnified (Acts 19:20). Paul had heard the Lord telling him to delay his journey to finish what the Lord was about to do. The Christians in Ephesus learned that the power of the gospel is greater than any force of evil. It was also seen that, when God chooses to invoke His Holy Spirit, no one can refuse His call. Why then do we not ask the Lord to sweep His Spirit across the face of our community? Begin today to lift the children and families in our community before the Lord, asking for His Spirit to fall on their lives and bring conviction that results in salvation. ***May the Lord be glorified by our absolute surrender to Him!***