
The Prison Epistles



Of The Apostle Paul

Ephesians • Colossians • Philippians • Philemon

Gene Taylor

Preface

This study will consider those epistles the apostle Paul wrote during his first imprisonment in Rome: Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians and Philemon. (Acts 28:30-31) There is a great deal of evidence which suggests these books were written about the same time:

- Tychicus delivered both Colossians and Ephesians. (Col. 4:7-9; Eph. 6:21)
- Onesimus accompanied Tychicus to Colosse (Col. 4:9) and delivered the letter to Philemon (Phile. 10:17).
- Philippians mentions imprisonment at the time of writing and the hope and expectation to be shortly released. (1:7, 12-18; 2:23) It refers to Caesar's household indicating Rome as the place of writing. (4:22)
- These books all belong to a period of the early 60's A.D.

This study guide contains introductions to each book, outlines for all four epistles and questions on each chapter of every book.

It is my hope that this study will cause your knowledge and understanding of all four of the epistles it covers to increase. May the time spent in your study be time well spent.

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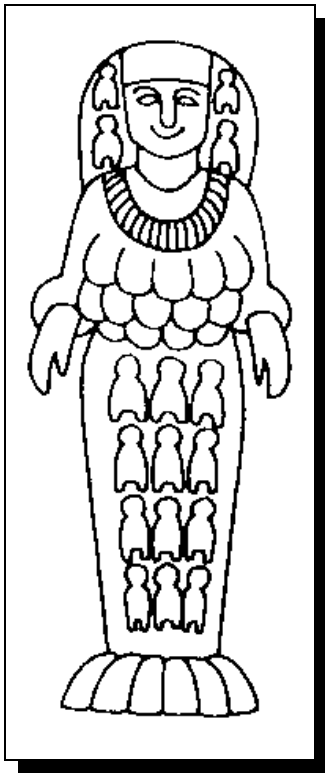
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Lesson One: Introduction to Ephesians

I. The City of Ephesus

- A. Ephesus was the capital of the province of Asia.
 - 1. It was located on the Cayster River about three miles from the seacoast.
 - 2. It was the chief port of Asia.
 - 3. Next to Rome it was probably the most important city Paul visited.
- B. Origin and history.
 - 1. It was colonized in the 11th century B.C. by the Athenians.
 - 2. It was conquered, in succession, by the Persians, Macedonians, and the Romans.
 - 3. Destroyed by fire in 356 B.C., it was immediately rebuilt because of:



Diana or Artemis

- a. The pride of its inhabitants.
 - b. The importance of its strategic location.
- C. Two buildings which gave prominence to the city.
 - 1. The Great Theatre of Ephesus which had a seating capacity of about 50,000.
 - 2. The Temple of Diana.
 - a. It was considered one of the Seven Wonders of the World.
 - b. Built of the finest marble, it took 220 years to complete.
 - c. It was 342 feet long and 164 feet wide.
 - d. It was supported by a mass of columns 56 feet high.
 - e. All that is standing today is one lone column.
- D. Both the city and the province had a large Jewish population. (Acts 2:9; 6:9; 19:8, 10)

II. The Church in Ephesus

- A. It was established by the apostle Paul on his second missionary journey (Acts 18:18-21).
 - 1. Paul had earlier wanted to go into Asia but the Holy Spirit prohibited him (Acts 16:6).
 - 2. After founding works at Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, and Corinth, Paul came to Ephesus.
 - 3. Paul preached to the Jews in the synagogue.
 - 4. Aquila and Priscilla, who had accompanied Paul from Corinth to Ephesus, remained there after he left.
 - a. They taught Apollos the gospel in its fullness since he only knew of the baptism of John (Acts 18:24-28).
 - b. Apollos departed to Corinth to preach.
- B. On his third journey, the apostle Paul returned to Ephesus.
 - 1. He spent a longer time there, about three years, than in any other city on his missionary journeys.
 - 2. He first taught 12 men who had been baptized only with the baptism of John (Acts 19:1-7).

3. He preached in the synagogue for three months until public opposition developed.
4. He then effectively preached for two years in the school of Tyrannus. (Acts 19:10)
5. Opposition came from pagan silversmiths led by Demetrius. (Acts 19:23-41)
 - a. They made their living through the manufacture of statues of Diana and replicas of her temple.
 - b. The opposition was such that it caused a riot and endangered Paul's life making it necessary for him to leave and go into Macedonia. (Acts 20:1)
- C. On his return to Jerusalem, while at Miletus some thirty miles from Ephesus, Paul called the elders of the Ephesus church to meet him so that he could encourage them and warn them of apostasy. (Acts 20:16-38)
- D. In the book of Revelation, Christ instructed John to write to the Ephesus church, one of the seven churches of Asia. (Revelation 2:1-7)

III. The Epistle to the Ephesians

- A. Author: The Apostle Paul.
 1. Internal evidence.
 - a. Paul identifies himself twice. (1:1; 3:1)
 - b. The style of writing follows the typical Pauline pattern: greeting, thanksgiving, doctrinal section, practical application of doctrine, exhortations, and personal matters.
 2. External evidence.
 - a. Clement of Rome, Ignatius, Polycarp, Hermas, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Irenaus, and Hippolytus all refer to it.
 - b. No New Testament book has stronger evidence or attestation.
- B. The Date and Delivery of the Epistle.
 1. The apostle Paul spent two years under house arrest in Rome around 59-61 A.D. (Acts 28:16-31). During this imprisonment he wrote the four "prison" epistles: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon.
 2. Tychicus was Paul's messenger.
 - a. Tychicus was to take Onesimus back to Philemon and to Colossae.
 - b. Paul had him deliver the epistle to the church at Ephesus and/or the other churches of Asia. (Eph. 6:21; Col. 4:7-9)
 - 1) Some believe this letter was a general epistle.
 - 2) "En Ephesoi" is not found in the Sinaitic or Vatican manuscripts (4th century) or in the Chester Beatty Papyrus (2nd century).
- C. The Purpose of the Epistle.
 1. An exposition of the nature of the universal church, the body of Christ (1:1 - 3:21), addressing its:
 - a. Sovereign calling.
 - b. Composition of saved Jews and Gentiles.
 - c. Eternal purpose.
 2. An exhortation to proper conduct to the members of the universal church toward each other, the world, God, and members of their own earthly families. (4:1 - 6:9)
 3. A warning for members of the church to be prepared for the spiritual conflict that results from putting into practice the principles of Christianity. (6:10-24)

D. The Themes of the Epistle.

1. The great epistle on Christ and the church.
 - a. The church is set forth as:
 - 1) The body of Christ. (1:23)
 - 2) The temple of God. (2:19-22)
 - 3) The family of God. (2:19; 3:14-15)
 - 4) The bride of Christ. (5:22-32)
 - 5) “The fullness of Him who fills all in all.” (1:23)
 - b. The attitude of Christ toward the church is seen in His:
 - 1) Love for it. (5:25)
 - 2) Sacrifice for it. (5:25)
2. The “walk” of the Christian.
 - a. Not according to the course of the world. (2:2)
 - b. In good works. (2:10)
 - c. Worthy of his calling. (4:1)
 - d. Not as the Gentiles in the vanity of his mind. (4:17)
 - e. In love. (5:21)
 - f. As a child of light. (5:8)
 - g. Circumspectly, wisely. (5:15)
3. Unity.
 - a. No distinction exists between Jew and Gentile. (2:15)
 - b. All are reconciled in one body. (2:16)
 - c. All have access by one Spirit to the Father. (2:18)
 - d. All should be endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. (4:3ff)

Lesson Two: Ephesians Chapter One

Outline

Introduction (1:1-2)

- A. Writer: Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God.
- B. Those addressed: The saints at Ephesus, the faithful in Jesus Christ.
- C. Salutation: Grace and peace.

I. Blessings in Christ (1:3-21)

- A. All spiritual. (3)
- B. Children of God in Christ. (4-6)
- C. Forgiveness in Christ. (7-10)
- D. God's heritage is in Christ. (11-12)
- E. Sealed by the Holy Spirit in Christ. (13-14)
- F. Paul's prayer for the Ephesians. (15-21)

1. Where are all spiritual blessings?
2. Since verses four and five say that Christians were chosen before the foundation of the world and predestined as children, is it teaching individual foreordination and predestination? If not, what is it teaching?
3. How is it possible to have redemption through the blood of Christ?
4. What is the earnest of the Christian's inheritance? How does it fulfill that function?
5. In verses 19 and 20, what illustrates the mighty power of God?

6. What is meant by the phrase "in the heavenly places" in verses 3 and 20?

7. Define the following terms found in verse 21.

- a. Principality.
- b. Power.
- c. Might.
- d. Dominion.

8. What has been put under the feet of Christ? What does it include?

9. What is meant by the phrase "the fullness of Him who fills all in all?"

Lesson Three:

Ephesians Chapters Two and Three

Outline

II. The Church in God's Eternal Purpose (1:22 - 3:21)

- A. The church, the fullness of Christ. (1:22-23)
- B. The church, alive in Christ. (2:1-10)
- C. The church, the body of the reconciled. (2:11-18)
- D. The church, the kingdom, family, and temple of God. (2:19-22)
- E. The church, the product of God's revelation. (3:1-21)
 1. The revelation was a dispensation of God's grace.
 2. Paul was commissioned to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ.
 3. The result of the preaching was to the end that God's manifold wisdom might be known to principalities and powers by the church.

1. Describe the "course of this world."
2. Describe the relationship of grace, faith and works as they pertain to an individual's salvation.
3. What was the previous condition of the Ephesians according to 2:11-12? What is their present condition?
4. What was the "middle wall of division" that Jesus broke down?
5. Where are both Jew and Gentile reconciled today?
6. What is the foundation of the holy temple of the Lord? What is the chief cornerstone?
7. How is the church "a habitation of God in the Spirit?"
8. What is meant by the phrase "prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles?"

9. Define the word "mystery" as used in this chapter.

10. What degree of understanding can the reader of this epistle have as compared to the understanding of the apostle Paul?

11. How does the church make known "the manifold wisdom of God?"

12. What is "the eternal purpose" of God?

13. How does the love of Christ pass knowledge?

14. How is the Christian rooted and grounded in love?

Lesson Four:

Ephesians Chapters Four, Five and Six

Outline

II. Unity in the Body (4:1-16)

- A. Responsibilities of the members. (1-3)
- B. God's platform for unity. (4-6)
- C. Gifts provided for unity. (7-16)

IV. Practical Applications (4:17 - 6:24)

- A. Do not walk as other Gentiles (4:17-19).
 - 1. In the vanity of their minds.
 - 2. Alienated from God through ignorance.
 - 3. Past feeling.
 - 4. Given over to lasciviousness.
- B. Rather you should (4:20-32):
 - 1. Put off the old man.
 - 2. Be renewed in the spirit of your mind.
 - 3. Put on the new man.
 - 4. Put away lying—speak truth.
 - 5. Be angry and not sin.
 - 6. Not give place to the devil.
 - 7. Not steal anymore.
 - 8. Work with your hands in order to have to give to the needy.
 - 9. Let no corrupt speech proceed from your mouth.
 - 10. Not grieve the Holy Spirit.
 - 11. Put away bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, evil speaking, and malice.
 - 12. Be kind, tenderhearted, and forgiving.
- C. Walks contrasted. (5:1-21)
 - 1. Walk in love as opposed to lust. (1-7)
 - 2. Walk in light as opposed to darkness. (8-14)
 - 3. Walk in wisdom as opposed to folly. (15-21)
- D. Family relationships. (5:22 - 6:4)
 - 1. Wives to husbands.
 - 2. Husbands to wives.
 - 3. Children to parents. (6:1-3)
 - 4. Parents to children. (6:4)
- E. Social relationships. (6:5-9)
 - 1. Servants to masters. (5-8)
 - 2. Masters to servants. (9)
- F. Spiritual relationships. (6:10-20)
 - 1. Christians face an enemy. (11-12)
 - 2. Be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might (10) and don the armor of God. (11-17)
 - 3. Pray always. (18)

Conclusion (6:21-24)

1. How are Christians to walk worthy of their calling?
2. How can one “keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace?”
10. Name the seven “ones” listed by the apostle and briefly summarize the meaning of each.
11. What is meant by the phrase “He led captivity captive?”
12. What is the work of the church as described in 4:12? What bearing did each of the things mentioned in 4:11 have on this work?
13. What is meant by the phrase “speaking truth in love?”
14. How can one be angry and not sin?
15. What is meant by the phrase “do not grieve the Holy Spirit?”
16. According to 4:31, what is the Christian to put away? What is to take the place of those things that are put away?

17. How is Christ's sacrifice a "sweet-smelling aroma" to God?
18. What is the Christian's responsibility toward "the unfruitful works of darkness?" What does that involve?
19. How can one walk "circumspectly?"
20. What is the wife's responsibility toward her husband?
21. What is the husband's responsibility toward his wife?
22. How did Christ cleanse the church? Why did he cleanse it?
23. What is to be the married man's attitude toward his father and mother?
24. How is a husband to "cleave" (NKJV: "be joined") to his wife?
25. Summarize the relationship of Christ and His church basing your summary on Ephesians 5.
26. What responsibilities do children have to their parents?
27. How broad an application can be made of 6:3? If children heed their parents, how will it be well with them and can they count on living long on the earth?
28. What is the father's responsibility to his children?
29. How are servants to serve their masters? Can any application be made of this teaching today? Explain.
30. Define the following things that are part of the armor of God.
 - a. Waist. (KJV: "loins")
 - b. Breastplate.
 - c. Feet.
 - d. Shield.
 - e. Helmet.
 - f. Sword.
31. How is the shield able to "quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one?"
32. How was the apostle Paul an "ambassador in chains?"
33. Who delivered this epistle to the Ephesians?

Lesson Five: Introduction to Colossians

I. Introduction to the Book

- A. The brief but rich Colossian epistle is a profound and priceless document which contains the apostle Paul's strongest line of argumentation for the divine supremacy and all-sufficiency of Christ.
 - 1. If the book of Ephesians can be said to portray the "**CHURCH of Christ**," then Colossians must surely portray the "**church of CHRIST**."
 - 2. Ephesians focuses on the **body** while Colossians focuses on the **Head**.
- B. Paul's purpose, stated in 3:11, is to show that Christ is preeminent—first and foremost in all things.
 - 1. Christ preceded all things, designed all things and holds all things together.
 - 2. He created you, set you free and forgave you.
 - 3. In short, He is ALL and in ALL.
- C. There is chaos in Colosse.
 - 1. A dangerous doctrine—that Jesus is neither central nor supreme—is undermining the brethren.
 - 2. Such serves as the reason for the letter.
- D. It is entirely possible that Paul wrote the letters of Ephesians and Colossians about the same time.
 - 1. One writer noted that 78 out of the 95 verses in Colossians have a marked resemblance to verses in Ephesians.
 - 2. Some of the striking similarities:
 - a. Both letters were delivered by the same individual—Tychicus.
 - b. Both were written from prison.
 - c. The salutations in each are similar.
 - d. The structures of the books are remarkably alike.
 - 3. Some corresponding verses:

| Ephesians | Colossians |
|------------------|-------------------|
| 1:7 | 1:14 |
| 1:10 | 1:20 |
| 1:22 | 1:18 |
| 1:23 | 2:9 |
| 6:21 | 4:7 |

II. Background

- A. The city.
 - 1. It was located about 100 miles east of Ephesus in the Roman province of Asia (Minor) about 12 miles up the Lycus River from Laodicea.
 - 2. In times past it had been a rather large and wealthy city but in Paul's day it had fallen into rapid decline.
 - 3. Not long afterward, it was virtually destroyed in a violent earthquake.
- B. The church.
 - 1. As far as we know, Paul never visited Colossae as indicated by the fact that he had only "heard" about their faith and love. (1:3-4; 2:1)

2. How and by whom was the church begun there?
 - a. Consider the impact of Paul's three years at Ephesus. The "all" of Asia would certainly include Colosse. (Acts 19:10,26)
 - b. Their main teacher had been Epaphras. (1:7)
 - 1) He may have been a native of the city.
 - 2) Presumably he had heard Paul in Ephesus, was converted and returned to his home to preach.
 - 3) Paul had nothing but praise for him and gratefully endorsed his teaching and labors (4:12-13).
 - c. The church may have begun meeting in the house of Philemon for it was to Colosse that Paul returned Philemon's runaway slave, Onesimus. (4:9; cf. Philemon 2)
3. Epaphras, it seems, traveled to Rome to visit Paul in his imprisonment (Acts 28:30 -31).
 - a. Although he brings a good report, in general, with warm assurance of love (1:8), he has to confess that there are certain false teachers who with great eloquence and influence have endangered the brethren with deceptively attractive false doctrine.
 - b. Paul at once writes a reply to the Colossians and sends it by the hand of Tychicus who was already making preparations to leave for Ephesus with the epistle to the Ephesians. (4:7)

C. The Colossian Cult.

1. It seems a strange doctrine that combined certain elements of Jewish ritualism and Oriental mysticism was threatening the faith of the Christians in Colosse.
2. These "intellectual" deceivers had changed the simplicity of the Gospel into a mind-boggling philosophy which only they could decipher.
3. Some elements of this false teaching:
 - a. It was ritualistic.
 - b. It was ascetic.
 - c. It was mystic.
4. While on the one hand these deceivers advocated holiness via self-abuse and asceticism, on the other hand their teaching was "of no value against the indulgence of the flesh." (2:23)

III. The Theme and Outline

- A. The theme of the epistle centers in Christ: **CHRIST IS ALL**. (3:11)
 1. Paul presents several thoughts pertinent to the problem at Colosse which shows the fullness of Christ. (See 2:9; 1:21-22; 1:28; 2:2-3,10; 1:13-14; 2:17; 3:1ff)
 2. From beginning to end, the substance of the epistle is the divine supremacy and all-sufficiency of Christ.
- B. In outline, the epistle divides evenly into two parts: **doctrinal** (chs. 1-2) and **practical** (chs. 3-4).
 1. Both of its main parts are anticipated in chapter one. (vv. 9-10)
 2. Both parts emphasize the preeminence of Christ.

IV. The Text

- A. Doctrinal. "That you may be filled." (chs. 1-2)
 1. However spiritually superior this false philosophy of the Colossian cult may have seemed outwardly, its actual effect was to depose Christ from His all-supremacy and all-sufficiency as Lord and Savior.

2. Paul immediately gives a glorious full-length portrait of the real Jesus by showing seven of His glorious features. (1:15-18)
 - a. Since this is the *real* Christ that had been preached to the Colossians, how could they exchange Him for any inferior power or fancy philosophy?
 - b. Jesus is the all-transcending sovereign and the all-sufficient Savior so “that in all things He may have the preeminence.” (1:18)
 3. Paul gives three tremendous aspects of Christ’s person, passion and purpose. (1:19- 20, 24-27)
 4. Intermingled in this section is a description of the sevenfold salvation which the Father has worked through the Son. (1:12-14, 21-22)
 5. Christianity demands circumcision. (2:11)
 - a. However, this is a circumcision “without hands” and involves the cutting away of the sins of the flesh.
 - b. When are our sins removed (cut away)? (See 2:12-13)
 - c. The commandment of physical circumcision and other laws of the Old Testament had been taken away. (2:14)
- B. Practical. “That you may walk worthy of the Lord.” (chs. 3-4)
1. The practical application of all that has been previously stated: Since Christ is ALL, He seeks preeminence in every walk of life.
 2. A summary of what a Christian’s general conduct ought to be. (3:1-17)
 3. Home life. (3:18-21)
 4. Employer-employee relations. (3:22 - 4:1)
 5. Attitudes toward others. (4:2-6)

Conclusion

Verses ten through twelve of chapter one provide a summary of what Christianity is all about: a life of **service** (v. 10), a life of **strength** (v. 11), and a life of **praise** (v. 12).

Lesson Six:

Colossians Chapters One and Two

Outline

Introduction (1:1-8)

1. Writer: the apostle Paul. (Timothy was included)
2. Salutation. Addressed to:
 - a. Saints.
 - b. Faithful brethren.
 - 1) All Christians are saints (set apart).
 - 2) Not all saints are faithful. (1 Cor. 1:2)
3. Paul gave thanks to God.
 - a. He had heard:
 - 1) Of this faith in Christ.
 - 2) Love to all saints.
 - 3) Hope laid up in heaven.
 - b. The basis of their faith, etc.—the gospel.
 - 1) It had come to all the world.
 - 2) It had produced fruit.
 - c. Epaphras.
 - 1) Paul's dear fellow servant.
 - 2) A faithful minister of Christ.
 - 3) Brought word of the Colossians' love.

I. Paul's Prayer for the Colossians (1:9-12)

- A. Constant: "Do not cease to pray."
- B. Four requests.
 1. Be filled with the knowledge of His will. (9)
 2. Walk worthy of the Lord. (10)
 3. Be strengthened with all might. (11)
 4. Give thanks unto the Father. (12)

II. The Pre-eminence of Christ (1:13 - 2:3)

- A. In authority—He has a kingdom. (1:13)
 1. The Colossians had been delivered from the power of darkness and had been translated into the kingdom.
 2. Jesus Christ now reigns!
- B. In redemption. (1:14)
 1. Only *in* Christ is redemption found—forgiveness comes by His blood.
 2. Reconciliation also comes by His blood. (1:20-22)
 3. Redemption is conditional. (1:23)
 - a. Continue in the faith.
 - b. Grounded and settled.
 - c. Not moved away from the hope of the gospel.
- C. In deity. (1:15)
 1. "Who is"—present tense—destroys the possibility of physical likeness. (John 1:1)
 2. Being divine, he is the "first born of every creature."

- a. 1:17 is a commentary on this phrase.
 - b. It does not mean that Jesus was created first!
 - c. "First-born" in the Greek is a compound word. "First" is the superlative of "before." It means absolute first.
- D. In creation. (1:16)
1. Jesus created all things.
 - a. In heaven and earth.
 - b. Visible and invisible.
 - c. Thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers.
 2. Jesus sustains all things. (1:17)
 - a. "Consist" means to cohere, hold together.
 - b. The permanence of the universe depends on Christ.
- E. In the church. (1:18-19; 24-29)
1. Christ is the head.
 - a. He provides authority.
 - b. He provides life.
 2. He is the beginning—the first-born from the dead.
 - a. Raised from the dead.
 - b. Others who had died and were raised died again, but not Christ—He did not die again.
 3. In Him all the fullness dwells.
 4. Conclusions.
 - a. Paul made a minister.
 - b. The sum total of things suggested is God's mystery.
 - c. Simply stated it is, "Christ in you, the hope of glory."
 - d. Christ is preached:
 - 1) That every man may be presented perfect.
 - 2) To this end Paul labored.
- F. In wisdom and knowledge. (2:1-3)
1. Paul was concerned that:
 - a. Their hearts might be comforted.
 - b. They be knit together in love.
 - c. They have assurance of full understanding.
 - d. They acknowledge the mystery of God and Christ.
 2. Paul wanted the Colossians to know that Jesus Christ was the treasure house of wisdom and knowledge.

1. Who is the author of the book? How does he identify himself? Why would he use such identification?
2. Give some reasons why Timothy was included in the salutation?
3. What distinction is there, if any, between “saints” and “faithful brethren?”
4. What had the author heard concerning the Colossians that prompted him to pray with thanksgiving to God?
5. Who was Epaphras? (cf. Philemon 23)
6. What requests did the author make for the Colossians in his prayers? List and briefly explain each.
7. What is meant by the phrase “partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light?”
8. Out of what are Christians delivered? Into what are they delivered?
9. What is redemption? Where is it found?
10. How is Christ:
 - a. “The image of the invisible God?”
 - b. “The firstborn over all creation?”
11. What is the relationship of Christ to “all things?” Briefly explain each relationship you list.
12. What is Christ’s position in relation to the church? Why?
13. Define “preeminence.”
14. What is the fullness that dwells in Christ?
15. What peace is made through the blood of Christ? How is it made?
16. Briefly describe:
 - a. The previous condition of the recipients of the epistle and what it caused.
 - b. Their present condition.
 - c. How they could stay in their present state.

17. What is “the mystery” of 1:26?
18. How can every person be presented “perfect” in Christ Jesus?
19. What indicates that the apostle Paul most likely had not started the church at Colosse?
20. What was the apostle’s desire for the saints at both Colosse and Laodicea? How could this desire be attained?
21. What are “persuasive words?”
22. What was it about the Colossians that caused Paul to rejoice?
23. According to chapter 2, what two things are necessary to walk in Christ? Explain each.
24. What is:
 - a. Philosophy and vain deceit?
 - b. The tradition of men?
 - c. The basic principles of the world?
25. How did the fullness of the Godhead dwell bodily in Christ?
26. What is “the circumcision made without hands?” When does it take place?
27. How is baptism a burial? What does such a baptism accomplish?
28. What is the “handwriting of requirements” (KJV: “ordinances”)? Explain the expression “nailed it to the cross?”
29. Why were the Colossians not to be judged in “food, drink, a festival, a new moon or sabbaths?”
30. What is a “false humility?” (KJV: “voluntary humility”)
31. What is to be the Christian’s attitude toward the “basic principles (KJV: “rudiments”) of the world?”
32. What is “self-imposed religion?” (KJV: “will worship”)
33. What is meant by “the indulgence of the flesh?”

Lesson Seven:

Colossians Chapters Three and Four

Outline

IV. Responsibilities of a Christian (3:1 - 4:6)

- A. Seek those things above. (3:1-4)
 - 1. Christ is there.
 - 2. Affections must be on heavenly things.
 - 3. Christians are dead—life is hid with Christ in God.
 - 4. When Christ appears, Christians will appear with Him in glory.
- B. Put these things to death because God's wrath comes upon children of disobedience. Though they had once walked and lived in these things, they must put off the old man. (3:5-9)
 - 1. Fornication.
 - 2. Uncleaness.
 - 3. Passion (inordinate affections).
 - 4. Evil desire (evil concupiscence).
 - 5. Covetousness which is idolatry.
 - 6. Anger.
 - 7. Wrath.
 - 8. Malice.
 - 9. Blasphemy.
 - 10. Filthy language (filthy communication).
 - 11. Lying.
- C. Put on the new man. (3:10-15)
 - 1. Advantages.
 - a. Renewed in knowledge.
 - b. In Christ there is neither:
 - 1) Jew nor Greek.
 - 2) Circumcision nor uncircumcision.
 - 3) Barbarian nor Scythian.
 - 4) Slave nor free.
 - 2. Things to put on.
 - a. Tender mercies (bowels of mercies).
 - b. Kindness
 - c. Humbleness of mind.
 - d. Meekness.
 - e. Longsuffering.
 - f. Forbearance.
 - g. Forgiveness.
 - h. Love, the bond of perfection.
 - j. Peace of God.
 - k. Thankfulness.
 - 3. General instructions. (3:16 - 4:6)
 - a. Let Christ's word dwell in you richly. (3:16)
 - b. In all wisdom, teach and admonish in song. (3:16)

- c. Do all in the name of the Lord. (3:17)
- d. Wives, submit to husbands. (3:18)
- e. Husbands, love your wives. (3:19)
- f. Children, obey parents. (3:20)
- g. Fathers, do not provoke children to anger. (3:21)
- h. Servants, obey masters. (3:22-25)
 - 1) Not with eye service.
 - 2) Do whatever you do heartily.
 - 3) The Lord will reward.
- j. Masters, treat servants properly. (4:1)
- k. Continue in prayer. (4:2-4)
 - 1) Vigilant in it with thanksgiving.
 - 2) For Paul's labors so that God would open a door for the word and that he would speak as he ought.
- l. Walk in wisdom toward those without. (4:5)
- m. Let speech be with grace seasoned with salt. (4:6)

Conclusion (4:7-18)

- A. The two messengers. (7-9)
 - 1. Tychicus—beloved brother, faithful minister, fellow servant.
 - 2. Onesimus—faithful and beloved brother, a member at Colosse.
- B. Three Jews. (10-11)
 - 1. Aristarchus—fellow prisoner.
 - 2. Barnabas—Barnabas' nephew.
 - 3. Justus—fellow worker who had been a comfort to Paul.
- C. Three Gentiles. (12-14)
 - 1. Epaphras—a Colossian, a servant of Christ, one who prayed for the Colossians.
 - 2. Luke, beloved doctor.
 - 3. Demas. (14)
- D. Brethren to be saluted. (15-17)
 - 1. Those in Laodicea.
 - 2. Nymphas and church in his house.
 - 3. Exchange epistles.
 - 4. Crisp command to Archippus: take heed to the ministry and fulfill it.
- E. Final words. (18)
 - 1. These words written by Paul personally.
 - 2. Remember my bonds.
 - 3. Grace be with you. Amen.

1. Name two things the Christian must do since he is risen with Christ. Explain what is involved in each.
2. What does the expression “your life is hidden with Christ in God” mean?
3. Define the following things from which the Christian is to abstain.
 - a. Fornication.
 - b. Uncleanness.
 - c. Inordinate passion.
 - d. Evil desire.
 - e. Covetousness (idolatry).
 - f. Anger.
 - g. Wrath.
 - h. Malice.
 - i. Blasphemy.
 - j. Filthy language.
 - k. Lying.
4. What is the old man? What is the new man?
5. Why are the distinctions of 3:11 not to be found in Christ? How broad an application can be made of this teaching? (For example, if there is no distinction between male and female, does that mean that whatever a male can do in the church so can a female?)
6. Who are the elect of God? How and when does this election take place?
7. Define the following things which the elect of God are to put on.
 - a. Tender mercies.
 - b. Kindness.
 - c. Humility.
 - d. Meekness.
 - e. Longsuffering.
 - f. Bearing with one another.
 - g. Forgiving one another.
 - h. Love.
 - i. Peace.
 - j. Thankfulness.

8. How is Christ's word to dwell in the Christian? How is this done?
9. What all is embodied in the expression "in the name of the Lord Jesus?"
10. Explain the Christian's responsibilities in the following relationships.
 - a. Family relationships.
 - b. Servant-master relationship.
11. How are masters to treat their servants? Why?
12. How are Christians instructed to pray? What will result from praying in that manner?
13. For what things did Paul want these Christians to pray with regard to him and his work?
14. How can a Christian "walk in wisdom toward those who are outside?"
15. What is meant by the expression "redeeming the time?"
16. How can one be sure that his speech is always:
 - a. "With grace?"
 - b. "Seasoned with salt?"
17. What is involved in the command to "know how you ought to answer each one?"
18. Why was Tychicus being sent to Colosse?
19. Who was Onesimus? In what other book of the Bible does he figure prominently?
20. Who were Aristarchus, Mark and Jesus called Justus? Why do you think Paul mentioned that they were "of the circumcision?"
21. Do we know any more about Demas from other sources? If so, what?
22. What were those at Colosse to do with the epistle once they had read it?

Lesson Eight: Introduction to Philippians

I. The City of Philippi

- A. Philippi was located on a fertile plain about nine miles from the Aegean Sea, northwest of the island of Thasos.
 - 1. Neapolis served as its seaport.
 - 2. It was in the midst of a very fertile territory.
- B. Originally it was a Phoenician mining town because of its proximity to gold mines located in the mountains and on Thasos.
- C. In 358 B.C., Philip of Macedon, father of Alexander the Great, from whom the city received its name, took the city from the empire of Thrace to whom it originally belonged.
- D. It was the site of the battle where Marcus Antonius and Octavius defeated Brutus and Cassius (42 B.C.) which overthrew the Roman Oligarchy and allowed Augustus, Octavius, to become emperor.
- E. As a Roman colony, it grew in prominence because it was on the Via Egnatia, the main road from Rome to the province of Asia.
 - 1. Its inhabitants were Roman citizens who not only had the right to vote but also to govern themselves.
 - 2. In New Testament times it was regarded as “the foremost city of that part of Macedonia, a colony” (Acts 16:12), even though Thessalonica was actually the capital of the Roman province of Macedonia.
 - 3. The status of being a Roman colony was a distinction in which its citizens took a great deal of pride which might explain the complaint against Paul for seeking to introduce customs and practices contrary to those of the Romans. (Acts 16:21-26)
- F. Evidently it did not have a large Jewish population.
 - 1. This is seen in the fact that there was not a synagogue there.
 - 2. Some scholars have suggested a strong anti-Semitic attitude existed in Philippi because large numbers of Jews were normally found in other Greek cities—Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, and Corinth.

II. The Church at Philippi

- A. The church at Philippi was established by the apostle Paul on his second missionary journey about 52 A.D.
 - 1. Paul had set out from Antioch and had traveled by land to revisit the churches he had established on his first journey.
 - a. Timothy joined him at Lystra.
 - b. Having gone through “ Phrygia and the region of Galatia, they were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia. After they had come to Mysia, they tried to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit did not permit them. So passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas. And a vision appeared to Paul in the night. A man of Macedonia stood and pleaded with him, saying, ‘Come over to Macedonia and help us.’ Now after he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go to Macedonia, concluding that the Lord had called us to preach the gospel to them. Therefore, sailing from Troas, we ran a straight course to Samothrace, and the

- next day came to Neapolis, and from there to Philippi, which is the foremost city of that part of Macedonia, a colony. And we were staying in that city for some days.” (Acts 16:6-12)
- c. God had guided Paul to Philippi: God had prevented Paul from speaking the word in Asia, Mysia, and Bithynia. He had given him the vision at Troas. A ship was immediately available. A favorable wind speeded them on their way. Sailing from Troas, they crossed the Aegean to Neapolis in two days, a journey that would ordinarily have taken five days.
2. Since there was no synagogue in the city, on the Sabbath Paul found a group of women meeting for prayer by the side of the river.
 - a. There Paul preached the first gospel sermon on the European continent. (Acts 16:13)
 - b. Lydia, a seller of purple from the city of Thyatira, along with her household, believed and was baptized. (Acts 16:12-15)
 - 1) Her home became the base of Paul’s operations in the city. (Acts 16:15)
 - 2) It seems the young church met in her home. (Acts 16:40)
 3. Having cast a demon that enabled her to tell fortunes out of a slave girl, her masters brought Paul and his preaching companion Silas before the city’s rulers and falsely accused them (Acts 16:20-21). They were beaten and cast into prison. (Acts 16:22-23)
 - a. At midnight, with their feet securely fastened in stocks, Paul and Silas were singing hymns. (Acts 16:25)
 - b. An earthquake shook the foundations of the prison, opened the doors and loosed the chains from the walls. (Acts 16:26)
 - c. The jailor, fearful that his prisoners had escaped, was about to commit suicide when Paul stopped him and told him that none of the prisoners had escaped. (Acts 27-28)
 - 1) The jailor and his household were taught and baptized by Paul. (Acts 16:29-34)
 - 2) He and Silas were released from prison the next day. (Acts 16:36)
 4. Prior to their release, Paul tells that both he and Silas had Roman citizenship and should not have been beaten. (Acts 16:37)
 - a. The magistrates became afraid and came and pleaded with Paul and Silas and asked them to leave the city. (Acts 16:38-39)
 - b. They go to Lydia’s house, encourage the brethren there, and then depart the city. (Acts 16:40)
 5. When Paul left Philippi, Luke, who had joined Paul in Troas (Acts 16:8,11,40), remained there to further aid in building up the church.
 6. Silas later visited Philippi. (Acts 18:5)
 7. Paul later revisited the city on at least two occasions. (2 Corinthians 2:13; Acts 20:6)
- B. Perhaps no other local church enjoyed such an intimate relationship to the apostle Paul as did the church in Philippi.
1. By their support of his work, they had made for themselves a special place in his heart.
 2. He loved them (1:8) and would never forget their many acts of gracious kindness on his behalf. (4:1)
- C. It seemed to have very few problems and very little trouble.
1. It seemed to be filled with goodness and love.
 2. It held a keen interest in Paul.
 3. Paul had no special admonitions to this church as a whole because, apparently, there were no real difficulties in it.

- D. “This church continued to flourish on into the second century A.D.” (William S. Deal, *Baker’s Pictorial Introduction to the Bible*, p. 358)

III. Author: The Apostle Paul

- A. Internal evidence. The writer clearly identifies himself as “Paul.” (1:1)
- B. External evidence. The recognition of authorship by Paul can be seen in the listing of the Muratorian Canon and in the writings of the early Church Fathers: Ignatius, Clement of Rome, Polycarp, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, and Marcion.

IV. The Date and Delivery of the Epistle

- A. Philippians was written during the very last part of Paul’s imprisonment at Rome probably during the latter part of A.D. 61.
 - 1. The references to the palace guard (1:13) and Caesar’s household (4:22) fit with Paul’s Roman imprisonment.
 - 2. His statements in 1:12-20 and 4:22 strongly suggest that his imprisonment had been fairly long.
- B. The messenger of the epistle was Epaphroditus.
 - 1. The church at Philippi had sent Epaphroditus to bring aid to Paul while he was imprisoned at Rome.
 - a. While there he became sick and almost died. (2:26-27)
 - b. Paul attributed his recovery to the mercy of God. (2:27)
 - 2. Upon his recovery, Epaphroditus longed to return home so Paul, being sympathetic and knowing of the concern of the Philippians for him, sent him back to Philippi along with this letter. (2:25)

V. The Purpose of the Epistle

- A. The primary purpose of this letter appears to be to express the sincere gratitude that Paul had:
 - 1. For the constant support that the Philippian church had given him in preaching the gospel “from the first day until now.” (1:3-5; 4:15)
 - 2. For the gifts sent to him even while he was imprisoned at Rome. (4:10)
- B. Some secondary purposes.
 - 1. To reassure them and lessen their concern for him by sharing with them his state of mind. (2:17-24)
 - 2. To recommend that two ladies in the church, Euodia and Syntyche, be fully reconciled to each other. (4:2)
 - 3. To warn against those who would tempt them to return to Judaism. (3:2-4)
 - 4. To plea for unity of purpose and work within the church by all its members. (3:15-17)

VI. The Themes of the Epistle

- A. Fellowship in evangelism.
 - 1. The Philippian church, from the beginning of its existence, had been partners—had fellowship—with Paul by contributing to his necessities wherever he went. (1:3-5; 2:25; 4:14-18)
 - 2. This provides an “Apostolic example” of how a New Testament church supported a preacher in his labors of proclaiming the gospel.

3. They cooperated with other churches in supporting Paul at Corinth. (2 Corinthians 11:7-9). The pattern for church support of a gospel preacher is clear.
 - a. Each church raised its own funds by the contributions of its own members.
 - b. Each church chose the preacher whom it would support.
 - c. Each church sent its contribution directly to the preacher.
 - d. There was no “sponsoring church” arrangement but rather a direct relationship between the supporting church and the preacher supported. From 2 Corinthians 11 it is seen that the church at Philippi did not send their support to the church at Corinth but directly to Paul.
 4. It is no wonder Paul was so thankful for them seeing that they had been so faithful through all the years in helping him spread the gospel.
- B. Joy as a Christian.
1. Someone has said that the sum of the whole letter is “I rejoice—you rejoice.”
 2. The words “joy” and “rejoice” are the most common words in the epistle.
 - a. Joy, Greek *chara*, is found five times. (1:4, 25; 2:2, 29; 4:1)
 - b. Rejoice occurs eleven times. (Twice in 1:18; 2:17, 18; 4:4; and once in 2:28; 3:1; and 4:10)
 3. This joy, on Paul’s part, was the result of his peace and contentment. (4:10-13) He gives several reasons for rejoicing:
 - a. His imprisonment had “turned out for the furtherance of the gospel.” (1:12)
 - b. Christ was preached even though by some in envy and strife. (1:15)
 - c. Though he was being sacrificed, the fruit that such sacrifice had borne in the faithfulness of such disciples as the Philippians. (2:16-18)
 - d. The calm confidence of a faith that assured him “The Lord is at hand.” (4:5)
 - e. The strength and satisfaction which the fellowship of the Philippians had brought to him in the preaching of the gospel. (4:14-17)
 4. Key verse: “Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!” (4:4)
- C. Self-sacrifice.
1. The example of Jesus. (2:5-6)
 2. His own example. (3:3-7)
 - a. His statement in 1:21.
 - b. His commendation of Timothy. (2:19-20)
 3. His use of the Philippians as an example to the Corinthians (2 Cor. 8:7-8) and their great sacrifice. (2 Cor. 8:1-3)
- D. Strong exhortations expressed in love.
1. Exhortation to unity, particularly as to a personal disturbance between Euodia and Syntyche whom he exhorts to be “of the same mind in the Lord.” (4:2)
 2. Exhortation to maturity as a Christian through diligence, constancy in their work, and faithful obedience. (2:12-18)
 3. Warning against Judaizers who had created trouble in many other churches. (3:1-3)
 4. Exhortation to keep their confidence in the Lord, their minds pure, and to continue to follow that which they had “learned and received and heard and saw” in him. (4:4-9)
- E. The four-fold Christ.
1. Christ, our life. (ch. 1) Key verse: 21.
 2. Christ, our mind. (ch. 2) Key verse: 5.
 3. Christ, our goal. (ch. 3) Key verse: 14.
 4. Christ, our strength. (ch. 4) Key verse: 13.

Lesson Nine:

Philippians Chapters One and Two

Outline

I. The Salutation (1:1-2)

- A. The writer. (1a)
- B. The readers. (1b)
- C. The greetings. (2)

II. Paul's Relations with the Philippians (1:3-11)

- A. His thanksgiving for them. (3-5)
 - 1. The stimulus for thanksgiving. (3)
 - 2. The expression of thanksgiving. (4)
 - 3. The cause for the thanksgiving. (5)
- B. His confidence in them. (6-7)
 - 1. The nature of the confidence. (6)
 - 2. The justification of the confidence. (7)
- C. His longing for them. (8)
- D. His prayer for them. (9-11)
 - 1. The contents of the prayer. (9)
 - 2. The purpose of the prayer. (10a)
 - 3. The results of the answered prayer. (10b-11)

III. Paul's Account of His Circumstances (1:12-26)

- A. His rejoicing at the furtherance of the gospel. (12-20)
 - 1. His imprisonment has furthered the gospel. (12-14)
 - 2. His indication of the motives of the preachers. (15-17)
 - 3. His reasons for rejoicing in all preaching of Christ. (18-20)
- B. His contemplation of the prospects of life and death. (21-26)

IV. Paul's Practical Appeal to the Philippians (1:27 - 2:18)

- A. The appeal for steadfastness. (1:27-30)
 - 1. The appeal to live a worthy citizen-life. (27a)

- 2. The task of united steadfastness. (27b)
- 3. The attitude in their persecutions. (28)
- 4. The basis for their steadfastness. (29)
- 5. The encouragement from his own experience. (30)

B. The appeal for unity. (2:1-4)

- 1. The basis for the appeal. (1)
- 2. The contents of the appeal. (2)
- 3. The implications of the appeal. (3-4)

C. The appeal for humility. (2:5-11)

- 1. The example of Christ Jesus urged. (5)
- 2. The self-humbling of Christ. (6-8)
- 3. The Father's exaltation of Christ. (9-11)

D. The appeal to work out their own salvation. (2:12-18)

- 1. The power of inner realization. (12-13)
- 2. The exhortation to outward manifestation. (14-16a)
- 3. The significance to him of their victory. (16b-18)

V. Paul's Plans for His Companions (2:19-30)

A. His plans for Timothy. (19-24)

- 1. The statement of the plan. (19a)
- 2. The motive he has for the plan. (19b)
- 3. The reasons for the choice of Timothy. (20-21)
- 4. His relationship with Timothy. (22)
- 5. The time of sending Timothy. (23)
- 6. The hope for a speedy personal visit. (24)

B. His plans for Epaphroditus. (25-30)

- 1. The statement of the plan. (25a)
- 2. The relationship of Epaphroditus to Paul and implied compliments. (25b)
- 3. The reason for sending Epaphroditus. (26-27)
- 4. The welcome to be given Epaphroditus. (28-30)

1. What do the “saints,...bishops and deacons” comprise? Explain.
2. What is meant by the phrase “your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now?”
3. How were the recipients of this epistle partakers of grace with Paul?
4. How can love abound in knowledge and discernment?
5. What does it mean to “approve the things that are excellent?” What would be its purpose?
6. How had Paul’s imprisonment been a blessing?
7. What does it mean to preach Christ from:
 - a. Envy and strife?
 - b. Goodwill?
8. What is meant by the phrase “to live is Christ, and to die is gain?”
9. How can one’s conduct be worthy of the gospel?
10. Why is lack of fear in relation to adversaries “proof of perdition” to the adversaries? Why is it proof of salvation from God to the Christian?
11. Define each of the following:
 - a. Consolation in Christ.
 - b. Fellowship of the Spirit.
 - c. Affection and mercy.
12. In 2:1, was Paul questioning whether or not these things existed? If so, why? If not, what was his purpose in mentioning them?
13. How could the Philippians fulfill the apostle’s joy? Explain what is involved in your answer.

14. What are some results when brethren have the same love and are of one accord and one mind?
15. What attitudes, according to 2:3-4, are Christians to have in relation to one another? How are these attitudes manifested?
16. What are the characteristics of the mind of Christ, which are revealed in 2:5-11, which Christians should possess?
17. What does it mean to “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling?”
18. What things are to be done “without complaining and disputing?” How broad an application should be made of this principle? What are the results of such a practice?
19. Who was Timothy? How is his character described in chapter 2? Why was Paul sending him to Philippi?
20. Who was Epaphras? What had happened to him? Why were the Philippians particularly concerned about him?

Lesson Ten: Philippians Chapter Three

Outline

VI. Paul's Warnings Against Errors

(3:1 - 4:1)

A. The warning against Judaism. (3:1-16)

1. The joy in the Lord as an antidote to error. (1-3)
2. The confirmation from his own experience. (4-11)
3. The Christian life viewed as one of progress. (12-16)
4. His exhortations to the mature. (15-16)

B. The warnings against false teachers. (3:17 - 4:1)

1. The safety in imitating him. (3:17)
2. The warning against false brethren. (3:18-19)
3. The motives of the true believer. (3:20-21)
4. The admonition to steadfastness. (4:1)

1. Why was it safe for Paul to write “the same things” to the Philippians?
2. Identify the following groups of whom the Philippians were warned to beware.
 - a. Dogs.
 - b. Evil workers.
 - c. The mutilation.
3. Who are the “circumcision” today? Why is that the case?
4. Why would the things listed in verses four through six have given Paul “confidence in the flesh?” How did he view these things at the time of his writing? Why?

5. How can one “know” Christ and the “power of His resurrection?” What does it mean to have “fellowship” in His suffering? What is the purpose of all these?

6. To what goal was Paul constantly pressing on toward? Who else seeks this same goal?

7. What does it mean to “walk by the same rule?”

8. Who are “the enemies of the cross of Christ?” What makes them enemies? What is their end?

9. In what way is the Christian’s “citizenship... in heaven?”

10. What will happen to the Christian when Christ comes again?

Lesson Eleven: Philippians Chapter Four

Outline

VII. Paul's Exhortations to the Philippians (4:2-9)

- A. The exhortation to unity. (2-3)
 - 1. The appeal for unity between two women. (2)
 - 2. The appeal to his fellow worker to help these women. (3)
- B. The exhortation to holy living. (4-7)
 - 1. The call to rejoicing. (4)
 - 2. The gentleness. (5)
 - 3. Prayerfulness. (6-7)
- C. The exhortation to holy meditation and action. (8-9)
 - 1. The things they are to think on. (8)
 - 2. The things they are to do. (9)

VIII. Paul's Thanksgiving to the Philippians (4:10-21)

- A. His rejoicing at their gift. (10)
- B. His present condition. (11-13)
 - 1. His independence of material need. (11a)
 - 2. His explanation of his secret. (11b -12)
 - 3. His source of strength. (13)
- C. Thanksgiving for their gift. (14-18)
 - 1. His appreciation of the gift. (14)
 - 2. His reminder of their past record. (15-16)
 - 3. His attitude toward their gift. (17)
 - 4. His receipt for the gift. (18)
- D. His counter-promise to them. (19-20)

Conclusion (4:21-23)

- A. The salutations. (21-22)
- B. The benediction. (23)

1. How were the Philippians Paul's "joy and crown?"
2. How does one "stand fast in the Lord?"
3. What does it mean to "rejoice in the Lord?" What seemed to prompt this teaching?
4. What relationship exists between being gentle and knowing that "the Lord is at hand?"
5. Why should the Christian "be anxious for nothing?" How can he gain peace? (vv. 7,9)
6. Define the following things upon which the Christian is to think. Things that are:
 - a. Noble.
 - b. Just.
 - c. Pure.
 - d. Lovely.
 - e. Of good report.
7. What does it mean to be "content?" How had Paul learned to be content regardless of his status?
8. What is meant by the phrase "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me?"
9. How had the Philippians shared in Paul's "distress?"
10. How was the Philippians' financial support of Paul a "sweet smelling aroma?" "An acceptable sacrifice?"

Lesson Twelve: Introduction to Philemon

I. The Main Characters

A. Philemon.

1. He was a resident of Colosse and the church seems to have assembled in his house. (v. 1)
2. He must have been converted by Paul at either Ephesus or elsewhere. (v. 19)
3. Evidently, he was a wealthy slave owner.
 - a. Onesimus was his property. (vv. 10-11, 16)
 - b. His house was large enough to serve as a meeting place for the church. (v. 2)
 - c. His benevolence toward the saints is cited. (vv. 5-7)
 - d. The apostle requests of him a place to lodge. (v. 22)
4. “Probably Apphia was Philemon’s wife, and Archippus, their son.” (William S. Deal, *Baker’s Pictorial Introduction to the Bible*, 387)

B. Onesimus.

1. He was a slave of Philemon who had run away. Verse 18 implies that he may have stolen money from his master to effect his get-away.
2. He fled to Rome which would serve as a populous haven to conceal him.
3. In Rome, he came under the influence of the apostle Paul. Two suggested possibilities as to how this came about.
 - a. Epaphras had come from Colossae at this time to visit Paul. (Col. 1:7-8; 4:12-13) He may have seen and recognized Onesimus and brought him to Paul.
 - b. Onesimus may have exhausted his funds and stood in desperate need. He may have been familiar with the name of Paul and his situation and turned to him as a “last resort.”
4. He endeared himself to Paul as another “son” in the faith (v. 10) so much so that Paul wanted to keep him in Rome. (v. 13)
5. Since Onesimus belonged to Philemon, Paul sent him back to him at Colossae with Tychicus who carried the Colossian epistle along with this letter to Philemon (Col. 4:7-9).

II. Author: The Apostle Paul

- A. “From the most ancient times, the Pauline authorship of this letter has never been questioned.” (Deal)
- B. Internally, the author refers to himself three times as “Paul.” (vv. 1, 9, 19)
- C. The book’s similarity to the book of Colossians (1, 2, 23-24; cf. Colossians 4:1-17) argues for a simultaneous writing from the same place by the same author.
- D. The book was listed within the Pauline section of the Muratorian Fragment.
- E. It was acknowledged both as canonical and as Pauline by early Church Fathers such as Ignatius, Tertullian, Origen, Eusebius, and Marcion.

III. The Date and Delivery of the Epistle

- A. “Philemon is one of the four ‘Prison Epistles’ (Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians were the others). It was written in A.D. 60 or 61 and dispatched at the same time as Colossians during Paul’s first Roman imprisonment.” (*Nelson’s Complete Book of Bible Maps & Charts*, 438)

- B. That Paul was in prison is seen in that:
 1. His listed associates were with him during his Roman confinement. (vv. 1, 23-24)
 2. He identified himself twice as “a prisoner of Jesus Christ” (vv. 1, 9) and as “the aged.” (v. 9) Both of these distinctions would fit Paul’s first Roman confinement.
- C. “It seems quite clear that this letter must have been written during Paul’s first Roman imprisonment, possibly about the time Colossians and Ephesians were written. Some think it was Paul’s first epistle while in prison. Evidently, Paul wrote this epistle just as he was arranging to send epistles to the Colossian and Ephesian churches. Tychicus apparently agreed to accompany Onesimus back to Colossae, taking the Colossian and Ephesian epistles. This was probably about A.D. 61.” (Deal)

IV. The Purpose of the Epistle

- A. “This very heart-warming letter was written by Paul for the purpose of interceding for the runaway slave who had become a faithful Christian, and not only pleading for mercy for him from his master, but also to remind his master of his duty as a fellow Christian toward this penitent slave.” (Roy Cogdill, *The New Testament Book-by-Book*, 117)
- B. “In this intimate letter Paul thus wrote to commend Philemon for his Christian compassion toward the needs of fellow believers (1-7); to effect the forgiveness and restoration of Onesimus by Philemon (8-21); to announce plans of a future visit, based upon his hopes of an imminent release (22); and to send greetings from many of Paul’s associates who were probably known to Philemon (23-25).” (Robert G. Gromacki, *New Testament Survey*, 314)

V. The Themes of the Epistle

- A. Brotherly love.
 1. “Paul’s epistle to Philemon is a testimony to the power of the grace of God in Christ Jesus and to the Christian love which unites believers. While he was formerly a thief and runaway slave, Philemon’s slave Onesimus had been transformed by God’s grace and was now a ‘beloved brother’ of Philemon (v. 16).” (*Nelson’s*, 440)
 2. “Does Christianity *really* work? Is the principle of Christian love and forgiveness *really* applicable, practical and possible in difficult daily dealings?...Paul’s brief ‘postcard’ to Philemon reveals that he had no doubt. This is the Savior’s message put to application. This is Christian love put to the test. This is forgiveness exemplified.” (Wilson Adams, *Bible Survey* [an unpublished work], 304)
 3. The epistle illustrates how brotherly love works. Love:
 - a. Is grateful for the best in others. (v. 4)
 - b. Seeks the welfare of others. (v. 10)
 - c. Deals honestly with others. (v. 12)
 - d. Bears the burdens of others. (v. 18)
 - e. Believes the best of others. (v. 21)
- B. Slavery.
 1. “This letter gives us a clear picture of social and domestic life in New Testament times. Slavery was one of the common practices of the ancient world. People then saw no more wrong in having slaves than in having domestic servants. Some authorities think that within the Roman Empire there were perhaps 60 million of these slaves. This grievous condition was so common it could not be uprooted immediately, so Christianity regulated it with such principles as to make righteous conduct toward it possible, while at the same time, making it very difficult to continue its inequities and be what Christians ought to be...

- “The letter suggests that social and inequitable evils in this world are not to be solved by revolution or violence but by Christian influence and teaching.” (Cogdill, 118)
2. “Although the Bible nowhere attacks directly the institution of human slavery, principles for the humane treatment of slaves are found everywhere (Eph. 6:5-9; Col. 3:22 - 4:1; I Tim. 6:1-2; I Peter 2:18-25). They were to be treated as people, not property. In this personal letter, however, there is a hint of a principle which if properly applied would lead a Christian master to release his slaves, especially those who were Christian. Paul wanted Philemon to receive Onesimus ‘not now as a servant [slave], but above a servant, a brother beloved’ (16). He later added: ‘Having confidence in thy obedience I wrote unto thee, knowing that thou wilt also do more than I say’ (21). The words *more than I say* provide the clue. Do they not contain Paul’s hope and prayer that Philemon would not only forgive Onesimus, but that he would also release him from the yoke of human bondage? The principle is clear: If God our heavenly master freed us who were slaves to sin, should we not also release men from human slavery if it is within our power to do so?” (Gromacki, 315-316)

VI. Some Lessons From Philemon

- A. Social evils are soonest changed by transformed lives.
- B. The worth of a soul. As a runaway slave, Onesimus was only worthy of death in the eyes of man. By the help of God he became a beloved brother and equal with all others in Christ.
- C. Christians are to bear one another’s burdens. (Gal. 6:2)
- D. Repentance demands restitution. (vv. 12-13, 18-19)
- E. An illustration of the salvation of the Gospel.
 1. Under Roman law, a slave had no right of asylum—if he ran away and was caught, his owner had full right to punish him at his discretion. However, the slave was conceded one right—appeal to his master’s friend for advocacy and intercession.
 2. We are God’s property but as sinners we have robbed Him and fled as fugitives. By law we stand condemned. However, grace has given us the right of appeal.
 - a. As Onesimus appealed to Paul, we appeal to Jesus.
 - b. As Paul took Onesimus’ debt upon himself (v. 18), Jesus takes all our debts upon Himself. (2 Cor. 5:21)
 - c. As Onesimus was reconciled to Philemon and voluntarily returned to his owner, we become reconciled to God and of our own free-will come back to Him. (Rom. 5:10-11)

Lesson Thirteen: Philemon

Outline

I. Salutation (vv. 1-3)

II. Thanksgiving and Prayer for Philemon (vv. 4-7)

III. The Appeal of Paul (An Entreaty for Onesimus) (vv. 8-20)

- A. The basis of the appeal. (8-9)
- B. The object of the appeal. (10-14)
- C. The purpose of the separation. (15-16)
- D. The nature of the appeal. (17-20).

IV. The Confidence of Paul (vv. 21-22)

- A. In Philemon's obedience. (21)
- B. In his release. (22)

V. Closing (vv. 23-25)

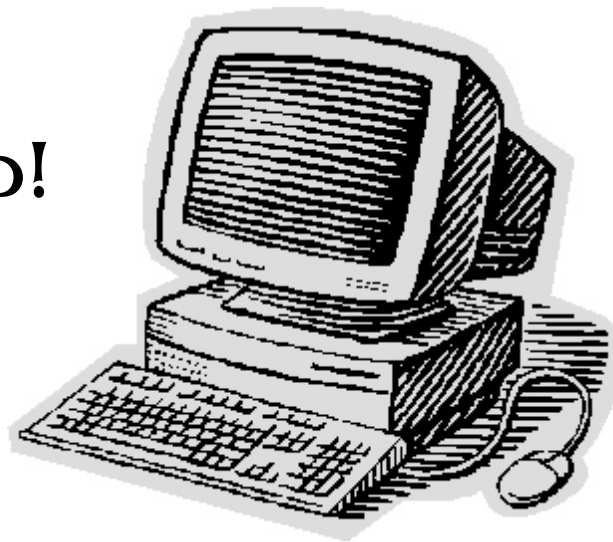
1. How does Paul refer to himself?
2. Who, in addition to Philemon, is addressed in the salutation?
3. Where did the church, of which Philemon was a member, meet? What conclusions can be drawn from this fact?
4. What had Paul heard concerning Philemon? What did this evoke from Paul?
5. Why could Paul have commanded Philemon? (See 1 Cor. 1:1; Gal. 1:1) Why did he not do it? What did he do instead?
6. Who was Onesimus? What was his relationship to Philemon? To Paul?
7. Why did Paul want Onesimus to stay with him? Why did he send him away?
8. Who offered to pay anything Onesimus might owe Philemon? Why was such an offer made?
9. In what did Paul hope for deliverance from prison?
10. What five people joined Paul in saluting Philemon? Do we hear of them elsewhere in Scripture? If so, where?

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