

*A Study
of The
Prison Letters
of Paul*

13 Lessons

**Prepared by
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2008

For Youth

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Lesson One

“Introduction to the Prison Letters”

While the Apostle was imprisoned at Rome (60-63), he wrote four letters: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon. These letters were written after his three mission journeys:

- a) 1st Journey (46-49). They went to Seleucia, Cyprus, Perga, Antioch of Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra, Derbe, and back to Antioch.
- b) 2nd Journey (50-53). They Went through Syria, Cilicia, Derbe, Lystra, Phrygia, Galatia, Troas, into Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, Corinth, and back to Antioch.
- c) 3rd Journey (53-58). They went through Galatia, Phrygia, into Ephesus, Macedonia, Corinth, and back to Jerusalem.

This study is intended to give a brief overview of these letters and how they can help us today as God's people.

Ephesians

The church at Ephesus was one of the outstanding churches of this early period of time. Paul, Timothy, and Silas helped to establish the church on Paul's 3rd mission trip into Asia Minor. Paul had spoken in the Synagogue at the end of his 2nd mission trip on his way back to Jerusalem. In between his trips, Aquilla, Priscilla, and Apollos had been meeting together for worship somewhere—possible in their home. When the mission team arrived, they set about to begin preaching. The first recorded persons were twelve men who had been baptized with John's baptism. Paul taught them more perfectly and after baptizing them in the name of Christ he laid his hands on them to impart a miraculous gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 19:1-7). He teaches in the local Jewish Synagogue for three months, but runs into too much opposition. He finds another place where he could teach and have access to more people. He teaches in the School of Tyrannus for two years that made it possible for ***“all who lived in Asia to hear the word of the Lord.”*** (Acts 19:8-10).

During the years at Ephesus Paul and others with him were able to reach a lot of people, evidently many of whom were quite mature spiritually or they matured quickly. Either during his stay or shortly afterwards, the church had appointed elders to oversee the flock of God. Because when Paul came back by Ephesus on his way to Jerusalem from his 3rd mission trip, he called the elders to meet with him and encouraged and warned them of coming dangers (Acts 20:17-38). Many of the people showed great dedication by turning from idols, witchcraft, etc., to the way of God—even burning their books of witchcraft which were worth a lot of money (19:19).

Early writings (uninspired) of Christians mentioned the fact that the Apostle John moved to Ephesus and made it his center of operation for the rest of his life. It may have been possible that Mary, the mother of Jesus, may have still been alive and was with the Apostle at Ephesus. His move would have been possibly a short time before the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem in AD 70.

The population of the city of Ephesus was quite mixed—there were Greeks, Asiatics, Jews, and Romans. The city was generally prosperous, but very religious and superstitious. They had their sorcerers and magicians, as well as their idols. One ancient writer stated that it was the “*seat of the most magnificent form of idolatrous worship then existing.*” The Temple of Diana was there—which was one of the seven “wonders of the world.” Once each year thousands would come to Ephesus for feast days that would last a month. All kinds of athletic games, plays, and sacrifices were offered by the people. Thousands of shrines of Diana were sold as souvenirs or objects of worship each year. It is conjectured that the worship of Diana may have helped to contribute to the worship of Mary later on. One of the early churches that was built was in honor to Mary. It was on the site of the famous Temple of Diana. In 431 AD, the council of bishops met at Ephesus and first gave the designation to Mary as the “Mother of God.” The city had a theatre that would seat 50,000 people. They had a library, gymnasia, and public baths. Their market place was surrounded by halls and chambers. The city was about three miles from the coast. As one would enter the city, he would see monumental gateways down a ½ mile long street lined with halls. It seems to have been a city of wealth and power.

Philippians

The church at Philippi was established on Paul’s second mission trip (50-53 AD). His co-workers traveling with him were Timothy, Silas, and Luke. This was Paul’s first efforts to preach on the European continent. Lydia and her household were among the first converts (Acts 16). A short time later we read about the conversion of the Jailor and his household. There were probably many more that composed the church at Philippi, and was made up of both Jews and Gentiles. Upon Paul leaving to go preach elsewhere, Luke seems to have stayed with the church to help stabilize them. Timothy may have stayed for a while. The church was very generous towards Paul. They helped him after leaving from Philippi (Phil. 1:5-7; 4:15-16), as well as while he was establishing the church at Corinth (2 Cor. 11:8-9). And when they learned of Paul’s imprisonment at Rome, they sent help by Epaphraditus (Phil. 4:18). It is easy to see why Paul felt very close to this church (Phil. 1:8). By the time of this letter (AD 62-63), the church had already appointed Bishops and Deacons (Phil. 1:1). The church also had a very dedicated minister by the name of Epaphraditus (Phil. 2:25-30). This letter was written from his Roman imprisonment towards the end of his two year stay. He hoped to be release soon, but wanted to express his gratitude for their help again.

The city of Philippi was one of the principal cities of Macedonia and the first place in Europe where the Gospel was preached. It was founded by Philip of Macedon, the father of Alexander the Great, and called after him. In Roman history, it was the scene of a victorious battle by Augustus and Anthony over Brutus and Cassius in BC 42. Because of this great victory and its vital location between Asia and Rome, it was made a Roman colony. These colonies were set up primarily as military safeguards of the Empire and to keep in check any uprisings in the provinces. It served as a means of rewarding veterans who had served in war, also as a place for

establishing freemen and other Italians whom it was desirable to remove to a distance from Rome. Roman citizenship gave special rights: (1) The right of trial, no matter how small the matter; (2) The person could not be beaten; (3) A person could not be crucified. Thus, along with other reasons Roman citizenship was greatly desired and a prized possession. The land in that

area was very fertile, and gold and silver mines were numerous. The official language was Latin, but Greek was the common tongue. Since there was not a Synagogue at Philippi, it is assumed that very few Jews lived in the city. This can be readily seen when it is understood that the city was more of a military outpost rather than a mercantile or commercial city.

COLOSSIANS

The city of Colossae, as you would expect, was founded close to the Lycus River. It was one of three cities that were close together—Colossae, Laodicea, and Hierapolis. The city of Laodicea became more and more important over the other two cities. An earthquake around the time of Paul's letter to the church at Colossae possibly led to the demise of the city after a few years. Ruins of the city have only been uncovered in the last century. The population of the city was mixed: (1) There were the long-time residents (native to the area); (2) A large population of Greeks that had a very strong influence over the area; and (3) A large body of Jews that had been settled in the area for some reason. The city of Ephesus was about 100 miles west of the tri-cities. These three cities were probably also included under the area that a Roman Proconsul ruled over in the province of Asia, even though they were in the region of Phrygia. At one time Colossae was a city of influence and wealth, but due to the change of the road systems, her two sister cities, Laodicea and Hierapolis, overshadowed her. It is also suggested that Colossae was an old city and slow to change, but Laodicea was younger and rapidly changed and grew with the times, thus causing Colossae to be of little importance at the time of the writing of this Letter. The people worshipped the idol god Bacchus, and the goddess, Cybele. Their worship was one of indulgence and licentiousness.

It is hard to know who first preached the Gospel to the Colossians. Luke's statement in Acts 16:6 ("*they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia*") could indicate that Paul, Silas, and Timothy could have preached at Colossae. In Acts 18:23, Paul went back through Phrygia strengthening all the disciples, which shows that congregations had evidently been established, but it does not state which cities. Also, Luke's statement in Acts 19:10 ("*all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus*") it is possible that people were converted in Ephesus and went to Colossae and other cities and preached the Gospel. We do know that Epaphras lived there and worked with the churches in that area (Col. 4:12-13).

PHILEMON

This letter is one of great politeness and courtesy. It is believed that both Philemon and Onesimus lived at Colossae (Col. 4:9) or in that immediate area. Both had possibly been converted by the preaching of Paul (Philemon at Colossae and Onesimus at Rome while Paul was in prison). It is possibly indicated that Philemon was a slave holder and Onesimus was his

slave. However, it is possible that he could have been a servant under some kind of bond to Philemon. It is also possible that Apphia was the wife of Philemon; and his son, Archippus, was a preacher of the Gospel (Col. 4:17). Philemon's faith and love towards the Lord and all the saints was a source of thanksgiving to Paul (5-7). The church evidently met in his home. Thus, we know that Philemon was a godly man, a sincere Christian, and one of integrity and goodness.

Onesimus had run away from Philemon's house, possibly taking some money with him to help get him by. He had made his way to Rome where he came in contact with the Apostle Paul. Paul was able not only to convert him to Christ, but encouraged him to go back to Philemon and set things straight.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What is the main emphasis of each of these letters?
 - a) Ephesus—
 - b) Philippians—
 - c) Colossians—
 - d) Philemon—

2. What is unusual about the Philippian letter in contrast to the other letters?

3. What is unusual about the Philemon letter in contrast to the other letters?

4. How close were these churches to each other?

5. Who were Paul's fellow-workers when these churches were established?

6. Of these three cities, which one was a Roman Colony?

7. Is it indicated that Christians were slave-holders?

8. Were there Jewish converts in all three of these churches?

Lesson Two

"Great Blessings in Christ"

(Eph. 1:1- 2:22)

In traveling from Rome, Ephesus would be the first stop of the three churches. The writer is reminding his readers of the great and wonderful blessings in Christ. The blessings of Salvation through Christ is to be offered to all, but there are special blessings given and made possible for those who accepted the Gospel of Christ. Men normally confer favor upon their friends—not their enemies. But God is willing to confer favor (grace) upon His enemies (Rom. 5:8-10).

1. Describe what is meant by the following expressions:

- a) **Chosen us in Christ (1:4)—**
- b) **Predestinated us to be adopted as sons (1:5)—**
- c) **Made us recipients of His grace (1:6)—**
- d) **We have redemption through Christ's blood (1:7)—**
- e) **He has revealed His Will to us (1:8-10)—**
- f) **He made us heirs in Christ (1:11-12)—**
- g) **He sealed us with the Holy Spirit (1:13-14)—**

2. For what did Paul give thanks? (1:15-16)

3. Describe the exaltation of Christ. (1:19-23)

- a)
- b)
- c)
- d)

4. Describe the relationship between Grace, Faith, and Works that makes man "alive" unto God. (2:1-10)

5. What is the "middle wall of separation" between Jews and Gentiles and how was it removed? (2:13-18)

6. What now is the "dwelling place" of God "in the Spirit?" (2:19-22)

True or False

- ___ ___ 1. The prince of the power of the air is Christ.
- ___ ___ 2. Sin is fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind.
- ___ ___ 3. No Gentile could be saved until after Christ came to offer them hope.
- ___ ___ 4. Salvation by grace does not require anything on man's part.
- ___ ___ 5. The enmity between Jew and Gentile was caused by the Law given to the Jews.
- ___ ___ 6. The Law of Moses had to be abolished in order for both Jew and Gentile could be one in Christ.
- ___ ___ 7. If man could earn his justification before God, he could rightfully boast about it.
- ___ ___ 8. God has redeemed us to walk in good works.
- ___ ___ 9. Gentiles were not a part of the Covenant that God made with Israel.
- ___ ___ 10. Spiritual death is when man is separated from God by sin.

Conclusion

The writer wanted God's people to fully know the God they have committed themselves unto, as well as the many wonderful blessings that He offers to us, and the great hope that lies before us as His committed children. He also wants us to realize the exaltation of Jesus and what that has to do with us. God's power is great and this should give us full assurance of His promises.

Lesson Three

"Growing up in Christ"

(Eph. 3:1-21)

There is constant competition between the world and the Gospel of Christ. Each has its offers and inducements. It was true in Paul's day, as well as in ours. Preaching and teaching needs to give emphasis by showing the contrast between the two; thus, showing the superiority of what the Gospel offers. The Apostle has already shown the Great blessings in Christ, but we need to avail ourselves of these blessings. This requires deepening of our knowledge and to mature as a Christian. Idolatrous religions had their mysteries and their priest who were fully informed about these mysteries. But they would only reveal such to certain ones. The Gospel had its mystery also that had been hidden for centuries, but has been revealed through the Apostles and Prophets in the first century.

1. In what sense was the mystery of God not made known to the sons of men? (3:5)

2. How does the church reveal God's eternal purpose? (3:10-11)

3. Please show how the following things denote maturity: (3:14-19)

a) Strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man—

b) Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—

c) Be rooted and grounded in love—

d) To comprehend what is the width, length, depth, and height of God's love—

e) Be filled with all the fullness of God—

4. How does God receive glory in the church? (3:21)

5. What is the "power" that works in us? (3:20)

True or False

- ___ ___ 1. We should address our petition to God, the Father, in the name of Jesus Christ.
- ___ ___ 2. The bowing of knees represents a humility of spirit on man's part.
- ___ ___ 3. All humanity can trace their lineage back to God.
- ___ ___ 4. It is God's Spirit that strengthens our inner man.
- ___ ___ 5. God's strength is made perfect in man's weakness.
- ___ ___ 6. The sturdiness of a Christian depends upon how rooted and grounded he is.
- ___ ___ 7. Christ dwells in the Christian even if he is not faithful.
- ___ ___ 8. The fullness of God is indicating how big God is.
- ___ ___ 9. God is able to do far less than what we expect of Him.
- ___ ___ 10. Heavenly beings glorify God because of the church.

Conclusion

Paul ends his prayer with the thought of how much glory belongs to God and that the church is man's way of giving glory to Him. The praises of God will be sung throughout eternity—throughout the ceaseless ages to come! He is worthy of praise, adoration, worship, reverence, and thanksgiving. The church is God's great creation and in and by it, God is glorified.

Man's faithfulness and usefulness to God comes through knowledge of His Word. We need to be taught it and filled with it. We need to fully grasp the great truths of God—about God! We need to yield our lives to Him, fully trusting in Him, and learning of Him and His ways.

Lesson Four

"Unifying and Perfecting God's People"

(Eph. 4:1-32)

It is one thing to get into Christ, but another thing to live the kind of life that God expects of His people. It is important to understand the greatness of what we have been born into by our commitment to follow Christ. But we need to be fixed and grounded in our profession of faith in Him. If God's people are to be faithful, they need one another and need to keep unity and harmony in their midst. This lesson is showing us how to be unified, upon what basis, and how we can be perfected together before God.

1. Define these attitudes and actions that are expected by Christian: (4:1-3)

a) Walk worthy of your calling—

b) With all lowliness and gentleness—

c) With longsuffering, bearing with one another in love—

d) Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace—

2. List the seven ones that the Christian is to hold to and explain each one briefly: (4:4-6)

a) One body—

b) One Spirit—

c) One Hope—

d) One Lord—

e) One Faith—

f) One Baptism—

g) One God and Father of all—

3. What servants has God placed in the church? (4:11)

4. What are their combined purposes? (4:12-13)

a) _____

b) _____

c) _____

d) _____

5. Tell how the following helps to define "Maturity." (4:13-16)

a) To a knowledge of the Son of God—

b) To a perfect man—

c) To the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ—

d) Be no more children tossed to and fro—

e) Speaking the truth in love—

f) May grow up in all things into Him—

g) Every joint supplies—

h) Every part does its share—

Conclusion

An interesting observation about the above seven "ones" is that they are all to be taught before one becomes a Christian. Our unity in Christ is brought about by these seven "ones." We are unified when all of God's people become a Christian, unless we become divisive. It is up to us to maintain these seven "ones" and deepen our roots in them.

Lesson Five

"Plain Teaching for the New Man to Follow"

(Eph. 4:25-6:24)

The previous two lessons dealt with the need for the new child of God to grow up in Christ and the need to put away those things that hinder such growth. This lesson will emphasize the need to walk as children of light—putting on righteous and holy living. These two terms are used in a special way with reference to God and man—only God is righteous and holy and man is unrighteous and unholy because he sins! (Rom. 3:10, 23). But there is another sense in which these two words are used in reference to man—he is to live righteous and be holy (1 Pet. 1:15-16; 1 Jn. 2:29; 3:7).

The following activities must be stopped in our lives if we are to live a holy life:

1. Please define or describe the following activities: (4:25-29)

- a) Stop Lying and speak only truth—**
- b) Control your anger—**
- c) Stop Stealing, but work for your needs—**
- d) Put away corrupt (rotten) speak, and use words that edify—**
- e) No longer grieve God's Holy Spirit—**

2. Define these wrong actions and attitudes: (4:30-31)

- a) Bitterness—**
- b) Wrath—**
- c) Anger—**
- d) Clamor—**
- e) Railing—**
- f) Malice—**

The above activities or attitudes should have been put away upon becoming a Christian. They are not to become an acceptable way of thinking and acting. To continue in such will destroy the influence of the new Christian and will cause reproach to come upon the church. The New man is to think and act like God.

The following are some of the things listed that we are to imitate or not walk in:

3. How do the following things portray God to us? (4:32)

a) **Being Kind to one another—**

b) **Being tenderhearted—**

c) **Forgiving one another—**

4. How can we walk in love as Jesus did? (5:1-2)

5. Define and explain the following wrong attitudes or actions: (5:3-4)

a) **Fornication—**

b) **Uncleanness—**

c) **Covetousness—**

d) **Filthiness—**

e) **Foolish Talking—**

f) **Coarse jesting—**

6. What will happen to the Christian that continues to walk in the above things? (5:5-7)

7. What is the fruit of the Spirit? (5:9-10)

a)

b)

c)

d)

8. What are some special admonitions to the following Christians? (5:21-6:9)

a) **All Christians—**

b) **Wives—**

c) **Husbands—**

d) **Children—**

e) Parents—

f) Bondservants—

g) Masters—

Conclusion

A Christian should not walk as a foolish man, but a wise one—because we have the greatest teacher of all—God, Himself! We must listen and follow the admonitions of the Spirit of God as He has revealed the Way we are to walk in His Word. The Christian has a worthy calling! Let us so walk as to bring honor to this calling rather than dishonor!

Lesson Six

"Living or Dying With Christ"

(Phil. 1:1-30)

The next four lessons will be from the four chapters in Philippians. This Letter gives us a brief glance of a good church, insights into Paul's life and thinking, as well as great concepts to live up to as a Christian. The Apostle Paul and the church become excellent examples for us to follow after. This book is both challenging and encouraging.

This first lesson gives us some good insights to Paul as he face challenges and persecution as a Christian.

- 1. Why is it appropriate to address Christians as saints? (1:1)**

- 2. Why was Paul thankful for the Christians at Philippi? (1:3-7)**

- 3. What four things did Paul pray about concerning the Philippians? (1:9-11)**
 - a)
 - b)
 - c)
 - d)

- 4. What two good things came out of Paul's imprisonment at Rome? (1:12-14)**
 - a)
 - b)

- 5. What are two ways that Christ can be preached? (1:15-18)**
 - a)
 - b)

- 6. How could Christ be magnified by Paul's life or his death? (1:19-20)**

- 7. What did Paul mean when he said: "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."? (1:21-26)**

8. What are four things that make our conduct worthy of the Gospel of Christ? (1:27-30)

- a)
- b)
- c)
- d)

True or False

- ___ ___ 1. Every Christian needs to be able to look back upon those they have helped to bring to Christ.
- ___ ___ 2. Paul expressed gratitude for their financial help in his preaching of the gospel.
- ___ ___ 3. Paul's preaching while in prison helped to encourage others to become more bold in their preaching of the gospel.
- ___ ___ 4. We share in the preaching of the gospel when we help to support those who preach.
- ___ ___ 5. Paul was a pioneer in the sense of wanting to preach the gospel where it had not been preached before.
- ___ ___ 6. All can help to spread the gospel around the world in different ways.
- ___ ___ 7. Christians need to "dress up" and not "dress down."
- ___ ___ 8. Loving God is more important than keeping His commandments.
- ___ ___ 9. Fruitfulness is a must for every Christian.
- ___ ___ 10. Some preachers were envious of Paul's success in preaching.

Conclusion

The Christian must never give way to despondency. We can serve God wherever we are, no matter what our circumstances! We will never fully realize the great value of a faithful example of a devoted Christian. Paul reminds God's people that we have not been given a spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind (2 Tim. 1:7). We can do all that God expects of us with the strength that comes from Christ's example before us (Phil. 4:13).

Lesson Seven

"Blameless and Harmless Sons of God"

(Phil. 2:1-30)

One of the themes of chapter two is for God's people to be blameless and harmless in a world that is called ***"crooked and perverse."*** Three other concepts, at least, are emphasized that tie in with this theme: (1) The need of a unified people; (2) The need to exalt Christ in our lives; and (3) The need to respect others. When we try to reach people with the Gospel, we must exemplify the benefits of the Gospel before them. A divided congregation destroys the very message it should be trying to teach—"Oneness in Christ!" Both the Ephesian Letter, as well as, the Philippian Letter emphasizes the necessity of oneness or unity of the people of God.

1. Please define or explain the four things that promotes unity among God's people. (2:1)

a) *"If there be therefore any consolation in Christ—*

b) *"If any comfort of love—*

c) *"If any fellowship of the Spirit—*

d) *"If any affection or mercy—*

2. Please define or explain how the following makes for good people relationships: (2:2-4)

a) *"Being likeminded—*

b) *"Having the same Love—*

c) *"Being of one accord, of one mind—*

d) *"Nothing done through strife or vainglory—*

e) *"In lowliness of mind, let each esteem other better than themselves—*

f) *"Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others—*

3. Explain how Christ is the supreme example of the above things. (2:5-8)

4. What three special admonitions are given to the Philippians? (2:12-16)

a)

b)

c)

5. Explain what Paul stated about Timothy that showed respect for him. (2:19-24)

a) He is dependable—

b) He has a proven Character—

6. Explain what Paul stated about Epaphraditus that showed respect for him. (2:25-30)

a) He is a true brother in Christ—

b) He is a true fellow-worker—

c) He was willing to die for Christ—

Conclusion

God wants His people to be beautified by His Spirit and then sent out into the world to be on display before them. It is like what God said to Satan about Job: "*Have you considered My servant Job?*" and doesn't He also say about us: "*Have you considered my servant _____?*" What kind of an influence will we have upon our society?

Lesson Eight

"Confidence in Christ"

(Phil. 3:1-21)

The Apostle next challenges the church at Philippi to rejoice! While there are several things that bring sadness to our hearts, it is not wise to dwell on them. We need to see the things about which we can rejoice—and that rejoicing can come from the Lord and in the Lord. A primary reason why we can rejoice in the Lord is our "confidence" in Him. Paul spoke of this confidence in 2 Cor. 5:6-9. The Christian can be confident of his hope in Christ. This hope is based on what Christ has done for us and our efforts to always be well pleasing to the Lord (Heb. 5:8-9). But there is a danger that false teachers can change their confidence to something else and be lost. In these verses (1-11) Paul is contrasting confidence in two different things.

1. What kind of confidence could Paul (Saul) have from a fleshly viewpoint? (3:1-6)

- a)
- b)
- c)
- d)
- e)
- f)

2. Why did Paul (Saul) give all of the above things up? (3:7-8)

3. What does Paul mean when he said he wanted to "gain Christ?"

4. Upon what basis did Paul believe that he could attain unto the resurrection from the dead? (3:9-11)

5. What did Paul realize that he would have to do in order to attain this goal? (3:12-14)

- a)
- b)

c)

6. Who does Paul said are enemies of Christ and their destiny? (3:17-19)

a)

b)

7. What is God going to do for the body of the faithful Christian? (3:20-21)

True or False

- ___ ___ 1. It matters what we put our confidence in for our salvation.
- ___ ___ 2. Paul was wrong to refer to people as dogs.
- ___ ___ 3. There is such a thing as evil workers as opposed to righteous workers.
- ___ ___ 4. Paul used an expression that was meant to belittle circumcision.
- ___ ___ 5. A true Christian has undergone a circumcision.
- ___ ___ 6. Paul could have boasted about his previous life as a Jew.
- ___ ___ 7. One's acceptability before God depends on our trust in Christ.
- ___ ___ 8. Paul said that he was blameless before the Law.
- ___ ___ 9. The satisfied person does not have the incentive to improve.
- ___ ___ 10. Paul made it clear that he had not arrived in his life.
- ___ ___ 11. We cannot win the prize that Jesus offers unless we get into the race of life.
- ___ ___ 12. The undisciplined person is usually a carnally-minded person.
- ___ ___ 13. Paul said that the carnally-minded person glories, but in that which is a shame.
- ___ ___ 14. Earthly things cannot satisfy our heavenly longings.
- ___ ___ 15. This body of humiliation will be changed into a glorious body.

Conclusion

The reward of the spiritually-minded person is not in what this world has to offer, but what God has to offer. Our citizenship is not of this earth, but it is heavenly. We are like a colony of heaven on earth for a short time to influence the world (Heb. 11:16). Earth cannot satisfy our longings and we are drawn to a celestial world. We serve a risen Savior that is coming back for us. When He comes, He will change our vile bodies into a glorious body because he loves us and has redeemed us and has the power over death.

Lesson Nine

"Contented Christians"

(Phil. 4:1-23)

The Philippian Church was an ideal church from many standpoints; but, they were not perfect—they had not arrived! He begins chapter three with a reminder: ***"For me to write the same things to you is not tedious, but for you it is safe."*** After reminding them that they were in a race to be run and that the prize had not been won as of yet; therefore, it was necessary and helpful for him to write and admonish them about their lives. He gives several basic admonitions in these verses.

1. Define or explain the following expressions that lead to contentment in Christ: (4:1-9)

- a) **Stand fast in the Lord—**

- b) **Live in harmony with each other—**

- c) **Be concerned for one another—**

- d) **Rejoice always—**

- e) **Exercise self-control—**

- f) **Don't worry—**

- g) **Meditate on good things—**

- h) **Follow the right examples—**

The apostle next gives some thoughts about what makes up the concept of contentment!

2. Define or explain the following expressions that are ingredients of contentment: (4:10-23)

- a) **To know that others care—**

- b) **Contentment is a learned process—**

c) Christ makes all of this possible—

d) Contentment comes through trusting in God's providential care—

True or False

- _____ 1. Affectionate terms are not really appropriate to use in mixed company.
- _____ 2. Paul's admonition to stand fast in the Lord does not infer that Christians can fall away and be lost.
- _____ 3. To be of the same mind means that somebody has to give in.
- _____ 4. Selfishness indicates a need to grow up—to mature as a person.
- _____ 5. The Christian can rejoice in the Lord under any circumstances.
- _____ 6. A person has to be in control of himself if he is to be gentle in all circumstances.
- _____ 7. The Christian should not have anything to worry about.
- _____ 8. What we think about and dwell on has little to do with the outcome of our lives.
- _____ 9. Worry is a sin.
- _____ 10. Contentment is being satisfied.
- _____ 11. We can be content and still be hungry.
- _____ 12. Contentment is graciously accepting the inevitable or unchangeable things.
- _____ 13. God works through His people to care for His own.
- _____ 14. Christ is the foundation of our contentment.
- _____ 15. The things Paul dealt with in this letter showed how many problems the church had.

Conclusion

It is amazing how much we need to be reminded on how to live our lives. Repetition seems to be needed by all of us and the Apostle was certainly showing that he felt the need of such reminding—just like Peter did to those to whom he wrote (2 Pet. 1:12-13).

Lesson Ten

"The Pre-Eminence of Christ"

(Col. 1:1-29)

We usually gain insight for the purpose of a letter from the things that are mentioned, discussed, or dealt with. It seems quite apparent that some false teaching and practices were trying to make inroads into the churches. The nature of these teachings was as follows:

1. Philosophical ideas that were tainted by Jewish observances and Oriental concepts (2:8, 11, 14, 16, 17).
2. There was an effort to get people to worship Angels (2:10, 15, 18, 19; 1:16).
3. Extreme ascetic rules and regulations were being fostered upon the church members (2:20-21).
4. A system of ideas that limited the greatness and the authority of Christ and the sufficiency of His atonement (2:8-10, 17, 19; 1:14-20).

Some have suggested that here is where the first indications of the heresy that later became known as "Gnosticism" had its beginning. Paul warned the elders at Ephesus of this grave danger (Acts 20:29-32). Some have identified the teachings and writings of a man named Philo with the ideas that began to water down and undermine the teaching and authority of Christ in the church. His writings had already influenced many Jews of Jesus' day. It is possible that his writings may have been adapted by someone in Colossae. The Apostle John later wrote his Gospel and letters to combat these teachings.

1. For what was the Apostle giving thanks to God about the Colossians? (1:3-8)

- a)
- b)
- c)

2. What six things does Paul pray for concerning the Colossians? (1:9-11)

- a)
- b)
- c)
- d)
- e)
- f)

3. Explain Paul's thoughts about the pre-eminence of Christ. (1:15-22)

- a) He is the image of the invisible God (1:15)

b) He created all things (1:15-17)

c) Headship over the church (1:18)

d) All fullness dwells in Him (1:19)

e) In Him is full and complete reconciliation (1:20-22)

True or False

- _____ 1. Jesus is the Icon of Deity.
- _____ 2. Jesus is the originator of all creatures that exist.
- _____ 3. Jesus created things that were visible and invisible.
- _____ 4. Jesus ante-dates all creation.
- _____ 5. Jesus is what holds this universe together.
- _____ 6. Jesus did not create Chaos, but a Kosmos.
- _____ 7. Jesus is the only head over His church.
- _____ 8. All fullness is found in Jesus.
- _____ 9. Man's reconciliation is complete in Jesus.
- _____ 10. Men can be right with God without Jesus.
- _____ 11. It is important that Christians grow in their knowledge of God's Will.
- _____ 12. A person cannot truly walk worthy of the Gospel of Christ.
- _____ 13. Not to be patient and long-suffering is a sin.
- _____ 14. To be an heir of God, one must be chosen by God.
- _____ 15. Forgiveness means that we will not have to suffer the just penalty of our sins.

Conclusion

What a privilege to be called by God through the Gospel of Christ to become devoted servants of righteousness. We are the chosen ones of God on this earth—be grateful for such a privilege. Walk worthy of such a calling. But in particular be thankful for all of those who have answered the same call that you have answered in their obedience to the Gospel.

Lesson Eleven

"Completeness in Christ"

(Col. 2:1-23)

It is truly a joy to see people become Christians and remain faithful to the Lord. But, it is saddening to see people either reject Christ or after receiving Him to fall away. Unfortunately, both are the experiences of life. Paul was discussing these things in his letter to the church at Colossae because he was made aware of some dangers, not only from a preacher that had worked among them, but also from the Holy Spirit. Paul knew that the Gospel he preached was from God and that it was a powerful Gospel—able to save man's soul. But he also knew it had been entrusted into the hands of mortal man. He knew that mortal man can receive it or reject it; change it, pervert it, and misuse it; etc. So, he is writing to express his gratitude for their reception of the gospel; but, as well to warn them of the dangers of false teachers who pervert this Gospel.

In Colossians 2:8, Paul makes his pronouncement against false doctrines! No matter how plausible they sound; how lofty in intellectual pretensions they are; how skillfully they are interwoven with past religious beliefs; or how popular they may be with people....if they set aside Christ or dethrone Christ, they will bring on man's condemnation instead of his salvation. In verse 9, he states emphatically that fullness or completeness is found only in Christ! The reason—in Him alone is the fullness of Deity Himself.

- 1. Explain the expression: "*In whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.*" (Col. 1:2-3)**

- 2. Explain the following expressions: (2:6-8)**
 - a) Walk in Christ as you were first taught and received—**

 - b) Rooted and built up in Him—**

 - c) Established in the faith, as you have been taught—**

 - d) Abounding therein with thanksgiving—**

- 3. What does it mean that Christ is the fullness of the Godhead? (2:9)**

- 4. Is there a difference in fullness or completeness?**

- 5. What kind of a circumcision does the Christian have? (2:10-11)**

6. What happened to the Old Law of ordinances and how does that affect us today? (2:14)

7. How does a person worship angels? (2:18)

8. What is a self-imposed religion? (2:20-23)

True or False

- _____ 1. To be beguiled is to be deluded.
- _____ 2. Reasonings of men could easily lead God's people away from Him.
- _____ 3. To abound in Christ is to grow in Him.
- _____ 4. There is not wrong with the philosophy and traditions of men.
- _____ 5. Christ in the flesh presents the fullness of Deity.
- _____ 6. False teachers try to rob Christ of His Deity.
- _____ 7. Plausibility of a thought does not necessarily assure it is true.
- _____ 8. The Devil is the head over all principalities and powers.
- _____ 9. Christ performs a spiritual circumcision upon those who believe and obey Him.
- _____ 10. Man's sins are removed when he is baptized into Christ.

Conclusion

Fullness or completeness is found only "in Christ!" No other can do what He has done for mankind. There is neither point nor purpose to turn to another. The redemption of fallen man has been made possible through Christ's death on the cross. We appropriate the benefits of His death by faith in Him. But it is an active faith—expressed in being buried with Christ in baptism. Then, we are raised up to walk in "newness of life." All past sins have been forgiven. Those who reject Christ are still under a "Lay System" to be righteous—which can only bring death!

Lesson Twelve

"Special Admonitions"

(Col. 3:1-4:25)

Inspiration, thus far, has stressed the Greatness of Christ, the All-sufficiency of Christ, and the Completeness of Christ. Such is shown in five areas:

1. All things consist and exist because of Him—He created all;
2. In Him, the great wisdom of God is manifested;
3. All knowledge find their truth in Christ;
4. Christ is the fullness of the Godhead—bodily;
5. And reconciliation and redemption was fully accomplished through the death of Christ.

Therefore, the Philosophy and Wisdom of men have nothing to offer in answer to the origin of things. Christ has revealed all things, so there is no need of further revelation. There is no need to use Angels as intermediaries to approach God for Christ is approachable. And, there is no other way of escaping the bondage of Law, but through Christ. He now turns to practical application of these great truths in the lives of Christians.

- 1. What should our affections be set on? (3:1-4)**

- 2. What are some deeds of the "Old Man" that need to be put off? (3:5-9)**

- 3. How is the "New Man" characterized? (3:12-17)**

- 4. How are Wives to act? (3:18)**
- 5. How are Husbands to act? (3:19)**
- 6. How are Children to act? (3:20)**
- 7. What warning is given to Fathers? (3:21)**
- 8. How are Servants to act? (3:22-25)**

- 9. How are Masters to act? (4:1)**

- 10. What good things does Paul point out about his fellow-workers? (4:7-14)**
 - a) Tychicus (4:7-8)—**

b) Onesimus (4:9)—

c) Aristarchus (4:10)—

d) Marcus (4:10)—

e) Justus (4:11)—

f) Epaphras (4:12-13)—

g) Luke (4:14)—

h) Demas (4:14)—

True or False

- _____ 1. Our affections must not be set on things of this life.
- _____ 2. To mortify the deeds of the Old Man is to put them to death.
- _____ 3. Evil concupiscence is unholy desires of the flesh.
- _____ 4. Malice is to harbor wrong feelings toward another.
- _____ 5. Bowels of mercy has reference to a heart that is compassionate.
- _____ 6. To forbear is to put up with something or someone that aggravates us.
- _____ 7. God's peace can only come to the thankful obedient child.
- _____ 8. To do all in the name of Jesus is to show respect for His authority.
- _____ 9. The husband has no right to ask his wife to do wrong or be dishonest.
- _____ 10. Obedience on the part of children is to be "in the Lord."
- _____ 11. Problems in the home come from a lack of respect for God's authority.
- _____ 12. Christianity advocates slavery.
- _____ 13. Submission is a key concept in all relationships in life.
- _____ 14. Luke was with Paul at the time of writing this letter.
- _____ 15. Churches meeting in homes were common in that period of time.

Conclusion

What a great attitude on the part of the Apostle towards other Christians. And what a great concern that he and others had for the well-being of the churches. What a great difference that the Gospel made in that heathen, ungodly world. How greatly Christians need to set an example before the world of godliness and its great blessings. What a great blessing we Gentiles have been given to be a part of the Redeemed of God!

Lesson Thirteen

"Challenging the Best in People"

(Philemon 1-25)

Christianity came into a world that was sin-laden! While there were conscious efforts on the part of many to have moral and ethical principles by which to govern their lives, there were many that seems to have gone to the other extreme (Romans 1:18-32; Acts 17:15-34). Not only did Christianity give mankind hope for something better after death, but it set about a revolution to change the lives of as many as could be reached with the Gospel (Romans 6:1-6). One of the many evils that had to be dealt with by Christianity was the question of slavery. Is it right or wrong? Should it be accepted or overthrown? Could a Christian owe slaves? If slavery is okay, what kind of regulations need to be put into action that helps to overcome some of its evils? The letter to Philemon comes to grip with at least part of the way to handle such.

- 1. Who were Apphia and Archippus? (vs. 1-2)**

- 2. What good things does the Apostle say about Philemon? (vs. 4-7)**
 - a)

 - b)

 - c)

- 3. Did Paul have a right to command Philemon to receive Onesimus back? (vs. 8-12)**

- 4. Why did Paul want to keep Onesimus in Rome? (vs. 13-16)**

- 5. Did Onesimus owe Philemon anything? (vs. 17-19)**

- 6. Was Paul planning to visit with Philemon? (vs. 20-22)**

- 7. Who was Epaphras? (v. 23)**

- 8. Who also sent greetings to Philemon? (vs. 23-24)**

True or False

- ___ ___ 1. Philemon, by law, had a right to own slaves.
- ___ ___ 2. As a Christian, however, Philemon should not have had slaves.
- ___ ___ 3. The Apostle condemned Philemon for owning slaves.
- ___ ___ 4. The use of one's Authority needs to be done wisely.
- ___ ___ 5. Archippus was the son of Philemon.
- ___ ___ 6. Onesimus had wronged his master by leaving and possibly stealing from him.
- ___ ___ 7. There are no regulations in Scripture concerning the owning of slaves.
- ___ ___ 8. Philemon's willingness to forgive and accept Onesimus back as a slave was the real issue here.
- ___ ___ 9. The Apostle was confident of the response from Philemon.
- ___ ___ 10. Paul wanted Onesimus to come back to Rome and be of help to him.

Conclusion

The Gospel challenges the very best in people to come out. The Lord set the example for us in all of these areas of excellence. Onesimus was trying to meet the challenge as a Christian. Philemon was challenged to do so also; and Paul was confident that he would measure up. So with us today—let the Gospel challenge the very best within us.

