

EXPOSED

The world's lies and deceptions uncovered

EMILY HATFIELD

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INTRODUCTION

In the fall of 2008, I was privileged to explore Athens, Rome, Ephesus, Corinth, Crete, and Patmos. The moment I stepped into the ruins of the past, I was changed. Seeing Biblical sites first-hand opens your eyes to Scriptural realities that are easy to miss otherwise. For instance, I never truly appreciated a prison epistle about joy until I stepped into a dark, damp first-century prison. When I returned home from my trip abroad, I knew I had to continue educating myself about first century life.

In 2013, my husband and I traveled back to Greece and Turkey, this time exploring each of the seven churches of Asia as well as other Biblically-significant sites. I didn't know it was possible to fall more in love with first century customs, architecture, and geography, but I did. Upon our return home, I continued my studies of these topics. This book is the product of the passion I cultivated and the knowledge I uncovered while on my journeys abroad.

What struck me most as I visited and studied these ancient sites was the fact that we really neglect to study them as we should. Here were Christians who lived in a world that was extremely ungodly, who faced extreme persecution, and who had oppressive governments. They were wealthy and sophisticated and captivated by material possessions. They were, quite frankly, not that different from us. In fact, their struggles against Satan were exactly the same. Neglecting to study their culture really puts us at a disadvantage. By digging into their first century life, though, we will be better prepared

for our own fight against an ungodly culture. After all, times have changed, but the world has not.

In this book we will look at the following tactics that Satan has used and continues to use to deceive Christians: inconvenience, timidity, conformity, idolatry, materialism, persecution, rationalization, complacency, vulnerability, discouragement, distress, and separation.

Each chapter of this book is broken down into three sections: the place, the passage, and the point. In *the place*, you will read a detailed description of the city or region that the chapter is focusing on. Emphasis will be given to pagan worship centers, topography, geography, and other important details specific to each location. *The passage* will highlight one section of scripture written either about the place itself or written to the Christians who lived there. *The point* is just that, a point of application we can glean from our studies. This section will expose Satan's tactics and make a modern application for our fight against him.

It is my prayer that this book will expand your knowledge of first century life, expose the recycled tactics Satan uses to lure Christians away from God, and open your eyes to more Biblical truths that you can apply in your walk with Jesus. We know that Satan is seeking to devour us (1 Pet. 5:8), therefore we must be ready to defend ourselves against his attacks. Since his schemes against mankind today are similar to the schemes he's always used, I pray this book will help you, personally, resist the devil so that he will flee from you (James 4:7).

EXPOSING INCONVENIENCE

Asia Minor

*Do you let comfort take precedence
over God's commands?*



Asia Minor is one of those places in the New Testament that we read about, perhaps hear about in sermons, yet do not often take the time to learn anything about its location, culture, or significance to the first century. It is so easy to skim over the geographical lists in the Bible, especially if we are wanting to move on to exciting places like Ephesus and Corinth. Don't worry, we'll get there. But first, it is helpful to understand the region that holds so many familiar stories, cities, and faces. That is why we're going to begin this study by looking into the place simply known as Asia Minor.

When you read through the New Testament, especially the book of Acts, and you come to terms like Cappadocia, Pontus, Bithynia, Galatia, Cilicia, Pamphylia, Lycia, Phrygia, Caria, Ionia, Lydia, and Mysia, what do you envision? If you're like I was before traveling to some of these locations, then you envision nothing. Absolutely nothing. These are just obscure names that do not really incite much of a reaction. Yet these are real places. Real people lived there, worked there, and wrestled with Satan there. For that reason, these places deserve our time and effort in understanding them because they can teach us

so much when we truly value the geography, topography, and culture of these New Testament places.

That long list of hard-to-pronounce locations? Those are the regions of Asia Minor. It would have consisted of the central and western portions of modern-day Turkey. If you are unfamiliar with the geography of that part of the world, Turkey is just east of Greece. In times just before the New Testament era, the Greeks ruled the world. Even when Rome took over the region in 63 BC, the Greek (Hellenistic) culture still reigned. Since the Greeks watched the sun rise in the east, they called their neighbor *Anatolia*, which means “the land where the sun rises.” This name would not be the only Greek influence in Asia Minor, but we will cover that in future chapters.

What, then, was Asia Minor, or Anatolia, like?

When I think of modern-day Turkey, I think of deserts and a very arid climate. This could not be a more inaccurate view of Asia Minor! The land is bordered by many rivers and three seas: the Black Sea (north), the Aegean Sea (west), and the Mediterranean Sea (south). The southern regions of Asia Minor have smooth, fertile soils, warm climates, produce citrus fruits, and are very green. The central and western regions are also lush, though not flat. Instead, there are two major mountain ranges that occupy the area. To the north, the Pontic Mountain Chain, and to the south, the Taurus Mountain Chain. Across the mid-section, the Anatolian Plateau, the area ranges in elevation from 2,000 feet to 4,000 feet west to east. Many of the ancient cities in these regions backed up to beautiful snow-capped mountains while their neighboring cities were low-lying coastal lands. While beautiful, this was not an easy terrain! In fact, Asia Minor’s diverse topography was quite inconvenient for those traveling from city to city through various regions.

The cities themselves were also quite fascinating. Having taken on the Hellenistic culture, the inhabitants spoke Koine Greek (one of the most expressive languages in history) and worshiped many Greek gods. However, do not let the proximity to Greece fool you into thinking that the Romans did not have a profound impact on the lives of those in Asia Minor. The Roman roads played a vital role in the prosperity that the region saw in the New Testament time period. Trade routes were established along the thousands of roads the Romans constructed, elevating the profile of coastal cities in the region and bringing more visitors to the area than ever before. Because travel was easier, Asia Minor became a place for Jews to settle after being displaced in 70 AD (when the temple in Jerusalem was destroyed). With these Jewish communities thriving, the gospel was more easily spread in the region and, as we'll see in subsequent chapters, it helped make Asia Minor the hub of this great message.

THE PASSAGE

The Bible gives us our first introduction to Asia Minor in Acts 2, when the Jews gathered on the day of Pentecost from “every nation under heaven” (v. 5). In verses 9 and 10, we have five regions of Asia Minor listed: Cappadocia (Central), Pontus (North), Asia (West), Phrygia (West/Central), and Pamphylia (South). It is likely that at least some of these were among the number converted at the end of the chapter (v. 38), thus paving the way for Christianity in Asia Minor as these new Christians took the message of Jesus back with them.

In Acts 15:41, Paul and Silas departed on their missionary journey and went first through Syria (which borders Turkey on the east) and Cilicia (which is a southern region of Asia Minor) strengthening the churches. Moving into chapter 16, we read that Paul picked up Timothy, whose father was Greek, and took him

with him on the journey. Acts 16:4 starts one of those famous lists that we love to skip over, but take a moment to really dive into the text. In verses 6-12, you will read of approximately five regions of Asia Minor that Paul, Silas, and Timothy attempted to go in order to preach the gospel. Five regions! These aren't simply the next 5 exits on the Roman Interstate, these are entire regions! From Acts 15:41 to Acts 16:12, Paul and his companions traveled the entire distance of Asia Minor, which we noted changes in terrain about 2,000 feet in just the middle section! Not to mention, they then traveled across the Aegean Sea into Greece. This would have been a considerable distance, likely around 800 miles¹ (roughly the distance from New York City to Chicago). Notice, though, that this is just the first part of their journey! They will end up going from Greece to Jerusalem, adding another 2,000 miles to the already lengthy trip. Remember, this is just one missionary journey; Paul does three. What great effort!

Acts 19:10 gives us a summary statement of the ministry that went on in this region of the world. The verse says, "all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks." This is just a few short years after the travels from Acts 16, yet the entire area of Asia Minor had received the word of God. There's nothing minor about that!

THE POINT

In seemingly no time at all, the entire area of the world known as Asia Minor heard the word of God. This would have been a difficult feat, especially in an era where there were no planes, cars, or trains. There were no such things as cell phones or Internet access. They didn't even have air conditioning! Yet they expended the necessary effort (and a considerable amount was needed!) to

¹ "Paul as Missionary Pastor." *Paul as Missionary: Identity, Activity, Theology, and Practice* (n.d.): n.pag. Web.

spread the gospel message of Jesus Christ. They conquered the rugged, mountainous terrain. They walked mile after mile along the Roman roads. They likely slept where they could and ate where they could. Clearly they were zealous about the work of the Lord, and excited that they were counted worthy to be involved. Because of this, no distance seemed too far; no terrain too difficult. Even when they weren't permitted to go where they wanted (Acts 16:6-7), they went where the Lord would have them go.

Too often, as modern-day Christians, we offer excuses. We don't want to tell our friends, neighbors, or co-workers about Jesus because it might put a strain on our relationship. We don't want to do something as simple as give them a CD or send them an email that will benefit their soul. We think it's difficult, but really, it's not at all. *Difficult* is having to walk up countless hills and mountains. *Difficult* is having to walk everywhere you go. *Difficult* is traveling 800 miles one way, unsure of where you'll sleep or what you'll eat or how the people will receive you. *Difficult* is going all over an entire country only to have your final destination be prison. *Difficult* is what Paul and his companions faced in taking the gospel to all of Asia Minor, and they didn't let that stop them. Instead, they praised God and rejoiced that they were enlisted in His service.

You and I would do well to dwell on the effort it took to take the gospel to all the world in the first century. When we do, maybe we'll stop excusing ourselves or telling ourselves it's too hard for us to do today. Instead, perhaps we'll find the fire and zeal that Paul and others had in taking the gospel to the entire world. When we do, we will see obstacles as opportunities to glorify God. We'll see any amount of effort as the least we could possibly do in response to all Jesus did in coming to earth to die for us. We'll see struggle as a way to share in the sufferings of Christ. After all, that's the way it's intended to be. Evangelism isn't meant to be a chore, it is meant to be a joy. God has entrusted us with His word. Since we

are unworthy vessels of such a glorious message, we should gladly and humbly do all that the Lord commands.

Just what does the Lord command when it comes to His saving message? He commands us to share that redemptive story with the world around us (Mark 16:15).

Yes, there will be obstacles in taking that message. However, we cannot let those obstacles keep us from doing what the Lord has commanded. Surely we don't have nearly the amount of obstacles Paul, Silas, and Timothy had, and yet God expected great things of them. And so, in a time when we have every convenience, not to mention the entire gospel plan revealed to us (and likely multiple copies of it in our possession!), let us not slack on our Christian duty. Instead, let us live our lives as Christ (Gal. 2:20), dedicating every part of who we are to His service. His message to us, individually, is to take the message that has changed our lives and our very eternity to those around us. Take it excitedly! Take it unapologetically! Just take it! Sow the seed, and God will give the increase (1 Cor. 3:6).

There are many ways this can be accomplished, and we will not all do it the same way. God has given each of us unique talents and abilities, as well as unique platforms. You have a set of friends and family members with whom I may never come in contact. Perhaps you have a blog, a large Twitter or Instagram following, or hundreds of friends on Facebook. Maybe you are a staple figure in your community. It could be that you have a job that frequently puts you in the public eye. In whatever place you find yourself, let God use you as the vessel He created you to be (2 Cor. 4:7).

For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them (Eph. 2:10).

The word translated “workmanship” literally means “the product of His hand.” God is truly the Potter and we are the clay

(Isa. 64:8). Let Him mold you for good works. Let Him use your life, your influence, and your position for His glory. Let Him use you to reach the lost people He loves so much. God has placed the beautiful message of His Beloved Son into your hands, and He has blessed you to live in an age where it's easier than ever to spread it! Don't offer excuses as to why evangelism is too difficult. Don't complain that you aren't equipped with the same talents as so-and-so. While we are all different, we are all required to be busy about our Father's business. Even if you consider yourself a one-talent man, you are still to do more with that talent than bury it in the sand (Mat. 25:24-25).

Evangelism has never been easy, but it has always been necessary. Instead of focusing on the difficulty, focus on very real, dedicated men of faith like Paul, Silas, and Timothy. Ask God to give you the same zeal that carried these men hundreds of miles and over difficult terrain. Thank God for blessing you with modern conveniences and abilities, and beg Him to help you never use those blessings as excuses.

If the people in the first century could take the gospel to an entire region without the use of email or cell phones or cars or television, truly we are without excuse in an age where you have to try to get away from some form of communication. Don't let Satan's whisper of "*it's too hard*" keep you from being involved in the greatest work on earth. After all, it is within the context of evangelism that Jesus promises to be with us always (Mat. 28:20). With Him, we can do all things (Phi. 4:13).

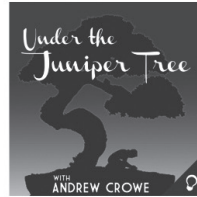
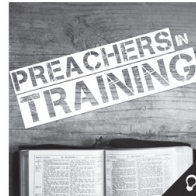


- I. How do you think Paul cultivated the zeal he had for the work of the Lord?
- II. What modern comforts do you have that could aid you in evangelism?
- III. If Paul were alive today, do you think he would use social media to spread the gospel? How might he do that? How can you implement these tactics in your outreach?
- IV. What excuses do you offer for not being more evangelistic?
- V. In what specific ways can you carry out the great commission (Mat. 28:18-20)? List specific people you want to reach this month.

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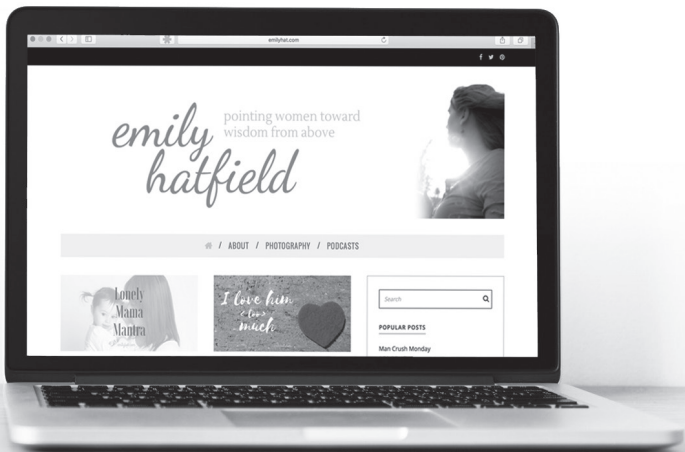
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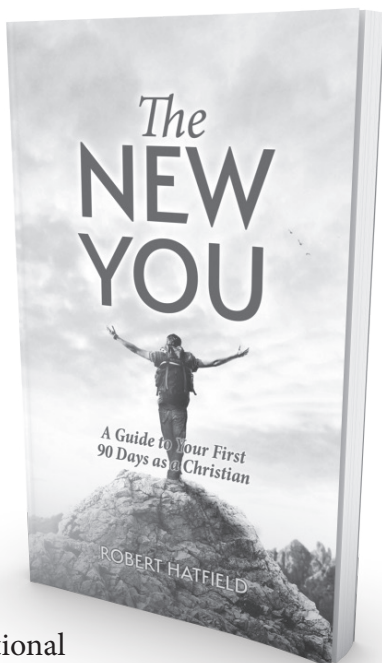
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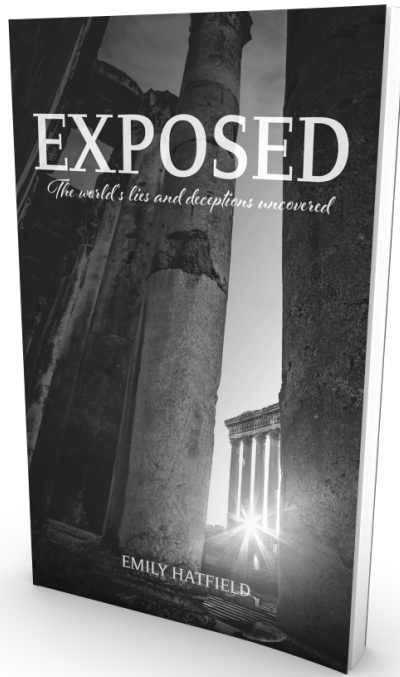
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