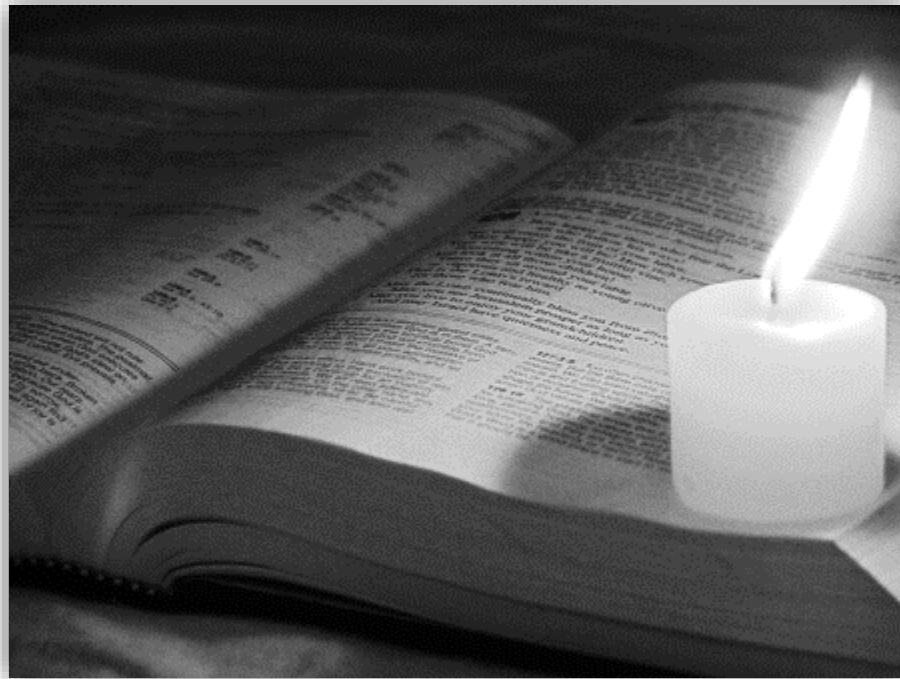


# BIBLE SURVEY COURSE

## FROM GENESIS TO REVELATION

The New Testament – 202

STUDENT NOTES



School of Global Missions  
Dr. Frederick Osborn, M.Div., D.Min.



**Bible Survey Course Syllabus**  
The New Testament - 202  
Student Notes

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Frederick Osborn** traveled the world teaching and preaching the Word of God from 2005 - 2017. His first trip to South Asia was in 2001, and since 2005 he has been fully involved in ministry. His books and study guides have been used in classrooms by hundreds of students around the world.

In 2013 he earned his M.Div. from Andhra Christian Theological College in Hyderabad, India and in that same year was officially ordained into the ministry in a holy convocation administered by Indian pastors representing AG, CSA, and other independent ministries. In 2017 he completed his D.Min. from Covenant Bible College & Seminary, Florida, USA.

He and his wife, Deena now live near Atlanta, GA where he continues to write, teach, and publish his books and study guides.

**Portions of this BIBLICAL STUDIES course are taken from the following books by this author:**

*Exploring the New Testament*

*Exploring the Old Testament: Vol. One – The Pentateuch*

*From Genesis to Revelation: Interpreting the Book of Revelation Through the Old Testament Scriptures*

*Judges: A 21st Century Prophetic Commentary*

*The Apocalyptic Vision: Understanding the Apocalyptic Writings of the Bible*

*The Revelation of Jesus Christ: John the Apostle's Heavenly Vision of Jesus Christ*

*The Way, the Truth, and the Life: The Teachings and Ministry of Jesus the Messiah*

*This Gospel of The Kingdom*

# *School of Global Missions*

## SGM BIBLICAL STUDIES: NT 202

### COURSE SYLLABUS – STUDENT NOTES

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#### COURSE OBJECTIVES:

This course in **BIBLICAL STUDIES** is designed to teach and train three groups: (1) those who are preparing to go to unreached people groups in foreign mission fields (2) for indigenous workers who need more teaching and training for the work they are doing, and (3) to provide materials for indigenous church planters to teach and train others for evangelism and church planting.

#### COURSE TEXT:

The only required text for all Biblical Studies Courses is **THE HOLY BIBLE**. We recommend that each student has a good Study Bible, if possible.

**NOTE TO STUDENTS:** SGM recommends the website, [www.blueletterbible.org](http://www.blueletterbible.org) for Bible translations and reference materials for Bible study. The site is also available on Mobile apps for your phone or tablet.

#### CREDIT VALUE:

SGM uses what is known as a *Trimester Calendar* for holding classes. In a trimester system, students have three terms of 12 weeks in each school year. The students will cover a full year's worth of teaching in a normal two semester year. This course in **BIBLICAL STUDIES** has a 30-credit hour value (Three Terms in Old Testament Studies and Three Terms in New Testament Studies).

**NOTE TO STUDENTS:** SGM recommends the website, [www.blueletterbible.org](http://www.blueletterbible.org) for Bible translations and reference materials for Bible study. The site is also available on Mobile apps for your phone or tablet.

**NOTE TO STUDENTS:** Additional material is included in the teaching materials that your teacher may or may not wish to take advantage of. Anything that is identified as **HANDOUT** material is **NOT** seen by the Students unless copied and given to them as supplemental material. It will be up to the individual teacher to review the teaching materials and decide what to emphasize in their class time. Whatever is not covered in the class, the students will be able study as homework assignments.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE STUDENTS:**

1. Read the required texts.

**NOTE TO THE STUDENTS:** Because the Bible is the only required text for all BIBLICAL STUDIES classes, the students should read the relevant chapters from the Scriptures. The chapters and verses covered in each class will be listed at the beginning of each lesson.

2. Attend all classes in person or Online, or review recording of an excused class (maximum two per term).
3. At the end of each term (12 weeks) write a term paper of at least three typewritten pages (12 point, Times New Roman font, single space.)

**NOTE TO PROFESSORS:** Additional material is included at the end of the teaching materials. You may or may not wish to take advantage of the Handouts. Anything that is identified as HANDOUT material is NOT seen by the students unless you copy and give to them as supplemental material. It will be up to the individual teacher to review the teaching materials and decide what to emphasize in their class time. Whatever is not covered in the class, the students will be able study as homework assignments.

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**NOTE:** Portions of the materials for the School of Global Mission's BIBLICAL STUDIES, NT 202: THE LETTERS OF PAUL are taken from *Exploring the New Testament* © 2010, 2015 and *The Way, the Truth, and the Life* © 2017 by Dr. Frederick Osborn.

**Notes** allow the teacher some flexibility in how they teach this course.

**SUPPLEMENTAL READING FOR N.T. COURSE WRITTEN BY  
REV. DR. FREDERICK OSBORN:**

**(NOTE: These books are not required-reading. They are listed for your benefit as additional sources for your Term Paper, as well as for your personal edification and growth. Portions of these books are included in the teacher's curriculum)**

**DISCIPLE-TO-DISCIPLE: Making Disciples Like Jesus**

**EXPLORING THE NEW TESTAMENT**

**FROM GENESIS TO REVELATION: Interpreting the Book of Revelation  
Through the Old Testament Scriptures**

**KINGDOM DISCIPLESHIP: Becoming Like Jesus**

**THE APOCALYPTIC VISION: Understanding The Apocalyptic Writings of The  
Bible**

**THE BOOK OF ACTS: The Holy Spirit's Handbook for Church Planting  
Movements**

**THE GOSPEL OF JOHN: Speaking Truth to Power**

**THE GOSPEL OF SALVATION: Our Complete Salvation in Body Soul and Spirit**

**THE HOLY SPIRIT IN YOU: Nourishing the Life of Holiness and Power In You**

**KEYS TO EFFECTIVE PRAYER**

**MESSIAH: The Mission of Jesus of Nazareth**

**THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST: John the Apostle's Heavenly Vision of  
Christ the King**

**THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE: The Teachings and Ministry Of Jesus  
The Messiah**

**THIS GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM**

## **BIBLICAL STUDIES COURSE: NEW TESTAMENT 201 – 203**

### **NT 201 The Gospels and Acts**

1. Introduction to the New Testament
2. Matthew pt. one: “King of the Jews” – The Background to the New Testament
3. Matthew pt. two: “Jesus, the Spokesman to Distortion”
4. Matthew pt. three: “The Parables of Jesus”
5. Mark pt. one: “Jesus, Messiah, Son of God, and Savior”
6. Mark pt. two: Jesus, the Son of Man”
7. Luke pt. one: “The Messianic Hope”
8. Luke pt. two: “Jesus the Teacher”
9. John pt. one: “The Word Became Flesh”
10. John pt. two: “Jesus, Lord and Savior”
11. The Gospels: “From the Tomb to the Throne”
12. The Book of Acts - Overview

### **NT 202 The Letters of Paul the Apostle**

1. Romans
2. 1 Corinthians
3. 2 Corinthians
4. Galatians
5. Ephesians
6. Philippians
7. Colossians
8. 1 Thessalonians
9. 2 Thessalonians
10. 1 Timothy
11. 2 Timothy and Titus
12. Philemon

### **NT 203 The Later New Testament**

1. Hebrews pt. one
2. Hebrews pt. two
3. James
4. 1 Peter
5. 2 Peter
6. 1, 2, 3 John
7. Jude
8. Revelation pt. one
9. Revelation pt. two
10. Introduction to Apocalyptic Literature
11. The Mission of the Church in the New Testament
12. Early Church History: The First Seven Ecumenical Councils

SGM BIBLICAL STUDIES  
NT 202: THE LETTERS OF PAUL

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NOTE: ALL HANDOUTS FOR THIS COURSE ARE INCLUDED IN A SEPARATE FILE AT THE END OF THE TEACHER NOTES. THEY ARE NOT INCLUDED WITH THE STUDENT NOTES BUT WILL BE PROVIDED UPON REQUEST.

## SGM BIBLICAL STUDIES NT 202-1

### ROMANS

#### Lesson Outline

##### The Major Themes in Romans

- I. The overarching theme of Romans is “The Just Shall Live by Faith”
- II. The major themes in Romans:
  - a. Faith
  - b. Election
  - c. Justification
  - d. Propitiation
  - e. Redemption
  - f. Sanctification
  - g. Glorification
- III. Israel, rejected because they failed to accept Jesus the Messiah and King of the Jews
  - a. Gentiles, a wild olive branch, are grafted into the natural olive tree.
  - b. By faith, Gentiles are sons and daughters of Abraham. Israel’s rejection is not permanent.
  - c. Israel is still the natural olive branch to be grafted in at the end of the age. ALL of God’s promises to Israel will be fulfilled.
- IV. Christian liberty is described in Romans.

#### ROMANS (Paul – Author)

**Approximate Date Written:** A.D. 57

**Original and Primary Audiences:** The Christians in Rome, and all believers

**Purpose:** Paul wanted to introduce himself to the Romans and give a sample of his message before he arrived. Therefore, his letter was less personal and more of a theological statement of his faith than most of his letters. Although Paul was not personally known to the Roman church, he did have a number of contacts there and greeted them at the end of his letter.

**Context:** Paul was preparing to visit Rome on his way to Spain. At that time, the Roman church was mostly Jewish but also contained a great number of Gentiles. Paul addressed themes that would have been of particular interest to a mixed church of both Jewish and Gentile believers.

**“The Just Shall Live by Faith”**

## INTRODUCTION TO PAUL’S LETTERS

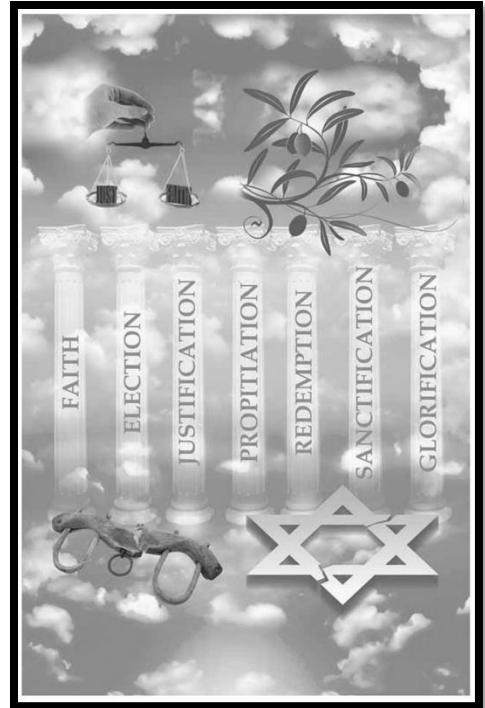
It would be impossible to overstate the value of Paul’s thirteen letters to Christianity. Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, was able to address the specific problems and issues of his time while speaking to Christians of every age. The spiritual insights and practical council Paul gave to the churches he planted and to the leaders he placed over them were recognized by the church throughout the centuries to be universal and timeless. (See HANDOUT “The Pauline Epistles”)

The Epistle was not used as a medium of divine revelation before Paul and the other Apostles began writing these formal letters to the churches and church leaders to:

- Give them instructions on the right conduct and the proper exercise of spiritual gifts in the churches.
- Address problems they were facing (immoral behaviors, false teachers, factions, and conflicts between believers, etc.)
- Answer theological questions.

In Old Testament times, the prophet would deliver God’s message to the people in the form of a formal sermon, psalm. Divine instructions might be in written or spoken word or communicated through symbolic actions. The Epistle, on the other hand, is a very personal form of communication written by one person and addressed to a specific person or group. Believers immediately treasured these letters because they addressed them not as outsiders or foreigners that were part of a Jewish sect, but as sons and daughters of the household of God who were adopted by His grace. These letters were quickly embraced by a new generation of believers as an appropriate way for the Apostles to communicate what the Holy Spirit was speaking to them and to all believers (John 16:12-14).

**Paul’s Epistle to the Romans** has correctly been called \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Also it has rightly been called Christianity’s greatest \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_. The book of Romans has inspired generations of Christians to, as John Wesley said, “Trust in Christ, Christ alone, for salvation...” and to be assured





\_\_\_\_\_ . Our faith must be – first and last – in God and God alone and in His saving grace toward us.

Faith, when applied to the revelation of God’s perfect righteousness versus our hopeless, sinful condition, allows us to see how God has provided for our righteousness through Christ’s perfect sacrifice on our behalf. We must recognize our spiritual poverty (Matthew 5:3) and realize how impossible it is for us who are dead in our trespasses and sins to earn our salvation before we will fully understand the truth of what a great thing God has done to save us. By faith, we see all that is necessary for us to be restored to a right standing with Him has been completed; there is nothing more we must do to receive it. It is God’s grace, not our faith that saves us. That is why the gospel is “good news”; it is “the power of God for salvation” to everyone who believes.

## ELECTION

God’s election is part of His overall plan and purpose for mankind. The word itself means there is nothing at all arbitrary (left to chance or without being thought out or planned) about God’s election. But God’s election is not cold and calculating and without compassion. Election means God has a \_\_\_\_\_ that was worked out in accordance with His love (Ephesians 1:4-6), His mercy (Romans 9:14-16), His grace (Romans 11:5)

Election and predestination mean that God’s perfect plan for mankind is to be accomplished by means worked out long before mankind needed saving. So the merciful and loving God worked out a gracious plan to redeem mankind that originated within the depths of Himself from before the beginning (John 1:1-3; Revelation 13:8). It is based on his eternal wisdom, motivated by His love and compassion that He manifests in time by means of election and predestination.

Election and predestination are not ends in themselves but means to an end, practical ways of accomplishing God’s will; and God’s will for mankind is \_\_\_\_\_. So God did not call Israel just for the sake of calling them, but His call was central to His plan to redeem mankind. And God did not predestine us just for our own sakes, but in same way, each and every one of us is a part of God’s overall plan of redemption. Therefore, according to that purpose, God calls and works everything together for good for those whom He has called: “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.” (Romans 8:28). God predestines those who are in Christ as part of His greater plan for Creation (Romans 8:22-24a)

## JUSTIFICATION

In the first three chapters of Romans, Paul lays out the need for \_\_\_\_\_ for both Jew and Gentile. He concludes that ALL are



**Romans 4:1-25 Abraham's Righteousness**

- 4:1-8 Abraham's righteousness was apart from works  
 4:9-12 Abraham's righteousness was apart from Circumcision  
 4:13-15 Abraham's righteousness was apart from the Law  
 4:16-25 Abraham's righteousness was by faith

The Jews who did not accept Jesus or understand His teachings were accusing Paul of creating a whole new theology of Justification by grace. So Paul turned to the book of Genesis and used Abraham as an example of how from the beginning, God's people were justified by faith. In Romans 4:16-25, Paul wrote that the promise of salvation has always come by faith, "so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring." Paul declared that it is not only those who are of the law who are Abraham's offspring, but it includes those who are of \_\_\_\_\_ . Referring to Genesis 12:1-3, Paul states that "it is written" that God promised to make Abraham "the father of many nations" making him the father of all who believe in God – the One "who gives life to the dead and calls things that are not as though they were."

In that same passage, Paul spoke of Abraham's unwavering faith that caused him to believe God even when he was advanced in years and Sarah's womb was barren. Because Abraham was absolutely convinced that God had the power to do what He promised – even when all seemed lost – his faith was accounted to him for righteousness. In the same way, God will credit righteousness to all those who believe in God who raised Jesus Christ from the dead. The Son of God was delivered over to death on the cross for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.

Paul argues that justification becomes the fulfillment of the sacred covenant God made with Abraham from the moment he called him out of Ur (Genesis 12:1-3). He finishes his statement on justification by describing the many Benefits of this Righteousness obtained by faith:

- \_\_\_\_\_ (5:1-2)
- \_\_\_\_\_ (5:3-8) and
- \_\_\_\_\_ (5:9-11)

In Romans 5:12-21, Paul closed his argument on Justification by returning to Christ. He contrasted the condemnation that came through Adam to all men – both Jew and Gentile – with the righteousness that comes to all men through Christ. Paul reminds us that sin entered the world through one man – Adam. And death came to the human race through sin, because all sinned – even before the law of Moses was given. Even when there was no law, death reigned from Adam to

Moses. But the gift of forgiveness of sins is much greater because the many who died by the trespass of the one man, are outweighed by the many more who received God's grace. The gift of salvation that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflows to the many. The gift of God is not like the consequence of the one man's sin because judgment followed one sin and brought condemnation, but God's forgiveness came after many trespasses and brought justification: "Therefore, as through one man's offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous." (5:18–19).

By the time Paul the Apostle (the former Saul the Pharisee) wrote Romans, he had come to the realization that rather than making one righteous, the law was added so that trespasses might increase; "But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more, so that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." (5:20–21).

## PROPIITIATION

"...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus." Romans 3:23-26

Paul used the same Greek word *hilasterion* in 3:23-26 that Hebrews and the Apostle John used in passages describing the "propitiation" (atoning sacrifice) for sins. In each case (Hebrews 2:17; 1 John 2:1-2; 1 John 4:10 and Romans 3:23-26) *hilasterion* speaks of God's atoning sacrifice that was necessary to pay the price to redeem us from the curse of sin. "For the wages of sin is death," Paul said, "but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." (6:23)

"Wages" implies a debt to be paid. However, there is no way we can pay the debt of sin; it is too great, making it impossible for us to work it off.

It is also important to note that the exact same word, *hilasterion*, is used in the Book of Hebrews for the "Mercy Seat" of the Ark kept in the Temple's Holy of Holies. The Hebrew equivalent of the Greek word means "the cover." Therefore, "the lid or cover of the ark of the covenant," signifies the Propitiatory (the One

who satisfies the debt of sin). Propitiation is called “the cover” because it is the place where \_\_\_\_\_ this expiation is made once a year on the great Day of Atonement (Heb. 9:5). It is a covering for sins committed.

Therefore, through His voluntary atoning sacrifice in the shedding of His blood, under Divine judgment upon sin, and through His resurrection, Christ is the Mercy Seat (covering and propitiation) for all those who believe in Him.

## REDEMPTION

Paul, the ex-Pharisee made the shocking statement to devout Jews that there is no difference between Jew and Gentile: “...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus...” (3:23–24). This redemption or ransom Paul spoke of is the \_\_\_\_\_ in order to set him free. He said those who obey sin are slaves to sin (Romans 6:16) so in a sense we are all born slaves to sin. But the good news is Jesus Christ paid our ransom in His blood in order that we might be set free from sin (8:1-4)

## SANCTIFICATION

Sanctification is the process through which we become more and more like Jesus Christ; it is the demonstration of \_\_\_\_\_ by the work of the Holy Spirit in us.

Before we can begin the process of sanctification, we must be \_\_\_\_\_. Our justification is received by grace through faith in the Son of God who was obedient to the will of His Father on our behalf. Without first being justified by grace through faith, sanctification is impossible; before our sin nature is dealt with through the cross of Christ, the best we can be is self-righteous, which may make us look good on the outside to ourselves and to others, but inside – in the heart where God alone sees us – we will remain “unclean” and sinful (Isaiah 64:6; Matthew 23:25-26).

Apart from justification, our obedience becomes like filthy rags - an outward show of religious legalism that will end up making us modern day Pharisees and keeps us separated from God. Justification by the blood of Jesus cleans us on the inside so the Spirit of God can move into our heart and lead us in the process of sanctification. Sanctification is what Jesus was talking about when He said, that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, we will not be able to enter the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 5:20).

Sanctification exceeds the surface and superficial righteousness of following religious rules and regulations and takes us into the realm of the Spirit where true inner transformation takes place.

In Romans 6:1 – 8: 39, Paul described this process of Sanctification by the Holy Spirit for us. For centuries Theologians have struggled to understand God's design for our growing in divine grace, free of the curse of sin. One of the great difficulties in our understanding of this process is the human desire for self-righteousness that religion offers. People are much more comfortable with the boundaries and restrictions that religion places upon them. But in these chapters of Romans, Paul described a freedom from sin for the believer that transcends the confines of any earthly religion.

Few books in the Bible have had more written about them than the book of Romans, and few chapters in the NT have had more written about them than these next chapters in Romans. A clear understanding of the concepts explained in these chapters of Romans is essential for the believer to have a clear understanding of the purpose and full meaning of our Salvation. This process of Sanctification is another one of those ideas that every Christian must have a clear understanding of if they are to grow in their spiritual life in Christ.

Paul begins his teaching on Sanctification in chapter six by explaining the relationship between sanctification and sin. In verses 1-14, Paul expressed two very important points about the sanctification of the believer and sin: (1) The believer is dead to Sin in Christ – baptized into His death; but (2) that does not mean that our freedom from sin in Christ Jesus is a license for us to keep on sinning. In other words, we have been freed FROM sin, not freed TO sin.

If the Christian continues to offer the parts of their body to sin, they become a slave to sin. Those who are under the law are slaves to sin because the law does not give anyone the power over sin. Therefore, there is no way they can avoid sinning: sin will always be their master. Paul is absolutely clear on this point: no man – Jew or Gentile – can obtain salvation through the works of any law or ritual. The cross of Christ is the only way God's grace is received through faith. Only by faith in Jesus Christ can man be saved from the power of sin and death.

In verses 6:15-23, Paul explains that the believer is free from sin to be a slave to righteousness. Before Jesus Christ came, we were dead in our trespasses and sins. Sin had its way with us because it was part of our very nature – the nature of Adam. But in Christ, the old sin nature was crucified, dead and buried. Once dead, we were raised to life with the “new Adam”, Jesus Christ, with sin no longer inside of us. “You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness.” But sin is still outside of us – in the world around us – wanting to entice us through the flesh to obey and follow it back into slavery to sin. However, sin has no dominion over Christ – and Christ is now in us by the Holy Spirit –

therefore, sin no longer has dominion over us and we no longer have to be slaves to sin. Sanctification is “living out” in our daily life the spiritual reality that we have been redeemed and are no longer slaves to the old nature of Adam but are now slaves to God (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

For the religious Jew (and really for anyone who has been taught by their religion that the observances of prayers, rituals, and obedience to the regulations of their religion is what makes them holy, pure, and sanctified before their God) this revelation of our freedom from sin through faith in Christ creates a great internal conflict. The Jews believed that obedience to the Law is what sanctified a person and therefore made them worthy of God’s Covenant grace, but here, Paul turned that whole concept on its head. He proclaimed what the Holy Spirit reveals to all who believe: that by the grace of God we are *made* holy and therefore are worthy not because of anything we have done or ever will do, but because of what God has done on our behalf through the Cross of Christ.

“*Where then does this leave the Law?*” The Jewish rabbis would ask, and Paul answers them in the next verses 7:1-25.

Sanctification and the Law: In the first six verses of chapter seven, Paul explains how the Christian is dead to the Law, but alive to God by using an illustration from marriage. In the same way that a woman is freed to remarry after her husband dies, so the believer is freed from the law to be married to another: “So, my brothers, you also died to the law through the body of Christ, that you might belong to another...”

The Law is good; it is without spot or blemish; it is God’s design, and therefore cannot be undone. But the problem is the Law can never set us free from itself, and like the woman in this illustration, we cannot abandon our “legal husband” (God’s Holy Law) and be married to another. Therefore, since God will not destroy His Law, He had to come up with a different solution. Instead of nullifying His law (or by this illustration, killing the husband) He puts us to death, and spiritually raises us to new life with Christ (7:7<sup>ff</sup>).

Therefore, God’s perfect Law is satisfied and yet all are free to be joined to Christ because our life is now “hidden with Christ in God” (note Colossians 3:1-4). Paul goes on to explain in verses 7-25 that the Law cannot deliver from sin. The Law is powerless to help us in our struggle against sins. It is there only to expose the evil desires that lurk in the hearts of men and to prove beyond a shadow of doubt that we are guilty of sin and deserving of the death sentence pronounced over us by a just God. Paul was not saying that the law is sin. He makes it clear that apart from the law we would not have known what sin is: “For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it killed me. Therefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good.” (7:11–12).

Paul continues his argument saying that the problem is not only with sin, but also with us; we are born into sin; unspiritual, and incapable of doing anything good, righteous, or holy. Because sin is always right there with us waging war against the Law of God and making us a prisoner of the war between the flesh and the spirit until we finally cry out “who will deliver me from this body of death?” He answers, “Thanks be to God--through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in the sinful nature a slave to the law of sin.” (See HANDOUT “Parallels and Contrasts Between Romans 6 & 7).

The explanation of how this freedom is accomplished is told in Chapter 8:1 – 39. In these verses, Paul describes the work of the Spirit in our Sanctification. As we cooperate with this work of the Holy Spirit in us, \_\_\_\_\_ Paul already described how powerless to free themselves from sin Jews and Gentiles are – the Law cannot save them. Therefore, only God can save anyone and chose the means of salvation by “sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering.”

In verses 1-11 of chapter 8, Paul describes how the Spirit delivers from the power of the flesh. Paul declared, “There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.” God sent His Son to do this because the law could not. In Christ’s humanity, God condemned sin so that the righteous requirements of the law – that the cost of sin is death – could be satisfied in us “who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.”

“To live according to the Spirit means this: Once we have believed in Jesus, the Holy Spirit comes into our lives and gives us a new desire, a new power, to obey God. We are born again by the Spirit; we receive new spiritual life in Christ. Only by the help of the Holy Spirit within us can we lead righteous lives. To say that Christ is righteous is not enough; through the Spirit, Christ’s righteousness must be demonstrated in our lives. This is what it means to live according to the Spirit.” (Thomas Hale and Stephen Thorson, *The Applied New Testament Commentary*, © 1996, Kingsway Pub., UK, p.580)

Although we have been freed from the law of sin and death by the finished work of Christ on our behalf, still we are unable by our own strength to live and walk in this new life. It is the SPIRIT that lives in us that gives us this power to overcome the flesh. Without the Spirit it is impossible, but if we cooperate with the Spirit and follow His commands, we will have the victory.

Paul continues his teaching on the Holy Spirit's work of freeing believers from indwelling sin. He reveals in verses 12-17 that the Spirit does more than empower the believer to have victory over the flesh, He also gives "Sonship" to those who live by the Spirit. Those who live by the Spirit put to death the misdeeds of the body and live. "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God." (8:14). Paul notes that the Spirit of sonship does not make us a slaves to fear, but because we are now God's children we are "joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together." (Ro 8:17).

God's intention for our sanctification is to bring us back into His family by removing the barrier of sin that separates us from Him. The Holy Spirit speaks to us deep within our hearts and tells us that we really are God's children and since we are His children, we will share in the riches of the Kingdom – as well as share in His sufferings. Now we are no longer aliens and strangers to our heavenly Father, but are co-heirs adopted into God's family through the blood of Jesus. It is no longer our fear of punishment for being a lawbreaker that controls us, but it is our adoption into God's family that motivates us by love to obey the Spirit that has taken up residence within each and every person born of His Spirit.

In verses 18- 30, Paul is building us towards the great climax of the fullness of our salvation, which is the Spirit's assurance of our future glory. Paul has laid the foundation that we who *have been* saved (justified by faith in the blood of Jesus), and *are being* saved (sanctified by the power and presence of the Holy Spirit within who helps us in our weakness), *will be* saved at the end of the age when God the Father liberates all of creation from its bondage to decay ("For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has?"). All this will come to fruition when the adopted sons and daughters of God are revealed, and all creation is brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.

In verses 8:29-30 Paul points to God's electing grace in our complete salvation. From the very beginning God knew those who would come to him—and all along His intention was that these should become like his Son. The Son of God would be the First, with many adopted brothers and sisters to follow. And those who have been adopted have been chosen by the Father to become like His Son; they have been justified (declared "not guilty"), and by the indwelling Holy Spirit, filled with Christ's goodness. God gave us right standing with Himself, helps us in our weakness, and assures us of His promised glory.

God's foreknowledge means that when God takes special knowledge of a people and chooses them out of this world – as He did Israel – He will fulfill the plan and purpose for which they were called. In the same way, God has chosen the Gentiles for a purpose. God gave us right standing with Himself, helps us in our weakness, and assures us of His promised glory.

“From the God of Knowledge comes all that is and shall be. Before ever they existed He established their whole design, and when, as ordained for them, they come into being, it is in accord with His glorious design that they fulfill their work.” Qumran Rule of the Community

Paul closed his arguments on justification (verses 31-39) describing how the Spirit assures us of final victory. Satan is the great accuser. He stands against us all day long accusing us before the Father, but we stand righteous in Jesus Christ. We have been justified, making us God’s elect – chosen in Christ and accepted. Therefore, no charge Satan can bring against us will stand. Then, Paul argues, our justification makes the way open for our sanctification because without the righteousness of Christ, all our efforts of self-righteousness will fall short. For the same God who justifies us, is the same one who sanctifies us by His Spirit working in us and through us. He has chosen us and predestined us to be glorified in the Son, therefore, the very best we can do is yield to the process taking place in us and let God have His way in us. In the end we cannot take credit for anything – God is the one who is just and who justifies us. We have hope for the future because nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

## GLORIFICATION

*“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.”* Romans 8:28-30

In Romans 8:28-30, Paul connects our predestination with our calling, justification, and glorification. F.F. Bruce said, “Sanctification is progressive conformity to the mind or image of Christ here and now (*cf.* 2 Cor. 3:18; Col. 3:10); glory is perfect conformity to the image of Christ there and then. Sanctification is glory begun; glory is sanctification consummated. Paul looks forward to the consummation of the work of grace – a consummation guaranteed by its inception: ‘he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ’ (Phil. 1:6)”

In Romans, Paul is referring to the present glorification of the church in Christ Jesus. Christ’s glorification is not only for Him but also for others, “In order that they might be the firstborn among many brothers.” His loving self-sacrifice for the church (Ephesians 5:25) is for His bride – that the church might be glorious

with Him. The church's glorification in this present time, takes place specifically as believers are "conformed to the image of his Son" (Romans 8:29). However, the glorification of believers awaits its full realization when He returns; "when Christ, our life, is manifested, then you also will be manifested with Him in glory" (Col. 3:4)

**Note: for a more detailed study of our justification, sanctification, and glorification in Christ see this author's book *The Gospel of Salvation: Our Complete Salvation in Body Soul and Spirit*.**

## ISRAEL'S ELECTION AND REJECTION

In Romans chapters 9 and 11, Paul wrestles with the issue of Israel's election by God in light of their rejection of Christ. In both chapters, Paul expresses his anguish over his own people's refusal to accept Jesus as the Messiah. How could the nation, which had been specially prepared by God to express the kingdom of heaven on earth – the nation that could glory in so many unique promises and privileges of divine grace – fail to recognize and then participate in the brutal execution of their long-anticipated Messiah? Israel was now like the natural, but fruitless branch that had been broken off the vine and the Gentiles, who were responding in large numbers to the gospel, were experiencing God's grace. But Israel was not without hope. For all those who call upon the name of the Lord during this age of grace – both Jew and Gentile – shall be saved. And Israel is not without hope in the future, for a time will come when all the promises of God to that nation shall come to pass.

## THE CHRISTIAN LAW OF LIBERTY

The church was young when Paul wrote this, but already religious and cultural differences were causing conflicts in the church about what was right and wrong. Jews and Gentiles lived very different lives and had different sensibilities about certain behaviors, people, or manner of worship. Paul gave simple instructions to avoid major disputes: "Accept him whose faith is weak, without passing judgment on disputable matters." (14:1).

Paul's teaching on Christian Liberty reminds us that each person is accountable to Christ, not to others. Certainly Christians must be uncompromising in their stand against activities that are expressly forbidden by both Old and New Testament Scripture (adultery, homosexuality, murder, theft, etc.), but they should not be like certain religious leaders of the Jews and create additional rules and regulations based upon tradition and give them equal standing with God's law.

When Christians allow public opinion, personal likes and dislikes, or cultural and religious biases to shape their moral judgments, conflicts will inevitably arise between believers. The resolution to these conflicts must be sought by rightly understanding and applying the Word of God.

Paul's argument in Romans 14 assumes there will be differences of opinion in the church about what is right or wrong. Paul states clearly that believers should not quarrel about issues that are matters of opinion. Superficial differences over matters that do not relate to our salvation should not be feared or avoided but accepted and handled with love. It is unrealistic to expect people from different cultural, ethnic, social, and religious backgrounds to express their faith in Jesus Christ in exactly the same way. In the end, Christian unity is what matters most (John 17:20-23).

A second aspect of this issue has to do with faith. Who is weak in faith and who is strong? In this passage of Romans, Paul defines "weak" faith as immature faith that has not yet developed the fortitude that a Christian needs to stand against the external pressures to conform to the patterns of this fallen world. Paul responds to weak brothers in love. Believers may be acting sincerely, according to their consciences, but it is wrong for them to try to make disputable matters into rules for the whole church. Certainly there are some issues critical to our salvation and growth in Christ that are worth fighting for, but many of the most divisive issues are based on individual differences or matters of conscience, and therefore, should not be mandated. Our principle should be: "In essentials, unity; in nonessentials, liberty; in everything, love."

### Questions for Lesson One

1. Explain why Romans is often considered to be Paul's greatest theological treatise.
2. Why is Abraham's faith so important to New Testament believers?
3. Write a brief definition of each of the crucial concepts in Romans (faith, election, justification, propitiation, redemption, sanctification, and glorification).
4. Why is it important to keep our cultural differences and differences of opinions over disputable matters from causing divisions in the church? (Note Romans 14:1-13 and John 17:20-23).
5. Paul described weak versus strong Christians. How should they treat one another in Romans 14:13-21

# SGM BIBLICAL STUDIES

## NT 202-2

### 1 CORINTHIANS

#### Lesson Outline

- I. Corinth was a gifted, but troubled church.
  - A. Introduction
  
- II. The Major Problems Paul Had to Address in the Church at Corinth
  - A. Sin and disorderly worship in the church.
  - B. Paul's authority as an apostle questioned.
  - C. False teachers were leading believers astray.
  - D. Disputes between believers were causing disunity.
  - E. The Corinthian church had a distorted view of Christian liberty.
  - F. The Corinthian church needed clear advice on marriage.
  - G. Because of their pagan background, many believers in Corinth needed instructions on worshipping God in spirit and truth.
  - H. The church at Corinth was undisciplined and were fighting among themselves.
  
- III. How Christians can address any of those issues that cause problems in the church today.

**Author:** Paul

**Approximate Date Written:** A.D. 55

**Original and Primary Audiences:** The church in Corinth, and all believers

**Purpose:** To address specific problems in the Corinthian church, to provide solutions, and to encourage believers to remain faithful to Jesus Christ in a corrupt and sinful world.

**Context:** Paul was near the end of his three-year ministry in Ephesus (during his third missionary journey) when he heard distressing news from the church he established in Corinth on his second missionary journey. Corinth was filled with idolatry and immorality, and most of the Christians there had come from that Pagan background. Paul had to write a forceful and straightforward letter to bring quick correction to those believers that were acting more like idolaters than followers of Jesus Christ.

## Corinth: A Gifted, but Troubled Church

The key word to understanding Paul's first letter to the Church at Corinth is \_\_\_\_\_

To understand the full story of Paul's relationship to the church at Corinth and his statements concerning his authority to bring correction to the church, we must turn to the \_\_\_\_\_



ANCIENT CITY OF CORINTH

Corinth was one of the most important cities in Greece when Paul arrived there on his second missionary journey. The Corinthians responded to the message Paul preached and a number of them were baptized and became believers. Paul spent a total of eighteen months in Corinth, preaching and teaching the word of God to all who would listen. At one point in time, he supplemented his income by joining Aquila and Priscilla in a tent making business. Later, Silas and Timothy joined them, and the ministry in Corinth continued to grow. But as time went on, opposition to Paul's ministry grew because leaders in the Jewish synagogue where Paul was preaching strongly objected to what he was saying. So Paul no longer used the Synagogue for his preaching and started a house church in the home of Titius Justus. After Paul departed from Corinth, Apollos arrived from Ephesus to minister to the Corinthian church (Acts 19:1).

While Paul was preaching and teaching in Ephesus during his third missionary journey, the church in Corinth sent him a disturbing report concerning a major quarrel that was splitting the church (1 Corinthians 1:11). A delegation was appointed to deliver a letter to Paul asking him to respond to a number of issues that were causing chaos and confusion in the church. First Corinthians is the letter Paul wrote in response. It is important to note at this point that the Corinthian church was primarily a \_\_\_\_\_. The believers knew very little about Jewish Law or religious traditions. They came from \_\_\_\_\_ and therefore only knew how to worship the way they were taught from idol worship and conducted themselves according to their Pagan traditions. So when the Corinthians accepted Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior – although they were sincere in the newfound faith – they continued to worship in a way that seemed natural to them. But worship of God in spirit and truth meant that they

must enter into a new way of worship and establish new traditions based upon faith in Christ and His resurrection.

Many of the problems Paul addressed were not problems for those who worshiped according to the \_\_\_\_\_ . Basically, idol worship for the Greeks was one long party that moved from festival to festival and from sacred site to sacred site around the region. Their worship was often chaotic – characterized by drunkenness, overindulgence of food, and sexual promiscuity. Practically anything was permissible, as long as it was done as part of some religious festival in honor of one or more of their gods or goddesses. This first letter to the Corinthians contained Paul’s prescriptions to \_\_\_\_\_ to the Corinthian church, which was in chaos.

Another thing to keep in mind when studying this epistle is that Paul was addressing this church in context of their immediate culture. We know that nothing in Scripture is in error, but at the same time, if we are going to keep ourselves from misunderstanding or misinterpreting these verses, we must first understand the word in its immediate context in order to learn how best to apply these principles to our particular time and place. The following is a list taken from the *Life Application Study Bible Notes* of the issues troubling the Corinthian church:

#### EIGHT ISSUES CAUSING CHAOS IN THE CORINTHIAN CHURCH

1. \_\_\_\_\_: Paul’s authority as an apostle had been challenged, so Paul defended his authority against the false teachers (chapters 2 – 4).
2. \_\_\_\_\_: Paul rebuked the church for not disciplining the blatant sin of one of its members. Their laxness in dealing with sin could become a severe problem (chapter 5)
3. \_\_\_\_\_: Paul explained that the believers should not take one another to the civil courts but should handle their disputes among themselves (6:1-8)
4. \_\_\_\_\_: Paul’s teaching about freedom in Christ had been changed to the point that some thought that even fornication was allowable among believers. Paul corrected that error by explaining that freedom in Christ did not mean freedom to sin (6:9-20)

5. \_\_\_\_\_: Paul answered the questions about marriage that the Corinthians had sent to him. Many new Christians were already married to unbelievers and did not know what to do. Other new Christians did not know whether or not they should marry. Paul gave forthright advice on the matter (chapter 7)
6. \_\_\_\_\_: Paul answered questions about dealing with a world filled with idolatry. Surrounded by the pagan religious cults and immorality of Corinth, the new believers wondered about how to deal with the issue of eating food sacrificed to idols. Paul explained the freedom in Christ yet also held them responsible to deal carefully with those among them with weak consciences in these matters (chapters 8-10)
7. \_\_\_\_\_: Paul delineated matters of respect and order in worship services. Male and female roles needed to be understood in context of this time period and culture (chapters 11-14)
8. \_\_\_\_\_: Paul reminded the Corinthian believers of their wonderful faith in the resurrection of Jesus Christ because false teachers had come along denying it as truth. Paul defended the resurrection and explained that without it, their faith was worthless (chapter 15)

There is no time in this lesson to go into detail over each of the issues that were addressed in this letter. However, we can highlight the broad principles Paul used to bring the Corinthian church back into alignment with the Holy Spirit and with the Word of God without putting them under the legalistic restrictions of the Jewish Law.

“Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe’s household, that there are contentions among you. Now I say this, that each of you says, ‘I am of Paul,’ or ‘I am of Apollos,’ or ‘I am of Cephas,’ or ‘I am of Christ.’” (1 Corinthians 1:10-12)

Some in the Corinthian church were thinking themselves better than others and were creating divisions based upon whose disciple they were and that

threatened the peace and harmony believers are supposed to share. Paul's answer was to remind them of the \_\_\_\_\_ (1:18 – 2:16) Christians ought to be considerate of one another because of what Christ has done for all of us upon the cross. We are all sinners saved by the grace of God and should not think more highly of ourselves than we ought. Paul said in Romans 12:3, Christians ought not to think of themselves more highly than they ought – that Christians should think of themselves with careful judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given them. And his advice here is no different:

“For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called...

But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption – that, as it is written, ‘He who glories, let him glory in the LORD.’” (1 Corinthians 1:26, 30-31)

Believers are called to be considerate of one another if for no other reason than because of what Christ has done for us. There is no place for spiritual pride or know-it-all attitudes in the body. We are supposed to have the mind of Christ:

“Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus...” (Philippians 2:1-5)

“For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ...” (1 Corinthians 3:11)

Those who have the mind of Christ must strive for unity. The wisdom of this world supports carnal lifestyles that are contrary to true godliness; it is full of pride and puffs up a person's ego and self-centeredness. Christians who evaluate themselves and others by the wisdom of this world will cause divisions in the church as they point to their own selves and their own ministries ahead of others.

Believers who followed the undisciplined ways of the Pagans in their lifestyles and in their worship were also causing many problems in the Corinthian church. Styles of worship that might be alright for those outside the church who worshiped idols were not alright for those who had become followers of Jesus Christ. Therefore, anyone who comes to the Lord's Table must not come like

Pagans, gorging themselves in drunken revelry, but must come in an attitude of holiness and reverence for Christ's sacrifice for sins. Paul reminded the Corinthian church of the story of the Last Supper (11:23-29); it is a time for reflection on Christ's final words to his disciples before he died on the cross. Therefore, believers must celebrate this in an \_\_\_\_\_

Life is not always orderly and simple; and the church at Corinth reflected many of the chaotic conditions of the worldly and idolatrous people around them; this was especially true since many of the new believers at Corinth came from pagan backgrounds. Paul had to address many difficult questions that were being raised by the Corinthian church about how to restore order and godliness to the church that was out of control. One-by-one, Paul answered the misunderstandings and false teachings that crept into the church at Corinth:

- The problems created by elevating human leaders over God's word (1:10-17; 3:1-23)
- The problems created by exalting human wisdom over God's wisdom (1:18-31)
- How to select trusted stewards over the church (4:1-13)
- How to settle disputes between believers (6:1-11)
- Questions over sin and believers (6:12-20)
- Questions over marriage, divorce, and remarriage (chapter 7)
- Conflicts over the Christian's liberty in Christ versus the need to obey religious rules (chapters 8 – 10)
- How Christians should conduct themselves in the house of God (11:1-34)
- The diversity of spiritual gifts and their proper use (12:1 – 14:38)
- Questions over the resurrection (15:1-58)

The church, at times, must exercise discipline toward members who have sinned. But church discipline must be handled carefully, straightforwardly, and lovingly.

Paul understood that not every matter that believers face throughout their life will have a clear-cut answer in Scripture. Some things – like sexual sin, and irreverence at the Lord's Table – Paul was able to deal with in a direct manner. But for the other matters, Paul expressed one overriding consideration: love (*agape*).

## 1 Corinthians 13:1-13 “The Poem of Love”

<sup>1</sup> Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal.

<sup>2</sup> And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.

<sup>3</sup> And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing.

<sup>4</sup> Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up;

<sup>5</sup> does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil;

<sup>6</sup> does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth;

<sup>7</sup> bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

<sup>8</sup> Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away.

<sup>9</sup> For we know in part and we prophesy in part.

<sup>10</sup> But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away.

<sup>11</sup> When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things.

<sup>12</sup> For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known.

<sup>13</sup> And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

In 1 Corinthians 13, Paul expressed the truth that \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ for all that believers do. Without love, the gift of tongues is useless, the gift of prophecy is useless, the gift of knowledge is useless, the gift of faith is useless, and the gift of giving is useless. Christians have different gifts, abilities, likes, and dislikes that can cause friction between believers – but we are called, without exception, to love one another because, “Love never fails.”

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” (John 13:34-35)

“And now I plead with you, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment to you, but that which we have had from the beginning: that we love one another. This is love, that we walk according to His commandments. This is the commandment, that as you have heard from the beginning, you should walk in it.” (2 John 1:5-6)

False teachers in the church often take advantage of \_\_\_\_\_ in worship services, which is why Paul admonished the church at Corinth to “Let all things be done decently and in order (14:40).

In this letter Paul laid out what is the best defense against deceptive false teachers or against those who may be sincere but in serious error concerning the faith. Paul reminds us in chapter 15:42-58 to keep our hearts and minds centered upon \_\_\_\_\_. The promise of Christ’s resurrection is that all those who put their faith in Him will live. In the end, their perishable bodies will be exchanged for heavenly bodies, and they will live and reign with Christ. Our final victory over death is assured (15:55). Paul encourages believers to \_\_\_\_\_ and let nothing \_\_\_\_\_. Christians can always give themselves fully to the work of the Lord because they know that our labor in the Lord is not in vain (15:58).

False teachers and cult leaders often try to wrap the message of the cross in mystery; their message – that salvation requires some kind of special spiritual wisdom or knowledge that only a few can obtain – is attractive to those who feel salvation is not that easy and that there must be some labor involved from those seeking redemption. But the message of the cross is really quite simple, and the way is open to all who believe and receive by faith the finished work of Christ on our behalf. Christians must keep the message of salvation simple and at the same time, lead those whom God has placed in our care beyond the fundamentals of our faith into maturity in Christ.

## HOW DO WE HANDLE FALSE TEACHERS AND FALSE PROPHETS IN THE CHURCH TODAY?

“I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given to you by Christ Jesus, that you were enriched in everything by Him in all utterance and all knowledge, even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you...” (1 Corinthians 1:4–6)

Jesus warned us that in the Last Days “many false prophets will rise up and deceive many.” (Matthew 24:11). As soon as the church started spreading beyond

the confines of Jerusalem, false teachers and false prophets started to inject their own thoughts and beliefs onto the church. The intentions of those who wrote the New Testament were to address false teachings and to assure new believers that the things the apostles said about Jesus Christ were the truth (Luke 1:1-4). Judaizers (those who believed Gentiles had to observe the Law of Moses alongside faith in Jesus the Messiah), and Gnostics (those who mixed the beliefs of pagan mystery religions with teachings of the apostles) were dismissed forcefully in the letters of Paul and the other Apostles. However, the existence of false teachers and false prophets in the church has remained a major problem for Christians from the early days of the faith.

Because there is no central authority or hierarchy that can enforce with any absolute certainty what is and what is not Christian orthodoxy, Christians today are confronted with a myriad of cults professing a wide range of often conflicting and contradicting beliefs that all claim to represent “true Christianity.”

Fortunately, for us today, the early church fathers, with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, foresaw the great need to gather into one volume the authentic writings of the chosen Apostles of Jesus Christ to help us know the true apostolic Christian teachings and stay away from those who deliberately teach what is false (1 John 1:1-4; 1 Peter 2:1-3). Because there are so many false teachings in the church today, the big question for us is “How do you recognize false teaching?”

In our modern technological age with its easy accessibility to a variety of Christian social media sites, how do we know for certain if what we are seeing and hearing is true Christian doctrine? The Scriptures themselves give us some foundational principles to help us identify false teachings in the church.

The surest way to spot a counterfeit doctrine is to know what is \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Experts will tell you that the way they combat counterfeit currency being circulated is to study and know everything about real currency. Then whenever fake currency appears they will immediately know it because they know what is real. This principle works when it is applied to Christian doctrine.

Authentic Christian teaching will be rooted and grounded in the accepted canon of Scripture (the 66 books of the Bible that are recognized across the board as Holy Spirit inspired works). Although there are various English translations of the original Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic languages of the original authors, those that are widely used by different Christian denominations and that are not exclusive to one group are the most trustworthy.

There are three major areas that are the most important signs to point us to sound Christian doctrines:

1. True biblical teaching always points to \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ Faith in Jesus is always by the grace of God and does not involve works (John 3:5-21).
2. True biblical teaching puts the growth and benefit of Christians \_\_\_\_\_. Genuine Christian teachers feed God's sheep; false prophets and teachers will want to feed off of them (John 21:15-19).
3. True biblical teaching makes believers \_\_\_\_\_, not dependent upon church leaders or treat them as subjects of a particular group or denomination. Cult groups almost always seek total control over their members. Christ came to set us free from rules and restrictions. (Luke 4:16-21).

When visiting an unfamiliar church or denomination for the first time, it is important to keep these basic principles in mind and not commit yourself to any group or denomination until you have compared their teachings with the Bible.

**There are three major ways that false teaching reveals itself and that Christians should be aware of.**

1. False teaching almost always appeals to people's \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ over biblical truth. Numerous Bible passages confirm that God's Word (truth) should always validate whether or not an experience is of the Holy Spirit. False teachers will make feelings and personal experiences more important than what God's word says. Biblical truth is undermined as irrelevant, outdated, untrustworthy, or incomplete. They will argue that new, fresh revelations from those calling themselves prophets or apostles are of equal or greater importance than biblical truth (1 John 2:18-27).
2. False teaching almost always appeals to \_\_\_\_\_. From the beginning of the church, false teachers were always exposed by their selfish self-interest (2 Peter 2:1-3, 12-17). The Apostle John specifically instructs the church not to love the world or anything in the world. He said, "If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them." A sign of false teaching is how it promotes love for everything in this world – things that appeal to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. False teachers ignore Jesus' teachings from His Sermon on the Mount about seeking first the kingdom of heaven and emphasize instead the material things this world has to offer.

False teachers manipulate people with promises of worldly blessings of money and possessions over the spiritual blessings that come from the Father. (1 John 2:15-16). False teachers will promise people that the more they give to them, the more they will receive from God in the way of houses, cars, and money.

3. False teaching always distorts what the Bible teaches us about \_\_\_\_\_ . False teachers will deny the Godhead of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. They will deny God's justice and righteousness to punish sinners. And will either portray God as a cruel Master who delights in punishing people (Exodus 20:5-6), or they will portray God as a permissive "Daddy" who loves without ever demanding obedience. (Hebrews 3:12-15; 10:26-31; 12:711). False teachers are like idol worshippers who feel the need to shape God into their own image, resulting in a false or incomplete picture of who God is.

They will take the parts of the Bible they like, then will cut out, reinterpret, or deny the Scriptures that keep them from creating a picture of God that is acceptable to them. (Usually, this is a God who fits their lifestyle and the way they choose to live.)

Another favorite tactic of false teachers is to add their own "Book" to the Bible claiming it is further or deeper revelation even if it totally contradicts what the Bible teaches about God. Or they will "retranslate" the Bible, reshaping its passages or adding notes that give totally different interpretations of Scriptures to fit their own false teachings.

It is true that God is loving, compassionate, and filled with mercy; and He wants everyone to come to repentance. Yes, God the Father sent His Son to make the way for this to be possible. However, we must never deny that God is holy, and he has the highest standards for His people to live by. We cannot deny that we are called to live in a way that honors God, and if we fail to live by His standards, we cannot expect His favor on our lives. At the same time, we know that God sends His Holy Spirit into the heart of every believer so that we can be like Christ in our words, thoughts, and actions. **If anyone hears someone describing God in a way that contradicts his standards as revealed in His Word, the Bible, it is a false teaching.**

## Conclusion

Paul's first letter to the Corinthians has much to say to Christians today. In many ways, ancient Corinth can be considered a microcosm of modern Western Civilization. Corinth was a cosmopolitan city that attracted commerce from exotic

places. It was filled with temples to their gods and goddesses that attracted worshipers to the many festivals and theaters dedicated to their immoral, idolatrous culture. The city was not far from Athens, which made it a center for Greek culture and learning that exalted human philosophy, science, and art as the savior of mankind.

Christians were a minority in Corinth and were viewed with suspicion or were belittled as ignorant fools who believed in superstitions like the dead being raised to life. The church in Corinth struggled to leave behind all of its ties to the religious and cultural activities they once were a part of. The problems of Christians in Corinth are found in the same or similar forms today, which makes the Holy Spirit's counsel in Paul's letters of timeless and equal value to Christians today.

### **Questions for Lesson Two**

1. Review the eight issues causing chaos in the Corinthian church. Do you see any of those issues in the place where you are ministering?
2. How does 1 Corinthians help church leaders address problems today?
3. How does 1 Corinthians chapter 13 help with church discipline?
4. What are the signs of a false teacher? And what happens if false teachers in the church are not confronted and corrected?
5. Explain why regular Bible study and teaching sound doctrine in the church are so important today.

# SGM BIBLICAL STUDIES

## NT 202-3

### 2 CORINTHIANS

#### Outline for Lesson Three

- I. Paul defends his actions
  - A. 2 Corinthians was written after Paul had dealt with the sin and disorderly worship in the church that was described in 1 Corinthians.
  - B. Paul makes a personal appeal to the Corinthian church in his second Letter.
  - C. Paul bares his soul and tell of his love for the Corinthian church; he gives his testimony
- II. Paul Defends his ministry
  - A. Paul defends himself from false apostles
  - B. Paul combats false teachings
- III. Paul affirms his apostolic authority
- IV. Paul commends the generosity of the church

#### **Author: Apostle Paul**

**Approximate Date Written:** A.D. 55-57

**Original and Primary Audiences:** The church in Corinth, and all believers

**Purpose:** Paul had three important purposes in writing this letter: (1) to affirm his ministry to the churches; (2) to defend his authority as an apostle; and (3) to refute the false teachers who had crept into the church in Corinth

**Context:** Paul was in Macedonia when he wrote this letter. His young disciple and co-worker Timothy was with him (see Acts 16:1-5; 19:22; 1 Corinthians 4:17; Philippians 2:22). Paul's inclusion of Timothy indicates his great respect for him. Timothy was with Paul when he made his second visit to Corinth and Paul sent him there to represent him (1 Corinthians 4:17; 16:10) while Paul was ministering in Macedonia. It was Timothy's report from Corinth that prompted Paul to write 1 Corinthians and follow up that letter with a visit to the city. In 1 Corinthians Paul had to use strong words to correct and teach the problem believers there. Most of the church had responded in the right spirit, but there were still those in Corinth who were denying Paul's authority and questioning his motives. Paul responded to the church in Corinth in this deeply personal and autobiographical letter.

## Conflict & Reconciliation in the Corinthian Church

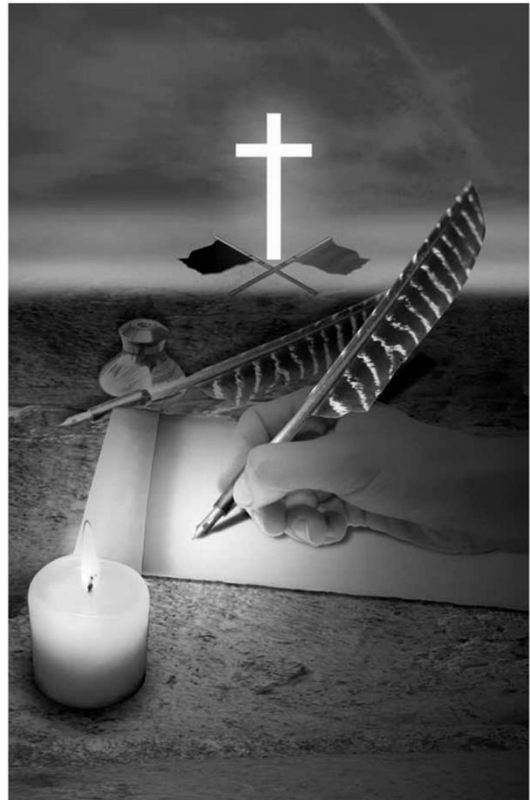
Paul's second letter to the church at Corinth is a master lesson on how to handle conflicts and facilitate reconciliation between believers. Paul had to deal with various conflicts between believers and conflicts with false prophets and false teachers that often challenged his authority to correct errors and discipline believers.

Paul opens his second letter to the church at Corinth with a pacifying tone. Although we do not have all of Paul's letters to that church, from the two letters we do have it appears that his visit to the church between 1 and 2 Corinthians had been painful: "But I determined this within myself, that I would not come again to you in sorrow. For if I make you sorrowful, then who is he who makes me glad but the one who is made sorrowful by me?" (2 Corinthians 2:1-2).

In the first eleven verses, Paul assured the church that any suffering that they had endured because of him was for their consolation and salvation. Paul reminded them of his suffering, troubles, and burdens "beyond measure" that he endured on his way to bring them the message of salvation in Jesus Christ. Their shared suffering for their faith in Jesus united them in love for one another: "For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote to you, with many tears, not that you should be grieved, but that you might know the love which I have so abundantly for you." (2 Corinthians 2:3-4).

### PAUL DEFENDS HIS ACTIONS (1:1 – 2:11)

Paul's story reminds anyone who has been in ministry for any length of time that they will experience some form of criticism. Sometimes it may be fair – for after all, none of us are perfect. Quite often the criticism we receive is unfair and not based in fact. It is human nature to defend when accused of wrongdoing, but before a Christian dismisses an accusation against them, they should make sure it is not without cause before responding defensively. Honest criticism given in love should humble us, cause us to examine ourselves, and produce positive changes. Christian leaders must resist the temptation to retaliate against those who criticize



us. As 1 Peter 2:19-20 says, “For this is commendable, if because of conscience toward God one endures grief, suffering wrongfully. For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God.” (1 Peter 2:19–20)

Paul was no different than many of us. Even though he was a great missionary and a true man of God, Paul did not escape the accusations of false teachers who tried to stir things up against him. Paul countered the false claims that he was:

- Proud (1:12-14)
- Fickle (1:15-20)
- Unimpressive in appearance and speech (10:7-11; 11:5-6)
- Dishonest (11:7-11)
- And unqualified as an apostle of Jesus

## PAUL DEFENDS HIS MINISTRY (2:12 – 7-16)

How we respond to those who level unfair and unjust criticisms of us tells us a lot about our character as leaders. Paul’s wise handling of the conflicts and criticism coming from Corinth should be an example for all of us to follow. After hearing of all the problems the Corinthian church was having, Paul composed his first letter to the Corinthian church. Paul could not go immediately to Corinth, so he sent Titus to them as his representative to deal with the difficulties. Upon Titus’ return, Paul rejoiced to hear of the Corinthian’s change of heart. His second letter to the Corinthians was Paul’s “thank you” note to the repentant majority, and an appeal to the rebellious minority to accept his authority.

Throughout the book he defends his \_\_\_\_\_ as an apostle of Jesus Christ. From the opening verses of his letter, it becomes clear that the tone of this letter is different from that of 1 Corinthians. Second Corinthians is a more \_\_\_\_\_, as Paul bares his soul and tells of his love for the believers at Corinth. His first letter dealt with questions on marriage, freedom, spiritual gifts, and order in the church. Paul’s second letter addresses the problem of false teachers while defending his authority and the truth of his message; he gives an account of his ministry and its challenges because it will help win acceptance of his advice, which was vital to the church’s well-being. Paul’s motive for ministry at Corinth was to help the church combat the havoc being caused by false teachers.

## PAUL DEFENDS HIMSELF FROM FALSE APOSTLES

False teachers had entered the flock in Corinth, and like wolves in sheep's clothing, they infiltrated the church. Paul is their main target; they were attempting to divide the flock by turning them against him. From Paul's response, it appears that his first letter was used against him – that these false apostles accused Paul of being too harsh. They used Paul's absence from Corinth to cause the church to question his concern for the church there. So, Paul had to reassure them of his love and concern for them and had to confirm his sincerity and innocence before God of doing them any harm.

Paul was not too proud to humble himself before the Corinthian believers and defend himself. They needed to be reassured, and Paul was most willing and able to do so.

Some false apostles (11:13) arrived in Corinth carrying “\_\_\_\_\_”, in order to commend themselves in the eyes of the church” (3:1). Central to the argument of those who opposed the believers who said Paul baptized them, was the argument that Paul was not a true Apostle. This was not the first time that Paul's authority and right of leadership in the church had been challenged (Note: Galatians chapters 1 & 2 for example). They produced these letters as “proof” of their authority as apostles, and argued that since Paul had no such letters, he was not an apostle, was not qualified to preach or teach Christians, and had no authority to correct anyone.

It is often the case today that certain people will show an advanced diploma from an accredited theological seminary or university, and then make the claim that because this preacher or that pastor does not have a similar degree from a credentialed seminary, they are not qualified to be a pastor or ministry leader. However, Paul's answer was clear: it is the Spirit that qualifies the leader, not the letter or seminary degree.

“Do we begin again to commend ourselves? Or do we need, as some others, epistles of commendation to you or letters of commendation from you? You are our epistle written in our hearts, known, and read by all men; clearly you are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, that is, of the heart. And we have such trust through Christ toward God. Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God, who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.” (2 Corinthians 3:1–6)

The evidence from these verses from chapter 3 was Paul's counter-argument to those who questioned his authority and right to be in ministry:

- The converts to the faith were the fruit of his ministry.
- The churches he planted were proof of his qualifications.
- The seal of the Spirit of God was his credential.

These may have been proof enough to defend his right as an Apostle, but Paul filled this letter with statements pointing out his many credentials as a true apostle of Jesus Christ and why the Corinthians should accept his authority to correct them.

## PAUL'S CREDENTIALS IN 2 CORINTHIANS

- Above everything else, Paul was \_\_\_\_\_ (1:1, 21; 4:1). Paul makes it clear that God is the source of the minister's call.
- Paul noted that he always acted in \_\_\_\_\_, and depended on the \_\_\_\_\_ alone in his dealings with them and all believers (1:12; 2:17; 13:4)
- He was \_\_\_\_\_ in his letters (1:13–14, 18; 4:2)
- He was \_\_\_\_\_ in his heart (1:22)
- Paul was motivated by \_\_\_\_\_ for the Corinthian believers (2:4; 6:11; 11:11)
- The believers in Corinth were \_\_\_\_\_ (3:2–3)
- Paul lived as \_\_\_\_\_ to the believers (3:4; 12:6)
- Paul \_\_\_\_\_ preaching or stop his ministry, even in adversity or persecution (4:1, 8–12, 16; 6:4–5, 9–10; 11:23–33)
- He taught the Bible with \_\_\_\_\_, and kept \_\_\_\_\_ the focus of his messages (4:2, 5)
- Paul was Christ's \_\_\_\_\_ (emissary), called by Him to tell the Good News of reconciliation (salvation) (5:18–20)
- Paul always \_\_\_\_\_ so no accusation against his ministry would stand (6:3–4, 6–7)
- Paul stood \_\_\_\_\_ first and always, regardless of whether people praised him or slandered him (6:8)
- Paul could honestly say that he never \_\_\_\_\_ or became a \_\_\_\_\_ to anyone (7:2; 8:20–21; 11:7–9)
- He used \_\_\_\_\_, not human plans, or methods to accomplish God's work (10:1–6)

- He was confident that \_\_\_\_\_ came from Christ (10:7–8)
- Paul refused to \_\_\_\_\_ with others; he would not \_\_\_\_\_ but only gave glory to God (10:12–13)
- Paul would not \_\_\_\_\_ upon another man’s work or \_\_\_\_\_ for another’s accomplishments in spreading the Good News (10:14–15)
- He was blessed with astounding \_\_\_\_\_ and revelations of the Lord (12:2–4)
- Paul was \_\_\_\_\_ with a “thorn” in the flesh that He refused to take away (12:7–10)
- The “\_\_\_\_\_” of an apostle were accomplished among them by the Holy Spirit through Paul (12:12)
- Everything Paul did was for the \_\_\_\_\_ of believers (12:19; 13:9)
- Paul passed \_\_\_\_\_ of having Christ in himself (13:5–6)

Despite having a long list of qualifications, Paul was humble enough to know he was not a perfect man. He acknowledged his weaknesses and failures but noted that they helped to make him a humble man who sincerely believed he could boast about nothing except for Jesus Christ. After reading Paul’s second letter, the believers at Corinth would have the full measure of the character that qualifies anyone to be an apostle of God: unconditional love, sincere humility, and complete submission to the will of God in righteousness.

### PAUL AFFIRMS HIS APOSTOLIC AUTHORITY (10:1 – 13:13)

**Apostles** (1 Cor. 12:28, 29; Eph. 4:11) are named as one of the ministries of the church. However, almost from the beginning of the church there has been considerable debate over the criteria for apostleship. Once Paul staked his claim for apostolic authority over the Gentile churches (Acts 15:7; Gal. 1:16; 2:7-9; 1 Tim. 2:7; 2 Tim. 1:11), others \_\_\_\_\_ (2 Cor. 10:7-18).

Most Bible commentaries cite the classical Greek origin of the word *ἀπόστολος* (Transliteration: *apostolos*) to derive the English definition: “\_\_\_\_\_.” In its broadest interpretation apostles are not limited to the Twelve, but included Paul, Barnabas, Andronicus, Junia, and others (Acts 14:14; Rom. 16:7; 1 Cor. 15:5, 7; 1 Thess. 2:6). But there seems to be a further requirement: that the person who fulfills the requirements for the office of Apostle must have seen the resurrected Jesus in the flesh (Acts 1:22; 1 Cor. 9:1) and to have been personally commissioned by Him. If this is the case, then this office ceased to exist by the second century. However, we have those in the church today who believe that the gift of apostleship continues to be given. As a spiritual

gift, apostleship can be interpreted as the ability to \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ with an inherent authority recognized by the church.

After the passing of the Apostle John, relatively few questions were raised about the continuing ministries of evangelists, pastors, and teachers for the church. However, there are now a number of voices calling for the restoration of apostles and prophets, thinking these offices are the key to the continued growth and vitality of the church. No one would seriously argue that the New Testament gifts of the Holy Spirit are no longer vital for ministry today. Along with the revivals of the last one hundred years has come the belief that the miraculous gifts of healings, prophecy, faith, tongues, and the interpretation of tongues to the Church have been revitalized. These revivals have also sparked the question of whether God is restoring to the church the offices of apostle and prophet to minister alongside evangelists, pastors, and teachers – offices that almost all agree have continued unbroken since the church began.

It is important to note that when Paul used the term “apostle” he did not always use it to refer to the sanctioned office. In 2 Corinthians 8:16-24 and Philippians 2:25, Paul refers men who are either sent to him to minister to his needs or sent from him as “messengers of the churches” (2 Cor. 8:23) to take care of a specific task for him:

“These two references support the notion that ‘messengers (*apostoloi*) of the churches’ were well established in the Pauline churches by the middle fifties of the first century. The most probable explanation for the origin of these apostles is that Paul borrowed the idea from Jewish practice and applied it to his churches.” (The Dictionary of Paul and His Letters, InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, IL, © 1993, p47)

The use of *apostoloi* in Paul’s letters referring to the office as reverent and solemn is used only of himself and others who were “apostles of (or ‘in’) Christ” (Rom. 1:1; 16:7; 1 Cor. 1:1; 2 Cor. 1:1; Gal. 1:1; Eph. 1:1; Col. 1:1; 1 Thess. 2:6; 1 Tim. 1:1; Tit. 1:1; NOTE ALSO 1 Pet. 1:1; 2 Pet. 1:1; and Jude 1:17). Once more it is important to note that Paul clearly indicated that the first and foremost qualification for the office of apostle was that the person so designated had actually \_\_\_\_\_ in person (1 Cor. 9:1) and had been \_\_\_\_\_ by Him. This qualification would have restricted the numbers of eligible candidates to only a few: The Twelve who were personally trained and commissioned by Jesus (Matt. 10:1ff; Mk. 3:14; 6:30; Lk. 6:13; 9:1ff), and Paul who was “born out of due time” (1 Cor. 15:8). Romans 16:7 indicates a handful of others who were named as apostles that were not among the twelve but

were evidently directly commissioned by Christ in some other way – possibly during the 40-day period immediately after His Resurrection (Barnabas, Andronicus, Junia, and possibly James, the Lord’s brother). So we have the names of \_\_\_\_\_ in the early church, but the exegetical evidence indicates that there were probably more. However no one can say with any certainty how many more apostles there were.

The big questions of our day are: “Were there any apostles after The Twelve?” And “Are there apostles in the church today?” These questions go to the heart of the issue of \_\_\_\_\_. Without going into a long theological discussion on the issue of Apostolic Succession, suffice it to say that there is nothing in the New Testament that indicates the apostolate as an institutionalized church office was intended to be passed on from the original group of Apostles to successive generations. As the churches grew and expanded, and as the numbers of the original Apostles were reduced, no attempt was made to replace any of them. Instead the office of the Apostle was distributed to the bishops, elders, deacons, shepherds, and other leaders (Acts 20:28; Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:1, 2, 8, 10, 12, 13; 5:17; Tit. 1:5, 7; James 5:14; 1 Pet. 5:1, 2, 5; 2 Jn. 1:1; 3 Jn. 1:1).

Setting aside the argument of Apostolic Succession, the generic definition of an “apostle” (a messenger who is sent) can easily be identified as an ongoing ministry of the church given by the Holy Spirit along with the others mentioned in Ephesians 4:11-13. The origin of a ministry for apostles in the New Testament church is discovered in Luke chapters nine and again in Luke ten when Jesus sends messengers ahead of him. First The Twelve were given “power and authority over all demons, to cure diseases” and were sent (*apostello*) by the Lord to “to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick... So they departed and went through the towns, preaching the gospel and healing everywhere.” (Lk. 9:1-6); eleven of these twelve eventually went on to become the very first Apostles of the church. A similar circumstance occurs in the next chapter, only this time Jesus sends out seventy of His disciples (Lk. 10:1). Once again, the Greek term *apostello* is used to indicate that these disciples had been set apart and sent out on a specific mission with the Lord’s authority. But there is no indication anywhere that any of these disciples became apostles in the same sense as the ones specifically named as Apostles of the Lord (Luke 6:13) that were sent in the previous chapter.

As with the gifts of the Spirit, the ministries named in Ephesians 4:11 are given by God and not by men. Therefore, it is not man who makes someone an apostle, but God. Apostles are distinguished from evangelists by the authority they are given over demons, sickness, and disease. An apostle may or may not be a gifted speaker, teacher, or pastor, but will share the same mandate as an evangelist to “go” and demonstrate the present reality of the kingdom of heaven, but

primarily with a demonstration of the supernatural. Paul modeled this when he wrote to the church at Corinth to remind them that he came to them in weakness; that his preaching was plain and simple and was not delivered with dazzling oratory or with human wisdom, but his words were spoken with the Holy Spirit's power (1 Cor. 2:3-5). Paul said that this was done so that their faith "should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God" (v.5).

It can be said of someone today that they are an apostle only in the sense that they have been \_\_\_\_\_ and "\_\_\_\_\_" by the Holy Spirit to participate in the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20, and Mark 16:15-18). There are countless numbers of apostles in the church – people who have been sent by God to diverse places near and far to be His witnesses. Modern-day apostles are sent to preach salvation, to make disciples, to baptize those who believe, to plant churches, teach new believers, and pray for them to be healed and delivered. (The preferred term today is "\_\_\_\_\_") They are the ones who have followed in the footsteps of the original Apostles including Paul.

Apostles were sent with one or more of the gifts of the Holy Spirit to demonstrate in word and deed the Gospel of the kingdom that Jesus, "the Apostle and the High Priest of our confession" (Heb. 3:1) preached. Jesus was the prototype of every apostle (i.e. missionary); He personally chose twelve to follow after Him as Apostles (the eleven remaining disciples He chose to be His Apostles plus Paul on the road to Damascus). We know that the eleven chose Matthias by lot to replace Judas Iscariot, and a few others were called "apostles" along with The Twelve, but after they passed, the office of Apostle on this earth closed and will remain closed until the new heaven and new earth is revealed at the end of the age (Matt. 19:28; Lk. 22:30; Rev. 21:14).

It takes the life of abiding to receive and effectively use the gifts of the Spirit. The gifts are to be used with humility and grace for ministry to the body of believers and others as God leads His ministers to use them. The stories in Acts of the miracles surrounding Paul and the other the Apostles should be tempered with the fact that they did not rely on signs and miracles as evidence of their apostleship or to prove the truth of what they spoke. Paul is representative of all the Apostles in that he affirmed his apostleship by his faithful and true preaching of the gospel (Rom. 15:19); by his wisdom that was not from men but was from God (1 Cor. 2:6-7); by the presence of the fruit of the Spirit of faith, love, and hope in him (1 Thes. 5:8-9). All could see and bear witness to Paul's life and ministry; but in the end, Paul proved his apostleship by his willingness to suffer the loss of all things in this life – even unto death – for the gospel (2 Cor. 11:23-31). "But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain

Christ” (Phil. 3:7-8). Note that every one of the Twelve Apostles and Paul suffered and was martyred (except John who suffered and died in exile); so anyone should consider the cost if they truly and faithfully want to bear that title.

Paul includes in this letter to the Corinthians every defense of his \_\_\_\_\_ Paul felt this lengthy defense was necessary to counter the accusations of those false teachers who were actively involved in stirring up the church at Corinth against him. Paul’s enemies criticized him for being bold in his previous letter, but timid when he was with them. Paul reminded them of the meekness and gentleness of Christ and warned them that his meekness in their presence in no way diminished his authority as an Apostle: “Let such a person consider this, that what we are in word by letters when we are absent, such we will also be in deed when we are present.” (10:11).”

To demonstrate his apostolic credentials, Paul is forced to boast about his knowledge, integrity, accomplishments, suffering, vision, and miracles (11:1 – 12:13) but he qualifies his boasting by humbly acknowledging his weaknesses and total dependence upon God. Paul’s critics pointed to his flaws and humility and claimed he was inferior to those “super-apostles” who came to Corinth with letters of introduction from teachers and institutions of higher knowledge. Paul may not have been able to match the rhetorical skills of those who were trained speakers, but he had the power of the Holy Spirit and knew the Lord from the depths of his soul (11:5-6).

Paul revealed his plans to visit them for the third time and urged them to repent so that he will not have to use severity when he comes (12:14 – 13:10):

“This will be the third time I am coming to you. “By the mouth of two or three witnesses every word shall be established.” I have told you before, and foretell as if I were present the second time, and now being absent I write to those who have sinned before, and to all the rest, that if I come again I will not spare—since you seek a proof of Christ speaking in me, who is not weak toward you, but mighty in you. For though He was crucified in weakness, yet He lives by the power of God. For we also are weak in Him, but we shall live with Him by the power of God toward you.” (2 Corinthians 13:1-4)

Paul’s second letter to the church at Corinth is indispensable for Christian leaders who need to know God’s way to \_\_\_\_\_ believers without hurting them. Paul was firm and bold when confronting others (7:9; 10:2-3). Yet, at the same time, he affirmed the good he saw in them (7:4). Paul made sure he was accurate, honest and knew the facts before he rebuked (7:14; 8:21; 11:22-27). He was careful to follow up after his initial confrontation to see what effect he had (7:13; 12:14). Once he saw the needed results, Paul could be

gentle after being firm (7:15; 13:11-13). Paul was always mindful to speak words that reflected Christ's message, not his own opinions or the opinions of men (10:3; 10:12-13; 12:19).

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However, discipline should never be abused by attempting to control others or silence those who have fair and honest evaluations of your ministry. In the end, discipline should only be used when all else fails.

### PAUL COMMENDS THE GENEROSITY OF THE CHURCH (8:1 – 9:15)

A church that is not turned outward – giving, impacting the lives of others, and preaching the good news – will naturally turn inward. And that was the problem with the church in Corinth. An inward-looking church becomes focused on the wrong things – like who is in charge, who has the high position and who is low, what is the latest gossip, etc. Paul, writing from Macedonia, hoped that news of the generosity of these churches would encourage and motivate the Corinthian believers to turn outward and solve their problems by uniting in fellowship to meet the needs of others less fortunate than themselves.

Although they were poor, the churches in Macedonia had given far more than anyone expected for the impoverished believers in Jerusalem. Their sacrificial gift was an example to other believers because they gave out of \_\_\_\_\_, and for the \_\_\_\_\_ of helping those in need without any expectation of return. If the believers at Corinth caught the vision for giving, not grudgingly, but because it was simply the good and right thing to do, they might stop focusing on their own conflicts and share in the love for fellow believers and enter into the joy of helping those in need around them. “For the administration of this service not only supplies the needs of the saints, but also is abounding through many thanksgivings to God, while, through the proof of this ministry, they glorify God for the obedience of your confession to the gospel of Christ, and for your liberal sharing with them and all men.” (2 Corinthians 9:12-13)

The church in Corinth had stopped growing and was in fact, in danger of splitting into different factions. Paul's letters to Corinthians teach us that if Christians are too busy fighting each other, the Gospel will not go forward. The Kingdom of God spreads when Christians are in unity and expressing love for one another. When believers show concern and eagerness to help others, non-believers will see the word of God in action (James 1:27).

### Questions for Lesson Three

1. Describe the principles of Conflict and reconciliation in the church found in Paul's letters to the Corinthian church.
2. Consider how Paul dealt with conflict and reconciliation. How can we follow his principles in the church today?
3. Review Paul's apostolic credentials. How do your ministry credentials compare with his?
4. Read Ephesians 4:11-16, then review the part of this lesson that describes the term "apostle". Is the ministry gift of "apostle" still relevant today?
5. Paul commended the churches for their generosity. Why is it important for believers to be focused on meeting the needs of others?

## **SGM BIBLICAL STUDIES NT 202-4**

### **GALATIANS**

#### **Lesson Outline**

I. The three distortions of Christianity addressed by Paul and the other Apostles in their letters to the churches.

II. Introduction to Galatians

- A. Paul's testimony to the Galatians
- B. Paul's fight against legalism

III. Paul's defense of justification by faith alone

- A. Galatians received justification by faith.
- B. Abraham was justified by faith.
- C. The law cannot justify anyone.
- D. All are justified by faith in the Son of God.
- E. The work of the Holy Spirit in those who are justified by faith.

III. Paul's arguments against legalism.

IV. The fruit of justification by faith.

V. Paul's final instructions.

### **GALATIANS**

**Author:** Paul

**Approximate Date Written:** A.D. 49

**Original and Primary Audiences:** The churches in southern Galatia, founded on Paul's first missionary journey (including Iconium, Lystra, Derbe), and all believers.

**Purpose:** To correct the problems that arose between new believers from Gentile backgrounds and Jewish believers who were insisting the Gentiles follow Mosaic

laws. To answer those who questioned Paul's call by God and to defend the gospel of salvation by grace and faith preached by Paul and other missionaries.

**Context:** As the early church broke through the barriers between Jews and Gentiles, conflicts between those who believed all Christians must obey Jewish laws and Gentile believers who did not observe them were upsetting the church. Paul wrote to correct these problems and restore the unity of the church. Although the council in Jerusalem officially resolved this issue, it was still a problem in the church.



There is an old saying: “If you don’t want to hear the message, kill the messenger.” And those who did not want to hear the message that salvation had come to all apart from Jewish religious laws and traditions attacked Paul and the other apostles that were preaching the gospel of salvation by faith in Christ alone. Some Jewish Christians (called \_\_\_\_\_) were attempting to convince believers that they were saved only partly by faith and needed to add their own efforts to obtain favor with God. The Judaizers argued that salvation in Christ came through \_\_\_\_\_ and then by faith in Christ.

Paul saw the danger that the Judaizers posed to the gospel. It was obvious that the Gentiles were responding in large numbers to the message of salvation. Gentiles were being baptized for repentance and were receiving the baptism of the Holy Spirit. If they were told that now they must become circumcised and follow the Jewish religious laws and traditions, many would fall away.



Paul responded to each of these three distortions of Christianity. His letters to the Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians contain some of the strongest arguments against the Judaizers, legalists, and Gnostics.

## PAUL'S DEFENSE OF JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH ALONE

Paul wrote this letter to the Galatian churches shortly after he and Barnabas completed their first missionary journey (Acts 13:2–14:28). The missionaries had successfully planted churches in Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe, cities in the Roman province in central Asia. Although Paul's strategy was to visit the local synagogue at each stop, he found that the curious Gentiles in the audiences he addressed were more receptive to the gospel than were the Jews.

Upon returning to Antioch, Paul learned that some Jewish Christian leaders were upset that Paul did not insist that all new Christians must remain faithful to the Jewish religious laws and traditions that all were taught from the beginning. The controversy grew until Paul was accused by some Jewish Christians of being a false teacher who diluted Judaism to make faith in Jesus Christ more appealing to Gentiles.

Paul argued forcefully that to be saved, Gentiles did not have to follow the same religious laws that the Jews obeyed. Some Jewish Christians sent word to the Galatian synagogues that Gentiles had to be circumcised and follow all the Jewish laws and customs in order to be saved. These Jewish Christians argued that salvation in Jesus the Messiah came through Judaism. Therefore, Gentiles had to be faithful Jews in order to become Christians.

Paul saw this idea as an immediate threat to the gospel of salvation by grace through faith that he and the other Apostles had been preaching since the day the church was born at Pentecost (Acts 2). Paul felt it was necessary to respond to these Judaizers as soon as possible and wrote this letter around A.D. 49. Shortly after writing this letter, the first meeting of the Jerusalem council settled the law-versus-grace controversy and confirmed all that Paul had been preaching (Acts 15). Paul responded to false teachers in Galatians by his defense of justification by faith alone. He explains that following the laws of Moses and Jewish traditions will not save anyone – Jew or Gentile. All are saved by grace through faith in the blood of Jesus.

Paul starts his letter by defining and defending the gospel of salvation he had been preaching as the one and only gospel: “As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.” (1:9). The gospel Paul delivered to the Galatians was not his own creation but came from God: “But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it

from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ.” (1:11–12).

Paul finishes his defense of his preaching by informing the Galatians that his ministry to the Galatians was recognized by the pillars of the church – the Apostles back in Jerusalem (Peter, James, and John) who “... perceived the grace that had been given to me, they gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised.” (2:9<sub>b</sub>). Paul was so confident in his position as an Apostle to the Gentiles that he was able to confront Peter after he mistreated the Gentile believers in front of the Jewish believers (2:11-14).

Once his ministry and credentials were established in his letter to the Galatians, Paul began his defense of his teachings on justification by faith.

- Paul reminded the Galatians that they received justification by faith \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ “Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?” (3:3)
- The Scripture says that Abraham was justified \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ of the law. “Therefore know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham.” Justification by faith for the Gentiles is the fulfillment of the promise of God to Abraham that, “In you all the nations shall be blessed.” Paul writes that those who are of faith are blessed (justified) with believing Abraham. (3:7–9)
- Paul repeated his preaching to them that \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ Jews or Gentiles; it brings with it only a curse (3:10-14). “But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for ‘the just shall live by faith.’” (3:11).
- Paul argued that since the promise to Abraham of justification by faith came 430 years before the Law, \_\_\_\_\_: “For if the inheritance is of the law, it is no longer of promise; but God gave it to Abraham by promise.” (3:18). The purpose of the law is to bring all to Christ where they are justified by faith in the Son of God. (3:15-25).
- The Gentiles have been made “sons and heirs” of God on the same basis as Abraham: \_\_\_\_\_. (3:26-29). The Holy Spirit in those who are justified by faith is what causes them to cry out to God for salvation in the Son of God (4:1-6): “And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, “Abba, Father!” (4:6)

## PAUL'S ARGUMENTS AGAINST LEGALISM

When we study what Paul said about Gentiles and the Old Testament laws, he was not saying that Gentiles are free to do as they please. Jesus never said that it is fine for His disciples to ignore the ten commandments. In fact, Jesus said that He had not come to destroy the law, but to fulfill it (Matthew 5:17-20). In His public sermons, Jesus affirmed all of the ten commandments. However, it is clear from the Scriptures that not all Old Testament laws apply to us. Certainly, Jesus spoke out strongly against the Jewish religious authorities who had conflated their manmade traditions with Mosaic laws.

It is important for Christians to distinguish between the three different types of laws in the Old Testament and if any of those laws may be applicable to believers.

### **Ceremonial law**

This kind of law relates specifically to Israel's worship (see, for example, Leviticus 1:1–13). Its primary purpose was to point forward to Jesus Christ. Therefore, these laws were no longer necessary after Jesus' death and resurrection. While we are no longer bound by ceremonial laws, the principles behind them—to worship and love a holy God—still apply. The Jewish Christians often accused the Gentile Christians of violating the ceremonial law.

### **Civil law**

This type of law dictated Israel's daily living (see Deuteronomy 24:10, 11, for example). Because modern society and culture are so radically different, some of these guidelines cannot be followed specifically. But the principles behind the commands should guide our conduct. At times, Paul asked Gentile Christians to follow some of these laws, not because they had to, but in order to promote unity.

### **Moral law**

This sort of law is the direct command of God—for example, the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1–17). It requires strict obedience. It reveals the nature and will of God, and it still applies to us today. We are to obey this moral law, not to obtain salvation, but to live in ways pleasing to God. From: *Life Application Bible Notes*. (2007). (p. 1989). Tyndale.

In Galatians 4:8 – 5:26, Paul had to make a strong argument against the legalistic way some Jewish Christians were applying the Old Testament laws to the New Testament believers. Paul saw the danger of turning away from \_\_\_\_\_, which would only end in failure and condemnation: “But then, indeed, when you did not know God, you served those which by nature are not gods. But now after you have known God, or rather are known by God, how is it that you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements, to which you desire again to be in bondage?” (4:8–9).

“They zealously court you, but for no good; yes, they want to exclude you, that you may be zealous for them. But it is good to be zealous in a good thing always, and not only when I am present with you. My little children, for whom I labor in birth again until Christ is formed in you, I would like to be present with you now and to change my tone; for I have doubts about you.” (4:17–20)

Paul’s major concern in Galatians was the danger posed by \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Legalistic Jewish Christians believed in Jesus as the promised Savior. However, they also believed that any Gentile desiring to become a Christian must also conform to the laws and traditions of the Jews to be saved. These Jewish believers had a high regard for the Hebrew Scriptures. They clung to the belief that the Jews were still God’s chosen people and God’s commands given on Mount Sinai must not be overlooked or broken by Jews or Gentiles.

Paul argued strongly that the Jewish believers were adding human traditions and were making unrealistic demands to conform to the laws of God. God’s salvation is for both Jews and Gentiles and is by \_\_\_\_\_:

“Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage. Indeed I, Paul, say to you that if you become circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing. And I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law. You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace. For we through the Spirit eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love.” (5:1–6).

Gentile Christians were liable to be influenced or harmed by those who promoted a legalized form of Christianity. The Gnostics were one group that advanced a mystical form of Christianity that taught that only a select few of enlightened souls would earn a place in the kingdom of heaven. Others taught believers that keeping their salvation required living by a list of do’s and do not’s – that God’s favor is earned by good behavior. Christians that came from Pagan religious backgrounds saw that real repentance and faith in Christ should lead to changes in behavior. But they did not see the danger that making God’s loving grace something to be earned rather than to be received freely would reduce Christianity to just another religion based upon impossible rules that no one could

follow perfectly. In Galatians, Paul forcefully opposed those who were transforming the gospel into bad news:

“I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.” (5:16–18)

“Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. For if anyone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. But let each one examine his own work, and then he will have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. For each one shall bear his own load.” (6:1–5)

## THE FRUIT OF JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH

Paul taught the Galatians that justification by faith produces \_\_\_\_\_ in the life of the believer. The works of the flesh are as different from the fruit of the Spirit as night is from day. Paul laid bare the obvious evils of the sinful flesh: “adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, etc.). Paul had told them from the beginning that those who engaged such evil behaviors will not inherit the kingdom of God. But Paul wrote, “...the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.” (5:22-23). Paul made it clear to those who were tempted to live by legalism that those who belong to Christ have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. He urged the Galatians and all believers everywhere, “If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.” (5:22)

## PAUL’S FINAL INSTRUCTIONS

Paul’s letter to the Galatians clearly marked out the false teachings of legalism and contrasted them with the true gospel of salvation by grace through faith in the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ. This is the only gospel that Paul and the other Apostles were teaching. Any gospel that treats Christ’s death as powerless to save (2:21); that says people must obey religious laws in order to be

saved (3:12); that says believers can find favor with God by observing certain rituals (4:10); that requires observing religious laws to be in right standing with God (5:4) is a false gospel.

Paul clearly defines and defends the true gospel – the gospel that the Apostles were preaching everywhere. In Galatians Paul proclaims that the true source of the gospel is not with men but is from God (1:11-12). Paul assured the Galatians that our life in Christ is assured for those who trust in God (2:20). All believers have the promise of the Holy Spirit through faith (3:14). Paul’s letter to the Galatians assured them that no one can be saved by keeping laws – that all are saved through faith in Christ, and that salvation is available to all (3:21-22). Paul, writing to Gentile Christians, said that all believers are to be treated the same and are one in Christ (3:26-28).

Galatians is Paul’s declaration of Christian liberty: “Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.” (5:1). Those who put their trust in Jesus are set free from sin’s bondage: “And those who are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. 26 Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.” (5:24–26).

### **Questions for Lesson Four**

1. Briefly describe the three distortions of Christianity addressed by Paul in his letters.
2. What was the primary concern of Paul in his letter to the Galatians? How did Paul’s defense of justification by faith alone address his concern?
3. What are the three different types of laws in the Old Testament? Why is it important for Christians to distinguish between the different kinds of laws?
4. What is the fruit of justification by faith that Paul wrote about?
5. What is meant by the statement that Galatians is Christians’ “declaration of liberty”?

## SGM BIBLICAL STUDIES NT 202-5

### EPHESIANS

#### Lesson Outline

- I. Introduction to Ephesians
- II. Our Redemption in Christ
  - A. He has chosen us.
  - B. He has given us an inheritance.
  - C. Paul's prayer for the church.
- III. Salvation is by Grace through Faith not by works or special knowledge
  - A. Salvation is our Provision in Christ
  - B. Salvation is the continuing work of Christ in the lives of believers.
  - C. The mystery of salvation by grace through faith.
- IV. Our Unity in Christ
  - A. Christian unity is in Christ.
  - B. Christian unity is in the proper structure of ministry.
  - C. Christian unity is in walking in love, light, and the wisdom of Christ.
  - D. Christian unity in regard to special relationships: husbands, wives, children, servants, and members of the church.
- V. Our Christian Unity in Spiritual Warfare.
  - A. The whole armor of God.
- VI. Paul's Concluding Remarks

### EPHESIANS

**Author:** Paul

**Approximate Date Written:** A.D. 60

**Original and Primary Audiences:** The church at Ephesus, the neighboring local churches, and all believers

**Purpose:** Paul wrote to the Ephesians to strengthen them in their faith.

**Context:** At the time this letter was written, the church in Ephesus was not experiencing any great controversies. Paul had spent a lot of time establishing the Ephesian church and felt very close to the believers there. This letter was sent with the disciple Tychicus to urge them to remain strong



It was not until the Great Reformation that major controversies over the doctrine of predestination erupted in the Protestant churches. Two major schools of thought developed around the differing teachings of Martin Luther (1483 – 1546) and John Calvin (1509–1564), and the teachings of Jacob Arminius (1560–1609) who took an opposing stance on the doctrine. Luther’s view that everyone who clung to the promise of salvation by grace could without a doubt, infer that God had empowered them to do so and therefore satisfied God’s election of them from the world’s foundation. Calvin responded to those who argued that predestination makes God unrighteous by maintaining that the will of God is the supreme rule of righteousness. Therefore, everything that God wills must be righteous by the mere fact that he willed it (Calvin, Institutes, 3.23.2).

Arminius countered that election does not occur apart from the individual’s choice, making his model of predestination *synergistic* (the joint result of human and divine activity) rather than *monergistic* (the work of God alone through the Holy Spirit to bring about the salvation of an individual through spiritual regeneration). After the Reformed Synod of Dort (1618–1619) rejected Arminius’ model, a theological rift developed between those who embraced Arminianism and those who stood by the Reformed theologians – this is a rift that continues to this day, but it should not be a cause for believers to break fellowship with one another. Our understanding of predestination should only be “to the praise of His glory” and not cause an open conflict in the church.

Paul had already indicated that the Church existed in the mind of God eternally before its creation, by “the good pleasure of his will.” Therefore, our salvation – no matter how we understand predestination – is not arbitrary, a whim, or subject to change, but rests in all-wise “counsel” of God, joined with His sovereign will. This means all believers (both Jews and Gentiles) can trust in God after hearing “the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.”

Before Christ, the Gentiles had only a vague hope that a Savior would come from somewhere to deliver them from death. However, once they heard the Gospel preached and believed, they were “sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise” (1:13-14). The Spirit is like an official seal that impresses on the soul the image of our Father. This “sealing” is the Holy Spirit’s witness to our hearts that we are the children of God, and therefore, are heirs of God (v. 11). The presence of God in our hearts by the Holy Spirit is the first instalment paid as a pledge (in earnest) that the rest of the purchased inheritance will follow. Paul is affirming what had been promised in Joel 2:28; Zechariah 12:10; and John 7:38, 39 that the Holy Spirit would be given to all those who had been redeemed by the blood of Christ until the

end of the age when all creation will be delivered from the bondage of sin and death's corruption. All those who believe "the word of truth" are freed from the usurping prince of this world, into the glorious liberty of the Lord's purchased possessions by His blood.

\_\_\_\_\_ (1:15-23). The Apostle closes his opening statements to the Ephesians with a prayer for them to have the spirit of wisdom and revelation to know the Lord. Paul prays that the eyes of their understanding would be enlightened so that they may know what is "the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places..."

Like many Christians today, the believers in Ephesus were \_\_\_\_\_. In times and places where believers are being crushed by wicked tyrants it is difficult to look beyond the immediate circumstances and see the ultimate victory that is waiting for them. Paul closed his prayer with an encouraging glimpse of the conquering King Jesus: "And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all."

In the next part of his letter, Paul builds upon the image of believers being \_\_\_\_\_ for a rich \_\_\_\_\_ and reveals more of God's purposes for doing so. Before Christ, all were without hope – dead in sin (2:1); in ignorance, following Satan (2:2); controlled by our lusts, and under God's wrath (2:3). Like the Ephesians, we were all without God – pagans who were separated from Christ and without hope in the world (2:11-12). But because God loves us (2:4), He saved us by grace and "raised us with him" in heaven with Christ (2:5-6).

Here, Paul shares the revelation that our salvation is not for our glory, but "that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus" (2:7). The great mystery of our salvation is that \_\_\_\_\_ – that it is only by the grace of God that anyone has been saved. God is working out His perfect will in our salvation: "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them" (2:10). Paul writes what the Holy Spirit reveals: that the works of the law never intended to be "good works" for salvation. We are not saved *by* good works; we are created *for* good works.

"God marks out for each in His purposes beforehand the particular good works, the time, and way, which He sees best. God both makes ready by His providence the opportunities for the works, and makes us

ready for their performance (John 15:16; 2 Tim. 2:21). that we should walk in them—not ‘be saved’ by them. Works do not justify, but the justified man works (Gal. 5:22–25).” *Brown, D., Fausset, A. R., & Jamieson, R. (n.d.). A Commentary, Critical, Experimental, and Practical, on the Old and New Testaments: Acts–Revelation* (Vol. VI, pp. 402–406). London; Glasgow: William Collins, Sons, & Company, Limited.

## SALVATION IS BY GRACE THROUGH FAITH NOT BY WORKS OR SPECIAL KNOWLEDGE

**Salvation is our \_\_\_\_\_.** Having established the truth that once our new life in Christ begins, good works must follow, Paul moves forward with his message. He argues that the Gentiles (called the “Uncircumcised” by the Jews) are saved not by submitting to Judaizers but they have been saved and “brought near” to God by the blood of Christ. As Paul had already stated, both Jew and Gentile are saved by grace alone (2:1-5). All are reconciled to God on the basis of grace received by faith, “that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.” (2:16–18). The purpose of God has always been to make both Jews and Gentiles equal “citizens with the saints and members of the household of God” (2:19).

**Salvation is the \_\_\_\_\_ in the lives of believers.** God’s intention is to make the New Testament church a single building – a holy temple of living stones – “built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.” The foundation of the church of God is built upon “the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone” (2:19-22).

**The mystery of salvation is by \_\_\_\_\_**  
The Gnostics presented an early challenge to Christianity. This mystery cult was strongly entrenched in the Pagan religions and in some Jewish sects throughout the Roman Empire. Paul and the other Apostles often had to confront and destroy completely any influence the Gnostics had over Gentile believers.

Gnosticism: Religious and philosophical movement popular in the Roman world in the 2nd–3rd century ad. The term, based on the Greek *gnōsis* (“secret knowledge”), was coined in the 17th century, when it was applied liberally to ancient Christian heretical sects, especially those described by their orthodox contemporaries as radically dualistic and world-denying, and those who sought salvation through esoteric revelation and mystical

spirituality. In the late 19th and the early 20th century, that view of Gnosticism was replaced with several groupings, and the discovery of the Nag Hammadi texts in 1945 greatly enhanced the understanding of Gnosticism. The relationship with ancient Christianity remains uncertain, but the Gospel of Thomas and the Gospel of Mary (which portrays Mary Magdalene as a leading apostle) are generally seen as being grounded in Gnosticism. They emphasized the teachings of Jesus, rather than his death and resurrection, as the key to salvation. The teachings of Valentinus were the basis of the Gospel of Truth, a fusion of Christian and Gnostic beliefs. Other texts previously considered Gnostic are now assigned to distinct religious traditions, especially Hermeticism (see Hermetic writings), Mandaeism, and Manichaeism. The texts of the Sethians have the best claim to the designation “Gnostic”; they describe one supreme, good God and the creation, by a junior heavenly being (Sophia), of an arrogant creature who then claims to be God. That creature withholds from humanity moral knowledge and eternal life, but Sophia plants the divine spirit within people to save them. Male and female saviours (including Jesus) were sent from the world above to instruct humanity in the knowledge of the true God and humanity’s own divine nature. In general, Gnostics taught cosmological dualism, strict asceticism, repudiation of material creation as evil, docetism, and the existence of the divine spark in humans.

<https://www.britannica.com/summary/gnosticism>

**The \_\_\_\_\_ is revealed.** For the Gnostics, the spiritual realities and their works were so mysterious that only a few enlightened souls could understand them. However, Paul “the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you Gentiles” countered that idea and wrote that the deep things of God were revealed to all believers by the Holy Spirit. This “mystery of Christ” which had been hidden before, was now “made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets.” This great mystery is that the Gentiles were now partakers of the gospel of which Paul “became a minister according to the gift of the grace of God given to me by the effective working of His power.”

Paul wrote that the purpose of the mystery of salvation (“a mystery which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ”) was not kept hidden but was made known to His church. The Gnostics believed that there were many levels to the wisdom of God. In contrast, Paul stated that God intended to make known to the church “the principalities and powers in the heavenly places.” God accomplished in the Lord Christ Jesus what the Gnostics believed could only be accomplished by a few after

years of ascetic practices and by participating in secret cultic rituals intended to release spiritual powers in the individual devotees.

In Christ Jesus, Christians “have boldness and access with confidence through faith in Him” into the presence of God. “Therefore I ask that you do not lose heart at my tribulations for you, which is your glory.”

Paul closes this chapter stating that Christians ought to express gratitude for the mystery of salvation being revealed. Every born-again believer is strengthened by the Spirit of God in the inner man. Unlike the Gnostics, who struggled for spiritual enlightenment, Christians received their knowledge of God in love by the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit so that all believers may be able to understand with all the saints what is the full extent the love of Christ which passes human knowledge. Paul’s prayer for all believers is that they may be filled with \_\_\_\_\_: “Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen” (3:20-21).

In the next major section of Paul’s letter, the Apostle urges the church to be united in Christ. Christian unity in Christ is essential for the health of the body. When believers \_\_\_\_\_;

- 4:1 – they are \_\_\_\_\_ of their calling and inheritance
- 4:2 – they \_\_\_\_\_ of humility, gentleness, patience, and love
- 4:3 – they strive to keep the \_\_\_\_\_ in the bond of peace
- 4:4 – they will function as \_\_\_\_\_, in \_\_\_\_\_, in \_\_\_\_\_
- 4-5 – they will worship \_\_\_\_\_, sharing \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_

The true spiritual church cannot be divided because God is one and is the Father of all, and is in all believers (4:6).

The spiritual gifts and ministries of the Spirit are given to the church to maintain \_\_\_\_\_ (4:7-16). The purposes of the gifts are for the proper development of the ministries of the church: “to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ’s gift” (4:7).

Paul reminds the church that Christ overcame everything that once made them captive to sin and death; He took them captive and ascended into heaven where He now rules with God over all things in heaven and on earth (4:8-10). Christ rules over His church from heaven, but He has given the church certain individuals with spiritual gifts “for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry” (4:11-12):

“Here a question arises: Are these gifts mentioned here natural gifts, that is, given at birth; or are they supernatural, that is given later by

the Holy Spirit? The answer is that these gifts have a natural part and also a supernatural part. God has given to every person at birth certain natural gifts and abilities. But when a person becomes a Christian, then the Holy Spirit begins to use those natural gifts. And in doing so, the Holy Spirit enlarges and refines those gifts, and sanctifies them for God's service." © Thomas Hale, *The Applied New Testament Commentary*,

The five ministries which Paul lists here are the most important ones for the church. They are given to:

4:12 – \_\_\_\_\_ other Christians for the work of ministry

4:13 – \_\_\_\_\_ in what Christians believe and increase their knowledge of the Son of God to "the fullness of Christ"

4:14 – \_\_\_\_\_ Christians from being confused or led astray by false teachers

4:15 – \_\_\_\_\_ mature, Christlike Christians

4:16 – \_\_\_\_\_ the body of believers function properly and work together effectively "...by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love."

Paul has given clear instructions on the believers' redemption in Christ; he has presented counter-arguments to the Judaizers and Gnostics who preached a gospel that set aside salvation by grace through faith in Christ alone in favor of legalism or special knowledge of the mysteries of divine wisdom. He has urged the believers in Ephesus to walk in unity in Christ. Now, Paul presents the Holy Spirit's will concerning the purity of His church. \_\_\_\_\_ are two things that are essential for a growing and thriving church.

Because of the growing numbers \_\_\_\_\_, Paul urges them to leave behind their old ways worship and "no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk" (4:17). False religions and worship of idols cloud the mind and confuse the understanding of who God is. The false beliefs of the pagan religions do not enlighten the souls of those who follow them but keeps them ignorant, blind, and bound to the flesh that craves all kinds of unrighteousness (4:18-19). "But you have not so learned Christ..." Paul reminded them. Gentile believers have been taught the truth in Jesus, "that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness" (4:21-24).

In verses 25-32, Paul gives a brief description of what walking in the “new man” of the Spirit looks like. Holiness and righteousness are not the way to salvation, but are the result of salvation. In Paul’s letter to the Ephesians, he clarifies for the church what is the purpose of salvation: putting away \_\_\_\_\_ in the hearts and minds of believers so that they will no longer grieve the Holy Spirit of God.

**Therefore, Christian unity and purity are linked together in a bond that leads all believers to walk in love (5:1-7), light (5:8-14), and in the wisdom of Christ (5:15-21).** The Pagan forms of religion that were so familiar to the believers who came into the church had to be dealt with strongly by Paul and the other Apostles. The evil practices that were a part of idol worship could not be tolerated in the church or they would spread quickly and destroy their faith in God. Sin deceives the minds of those who practice it; in the end, it will only bring God’s wrath. “Therefore, do not be partakers with them.”

Those who walk in the love of God, will naturally gravitate to the light of the Lord. The light of Christ exposes the sinful deeds done in darkness and unifies the church as all believers fellowship with one another in the love of God. True wisdom is found by those who “walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil.” The Gnostics believed that the flesh was evil and had no effect upon the spirit. Therefore, a person could do whatever they wanted in the flesh, and it had no effect upon the soul.

It was not uncommon for Pagans to use sexual excitation, alcohol, and drugs along with chanting, drumming, and intense dance in their worship to produce ecstatic states of *gnosis*. But Paul and the others who were faithful to the teachings of Christ knew that it is not the will of the Lord to “be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation.” The will of God for His people is for them to be lucid; “filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Christians are not like those who follow the ways of false religions, but they walk \_\_\_\_\_ with one another, \_\_\_\_\_, and “\_\_\_\_\_ in the fear of God.”

Paul gives some practical applications of how Christians are to submit to one another (5:22 – 6:9). He compares Christian marriage with the relationship between Christ His church (5:22-33). Husbands and wives are to be mutually submitted to one another under Christ who is the head of the church and is therefore, head of the Christian household. The command “wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord” is written in context of the command for husbands to “love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her.”

“So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church.” (5:28-29). There is a specific divine order for the family: God > husband > wife > children. The true nature of Christian marriage is a reflection of that perfect union between Christ and His church. The sacrificial love of God for His bride – the church - is “that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.” (5:25-26). The Christian husband loves His wife sacrificially, he supports and cherishes her as he does his own body. “‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.’ This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband. (5:31-33).



Children and parents (6:1-4), bondservants and masters (6:5-9) – all relationships are subject Christ and find their harmony and fulfillment God’s design for human relations.

Much has been said about Paul’s verses on spiritual warfare in this letter (6:10-20). Comparing the Christian to a soldier fully equipped for war, Paul reveals some valuable truths for all Christians to live by:

1. This world is a battlefield between the forces of good and evil and Christians cannot afford to be neutral in this war.
2. God provides everything the Christian needs to withstand the enemy’s attacks.
3. The weapons of our warfare are not physical, but are spiritual: truth, righteousness, the gospel message, faith, knowing our salvation, handling the word of God.
4. Christians must be praying always “being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints.”

Paul closes his letter to the Ephesians with a few personal greetings. The central theme of his letter – that they know the grace and peace of God in a spirit of unity and love – is summed up in his benediction: “Peace to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen.” (6:23-24).

“From this we are again reminded of the great theme of this great letter: Peace through grace... Even though we are in the midst of a great spiritual struggle, we have peace with God, and peace within our church and within our hearts.” © Thomas Hale, *The Applied New Testament Commentary*

### Questions for Lesson Five

1. The first two chapters of Paul’s letter to the Ephesians provides us with a blueprint for how to present the Gospel to those who are unfamiliar with the Scriptures. How can Paul’s main points in these chapters help you share the gospel with others?
2. Paul argued against any kind of legalized Christianity that added any form of works as a way or means to salvation. Read Ephesians 2:9-10 (see also James 1:21-27). What role should good works play in the life of the believer?
3. The Gnostics were a religious cult that believed its devotees had obtained a special kind of spiritual enlightenment (or salvation) by a secret or higher level of knowledge not accessible to the uninitiated. Review Ephesians chapter three (see also 2:6-8). How does Paul prove the teachings of the Gnostics to be false?
4. Why is unity in Christ essential for the health of the body (the church)?
5. How do the spiritual gifts and ministries of the church build Christian unity?
6. In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul expresses the importance of Christian unity and purity. How are these attributes applied to Christian relationships within the family and in relationships with those around them?
7. Review Paul’s description of the full armor of God (Ephesians 6:10-20). How is the full armor of God applied in spiritual warfare?

# SGM BIBLICAL STUDIES NT 202-6

## PHILIPPIANS

### Lesson Outline

- I. Paul's Joy in Suffering (1:1-30)
  - a. Paul prays for Philippian believers (1:1-11)
  - b. Paul explains the reasons for his joy (1:12-30)
- II. Paul presents Christ's example of Joy in serving (2:1-30)
  - a. Christ's example of humility (2:1-18)
  - b. Paul's co-workers as examples of serving (2:19-30)
- III. Paul presents Christ as the true believers' joy (3:1 – 4:1)
  - a. Judaizers are a threat to the believers' joy (3:1-3; 18-19)
  - b. The costs and rewards for being a child of God (3:4-8; 3:9 – 4:1)
- IV. Joy is the evidence of Christ in the believer (4:2-23)
  - a. Christ resolves conflicts between believers (4:2-3)
  - b. Christ guards the heart of the believer (4:4-9)
  - c. Christ empowers the believer (4:10-23)

## PHILIPPIANS

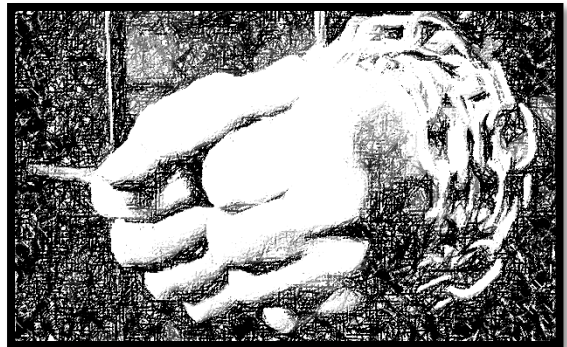
**Author:** Paul

**Approximate Date Written:** A.D. 61

**Original and Primary Audiences:** The Christians at Philippi, and all believers

**Purpose:** To thank the Philippian church for the gift they had sent Paul and to encourage them that their joy is found in Jesus Christ alone

**Context:** Paul was writing from Rome during his imprisonment there. On his second missionary journey Paul and his companions planted the first church on European soil at Philippi. Paul wrote this letter to them after the Philippian church had sent a gift to him.



## PAUL'S JOY IN SUFFERING

Philippians has been called, “\_\_\_\_\_.” In the introduction to this letter, *The Life Application Study Bible* says, “In contrast to *happiness* stands *joy*. Running deeper and stronger, joy is the quiet, confident assurance of God’s love and work in our lives – that he will be there no matter what! Happiness depends on happenings, but joy depends on Christ.”

By the time of his imprisonment in Rome (60-61 A.D.) Timothy had become a close friend and disciple of Paul. Most Bible scholars believe that Paul wrote this letter and his letters to the Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon during this same confinement. Although Paul addresses “all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the bishops and deacons,” the letter is more personal in its tone:

<sup>3</sup> I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, <sup>4</sup> always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy, <sup>5</sup> for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now, <sup>6</sup> being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ; <sup>7</sup> just as it is right for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart, inasmuch as both in my chains and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers with me of grace. <sup>8</sup> For God is my witness, how greatly I long for you all with the affection of Jesus Christ.

<sup>9</sup> And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment, <sup>10</sup> that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ, <sup>11</sup> being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.” (1:3-11)

In this opening prayer and thanksgiving, Paul uses the word “joy” for the first of six times. In this letter Paul uses the words “joy” or “rejoice” a total of fourteen times, which truly makes this his “epistle of joy”.

Paul was no stranger to the church at Philippi. He established that church on his second missionary journey (Acts 16:6-40). In Philippi, Paul baptized his first disciples in Europe (Lydia and her household); after Paul and Silas were arrested and thrown into prison, the jailer and his household became believers; in the end, the entire city had heard about the apostle Paul and the gospel of salvation he and Silas preached.

Paul shared fond memories with the believers in Philippi. Although his visit was not always pleasant – at one point Paul and Silas were beaten and thrown into prison – Paul chose to highlight the joy and warm fellowship they shared. Paul

visited Philippi again on his third missionary journey (Acts 20:6) but Luke gives no details about what took place during this visit. However, we can conclude from Paul's letter that their continuing "fellowship in the gospel" was genuine, that Paul was confident in their \_\_\_\_\_, and that the Philippian church held a special place in his heart.

In spite of all the hardships, Paul explains that the reason for his joy (and theirs) is that in the end, \_\_\_\_\_: "But I want you to know, brethren, that the things which happened to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel..." (1:12). In too many places around the world, Christians are still being persecuted for their faith in Jesus. Christians may be imprisoned for preaching the Gospel. Paul set the example for anyone who has suffered for their faith. Persecution can lead to discouragement and cause many believers to become angry or give up, but when our heart is full of joy in Christ, as strange as it may seem to unbelievers, imprisonment, financial burdens, family conflicts, church conflicts, the loss of a job, or failing health can be turned into opportunities to demonstrate our faith in God. Anyone can happily follow Jesus when all is well with them and they are prospering, but the real test of faith comes when following Jesus Christ causes us to suffer a loss in some way. The Apostle Paul had such joy that whatever the situation, his faith remained strong.

Like the Apostle Paul, no Christian should feel ashamed if they have been put in chains for the sake of the Gospel. If punished for preaching the Gospel, we can be encouraged by Paul's positive attitude: to be "much more bold to speak the word without fear."

Paul was not selfish when it came to preaching Christ. Although some may preach the Gospel because it brings them fame and fortune, many more preach the Gospel in obscurity. Countless numbers of Christians minister in one of the tens of thousands of small villages, far away from the prosperous places where they can benefit from generous tithes and offerings. Countless numbers of Christians minister in poverty and obscurity, with no hope of ever living in luxury. But they serve joyfully, knowing that through the prayers of the saints, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, "whether by life or death" they will receive a \_\_\_\_\_.

Led by the Holy Spirit, Paul's life is the inspiration for many Christians who, filled with the joy of the Lord, say with him, "For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain." (1:21). Paul was sincere when he wrote to church about his desire to leave this world and be with Christ in the kingdom of heaven, "Nevertheless," Paul said, "to remain in the flesh is more needful for you. And being confident of this, I know that I shall remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy of faith, that your rejoicing for me may be more abundant in Jesus Christ by my coming to you again." (1:24-26).

There is supernatural joy for those who truly suffer for the sake of the Gospel, however, that joy is lost if our trials are the result of conduct unworthy of being a follower of Christ. So, Paul urged all believers to “stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel.” (1:27).

Our joy in Christ helps us overcome the terroristic threats of the enemies of the gospel. When they persecute and imprison Christians, they believe it is proof that they are more powerful than our God. If Christians are not saved from their wrath in this world, they believe it is proof that Satan is in control. But Paul learned from experience that it is not only a privilege to believe in Christ, but also

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### PAUL PRESENTS CHRIST’S EXAMPLE OF JOY IN SERVING (2:1-30)

In his commentary on this chapter, William Barclay wrote, “The one danger which threatened the Philippian church was that of disunity. There is a sense in which that is the danger of every healthy church. It is when people are really serious and their beliefs really matter to them that they are apt to come into conflict with one another. The greater their enthusiasm, the greater the danger that they may collide. It is against that danger Paul wishes to safeguard his friends.” This is why Paul was so forceful in his plea for \_\_\_\_\_:

“<sup>1</sup>Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, <sup>2</sup> fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. <sup>3</sup> Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. <sup>4</sup> Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.” (2:1-4)

In only a few verses, Paul identified the three major causes of disunity in the church that have created all kinds of problems and obstructed the advancement of the gospel almost from the beginning of the church:

1. \_\_\_\_\_ . Paul had already addressed this issue with the Corinthian church. Whenever believers are only interested in advancing themselves and exercising power over others, unity dissolves and the gospel suffers. Jesus stated clearly that the least of His disciples would be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven; His disciples were called to serve and not to be served.

When leaders use their authority in the church to satisfy a personal need to control and manipulate others, unity is shattered. Such leaders will surround themselves with loyalists who are afraid to confront them when they are in the wrong or make a mistake. Paul was not afraid to confront Peter when he was wrong (Galatians 2:11-16). Peter's actions were hurting Gentile believers and created a rift between Jewish and Gentile Christians.

2. Philippians 2:1-7. Again, Paul turns to Christ's example of true humility to instruct the church on the importance of unity: "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. (2:5-7).

It is only human nature to want to be admired and respected by others. The desire to look good in front of others, to feel good about oneself, to always be right, and to be included with the highly exalted personages has led to the downfall of many church leaders. William Barclay wrote in his commentary on Philippians: "Prestige is for many people an even greater temptation than wealth. To be admired and respected, to have a seat on the platform, to have one's opinion sought, to be known by name and appearance, even to be flattered, are for many people most desirable things. But the aim of Christians ought to be not self-display but self-obliteration."

Throughout His earthly ministry, Jesus had to deal with the religious elites who were motivated by the desire of self-promotion. In His Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5 – 7), Jesus taught that blessed are the poor and meek; He spoke of true righteousness that comes from within and not from outward shows of piety. In that Sermon, Jesus warned against allowing strife and anger to control your emotions and said we should humble ourselves and be reconciled to one another.

Those who seek their own celebrity will fall into the traps and snares of lust, hard-heartedness, making rash vows, seeking retaliation against anyone who opposes them or that they see as an enemy. In His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught His disciples to humble themselves in prayer before God and seek first His kingdom and righteousness above the things this world has to offer.

Selfish ambition and personal prestige are a two-edged sword that cause dissensions and divisions in the church; whenever leaders worry about tomorrow and what they will eat, drink, and wear, sin will be waiting at the door of their church or ministry (Gen. 4:6-7). Wrong motivations of believers will suck the joy out of ministry and serving others. This is another

reason why Jesus taught in His Sermon not to judge or make unfair criticisms of others, but first humble yourself and “remove the plank from your own eye” before you attempt to remove the speck of imperfection you see in someone else.

3. \_\_\_\_\_ . The Joy of being in fellowship with other believers is quickly destroyed when the members of a church are only looking out for their own interests. Instead of humbly taking care of the interests of others in the church, self-centered Christians will inevitably clash with those who have competing interests. Hidden agendas and taking personal advantage of others will characterize those whose agendas are contrary to Christ’s interests for the church. Jesus “being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.” (2:8).

At one point, Jesus told His disciples that, “...he who is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.” (Mt 23:11–12). And here, Paul expresses the same thought: “Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” (2:9-11).

For all of us, Christ’s humility and obedience to the Father is an example to follow (2:12-18). When Paul wrote to the Philippians, “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling”, he was not contradicting what he wrote to the Ephesians about salvation being by the grace of God through faith (2:1-9), but was echoing what he wrote in Ephesians 2:10: “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.” We do not need to work *for* our salvation but do the works of righteousness to achieve Christlikeness. “It is plain that salvation is not by human works. Isaiah 64:6 gives us God’s viewpoint of man’s righteousness outside of his Son: ‘All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags.’ Only through Christ’s righteousness in our behalf on the cross can we be righteous before God.” (Max Anders, © 1999, *Holman New Testament Commentary*). However, to be “blameless and *harmless*, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world” (2:15) takes effort and will power on our part. But we do not work out our salvation alone, “for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure” (2:13).

Paul, facing what may well have been the end of his life here on earth, encouraged the believers in Philippi that their steadfastness in the midst of a “crooked and perverse generation...shining as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life” would be his joy and proof that Paul had not “run in vain or labored in vain” for the gospel. “Yes, and if I am being poured out as a drink offering on the sacrifice and service of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. For the same reason you also be glad and rejoice with me.” (2:17-18). Paul closes this part of his letter commending certain co-workers as examples of serving the Lord with joy (2:19-30).

### PAUL PRESENTS CHRIST AS THE TRUE BELIEVERS’ JOY (3:1 – 4:1)

“Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. For me to write the same things to you is not tedious, but for you it is safe.” Philippians 3:1

The true believers’ joy is threatened by those who would turn them away from Christ and seek \_\_\_\_\_ for salvation. Many of Paul’s letters address the threat that the Judaizers were to the believers’ joy. In his letters to the Galatians, Ephesians, and Philippians in particular, Paul was especially concerned with the bad influence these religious extremists were having upon Christians. In this letter (3:1-3; 18-19), Paul uses some of the same strong language found in his letter to the Galatians. He follows the pattern set in his other letters of defending himself while expressing the costs and rewards of being a faithful follower of God (3:4-8; 3:9 – 4:1).

It was Paul’s great joy in the Lord that allowed him to count as “rubbish” everything that he at one time counted to his credit. Paul could gladly “count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord” (3:8). True believers of every generation who have found the secret of joy in the Lord, will testify of the “hidden treasure” and “pearl of great price” which is to “know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.” (3:10-11).

“Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.” (3:12-14)

Paul's words to the Philippians about pressing on toward the goal (3:12-16) have inspired countless Christians to pick themselves up from the ground after some failure or setback and realize that the only way they will be defeated in the end is if they give up and turn back from running the race of faith in Christ. If Paul himself struggled to "lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me" but kept pressing on "toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" then we ought to have the same joy in persevering through the many trials and troubles that every other true believer must face. Jesus never promised us an easy road when we walk in His footsteps. He warned us of the world's hatred for Him and for us, but He also encouraged us saying, "In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." (John 16:33<sub>b</sub>).

"Therefore, my beloved and longed-for brethren, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, beloved." Philippians 4:1

Paul never asked anyone to make any sacrifice for the gospel that he himself had not already made. Paul set the example and made the way for others to follow: "Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern." (3:17) but Paul's walk with Jesus Christ was not an easy one. Paul not only had to endure the attacks of non-believers, but he also had to suffer because of those who proved to be false Christians and "enemies of the cross of Christ." The key to Paul's joy and the joy of every true Christian is to set their mind on \_\_\_\_\_, "For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself." (3:20-21).

### JOY IS THE EVIDENCE OF CHRIST IN THE BELIEVER (4:2-23)

Paul brings his letter to a close by addressing some practical concerns for the church at Philippi. As is all-too-often the case with believers, conflicts and divisions will arise. Sometimes conflicts between individuals will quickly spread and cause factions to be created which will lead to major divisions. If Christians cannot allow Christ to resolve conflicts when they arise, the joy, love, and power of Christ will be destroyed.

Paul urges the church to guard their hearts and "Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!" \_\_\_\_\_ quickly when they start is essential for any church or ministry to remain united in purpose, joyful in service, and effective in their prayers. Our witness to the world depends on our

love and unity. Jesus prayed to His Father for His disciples, “And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me.” (John 17:22–23). Therefore, Paul encouraged the church to lay aside selfish ambition and “Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand.” (4:5).

Once again, Paul’s letter reflects the teachings of our Lord Jesus from His Sermon on the Mount. Jesus said, ““And do not seek what you should eat or what you should drink, nor have an anxious mind. For all these things the nations of the world seek after, and your Father knows that you need these things. But seek the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added to you.” (Luke 12:29-31). So, Paul wrote, “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” (4:6-7).

Speaking to those who are anticipating \_\_\_\_\_, Jesus said, “But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly. For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man.” (Luke 21:34–36). Paul instructed believers in his letter to have a similar attitude of mind:

“Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things. The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.” (4:8-9).

**Paul noted how the joy of the Lord empowers the believers’ generosity (4:10-23).**

“Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” (4:11-13).

Paul rejoiced in the Philippians' generosity. When the opportunity arose, they responded to the need. Although Paul had learned over time to be content in every situation, he still rejoiced that the Philippian church had not forgotten him and were willing to share to relieve his distress (4:14). Paul learned that the life of a missionary can be a lonely one, many of those that Paul had ministered to refused to share what they had to help supply Paul's need. And so it is today also. Pastors, evangelists, missionaries, and ministries often work in the field with little or no support from home. People who live in safe, comfortable places are often excited to hear of great missionary adventures, but they often forget that even a small amount of aid from them can go a long way to provide the necessities for the minister and his family when they are far away.

Paul commended the Philippians because when others quickly forgot about him when he was out of their sight, they remembered him and sent aid without being asked to do so. "Not that I seek the gift," Paul wrote, "but I seek the fruit that abounds to your account. Indeed I have all and abound. I am full, having received from Epaphroditus the things sent from you, a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God." (4:17-18).

Christians love to quote verse 19: "And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus" forgetting that it is written in context of their sacrificial giving. God gives generously to those who are a vessel out of which His servants are supplied to the Father's glory and not their own. Paul's final greetings and blessings in verses 21 – 23 are both personal and an inspiration to all of us to keep the bond of unity, peace, and love in the Holy Spirit as we serve one another in Christ.

### **Questions for Lesson Six**

1. Compare the tone of Paul's letter to the Philippians with his letters to the Corinthian church. Explain the differences.
2. How does joy help Christians when they are being persecuted?
3. Review Jesus' Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5 – 7 and compare with Paul's letter to the Philippians. How does Paul's letter help Christians find the same joy that Jesus taught about?
4. After studying Paul's letter to the Philippians, what are the evidences of Christ's presence in the life of believers and in the church as a whole?

## SGM BIBLICAL STUDIES NT 202-7

### COLOSSIANS

#### Lesson Outline

##### I. Paul Describes the Supremacy of Christ

- A. He is the Creator
- B. He is Above All Things
- C. He is the Head of the Church
- D. The Preeminence of Christ counters Heresies

##### III. Jesus Reconciled to Himself All Things on Earth and In Heaven

- A. Through his blood shed on the cross, Jesus reconciled to himself all things on earth and things in heaven.
- B. Our union with Christ in His death, resurrection, and exaltation is the foundation upon which our earthly life must be built.

##### IV. Paul's Practical Teachings on How Christians Live

- A. Put away carnal living
- B. Proper conduct in the Christian home

### COLOSSIANS

**Author:** Paul

**Approximate Date Written:** A.D. 60

**Original and Primary Audiences:** The church at Colosse, a city in Asia Minor, and all believers

**Purpose:** Another of Paul's letters written during his imprisonment in Rome. This letter was written to urge the church at Colosse to combat errors that had come into the church.

**Context:** Although Paul had never visited Colosse in person, the church was founded by those whom Paul had personally disciplined. Paul felt a burden to address the false teaching that had infiltrated the church – especially Gnostic teachings. Paul countered these false teachings by affirming the sufficiency and absolute supremacy of Christ.

## THE SUPREMACY OF CHRIST

Colossae was a relatively unimportant city in Asia Minor by the time the first Christian missionaries reached the city sometime before Paul's third missionary journey. The cities of Asia Minor were predominately Gentile, but there were numerous small Jewish communities scattered throughout the province. One of those communities was in Colossae where the church was founded. There is no evidence that Paul ever went to Colosse, but he was kept informed of what was happening in the church by Epaphras:

“We give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of your love for all the saints; because of the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, of which you heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel, which has come to you, as it has also in all the world, and is bringing forth fruit, as it is also among you since the day you heard and knew the grace of God in truth; as you also learned from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf, who also declared to us your love in the Spirit.”  
**Colossians 1:3-8**

Epaphras served the Lord faithfully in the Lycus Valley region where Colossae was located. Later Epaphras was one of the brothers who came to visit Paul in prison:

“Aristarchus my fellow prisoner greets you, with Mark the cousin of Barnabas (about whom you received instructions: if he comes to you, welcome him), and Jesus who is called Justus. These are my only fellow workers for the kingdom of God who are of the circumcision; they have proved to be a comfort to me. Epaphras, who is one of you, a bondservant of Christ, greets you, always laboring fervently for you in prayers, that you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God. For I bear him witness that he has a great zeal for you, and those who are in Laodicea, and those in Hierapolis.” **Colossians 4:10-13**

Epaphras' visit with Paul and his report about \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_ are what prompted him to write this letter. Colossae was one of the cities of Galatia so it is quite likely that Paul's Epistle to the Galatians also would have made its way there shortly after it was written. Epaphras reported that

the same heresies Paul addressed in his letters to the Galatians, Ephesians, and Philippians were perverting the Gospel in Colossae. The method Paul used in this letter to refute the Colossian heresies speaks to us today as well. Rather than making a lengthy argument attempting to tear down the heretical teachers, Paul makes a positive presentation of the true attributes and accomplishments of Christ. As a result, the resounding theme that comes forth from the letter is the \_\_\_\_\_ of Christ in all things. That the believer is complete in Him and lacks nothing because *“in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.”* **Above all else Colossians teaches us that a proper view of Christ is the antidote for heresy.**

Almost from the beginning, Christians have struggled to understand and define the nature of the One they proclaim as "Lord and Christ". It is not an easy task to define the eternal in human terms - especially when reconciling Jesus' divine nature as "Son of God" and human nature as "Son of Man". The human mind can easily grasp one nature or the other, but to embrace both at the same time requires a mental dexterity equal to that of a person who is able to count forward and backwards simultaneously. The intellectually easy way to solve the problem is simply to deny one or the other of \_\_\_\_\_. It was not long after Paul and the other Apostles passed that two schools of thought concerning the nature of Christ emerged in the Church:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
  - Used the \_\_\_\_\_ approach to interpreting Scripture
  - Emphasized the \_\_\_\_\_, but at the expense of denying His full \_\_\_\_\_.
2. \_\_\_\_\_
  - Took the \_\_\_\_\_ approach to interpreting Scripture
  - They defended the doctrine of \_\_\_\_\_ well, but at the expense of reducing \_\_\_\_\_.

The consequence of not following the teachings of Paul and the other Apostles is to end up in one extreme position or the other:

- Denying the reality of Christ's humanity  
or

- Denying the fullness of Christ's Deity

The church fathers that followed Paul had to deal with these same controversies against the heretics. The leaders of the early church dealt with them with the utmost seriousness because they understood that Christianity's very foundations and future were at stake in these issues. These issues go far beyond a concern for the correct understanding of Scripture; they go to the very heart of our salvation in Christ. For if Christ is not who the Gospels and the Apostles say He is then our faith is wasted, and our eternal destinies are unsure.

Following the teachings of the Gnostics led to the rise of a group of Christians that came to be called Docetists. Docetists held the extreme position that denied the reality of Christ's humanity; they taught that Jesus only appeared to be human, suffer and die – that he was in fact a spirit-being. The Christ described by the Docetists could save no one, since His death in a human body was the condition of His destruction of the power of Satan's hold on humanity:

“He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.

For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell, and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross.

And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight – if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister.” **Colossians 1:15-23**

Following those who taught the opposite extreme of denying Christ's full deity, led to the rise of another heretical group called Ebionites. The Ebionite heresy grew out of a branch of Jewish Christianity that attempted to explain Jesus

Christ according to \_\_\_\_\_, which meant these early Christians believed the Father alone was God. These Pharisaic Christians taught that Jesus was just a man, begotten by Joseph and Mary, but only adopted as a son by God the Father. They believed that Jesus was “made” the Son of God at His baptism or at some other point in His life. However, this teaching, known as “\_\_\_\_\_,” is incompatible with the Apostles’ statements about Christ’s origins that Paul expressed when he wrote that “all things” in heaven and earth – visible and invisible, thrones, dominions, principalities or powers – were created by Him, through Him, and for Him (1:16). The Apostle John opened His Gospel with the same thought: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shined in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.” (John 1:1–5).

Early in the fourth century, a man named Arius captivated a large following with his teachings. Arius taught that the Son was \_\_\_\_\_ and therefore was not truly God. Apollinaris of Laodicea came along about the same time as Arius. He taught that two perfect beings cannot become one, therefore at some point, the divine "Logos" replaced Jesus' human spirit in the man Jesus. This meant that Jesus' mind was not human. So in essence, Apollinaris, taught that Jesus was a \_\_\_\_\_. This heresy was renewed by New Age and occult teachers who teach that the man, Jesus, obtained “Christ Consciousness” and that the same consciousness is available to anyone willing to follow the same mystical path they believe Jesus followed.

By no means is this a complete list of all the ancient heresies that were circulating in the early church. Even up to this day, the list of heresies goes on and on as new ones are being added all the time. However, there are certain things these teachings have in common because so many of them are the result of placing \_\_\_\_\_ over and above what the word of God reveals to us. Since the human mind cannot rationally grasp the divine reality that Jesus Christ is fully God and yet at the same time, was fully human, these false teachers all, in one way or another, end up denying the Triune Godhead of Father/Son/Holy Spirit. It took a long time for Christian theologians to sort things out and come up with as clear an understanding as humanly possible of the Nature of Jesus Christ and His relationship with the Father and Holy Spirit. The way it was defined is what we now call "\_\_\_\_\_". It is the best we humans can do and no one has come up with anything better so far.

Another thing many of these heretical teachings had in common is that they often mixed their own religious teachings and traditions with the Word of God. It is a human attribute to want to hold on to what is familiar to us, and it is no exception when it comes to religion. Christianity was a strange religion for almost all Pagans because they were idol worshippers at heart. Idol worship appeals to the fallen human nature because:

- Idols are \_\_\_\_\_ and therefore appeal to the physical senses of the worshipper who could see and make physical contact with the object of their worship.
- Like their human makers, idols all have \_\_\_\_\_. Their names make them easy to identify and their family relationships make them seem not so distant from the affairs of men.
- Like their human makers, they are \_\_\_\_\_; and that also makes them seem not so different from those who worshiped them.
- They are \_\_\_\_\_. Although they may take different forms or have different names in different cultures, all of these gods and goddesses fall into certain patterns and have certain similarities that make idols from one people group familiar to those who worship similar idols of their own culture.
- They are made in the \_\_\_\_\_. They may be carved from wood or stone, or cast in precious metals of gold or silver, but the truth is because they were created from the human imagination, if you look behind the mask of any idol you will find a human face staring back at you. Apart from the revealed word of God, man's religious quest becomes a quest of man in search for himself as god:

“What profit is the image, that its maker should carve it,  
 The molded image, a teacher of lies,  
 That the maker of its mold should trust in it,  
 To make mute idols?  
 Woe to him who says to wood, ‘Awake!’  
 To silent stone, ‘Arise! It shall teach!’  
 Behold, it is overlaid with gold and silver,  
 Yet in it there is no breath at all.

But the LORD is in His holy temple.

Let all the earth keep silence before Him.” **Habakkuk 2:18-20**

Unlike idols, the God Paul preached to the Gentiles is:

- \_\_\_\_\_ – “He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.” (Colossians 1:15).
- \_\_\_\_\_ – instead, humans are made in His likeness and image. He is the potter; we are the clay in His hands. (Isaiah 29:16; 64:8).  
 “For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.”  
**Colossians 1:16-17**

Through their idols Pagans identified with an image of something they were not, but what they wanted to become; and, as Paul pointed out in Romans chapter 1 and in 2 Corinthians 6:14-18, idol worshippers were exchanging the truth of God for a lie. The Apostles’ teaching was clear, once a person came to the Lord, they should leave their idols behind:

“For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell, and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross.

And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight—if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister.” **Colossians 1:19–23**

For the Greeks, human wisdom and knowledge was their god. The guiding force behind Gnostics was an elitist mindset that led them to believe that the knowledge they possessed was their salvation. Although some embraced Jesus Christ, the Gnostics refused to submit to what the Word of God taught in its fullness about Him because it did not fit with their philosophy. The Gnostics arrogantly believed that their theology was superior to the Apostles’ preaching of

salvation by grace through faith. They attempted to force Christianity into their Gnostic teachings. Instead of leaving their own beliefs behind and embracing the fullness of the mystery of salvation revealed in Jesus Christ, "...the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints." (1:26), they added to or subtracted from God's word in order to maintain the essence of their own theology. Paul's warnings to church about them were just as strong as his warnings to those who came to the church after worshiping idols:

"...that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, and attaining to all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Now this I say lest anyone should deceive you with persuasive words."

**Colossians 2:2-4**

Paul made clear his purpose for writing the church: to make known to them that it is the Lord's desire that they may be moved in their hearts to remain united in love. They were not to be like the Gnostics who were puffed up by their so-called special spiritual knowledge, but they have the full riches of complete understanding in Christ. They received the Holy Spirit so that they all may know the mystery of God: "Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."

"Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them. But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him..." **Colossians 3:5-10**

Inspired by the Apostles' preaching and writings, the early church purged itself of all false knowledge that some attempted to pass off as secret teachings of Jesus unknown to the rest of the church. But human pride and arrogance will always believe it has something more or better to add to simple message of God's salvation in the finished work of Jesus Christ on mankind's behalf. So far, all those who will not embrace the full revelation of God's word can do is rehash the same

old ideas that long ago were proven to be deeply flawed at best and outright heresy at worse. Paul's advice to Timothy to guard the gospel that was entrusted to his care and turn away from false knowledge must be heeded as much today as it was when Paul first gave it to his young disciple (1 Timothy 6:20-21).

Paul's letter to the Colossians preserves for us the battles he and the other Apostles fought against those who sought to corrupt the purity of the Gospel and lead others astray by adding their own false teachings to it or subtracting what God has plainly revealed to all:

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him." **Colossians 3:16-17**

#### PAUL'S PRACTICAL TEACHINGS ON HOW CHRISTIANS SHOULD LIVE

"If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. 3 For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory." **Colossians 3:1-4**

Because most of the believers in Colosse had come from purely pagan lifestyles, they needed some practical instructions from Paul about how Christians should live and worship. Pagans often indulged their carnal desires as part of their worship. Fornication, uncleanness, sexual perversion, drunkenness, etc. were celebrated in pagan festivals given in honor of their gods and goddesses. Paul called upon all believers to put away all these carnal behaviors along with "anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language..." (3:5-9).

Next, Paul begins to describe the character of the "elect of God, holy and beloved. The lifestyle of believers should be a stark contrast to those who are under the influence of the carnal mind:

"...put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to

which also you were called in one body; and be thankful.” **Colossians 3:12–15**

Christian worship should also be a complete break from the worship of idols. Paul instructed the church to “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom...” (3:16). In total contrast to the chaotic revelry of the pagan worshippers, Christian worship includes teaching the word of God along with singing “psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.” (3:16). The Christian lifestyle may be summed up in this one verse: “And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.” (3:17).

Paul gives some practical instructions for three types of relationships that characterized all households throughout the Roman world of that day: (1) Husbands and wives, (2) Parents and children, and (3) masters and slaves or bondservants.

Christian marriage is based upon mutual submission, not one partner attempting to dominate the other (3:18). Children should obey their parents (3:20). Bondservants are to obey their master from the heart. About the same time that Paul wrote this letter, he wrote in more detail about these relationships in his letter Ephesus (Ephesians 5:21– 6:9). It may be that he did not include more details because he knew that his letters were already being copied and shared among all the churches.

Paul and the other Apostles did not condone slavery as it was practiced throughout the Roman world. Slaves were an important part of the Roman economy. About 1-in-10 Romans were slaves and if they were suddenly released, it would have played havoc on the Roman economy. Most slaves were treated well, but many suffered a lifetime of hard labor under cruel masters. Slavery in the Roman Empire was not based upon race, but people might become enslaved for a variety of reasons – economics (extreme poverty or debt) or being captured in war were two of the most common causes. Christians are not social revolutionaries; they are not called to overturn the social order and if from the start they had insisted on an end of slavery, they would have been guilty of sedition. Instead, Christians called for believing masters and slaves to respect and care for each other as brothers and sisters in the Lord, believing that the masters would eventually free their slaves for Christ’s sake. “Masters, give your bondservants what is just and fair, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven.” (4:1).

We will study more about Paul's attitude towards slavery in his letter to Philemon.

Before closing his letter with his usual greetings to his growing number of "fellow servants in the Lord," Paul gives a few more instructions to the church:

"Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving; meanwhile praying also for us, that God would open to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in chains, that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak. Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time. Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one." (4:2–6).

### **Questions for Lesson Seven**

1. Read the HANOUT "The Hidden Mission Field in Our Churches". How does Paul's letter to the Colossians help us reach this hidden mission field in our churches?
2. How does Paul's description of Christ in Colossians help to refute major heresies that may corrupt the gospel?
3. Christians are not called to be revolutionaries or force social changes on those around them. However, Christians should be "influencers" who produce positive changes that overturn social injustices. Explain how Christians can influence societal change for the better.

## SGM BIBLICAL STUDIES NT 202-8

### 1 THESSALONIANS

#### Lesson Outline

- I. The Good Example of the Thessalonian Church
- II. Paul Writes About His Past Visit to Thessalonica
- III. Paul Instructs the Church About the Lord's Second Coming
- IV. Paul Gives Instructions on How to Conduct Themselves Until the Lord's Return

### 1 THESSALONIANS

**Author:** Paul

**Approximate Date Written:** A.D. 51

**Original and Primary Audiences:**  
The church at Thessalonica and all believers

**Purpose:** To strengthen the Thessalonian church in their faith and give all believers the assurance of Christ's return

**Context:** Believed to be one of Paul's earliest letters. This letter was written to believers in Thessalonica that were not yet mature in their faith. Paul wrote to Christians who needed a fuller understanding of Christ's Second Coming. Also, believers in Thessalonica were being persecuted and needed to be encouraged.



#### THE GOOD EXAMPLE OF THE THESSALONIAN CHURCH

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.” **Acts 16:7–10**

Paul established the church in Thessalonica during his second missionary journey (about 51 A.D.) after having received a vision from the Holy Spirit directing him to go to Macedonia (Note: Compare Paul’s calling to Macedonia with Peter’s call to go to Gentiles in Acts 10:9-20).

Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. Then Paul, as his custom was, went in to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and demonstrating that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, “This Jesus whom I preach to you is the Christ.” And some of them were persuaded; and a great multitude of the devout Greeks, and not a few of the leading women, joined Paul and Silas.” **Acts 17:1–4**

Thessalonica was one of the cities Paul and his companions visited after receiving his “\_\_\_\_\_”. When they came to that region, Paul and Silas were persecuted and hounded by the Jews who had not only rejected the message of salvation for themselves, but also did not want anyone else to receive it. It was in Thessalonica that their enemies tagged Paul and the followers of Jesus Christ as “*men who turn the world upside down...*” (Acts 17:6b KJV)

Despite these Jews who incited an angry mob to threaten the lives of the missionaries, Paul and Silas were able to remain in the city just long enough to plant a seedling of belief in the Gospel that would grow and become the Thessalonian church, which Paul addressed in these two letters.

Paul must have been concerned with how this new church would survive and grow in such a hostile environment and so he wrote these letters a short time after his visit to encourage the young church he left behind there. Paul had good reasons to be concerned for the church in Thessalonica:

- **His stay in the city had been \_\_\_\_\_** (Acts 17:2). He did not have the time to firmly establish the new believers in the faith. They were mere “babes in Christ”; could they stand firm in gospel message delivered to them by Paul?
- **The believers there were almost all \_\_\_\_\_**. They would be unfamiliar with the Jewish Scriptures and traditions that were the foundations of this new faith in Jesus Christ. Would they be able to grasp the broader implications of salvation by grace through faith?

- **The church was born in an atmosphere of \_\_\_\_\_.** Paul and Silas left them as the persecution was building. Could the church stand in the face of it, or would it be swept away?
- **The church stood in the midst of a \_\_\_\_\_**  
Would Gnostic cult teachings and Pagan worship entice new Christians to abandon their faith or tempt them to mix the old with the new?

These questions were on Paul's mind when he sent Timothy back to Thessalonica to see how the church was doing – as Paul himself explained in this letter:

“But we, brethren, having been taken away from you for a short time in presence, not in heart, endeavored more eagerly to see your face with great desire. Therefore we wanted to come to you—even I, Paul, time and again—but Satan hindered us.” (2:17–18).

“Therefore, when we could no longer endure it, we thought it good to be left in Athens alone, and sent Timothy, our brother and minister of God, and our fellow laborer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you and encourage you concerning your faith, that no one should be shaken by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that we are appointed to this. For, in fact, we told you before when we were with you that we would suffer tribulation, just as it happened, and you know. For this reason, when I could no longer endure it, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter had tempted you, and our labor might be in vain.” (3:1–5)

Paul wanted to assure the church of his love and concern for them, and to let them know that he had not forgotten them. When Timothy returned from the city with the good news that the church was not only withstanding the trials and temptations, but it was growing in faith and adding new believers to its ranks, Paul wrote to the Thessalonians to commend them for their steadfast witness and the positive impact they had made upon the other churches.

“And you became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit, so that you became examples to all in Macedonia and Achaia who believe. For from you the word of the Lord has sounded forth, not only in

Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place. Your faith toward God has gone out, so that we do not need to say anything. For they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.” (1:6–10)

The first chapter of Thessalonians gives us a good picture of what a healthy, fruit-bearing church looks like:

- It is an energetic church working in faith, hope, and love (1:1-3)
- It is an elect church, full of confidence, knowing they are chosen by God (1:4-5)
- It is a praiseworthy church, faithful followers of the Apostles and the Lord (1:6)
- They became an example to others of how a church should act (1:7)
- They were an evangelistic church (1:8)
- They were a forward-looking church, waiting expectantly for the return of Jesus Christ from heaven (1:9-10)

## PAUL WRITES ABOUT HIS PAST VISIT TO THESSALONICA

“For you yourselves know, brethren, that our coming to you was not in vain.” (2:1)

After praising the Thessalonian church, Paul reminds them of his past trip to the city and the factors that made his visit with them so successful (2:1-20).

The Thessalonians learned how much Paul and his companions had suffered along the way (Acts 16, 17, and 18:1-17). Even after suffering so much, they would not back down or soften the message they preached. Their devotion to Christ and the steadfast adherence to the gospel they preached won the apostles a hearing from the people (2:2). Paul reminded the church that their appeals to receive the gospel did not come from error or impurity, nor were they trying to deceive them.

Their preaching was a success because the missionaries “have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who tests our hearts” (2:4). Paul went further and reminded the church that “when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God” which

was affirmed by the evidence that the word works effectively in those who believe. (2:13)

Paul presented himself as a positive role model to the church: “You are witnesses, and God also, how devoutly and justly and blamelessly we behaved ourselves among you who believe; as you know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father does his own children, that you would walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.” (2:10-12)

- His preaching was \_\_\_\_\_ (2:3-6, 10). “Nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others, when we might have made demands as apostles of Christ.”
- Paul \_\_\_\_\_ among them and refused to be a burden to them in any way (2:9). Their only agenda was to preach to them the gospel of God.
- He \_\_\_\_\_ them as a loving parent would do (2:7-8, 11-12).

Paul praised them for their faithfulness during persecution and reminded them that the other churches were experiencing the same kind of suffering from those who “killed both the Lord Jesus and their own prophets.” (2:15). “For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God which are in Judea in Christ Jesus. For you also suffered the same things from your own countrymen, just as they did from the Judeans...” (1:14). Christians who live in places where little or no persecution takes place, often forget the fact that in most places around the world today, Christians are often killed or punished for their faith.

Christians should never be surprised when they are being persecuted for their faith. Those who have no desire to please God and who live contrary to the teachings of Jesus Christ, will use whatever power they have to forbid Christians to speak the gospel of salvation. In many countries, anti-conversion laws are used as an excuse to stop the spread of the gospel. Evangelists, missionaries, pastors and ministry leaders are not called to fight with them; let them go, “so as always to fill up the measure of their sins.” Pray for them that God’s wrath will not come upon them in its fulness.

Remembering his visit to Thessalonica with fondness served to increase Paul’s longing to see them in person once more (2:13-20). Paul’s time with them had been too short, but “not in heart.” Paul’s absence was not from lack of trying. He confessed to them that “Satan hindered us” from reaching them. Paul never obsesses over the frequent demonic activity that hinders his work and the work of the other ministers of the gospel. However, it is important to for all who are involved with the work of advancing the kingdom of God in the hearts of men that

we have an adversary who is actively involved in hindering our work. Therefore, it is important to pray and seek the guidance, protection, and the help of the Lord in all that we do for Him and on behalf of those who need salvation.

“For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy; giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light. He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.” **Colossians 1:9–14.**

Paul reveals the reasons for his hope to see them again: his joy “or crown of rejoicing.” “Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? For you are our glory and joy.” (3:20). The motivation for those who are in ministry should never be for \_\_\_\_\_ these wrong motives will only destroy the work of the gospel in the end. Countless numbers of apostles (missionaries), prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers work tirelessly and in obscurity and poverty motivated by only one thing: to see in the kingdom of heaven as many as they can reach with the gospel of salvation. These men and women will be the ones who have their names written in heaven.

### **Encouraged by Timothy**

Because he was not seeking his own glory and because he did not think of himself as indispensable to the advancement of the gospel, Paul was quite willing to send Timothy “our brother and minister of God, and our fellow laborer in the gospel of Christ” to minister to the church Paul had established (3:1-5). Paul was more concerned about the health of the Thessalonian believers than he was about his own reputation as an apostle. Paul was anxious to hear how the church was holding up in the persecution that was sure to follow Paul’s departure from their city. They would need to be \_\_\_\_\_ in their faith and \_\_\_\_\_ in afflictions that Paul warned them must happen “...for you yourselves know that we are appointed to this.” Paul had heard nothing from the Thessalonians, so, “when I could no longer endure it, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter had tempted you, and our labor might be in vain.”

Paul shared his joy at hearing the good news brought back to him by his emissary (3:6-10). The church at Thessalonica was \_\_\_\_\_ They remembered affectionately Paul's visit and were hoping to see him again soon. The steadfast faith of the church made bearable all of the suffering and grief Paul and companions were experiencing on behalf of the gospel. "For now we live, if you stand fast in the Lord. For what thanks can we render to God for you, for all the joy with which we rejoice for your sake before our God..." (3:8-9).

Paul revealed to the church that "night and day" they were praying that they would be able to come and see them again. Paul wanted to teach them more and "perfect" what is still lacking in these new believers' faith:

"Now may our God and Father Himself, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way to you. And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all, just as we do to you, so that He may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints."

1 Thessalonians 3:10-12

The Apostle's prayer is an example for how missionaries and other ministers should pray before moving forward in their work. Paul prayed that God himself would \_\_\_\_\_. Nothing other than God's will should guide our steps as we step out in faith to fulfill our ministry calling. Second, Paul prayed that their **love would increase**. Paul wrote to the Corinthians that love is the greatest Christ-like attribute of the church (1 Corinthians 13:13) and love should be the greatest motivation for Christian ministry. Third, Paul prayed for their \_\_\_\_\_ being "blameless in holiness before God" as they look forward to the Second Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Our steadfast hope in the promise of our Lord that He will return and take us to heaven with Him is an essential part of the gospel we preach.

#### PAUL GIVES INSTRUCTIONS ON HOW TO CONDUCT THEMSELVES UNTIL THE LORD'S RETURN (4:1-12)

"For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality; that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in passion of lust, like the Gentiles who do not know God..." (4:3-5)

Paul almost always includes practical instructions for believers his letters and 1 Thessalonians is no exception. Paul urges the church to “abound more and more” in how they should walk to please God. In their presence, Paul had given them specific commandments “through the Lord Jesus.” He affirms what is the will of God for them and for all believers: \_\_\_\_\_ (4:3).

Throughout Paul’s letters he insists that believers conduct themselves in a \_\_\_\_\_ manner. Often his instructions to be holy are given in anticipation of \_\_\_\_\_. The general human condition of sin has not changed since the beginning of the church. Apart from the Holy Spirit, people are helpless against sin’s power of to overtake them: “the Thessalonians had only recently come into the Christian faith, and they had come from a society in which chastity was an unknown virtue; they were still in the midst of such a society, and the infection of it was affecting them all the time.” The William Barclay Estate, © 2009.

Paul was as equally concerned for the unity of the church in Thessalonica as he was for all the churches. He saw how lawsuits between believers may be destructive to Christian unity and wrote forcefully to the church in Corinth against the practice (1 Corinthians 6:1-8). At the same time, Paul wrote to the church at Thessalonica that “no one should take advantage of and defraud his brother in this matter, because the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also forewarned you and testified.”

Paul urged the church to live up to their confession of Christ the Lord: “For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness.” True holiness and righteousness do not come from society’s rules or from manmade religion, but they come from the hand of God (Exodus 31:18). “Therefore,” Paul told them, “he who rejects this does not reject man, but God, who has also given us His Holy Spirit.”

Paul and the other Apostles return time and again to the theme of love as the motivating factor for the church (4:9-12). Here, Paul alludes to the Lord’s teachings concerning love that they had already heard from him: “But we urge you, brethren, that you increase more and more...”

Christians are not called to lead riots or create revolutions to cause social change. Instead, we are called to lead peaceful and quiet lives, to mind our own business, and to work with our own hands to support ourselves, our family and our church. The Lord’s admonitions for us to obey just laws, to be at peace with our neighbors, and not to retaliate against our enemies makes Christians easy targets for those who have no regrets about using vicious attacks upon Christians and threats of violence against them. Although it may cost us our basic human rights,

freedoms, life, or property, the love of Christ in us compels to “walk properly toward those who are outside.” and that you may lack nothing.

## PAUL INSTRUCTS THE CHURCH ABOUT THE LORD’S SECOND COMING (4:13 – 5:11)

The many questions concerning the Lord’s Second Coming began even before Jesus was resurrected. His disciples were deeply troubled over the unfulfilled prophecies concerning the Messiah and His kingdom to be established at the end of the age. Even as the Lord Jesus was about to make His ascent into heaven, the disciples were asking, “Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” (Acts 1:6). As the church spread to Gentiles that had little or no understanding of Old Testament apocalyptic prophecies, their questions about the Lord’s return were more personal: “What will our resurrection bodies be like?” “Will we know and be known by others after the resurrection?” “Will only those who are alive at the time rise to meet Jesus when He returns?”

The Apostles did their best to answer some of their questions within the bounds of what the Holy Spirit was willing to reveal, but Jesus said, “...of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only.” (Matthew 24:36). John’s Apocalypse (Revelation) and the other apocalyptic prophecies of the Old Testament are full of mysteries and unanswered questions that have led many to speculate about end times events beyond what the Scriptures reveal.

Paul wrote to comfort those Thessalonians who were concerned about those believers who had died, still waiting for the Second Coming:

- They did not die without hope since “Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.” (4:13-14)
- Those who are still alive “will by no means precede those who are asleep” (4:15-18)
- No one knows the day or hour of the Lord’s return. “For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night.” (5:1-4)
- Christians are called to be alert, watch, and pray with hope, faith, and love, confident in their salvation, “For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (5:9-10)
- The assurance of our salvation, knowing that it is by faith in the resurrection of Jesus Christ and not by works of the flesh, encourages us not to lose heart when the spiritual battles rage around us. “Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing.”

Paul ends his letter to the Thessalonians with a few more exhortations, blessings, and admonitions (5:12-28).

Paul urged them to recognize those who labor among them as spiritual leaders. Those who give their life to serve the body of believers – whether they are paid or not – rarely receive any honor or recognition in this world. Honor and respect is due to those who possess spiritual authority in the Lord and caution the church to live holy lives worthy of Christ. Those who benefit from the leadership of apostles (missionaries), evangelists, pastors, preachers, teachers, etc. ought to be esteemed “very highly in love” for the work they faithfully perform (5:12-13).

Christians should always strive to be at peace among themselves. Sometimes an immature believer or someone with mental or emotional problems can be disruptive in the church; they should be warned not to disrupt or upset the peaceful, orderly service being led by the minister and worship leaders. Others come to the church needing comforting for some emotional hurt or mental distress. In all cases, believers should be patient with them and handle them with loving care. The principle is that no one in the church should render “evil for evil to anyone, but always pursue what is good both for yourselves and for all.” (5:14-15). Without going into detail, Paul instructs them to:

- \_\_\_\_\_ (5:16)
- \_\_\_\_\_ (5:17)
- In everything \_\_\_\_\_, noting that this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for them (5:18)
- \_\_\_\_\_ (5:19)  
 “This can happen in any heart when the Holy Spirit is stifled, allowing thoughts or actions which are contrary to the character or practices of God. The fire of the Spirit is suppressed when he is rejected, when his convicting power, righteousness, and judgment (John 16:8-11) are ignored. We douse the Spirit’s influence in our life through doubt, we drench him with anger, we drown his power with immorality.” (Knut Larson, Holman New Testament Commentary © 2000, Broadman & Holman Publishers, p.75)
- \_\_\_\_\_ (5:20).  
 There are those who believe the gift of prophecy is no longer active in the church today. Others believe the gift is still in effect and there are those in the church today that have that gift. Either way, all can agree that the prophecies of the Old Testament are without question, should not be treated as outdated, and should be the standard by which any or all words of prophecy are given. No genuine word of prophecy from

the Holy Spirit will in any way contradict or cancel-out any word written in the Bible.

- \_\_\_\_\_; hold fast what is good (5:21). Christians must not accept anything that is said or done in the church without question. The faith we have is not a blind faith; it is a faith that is rooted in grounded in the written Word of God: *The Holy Bible*. Everything we believe and do must pass the test of Scripture (see 1 Corinthians 14:29; 2 Corinthians 13:5; 1 John 4:1).
- \_\_\_\_\_ from every form of evil (5:22). Because we are a fallen race living in a fallen world, Christians cannot avoid coming into contact with evil – it is all around us. However, Christians must exercise self-control and refuse to participate in every evil act. Jesus taught us to pray, “Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.” And with the Holy Spirit to guide us and empower us, we will overcome every temptation and be free from the slavery of sin (Romans 6:15-23).

## BENEDICTION

“Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it.

Brethren, pray for us.

Greet all the brethren with a holy kiss.

I charge you by the Lord that this epistle be read to all the holy brethren.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.” (5:23–28)

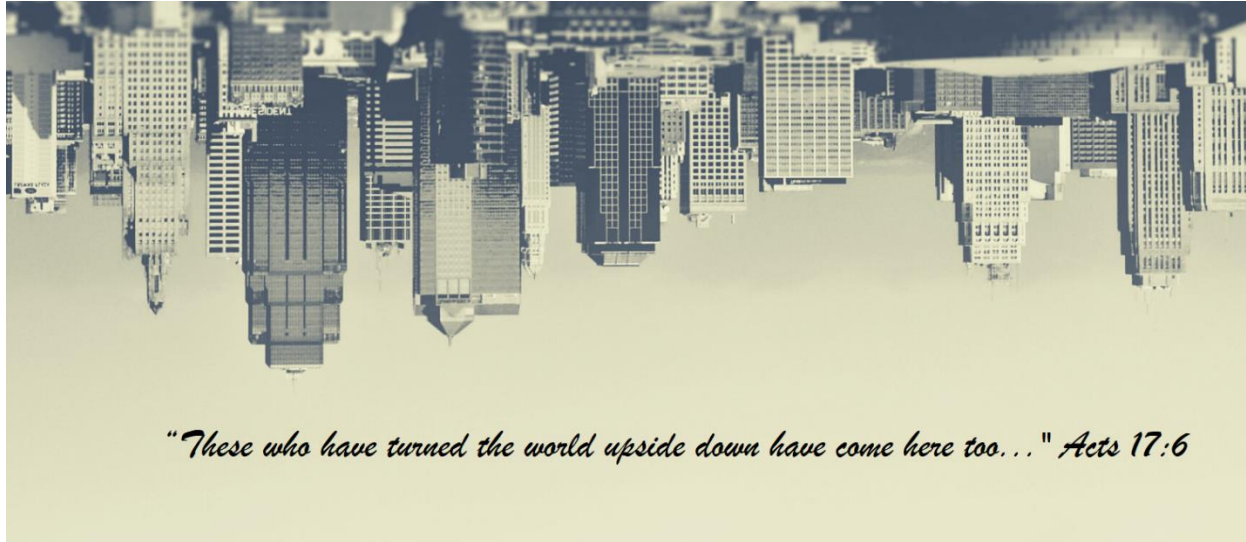
Paul used his Apostolic authority to order “by the Lord” that this epistle be shared to all the churches: It is the duty of every leader in the church to see to it that every member reads and understands this epistle along with the rest of the Word of God. Every chapter and verse of God’s Word is important and must be studied by all. No believer is to be left behind when it comes to knowing the essential truths about our salvation that the Holy Spirit wants all Christians to know. No believer can have the peace of God that comes from being sanctified completely, and preserved blameless – spirit, soul, and body – until our Lord Jesus Christ comes for us.

## Questions for Lesson Eight

1. The church at Thessalonica was one of the churches founded after Paul received his “Macedonian Call” on his second missionary journey. Review chapters 16 – 18:17 of Acts. After receiving a specific call to ministry or missions, should anyone expect no trouble or opposition until the completion of that call?
2. Paul praised the Thessalonian church for the good example the believers were setting. Describe the positive impact a healthy, fruit-bearing church can have upon others around them.
3. Consider your own ministry and preaching. How does it measure up to Paul’s example of ministry described in chapter two?
4. It has been said that “greatness in the kingdom of God is measured not by how many people serve you, but by how many people you serve.” Review the second chapter of 1 Thessalonians. How did Paul set the example of being a servant of God to the church?
5. In 5:11–23 of this epistle, Paul gives us specific examples of how we can encourage others. Why is it so important to encourage and strengthen others as we wait for the Lord’s Second Coming? (Note Paul’s instructions for the church about the Lord’s Second Coming in 4:13 – 5:11).

## SGM BIBLICAL STUDIES NT 202-9

### 2 THESSALONIANS



#### Lesson Outline

- I. Paul answers questions about the Lord's Second Coming
  - a. Greeting (1:1-12)
  - b. Conditions for Christ's return (2:1-17)
  
- II. Paul instructs the church about living until Christ returns
  - a. Pray (3:1-5)
  - b. Watch (3:6-15)
  - c. Benediction (3:16-18)

**Author:** Paul

**Approximate Date Written:** A.D. 51 or 52

**Original and Primary Audiences:** The church at Thessalonica, and all believers

**Purpose:** Paul wanted to clear up the confusion in the church about the second coming of Christ

**Context:** Written from Corinth a few months after 1 Thessalonians. Paul had learned that many in the Thessalonian church were confused about the timing of Christ's return. The church believed that the persecution they were experiencing, plus the statements in Paul's first letter meant that the Second Coming of Christ would be at any moment.

#### PAUL ANSWERS QUESTIONS ABOUT THE LORD'S SECOND COMING

“Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, to the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” (1:1-2)

After his first letter was sent, Paul received more news from Thessalonica. The good news was that they were greatly encouraged and comforted by Paul’s letter. But the Apostle was made aware of some troubling problems in the church. Just as Paul had feared, because of his sudden departure from them (Acts 17:1-10) some disturbing issues materialized in the church and some serious questions were being raised concerning the conduct of believers who were expecting the Lord’s return at any moment. Some false teachings about Christ’s Second Coming were spreading, leading many to abandon their civic duties, quit their jobs, and sit down to wait for the end of the world to come. In response to these problems and the questions being raised about the Lord’s return, Paul quickly wrote his second letter to assure them of Christ’s second coming while correcting false teachings about it.

The believers in Thessalonica were experiencing the same kinds of persecutions that many of the other churches were experiencing at that time. Paul never offered the church a way to end the persecutions, but his letters do help Christians understand their meaning and purpose in the life of the Christian.

1. Although it is difficult for most people to understand, it is a privilege for believers to suffer for the \_\_\_\_\_ (Matthew 5:10). In his first letter to the Thessalonians, Paul said, “...no one should be shaken by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that we are appointed to this. For, in fact, we told you before when we were with you that we would suffer tribulation, just as it happened...” (1 Thessalonians 3:3–4). He warned his disciple Timothy that “all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.” (2 Timothy 3:12). In this letter, Paul notes the growing faith, love that abounds, and the patience and faith manifested in all the persecutions and tribulations that the church endured for the sake of righteousness (1:3-4).
2. It is a privilege to suffer for the \_\_\_\_\_ (Matthew 5:11). “For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake” (Philippians 1:29). Paul wrote to the Colossian church how he was able to rejoice in “the afflictions of Christ for the sake of His body, which is the church.” (Colossians 1:24). In this letter,

Paul explained to the church that their afflictions counted them “worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you also suffer” (1:5).

3. It is a privilege to suffer afflictions for the \_\_\_\_\_  
 Paul told them “it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you, and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels” (1:6-7). Paul reminds them of what they have been taught concerning the Day of the Lord “when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (1:7<sub>b</sub>-8). In that Day the wicked will be punished “with everlasting destruction” while the Lord will be glorified in His saints “because our testimony among you was believed.” (1:9-10).

In this letter, Paul teaches the church that suffering is not only necessary but is in fact beneficial:

- The persecution that comes upon the church is evidence that God’s judgment is \_\_\_\_\_.
- Through the trials and sufferings of the church others may see our \_\_\_\_\_ more clearly as the reason for our perseverance.
- Enduring persecution with patience and faith \_\_\_\_\_ for other believers to follow.
- Suffering and persecution are evidence that God is \_\_\_\_\_.
- Through suffering, God also \_\_\_\_\_ and makes us holy and perfect in His sight.

Paul closes this chapter telling them that they are praying three things for them:

1. That “our God would count you worthy of this calling
2. That God would “fulfill all the good pleasure of His goodness and the work of faith with power”
3. That “the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.” (1:11-12).

## THE CONDITIONS FOR CHRIST'S RETURN (2:1-17)

After encouraging the church to hold fast in the face of persecution while they watched and prayed for the Lord's return, Paul addressed the three main problems resulting from their misunderstanding of the time and place of the Lord's return.

### **The First Problem:** \_\_\_\_\_

“Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come. Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things? And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time. (2:1-6)

Almost from the beginning, the church has been attacked on two fronts: from powerful people on the outside who use \_\_\_\_\_ to destroy the church; and second, from \_\_\_\_\_ who slip inside the church to lead Christians away from the true faith. In Matthew 24:10-14, Jesus had said about His own Second Coming that “many false prophets will rise up and deceive many...” lawlessness will flourish, and the love of many believers will be lost. Only those who resist being led astray by a false gospel and endure to the end will be saved.

Paul did not have to name those who were circulating a false report about Jesus' return in letter supposedly to have come from him. Those who had received the Holy Spirit would know the truth. However, it is clear from his response that this false letter contained some deceptive teachings that were causing confusion and upsetting the church. Most scholars tend to believe that Gnostic teachings were being presented in the letter Paul referred to because it was common practice with the Gnostics to attach a known name to one of their writings to give it greater authority with the audience being addressed. However, the mystery religion of the Gnostics was by no means the only false teaching circulating in the early church. So Paul reminded them of what he had taught them about the resurrection and the

Second Coming of the Lord when he was with them. They needed to be reassured and encouraged to stay on target with what they learned.

**The Second Problem That Arose from The False Teaching About the Second Coming Was It Led to \_\_\_\_\_.**

“For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming. The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.” (2:7-12)

Another attraction of this deceptive teaching was a form of “lawlessness” that wrapped itself up in a \_\_\_\_\_. The Gnostics taught a theology of *Dualism* that said the spirit is all good, the flesh is all evil and there is no connection between the realm of matter and pure spirit. Therefore the spirit had nothing to do with the flesh and was therefore unaffected by deeds done by the body. So these Gnostics believed you could do anything you wanted in and to the body and it had no impact on the spirit. But this is not at all what the Bible teaches, and Paul strongly condemned these false teachers and their lies.

Paul and the other Apostles taught clearly that Christians are saved to live holy, sanctified lives. People who do not believe in the Second Coming and a final judgment at the end of the age are easily deceived into thinking that they can live any way they want to live in the flesh and in the end not face any consequences for it. But the Apostles shared Jesus’ teaching that when He returned, those who joined on the side of the lawless one, “...the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming.”

**The Third Problem That Arose from False Teaching About the Lord’s Second Coming Was \_\_\_\_\_.**

But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth, to which He called you by our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle. Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and our God and Father, who has loved us and given us everlasting consolation and good hope by grace, comfort your hearts and establish you in every good word and work. (2:13-17)

A misunderstanding about the Lord's Second Coming was causing some in the church to become idle (3:11). Early believers lived with the expectation that Christ's return to the earth would happen at any time, but some in the Thessalonian church thought it meant their normal way of life was useless. The preaching of the other Apostles concerning the Lord's return when added to Paul's words to the Thessalonians in his first letter, heightened the believers' expectancy for the Lord's immediate return. Paul warned them in his first letter that it was pointless to write to them about "times and dates... for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night."

Paul's words of warning in his first letter that destruction will come upon the world as suddenly "as labor pains on a pregnant woman" (1 Thessalonians 5:1-3) echoed Jesus' own words concerning His return (John 16:21-22) and used the same image as the prophet Isaiah's words (26:17). In Isaiah's day, His people felt the pain of being separated from God because of their sins. Although most of God's people feared that He had turned his back on them forever, a small number never lost hope and continued to seek Him. Christians may feel at times that Jesus may not return, but the Holy Spirit used His Apostles to encourage His people to have hope, keep our trust in God the Father, and wait patiently for Jesus Christ to come again. And when He returns all those who have \_\_\_\_\_ until the end will live again.

There is no doubt that Jesus taught His disciples that He would come again (Matthew 26:64; Mark 14:62; Luke 21:27; John 14:3). And the Apostles proclaimed His return as part of the Gospel message they preached (Corinthians 1:7-8; 4:5; Philippians 3:20; Colossians 3:41; 1 Thessalonians 5:23; 1 Timothy 6:14; Titus 2:13; 1 John. 2:28). But Jesus also warned His disciples that the exact time of His return was unknown to everyone except the Father: "No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the

Father. As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.” (Matthew 24:36-37 NIV).

### **The Fourth Problem That Arose from False Teaching About the Lord’s Second Coming Was Disunity**

The church in New Testament times was a mix of Jewish and Gentile believers. Tensions may rise and conflicts can break out when believers disregard the Spirit, ignore their leaders and follow worldly patterns of behavior. Paul instructed the church to respect their leaders and encouraged them to “Live in peace with each other” as the only means to maintain the unity of love in the body.

**To those who remained faithful**, Paul asked them to pray for him and his co-workers “that the word of the Lord may run swiftly and be glorified, just as it is with you.” Paul also asked them to pray “that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men; for not all have faith.” Ministry leaders must have \_\_\_\_\_ on their side. Not all believers are able to work on the frontlines of ministry in mission fields around the world. Before going across town, to another village, or another country to preach the gospel of the kingdom, workers need strong prayer support along with the financial support and emotional support of senders back home.

Next, Paul expressed his prayer for the believers in Thessalonica:

“But the Lord is faithful, who will establish you and guard you from the evil one. And we have confidence in the Lord concerning you, both that you do and will do the things we command you. Now may the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the patience of Christ.” (3:3–5).

In his chapter on prayer support, Neal Pirolo said of the Apostle Paul:

“As a missionary in the first century, he was continually calling on the churches for prayer support: ‘Brethren, pray for us’ he simply stated in 1 and 2 Thessalonians and Hebrews. His appeal to the Christians in Rome seemed a bit more pressing: ‘I beseech you, brethren... that you strive together with me in your prayers to God for me’ (Romans 15:30). Paul assumed Philemon was on his prayer support team (Philemon 22). To the church in Philippi, he stated his confidence that what he was experiencing would turn out for the good of his soul

because of their prayers and the resources of the Spirit of Jesus Christ (Philippians 1:19) – bringing us back to the insoluble cooperation of God and man in prayer.” *Serving As Senders* © 2012, Emmaus Road International, Inc., p.97

Ministry leaders around the world learn from experience how essential prayer support is to their work. As Pirolo said, “Prayer is where the action is – supporting and sustaining those on the fields of the world.” It is especially important for those in distant mission fields, and working cross-culturally to have a strong prayer support team because the challenges many face are extremely difficult, making supernatural power essential for them to continue on the daily tasks that often meet with strong resistance. Pirolo continued:

All Christians are involved in spiritual warfare. Whenever they are aggressively battling the enemy, there is a greater vulnerability to his attacks. However, your cross-cultural worker often has to deal with battle tactics less familiar than those he faced back home. Where there is less Christian witness, there is greater oppression. Cultures more open to Eastern religions and animism are also more aware of the evil spirit world. Territory that satan has held for generations does not yield easily. Add to this your worker’s adjustment to all the unknowns of his new culture and you already have a sizable prayer list.” p.99.

For those who were causing disunity and rebellion in the church, Paul gave this \_\_\_\_\_:

“But we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us. For you yourselves know how you ought to follow us, for we were not disorderly among you; nor did we eat anyone’s bread free of charge, but worked with labor and toil night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, not because we do not have authority, but to make ourselves an example of how you should follow us.

For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat. For we hear that there are some who walk among you in a disorderly manner, not working at all, but are busybodies. Now those who are such we command and exhort

through our Lord Jesus Christ that they work in quietness and eat their own bread.” (3:6-12)

We must not judge the believers at Thessalonica too harshly for not knowing how to live with the expectation of the Lord’s return on any day. From the very start, believers had been expecting the Lord to immediately return. Acts 1:10-11 describes the disciples of Jesus standing and looking intently up into the sky as He was ascending, when suddenly two angels in the likeness of men stood beside them and asked them “why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.”

Christians are called to live with the \_\_\_\_\_ of the Lord’s return at any moment; we live in the tension between being heavenly-minded and living our lives in the here-and-now as we wait upon the Lord’s return. There was – and still is – much work to be done to fulfill the Great Commission. In his letter, Paul pointed out the obvious fact that they were not idle while they were with them. Therefore, they should follow the example of Paul and the other leaders of the church.

But those who used the idea that the Lord might return any day as an excuse for not being useful and productive were creating a bad impression on those outside the fellowship of believers, and at the same time they were failing to fulfill their responsibilities to their families, church, and community. As the old saying goes, they had become “too heavenly-minded to be any earthly good.”

“But as for you, brethren, do not grow weary in doing good. And if anyone does not obey our word in this epistle, note that person and do not keep company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet do not count him as an enemy but admonish him as a brother.” (3:13–15)

The Epistle of 2 Thessalonians is a continuation of the first letter in its call to continue in \_\_\_\_\_ in the church until the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

- Paul commended the persecuted believers for their \_\_\_\_\_ (2 Thessalonians 1:1-5)

- He encouraged them that their suffering was \_\_\_\_\_  
(2 Thessalonians 1:6-9)

Paul's letters to the Thessalonian church are models for \_\_\_\_\_. Since he planted the church, Paul took the initiative to follow-through and check on the progress of the believers there. Paul understood the necessity of mentoring the leaders there and gave practical advice to the leaders and those who followed them on how to stay focused upon the message while struggling to grow spiritually in a hostile environment. Although there were some in the church who had become idle and disorderly and were causing internal divisions and defiance of godly leaders, Paul was able to address them fearlessly and prayerfully. He would not allow false teachers to use the excuse of waiting for Christ's return for their behavior. Paul cleared up their misunderstanding by elaborating on various events that must precede the Second Coming and cautioning them to be diligent in their faith and obedient to Christ until His return.

Paul encouraged every church he founded to keep the faith they had from the beginning and admonished them as a parent would their child without attempting to "lord over" them in the process. Therefore, Paul could express confidence in the Lord that the church was doing and would continue to do the things the Apostles commanded in the name of the Lord. Paul was confident that the Lord would direct the hearts of the steadfast believers to the love of God and perseverance in Christ.

### Questions for Lesson Nine

1. Why were Paul and the other Apostles able to speak of the persecutions and sufferings of the church without bitterness or complaint?
2. Why is it important for believers to expect Jesus Christ's return?
3. What are some of the problems that can arise from false teachings about the Second Coming?
4. What are some of the problems that result if those causing disunity and teaching false doctrines in the church are not confronted?
5. How did Paul address the problems that arose from False Teaching About the Lord's Second Coming?

## SGM BIBLICAL STUDIES NT 202-10

### 1 TIMOTHY

#### Lesson Outline

- I. Instructions on Sound Doctrine (1:1 – 20)
  - a. Allow no other doctrine to be taught
  - b. Contend for the faith
- II. Instructions for the Church (2:1- 15)
  - a. Instructions on prayer
  - b. Instructions for men and women
- III. Instructions for Overseers and Leaders (3:1 – 4:16)
  - a. Qualifications for overseers and deacons
  - b. Instructions for Conduct of church leaders and ministers
- IV. Instructions for How to Treat Church Members (5:1 – 6:10)
  - a. How to treat widows
  - b. How to treat elders
  - c. How masters and bondservants should treat each other
- V. Final Instructions for Timothy (6:11-21)
  - a. Fight the good fight of faith
  - b. Instructions on the rich
  - c. Guard the faith

### 1 TIMOTHY

**Author:** Paul

**Approximate Date Written:** A.D. 64, probably just prior to Paul's final imprisonment in Rome

**Original and Primary Audiences:** Timothy, Paul's son in the faith, and all believers

**Purpose:** To give encouragement and instructions to Timothy, a young leader Paul discipled

**Context:** Timothy was one of those Paul personally discipled and prepared for leadership. He already had sent Timothy to the church at Ephesus to counter the false teaching that had arisen there (1:3, 4) and may have served for a time as a leader there. Paul wrote this letter to give Timothy practical advice about being a minister of the gospel. Although this first letter to Timothy is personal in tone, it serves as a handbook of church administration and discipline.

## INSTRUCTIONS ON SOUND DOCTRINE (1:1 – 20)

**Allow no other doctrine to be taught**

After greeting his appointed leader of the church at Ephesus, Paul, begins his instructions for Timothy on how to lead the church.

As with most of his letters, one of Paul's primary concerns for the church is that they are not led astray by \_\_\_\_\_ who present their own doctrines contrary to what the known Apostles of Jesus Christ were teaching. Paul urged Timothy to not allow anyone under his authority to teach any other doctrine than what he had learned directly from Paul and the other Apostles.

Paul knew from observing the Gentiles that the pagan religions of the Greeks and Romans were full of "\_\_\_\_\_” from their pantheon of gods and goddesses. The gods and goddesses of the ancient world all had names and family trees (like their human makers). These names made them easy to identify and classify; their stories made them changeable and therefore able to be bent and shaped to fit the needs of the moment. The various mythologies of the pagan religions were similar, making them interchangeable. Although the names might differ, the stories would be familiar to different groups who all worshiped basically the same false gods. The gods of the pagan religions were more like their human makers than the one, true, living God that Christians worshiped. If allowed to apply the same pagan ideas to God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit it would only cause arguments between those who promoted different fables rather than “\_\_\_\_\_.”

Christian cross-cultural missionaries are often faced with the difficult task of contextualizing the gospel message to reach a far-off people group that has no concept of the world of the Bible. How do you teach the New Testament to people who have never heard of Pharisees, Sadducees, Herodians, centurions, shepherds, Moses, or any of the Old Testament prophets? Christian missionaries and evangelists must take care not to stray from the \_\_\_\_\_ in the gospel of salvation as they grasp for new terms or images to communicate the pure doctrine of the gospel of the kingdom that Jesus preached.

If Christian leaders do not insist upon preaching only the \_\_\_\_\_ that Paul and the other Apostles had preached and taught, the Word of God will be in danger of being corrupted. The Christians who compromised with the mystery religions of the Roman world were adding, subtracting, and formulating new doctrines that they believed improved and corrected what they supposed were defects in the Apostles' message of salvation by grace through faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross.

The reference to “endless genealogies” may also refer to the Judaizers who took pride in their godly heritage. Some Jewish Christians believed that their godly

ancestors guaranteed them a special status in the kingdom of heaven. They clung to their roots, stressing

- their \_\_\_\_\_ over the spiritual heritage in Christ
- their \_\_\_\_\_ over salvation by faith in Jesus Christ
- their own \_\_\_\_\_ over building the family of the church which included Gentiles
- their own \_\_\_\_\_ rather than building godly behavior among the members of the church.

This does not mean that Christians should stir up trouble and cause dissention over anything they disagree with. Paul reminded Timothy, “Now the purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from sincere faith” (1:5).

“The false teachers were motivated by their own interests rather than Christ’s. They embroiled the church in endless and irrelevant questions and controversies, taking precious time away from the study of the truth. Stay away from religious speculation and pointless theological arguments. Such exercises may seem harmless at first, but they have a way of sidetracking us from the central message of the Good News—the person and work of Jesus Christ. They expend time we should use to share the Good News with others, and they don’t help people grow in the faith. Avoid anything that keeps you from doing God’s work.” *Life Application Bible Notes* (Tyndale, 2007).

Not everyone who desires to teach is qualified to do so. Teachers of God’s word should be carefully vetted to make sure they not only \_\_\_\_\_ God’s word, but that they also \_\_\_\_\_ what they teach. Tremendous damage can be done to the faith of new believers when someone is allowed to teach who understands “neither what they say nor the things which they affirm.”

Just because a person has their sins forgiven by the blood of Jesus, does not mean they can do whatever pleases the flesh. The Gnostics were attracting followers because they taught that Christians were allowed to indulge the flesh since it had no effect on the spirit. On the other side, the Judaizers insisted that believers must strictly obey the Laws of Moses or lose their salvation. But Paul, having been instructed by the Holy Spirit concerning the gospel (John 16:12-15) said, “we know that the law is good if one uses it lawfully, knowing this: that the law is not made for a righteous person, but for the lawless and insubordinate, for the ungodly and for sinners, for the unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for fornicators, for sodomites, for kidnappers, for liars, for perjurers, and if there is any other thing that is contrary to

sound doctrine, according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God which was committed to my trust.” (1:8-11).

Paul humbly thanked the Lord who allowed him, empowered him, and counted him faithful, putting him into the ministry (1:12). Like Paul, none of us are perfect; we are all sinners saved by the grace of God. Paul confessed that he was “formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man” but like all of us, he obtained mercy because he acted “ignorantly in unbelief” (1:13-17).

### **Contend for the Faith (1:18-20)**

What an honor it must have been for those who were remembered in Scripture for their \_\_\_\_\_ to the Lord. Not so for Hymenaeus and Alexander who, like Korah, Balaam, King Ahab, Ananias and Sapphira, and many others who were named for having rejected faith in God and a good conscience, only to shipwreck their salvation. Paul encouraged his “son” Timothy to \_\_\_\_\_, holding onto “faith and a good conscience.”

It may seem like harsh treatment to deliver anyone to Satan (in 1 Corinthians 5:5, Paul had to do the same thing). But if anyone is openly practicing immoral behavior without repentance; or if anyone is knowingly speaking blasphemy (using offensive words or making statements that show no respect for God or our religion) then other believers must be protected by dismissing the offender from the church. At the same time, by sending that person out of the protective covering of the church and Christ’s kingdom by delivering that person to Satan and his domain, that person may learn not to blaspheme or corrupt other believers with false doctrines.

### **INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE CHURCH (2:1- 15)**

#### **Instructions on prayer**

Unlike the leaders of the kingdoms of this world who impose their will over others, spiritual leaders in the kingdom of God humbly offer themselves as \_\_\_\_\_ and the other members of Christ’s body. Paul offered himself as an example of Jesus Christ’s patience and forgiveness of sinners and “a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life.”

Paul understood that he was saved by the infinite mercy of God. Therefore, he instructed that all “supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men...” \_\_\_\_\_ is a key element in our worldwide mission to preach the gospel and make disciples of all those who believe. God is glorified by the spread of the gospel making more and more people come to salvation through Jesus Christ.

Nothing will stop the advance of the kingdom of God (Matthew 11:12). Good government is an aid to all who wish to “lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence.” However, even when governments turn against God’s people, intercession for “kings and all who are in authority” is important and “acceptable in the sight of God our Savior” (2:2, 3). Paul instructs the church to pray for all those who need to be saved and “come to the knowledge of the truth.” (2:5). “God wills all men to be saved, but not in the sense of a decree. God has not decreed that all men be saved. This is evident by the ungodly and unrighteous lives lived by so many. God wills all men to be saved in the sense that He loves and longs for them to be saved. If any man perishes, it is his own fault. God has done all He can. He has provided the way for man to be saved. If a man is now lost, it is his own choosing.” (Copyright © 2003, *The Preacher’s Outline & Sermon Bible* ® Volume 3: *1 Thessalonians – Revelation (New International Version)* p.123).

In verses 5 & 6 Paul expresses one of the essential doctrines of the Christian faith: there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time...” First, Paul declares there is only one God. Monotheism is the foundation of both Judaism and Christianity; it stands in direct opposition to all Pagan religions that feature a pantheon of gods. Then Paul goes a step further to assert that there is only one mediator between God and men, Jesus Christ. Almost every religion features some kind of a “mediator” who will stand between them and the deity to keep the peace or gain favor with the god.

“To be of any use, a bridge across a chasm or river must be anchored on both sides. Christ has closed the gap between deity and humanity. He has crossed the grand canyon, so deep and wide, between heaven and earth. He has bridged that which separated us from God. With one foot planted in eternity, he planted the other in time. He who was the eternal Son of God became the Son of Man. And across this bridge, we can come into the very presence of God, knowing that we are accepted because we have him as a Mediator.” *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary – Abridged Version: New Testament*, Copyright © 1994 by Zondervan Corp., p.896

Paul announces to the world that by his death, Christ restored the peace between God and human beings which sin had broken. He did this by giving Himself as the only acceptable ransom for all men. Jesus Christ paid the price to redeem mankind from the slavery to sin. It was for this reason that Paul was \_\_\_\_\_ (preacher and teacher) of the Gentiles in faith and truth (1:7).

### Instructions for men and women

As with most of his letters, Paul includes some practical instructions for the church. Paul's desire that the men pray in all places "lifting up holy hands" – meaning devout, pious, and consecrated to God – may only be accomplished when their prayers are lifted up to God without wrath or malice towards others (2:8). Paul is stating the obvious: "The LORD is far from the wicked, But He hears the prayer of the righteous." (Proverbs 15:29). James (5:16) and Peter (1 Peter 3:12) share Paul's observation that the righteous must pray in faith, without doubting God's ability or desire to answer them if their prayers are to be effective.

It is important for us to understand the cultural context of Paul's instructions for how women should conduct themselves in church services. Once we understand the context, then it is possible to apply correctly those instructions in the cultural context of our time and place.

In the ancient Greco-Roman world, it was common practice for women to put on a public display of the wealth, beauty, and status when attending Pagan temples or participating in festivals dedicated to one or more of their many gods or goddesses. Braided hair adorned with ribbons and jewels, expensive jewelry and elegant clothes were worn to show others their wealth and social status. In contrast to their old Pagan lifestyle, Christian women were taught not to try and draw undue attention to themselves, showing pride and self-centeredness (2:9-11). Both men and women are instructed to dress and act in ways that are \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_. These principles of expressing Christlike character by dressing modestly, not provocatively to entice men to look upon them lustfully are universal. Of course, women may look their best, and men should wear their best clothes to Sunday worship as a sign of respect and reverence for God. But Christians should not judge one another by clothes, jewelry, houses, cars, bank accounts, jobs, or social status. All are to be treated equally because all are equal in God's sight.

"Let a woman learn in silence with all submission. And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence. For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression. Nevertheless she will be saved in childbearing if they continue in faith, love, and holiness, with self-control." (2:11-15)

Paul's statements in 1 Timothy 2:11-15 have stirred up a lot of controversy in modern societies where woman have won equal rights with men and where they are granted equal status with men. In some cultures where women are granted authority over men, these verses are ignored. In other cultures where men have full

authority over women and where no equal rights are afforded to women, these verses are interpreted to mean that women have no role in ministry – with exception of teaching children and other women. It is for controversies like this one that we must examine certain passages of Scripture in their proper context.

These verses from 1 Timothy are not all that the Bible has to say about women. The New Testament gives many examples of women who had prominent ministries from the beginning of the church. The modern-day student of the Bible should take into consideration the roles of Mary of Nazareth (Luke 1:26-38), Anna (Luke 2:36-38), the women who ministered to Jesus at the foot of the cross (Mark 15:40), Joanna and Susanna (Luke 8:3), Martha and Mary (Luke 10:38-39; John 11:5), Mary Magdalene (Matthew 16:9; John 20:11-18), Dorcas (Acts 9:36-43); Mary, the mother of John Mark (Acts 12:12), Lydia (Acts 16:13), Priscilla (Acts 18:26), the daughters of Philip (Acts 21:9), Phoebe (Romans 16:1-2), Mary of Rome (Romans 16:6), Tryphena and Tryphosa (Romans 16:12), the mother of Rufus (Romans 16:13), Euodia and Syntyche (Philippians 4:2-3), Lois and Eunice (2 Timothy 1:5).

When every New Testament verse about women is added to 1 Timothy 2:11-15 (and Paul's instructions in Titus 2:3) a more complex picture emerges of what the proper role of women in the church should be. Together, these verses from the New Testament reveal how women were chosen and gifted by God to hold significant positions in the family, community, and church. However, it is clear from Paul's reference to the created roles of man and woman that these verses were not to be interpreted only in the context of the time and place they were addressed. The universal principle to be applied here is that God constructed and organized His creation with a specific order and that the man and woman were intended to fulfill specific functions. If a woman dominates, dictates, and takes authority over her husband and the other men in the church, the natural order of creation is turned upside down and chaos and confusion will follow. When a husband is submitted to Christ, the head of the church, the wife will love and trust him and willingly accept his leadership. Paul had already instructed the church that when a husband is surrendered to Christ, he will \_\_\_\_\_ and will \_\_\_\_\_ (Ephesians 5:22-33). And when a woman is fully surrendered to Christ and to her husband she will be "saved" (\_\_\_\_\_):

“The very nature of a woman's being, the primary function of a woman's nature and call upon the earth, is to carry on the human race. Therefore, the woman's salvation – that is, her ultimate fulfillment, satisfaction and completeness in life – comes through bearing and rearing children. Her salvation and completeness in life does not come from competing with men to see who blazes the paths and builds the

roads thorough the jungles of this earth. She can do these things, but her salvation – her ultimate fulfillment and satisfaction – does not come by doing these things.” (Copyright © 2003, *The Preacher’s Outline & Sermon Bible* ® Volume 3: 1 Thessalonians – Revelation (New International Version) p.129).

## INSTRUCTIONS FOR OVERSEERS AND LEADERS (3:1 – 4:16)

### **Qualifications for overseers (3:1-7)**

“This is a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work.” (3:1). (See HANDOUT, “History of Church Leadership from the New Testament”)

1. A bishop then must be blameless (above accusations against his character)
2. The husband of one wife (a loyal husband to one wife – not bigamous)
3. Temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior (self-controlled in actions and thought)
4. Hospitable (social, welcoming, and friendly)
5. Able to teach (able to preach the gospel to the unconverted and instruct believers in the word of God)
6. Not given to wine
7. Not violent (a peacemaker in his home, community, and church)
8. Not greedy for money
9. Gentle (gracious, kind, forbearing, and tender towards others)
10. Not quarrelsome (not contentious or a fighter)
11. Not covetous (not a lover of money or motivated by it)
12. One who rules his own house well, having his children in submission with all reverence – “...for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?” (verse 5)
13. Not a novice (a recent convert); new believers need time to be rooted and grounded in Christ and spiritually mature (which take time). Pushing a new convert into a position of leadership before they are ready, risks them falling into temptation of being puffed up with pride.
14. Must have a good testimony in the community (a good reputation with outsiders)

### **Qualifications for Deacons (3:8-16)**

1. Must be reverent (respectful, worshipful)
2. Not double-tongued (honest, not deceitful or two-faced)
3. Not given to much wine (does not get drunk on alcohol)

4. Not greedy for money (not motivated by money)  
Holding the mystery of the faith with a pure conscience. (The deep truths of the faith are given in verse 16:  
“God was manifested in the flesh,  
Justified in the Spirit,  
Seen by angels,  
Preached among the Gentiles,  
Believed on in the world,  
Received up in glory.”
5. But let these also first be tested; then let them serve as deacons, being found blameless (verified by observation to possess a proven godly character)
6. Likewise, their wives must be reverent, not slanderers, temperate, faithful in all things. (wives must be committed to the Lord and like their deacon husbands, possess a proven godly character)
7. “Let deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well. For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a good standing and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.” (3:12-13)

“Paul first described the church as \_\_\_\_\_ . The household of the first century was a bit different from what we have in modern times. Not only did the ancient home consist of parents and children; it also encompassed extended family, workers, and stewards. It was the framework and microcosm of society at large. Within the household were various age groups, genders, duties, responsibilities. Over this diversity was the master who kept the house in order, and stewards, who bore responsibility to the master for those in his charge. The household is a picture of the church in variety and structure, bringing together a mix of talents and gifts, men and women, adults and children, professionals and laborers. All of them are cared for and guided by stewards – pastors and deacons responsible to the Master.” (Knute Larson, *Holman New Testament Commentary, I & II Thessalonians, I & II Timothy, Titus, Philemon*, © 2000 Broadman & Holman Pub., p.190)

### **Warning Against False Teachers (4:1-16)**

**The Great Apostasy (4:1-5):** “Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron...”

All false teaching comes from Satan, “the father of lies” (John 8:44). In these last days, the deceptions of Satan and his demons seem to come from every direction. Paul and the other Apostles specifically addressed the false religions that taught extreme forms of ascetism that did not permit marriage. Then there were others like the Judaizers that commanded people to abstain from certain foods (foods that Christians know “God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.” Although Christians know that “every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving” that does not mean we should eat anything that we know is unhealthy, or overindulge in food, which is also unhealthy for us. Our bodies are the temple of God (1 Corinthians 6:19). Therefore, we should treat them respectfully, and sanctify whatever we eat “by the word of God and prayer.”

Paul instructs Timothy to teach others what he learned from Paul and the other Apostles so he will be “a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished in the words of faith and of the good doctrine which you have carefully followed” (4:6-11). Paul had to defend his ministry, and he knew that Timothy would need to defend his ministry also against those who would criticize him (4:12-16). But Paul knew that the best defense against those who attack God’s ministers is to “be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity.”

### **Instructions for How to Treat Church Members (5:1 – 6:10)**

“Do not rebuke an older man, but exhort him as a father, younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, younger women as sisters, with all purity.” (5:1-2).

Paul begins his next instructions with an elementary principle for how a younger minister should treat those who are older to him in years. He goes into greater detail about the treatment of widows in verses 5:3-16. “But, if any widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to show piety at home and to repay their parents; for this is good and acceptable before God.”

Paul clarifies those who should be honored as \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ in the church. They are widows who are blameless (v.7):

- Left alone (v. 5)
- Trust God and continues in supplications and prayers night and day (v. 5)
- Not living in pleasure and self-indulgence (v. 6)
- Not too young and having been the wife one man (v. 9)

- Has “brought up children, if she has lodged strangers, if she has washed the saints’ feet, if she has relieved the afflicted, if she has diligently followed every good work.” (v. 10)

“But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.” (5:8).

\_\_\_\_\_ are contrasted with genuine widows (5:11–13). Instead of spending their days praying for and doing good works for others in the Lord, they are idle, allowing their faith to wither on the vine (Revelation 2:4-5). Instead of extending hospitality to others, they go house to house spreading hurtful gossip and giving unwanted and unnecessary advice. Paul noted that this is especially a problem with younger widows that naturally have a desire to marry. If a believer has widows in their family, it is their responsibility to help them and not burden the church with use its time, money, and efforts on those who are not truly widows (5:16).

After giving practical instructions on how to treat family members, Paul addresses the issue of how elders and others who labor in the church should be treated. “Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine.” (v. 17). Paul reinforces his words by quoting from Deuteronomy 25:4, “You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain,” and Deuteronomy 24:15, “The laborer is worthy of his wages.” To protect the elders from false accusations, any allegations brought against them should be based on the testimony of more than one witness. But those who are guilty of engaging in sinful behaviors should be rebuked “in the presence of all, that the rest also may fear.”

Paul cautions Timothy to lead without prejudice or partiality and not to lay hands on anyone hastily, nor share in other people’s sins. Timothy, like all Christian leaders, must keep themselves pure (5:21-25).

### **Paul’s Final Instructions for Timothy (6:1-21)**

From the very beginning, Christians have been in a \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Enemies from without and from within have attacked the foundations of what we are called to do and believe in. Christians are not called to be \_\_\_\_\_ – which is why the Apostles never promoted overthrowing the Roman social order (6:1-2). Our warfare is fought on a spiritual level, and we make our appeal to hearts and minds, one soul at a time. Christians will lose if they allow themselves to be dragged into politics, or

disputes and arguments with other religious leaders. We are not to use the same tactics as others who equate worldly wealth and power as a means to control others or force non-believers to conform to our religion (6:3-5).

In \_\_\_\_\_, wealth is not measured by what can be counted, measured, or weighed out on a scale; it is measured by how much we love God, others, and ourselves. The wealth of Christians is found in holiness, righteousness, and truth which causes peace and contentment within, with others, with nature, and with our Creator.

Paul, following the teachings of Jesus on wealth and possessions, wrote, "...those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." (6:9-10.) He instructed those believers who are rich with worldly wealth "not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God" but to be rich in good works and giving "...storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life." (6:17-19).

"Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses." (6:12). In verses 11-16, and 20-21, Paul urged Timothy, "in the sight of God... and before Christ Jesus" to turn away from worldly pursuits and useless talk "babblings and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge" and to seek righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness (the fruit of the Spirit).

### Questions for Lesson 10

1. What happens if the leaders of a church or denomination allow anyone to teach false doctrines?
2. Review Paul's instructions to Timothy for overseers and leaders (3:1 – 4:16). Why is it important to promote leaders who fit these qualifications?
3. Review Paul's instructions to Timothy for how to treat elders, widows, and other members of the church in 5:1 – 6:10. What guidelines for ministry can we apply to our own ministry?
4. Review Paul's instructions to Timothy for women in ministry. What do you conclude from Paul's statements? Explain.
5. Describe the warfare Christians are engaged in? How do we win it?

## SGM BIBLICAL STUDIES NT 202-11

### 2 TIMOTHY & TITUS

#### Lesson Outline

#### I. Leadership Profiles Of Timothy And Titus

1. Personal Advice Given Timothy
2. Personal Advice Given to Titus

#### II. Parallel Themes In 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus

#### III. Paul's Pastoral Advice for Successful Ministry

### 2 TIMOTHY

**Author:** Paul

**Approximate Date Written:** A.D. 66 or 67

**Original and Primary Audiences:** Timothy and all believers

**Purpose:** To give final instructions and encouragement to Timothy, pastor of the church at Ephesus

**Context:** It was near the end of Paul's life; he was practically alone and in prison in Rome (only Luke was with him). This letter is Paul passing the torch of leadership to a new generation of disciples. Because Paul believes this may be his last letter to Timothy, he reveals his heart and primary concerns for the church which include: maintaining sound doctrine, being steadfast in the faith; enduring through trials and tribulations; and keeping the bonds of unity in love.

### TITUS

**Author:** Paul

**Approximate Date Written:** A.D. 64

**Original and Primary Audiences:** Titus, a Greek believer discipled by Paul, and all believers

**Purpose:** To instruct Titus as he was about to take the responsibility of supervising the churches on the island of Crete

**Context:** Probably written around the same time as 1 Timothy (gives very similar instructions as his first letter to Timothy in regard to selecting church leaders). Paul

had sent Titus to organize and oversee the churches on Crete. This letter gives Titus advice on how to fulfill his ministry.

## LEADERSHIP PROFILES OF TIMOTHY AND TITUS

### **Timothy**

Paul met the young Timothy at Lystra:

“Then he came to Derbe and Lystra. And behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a certain Jewish woman who believed, but his father was Greek. He was well spoken of by the brethren who were at Lystra and Iconium. Paul wanted to have him go on with him. And he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in that region, for they all knew that his father was Greek.” **Acts 16:1-3**

**As time passed, Timothy became one of Paul’s most trusted colleagues:**

- When Paul was concerned about the condition of the Thessalonian church, he sent Timothy there as his emissary:  
“Therefore, when we could no longer endure it, we thought it good to be left in Athens alone, and sent Timothy, our brother and minister of God, and our fellow laborer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you and encourage you concerning your faith...” **1 Thessalonians 3:1-2**
- When the Corinthian church was experiencing division and strife, Paul sent Timothy there as his personal representative to try and bring order and heal the wounds caused by the conflict:  
“For this reason I have sent Timothy to you, who is my beloved and faithful son in the Lord, who will remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church.” **1 Corinthians 4:17**
- When Paul was called away from the church he established at Ephesus, he left Timothy in charge:  
“As I urged you when I went into Macedonia—remain in Ephesus that you may charge some that they teach no other doctrine...” **1 Timothy 1:3**

The young pastor would have to work hard and would face many difficult trials and challenges before he would establish himself as the “shepherd of the flock” in Ephesus. Paul, the aged and experienced apostle, wrote to the young man

he mentored and loved as a son to advise him as “a true son in the faith” (1 Timothy 1:2).

Timothy would need all the advice he could get. He was facing a heavy burden of responsibility and the task before him was challenging:

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

Paul’s letters to Timothy would serve in his absence to give him the advice and counsel needed to fulfill his role as the leader of the church in Ephesus. As in so many of his other letters, Paul expressed the need for order and proper conduct of the church, but his pastoral letters addressed to Timothy included direct guidelines about the conduct of ministers and other leaders in the Church.

### **Titus**

Titus was a young minister Paul assigned to the island of Crete off the coast of Asia Minor. He was given the challenging task of organizing new believers into local churches.

“For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you...” **Titus 1:5**

“Leadership is dangerous. World history can best be written by studying the lives of great and terrible leaders and what they accomplished through others. We who are in leadership can on the one hand move men, women and mountains for tremendous good. At the same time, we hold in our hands the power to do irreparable damage to our followers by the mistakes we make. The greater our sphere of leadership influence, the more our impact on the world around us. And the more people we lead, the greater the potential damage caused through our poor decisions and actions. This is one of the sobering realities we must face when we take up the mantle of leadership.” Hans Finzel

Paul’s letters of 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus are known as his “Pastoral Letters.” However, the pastoral advice Paul gave to his young protégés was

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“I thank God, whom I serve with a pure conscience, as my forefathers did, as without ceasing I remember you in my prayers night and day, greatly desiring to see you, being mindful of your tears, that I may be filled with joy, when I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in

you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also. Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.” 2 Timothy 1:3–7.

Paul had personally trained these men and assigned them as ministry leaders. But Paul knew that good leaders are not born; they must be made. Good leadership – whether in the corporate world or in the church – requires skills and training. Timothy and Titus may have been called to ministry, but Paul knew they still needed to be trained to be effective leaders. Lacking any training, leaders will by nature, lead as they were led; if they were led by those with poor leadership habits, then they will most likely replicate those same poor leadership habits they learned from others. Without proper training, men and women often make poor leaders because they will:

- Lack basic skills for \_\_\_\_\_
- Lack good \_\_\_\_\_
- Lack \_\_\_\_\_ (good leaders are not born, they learn by trial and error)
- Lack a basic understanding of \_\_\_\_\_ between non-biblical and biblical leadership values (And this confusion will be greater for those who run their ministry like it is a business and not as a calling from God.)

During Paul’s long history in ministry, he faced and overcame many trials and challenges along the way. He had learned some important lessons and gained some keen spiritual insights about leadership that needed to be written down to help these young pastors:

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- To instruct them how to equip the believers in Ephesus and Crete to \_\_\_\_\_

### **Paul’s Pastoral Advice for Timothy and Titus**

Like Paul’s letters to Timothy, the letter to Titus contains practical wisdom regarding effective \_\_\_\_\_ for the churches so that they would know how godly leaders – and those who follow them – must behave in God’s presence (which is something people from Pagan backgrounds would not necessarily know).

“Remind them of these things, charging them before the Lord not to strive about words to no profit, to the ruin of the hearers. Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” 2 Timothy 2:14–15.

“This is a faithful saying, and these things I want you to affirm constantly, that those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable to men.” Titus 3:8.

**Paul stressed six times in his letter to Titus the need for good deeds by all Christians as evidence of their salvation (1:6; 2:7, 14; 3:1; 8, 14).**

### PARALLEL THEMES IN 1 & 2 TIMOTHY AND TITUS

#### HEART CONDITION OF MINISTERS

- 1 Tim. 1:3-7 The Goal of ministry: love from *pure heart*  
 2 Tim. 1:3-12 Leaders are called to a *faithful life* of ministry  
 Titus 1:5-7 The leader’s ministry must be *blameless*

#### IMPORTANCE OF SOUND DOCTRINE

- 1 Tim. 1:8-11 Lifestyle contrary to *sound doctrine* described  
 2 Tim. 1:13-14 The leader must guard *sound doctrine*  
 Titus 1:10-16 Leaders must rebuke those who abandon *sound doctrine*

#### IMPORTANCE OF FAITH

- 1 Tim. 1:18-20 Timothy to *hold on to the faith*  
 2 Tim. 2:1-7 Timothy to entrust truth to *faithful men*  
 Titus 1:9 The leader *must hold fast the faithful word* as he has been Taught

#### IMPORTANCE OF GODLY LIVING

- 1 Tim. 2:8-10 Examples of a *godly life*  
 2 Tim. 2:14-19 Leaders must live *godly lives*  
 Titus 2:1-15 *Godly living* in the church

## QUALITY OF LEADERSHIP

- 1 Tim. 3:1-15 *Leaders' qualifications*  
2 Tim. 2:14-19 How *leaders* live and teach  
Titus 1:5-16 *Leaders' qualifications*

## DANGER FROM FALSE CHRISTIANS

- 1 Tim. 4:1-5 *False* Christian lifestyle described  
2 Tim. 3:1-9 Warning against *False* Christians  
Titus 3:9-10 Avoid *false* brethren

## EXAMPLES OF TRUE CHRISTIAN LIVING

- 1 Tim. 4:11-16 Need to set example in faith, *life*  
2 Tim. 3:10 - 4:5 Need to continue in godly *life*, teaching  
Titus 3:1-8 Right *living* in society

**A Major Theme of Paul's Pastoral Advice to His Young Leaders: "HOLD FAST TO THE TRUTH."**

"But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away! For of this sort are those who creep into households and make captives of gullible women loaded down with sins, led away by various lusts, always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. Now as Jannes and Jambres resisted Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, disapproved concerning the faith; but they will progress no further, for their folly will be manifest to all, as theirs also was." **2 Timothy 3:1-9** (See also 1 Timothy 6:3-12)

"For there are many insubordinate, both idle talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole households, teaching things which they ought not, for the sake of dishonest gain. One of them, a prophet of their own,

said, ‘Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.’ This testimony is true. Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith, not giving heed to Jewish fables and commandments of men who turn from the truth. To the pure all things are pure, but to those who are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure; but even their mind and conscience are defiled. They profess to know God, but in works they deny Him, being abominable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work.” **Titus 1:10–16**

Although the church was still very young, there were danger signs over the horizon already. False idol worship and false religions were all around the church, and since Christians came from those backgrounds, there was always the danger of believers sliding back into the old habits and old patterns of behaviors that were consistent with Pagan lifestyles but were by no means acceptable for those called to worship God in spirit and truth (John 4:23-24).

False prophets and teachers were on the prowl seeking weak Christians who might be easily led astray. Some of these false teachers had managed to slip inside the church and were causing confusion and division within the ranks of believers. In these letters to his leaders, Paul admonishes them to be on guard against those who do not follow the sound doctrines of the faith. He commands them not to tolerate those who promote false teachings and false doctrines in the church; if they refuse correction and shipwreck their faith, have nothing to do with them and deliver them to Satan “that they may learn not to blaspheme” (1 Timothy 1:19-20).

Paul’s words may seem harsh, but they were no less harsh than what Jesus said in Matthew 7:15-23 about these false teachers and their fruits:

“Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Therefore by their fruits you will know them.

Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’”

Paul often used military imagery in his writings. He understood that living the Christian life is not easy in this world. Christians cannot afford to be idle until

the Lord's return. Being a leader in the Church means we must have the mindset of a warrior, aware that we are living on a battlefield and not a picnic ground. We are not fighting against flesh and blood, but we are engaged in spiritual warfare for the salvation of others.

“You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier. And also if anyone competes in athletics, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules. The hardworking farmer must be first to partake of the crops. Consider what I say, and may the Lord give you understanding in all things.” **2 Timothy 2:3–7**

No matter where you live on this earth, Christians who determine to live holy, obedient lives before God place themselves on the front lines of spiritual warfare. This is why we must make every effort to keep from being entangled in civilian affairs – not being entangled in civilian affairs simply means that we should seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. The task of the missionary, evangelist, pastor, teacher, etc. is to seek and save the lost. If we put societal change or the pursuit of the things of this world, the praises of men, and construction projects ahead of fulfilling our mission to fight for the lost, we will not be effective building the church. So, whether we are in business, politics, or full-time ministry, our first priority must be advancing His kingdom.

Christians must endure all kinds of attacks from Satan and his minions that engage us on this battlefield called Earth:

“Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.” **2 Timothy 3:12–15**

On the night before he was arrested and taken away to be crucified Jesus warned His followers, “If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also” (John 15:18-25). Throughout church history and in many places in the world today, Christians suffer for their faith in Jesus Christ. In some places the persecution is subtle and not life-threatening, but in many places in the world today, Christians live in fear of being killed simply because they are Christian. “They hated me without reason” Jesus said, and “they will treat you this way because of my name.”

Today some Christians are suffering scorn and rejection because they believe; others are facing the loss of home and family for their faith; and this day, some are about to be martyred because they refuse to deny Christ as Lord and Savior of all. But as Paul pointed out to Timothy (2 Tim. 2:3), they are not alone in this struggle. We have become a part of one family as adopted brothers and sisters in Christ, and therefore when one member of the body suffers, we all suffer. Therefore Christians ought to take comfort and have courage in the knowledge that through the Holy Spirit, there is a connection of love between us and other believers. We do not have to be isolated and alone in our trials. Satan's strategy has always been to destroy this bond of unity in love in the church – to cause us to feel isolated and alone. Isolated, the Christian is easily attacked on all sides by Satan with:

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

Therefore, we must be \_\_\_\_\_  
to our life in Christ.

## PAUL'S PASTORAL ADVICE FOR A SUCCESSFUL MINISTRY

In 2 Timothy, chapter 2, Paul lists the **Four Keys** to an enduring, successful ministry:

### 1. **Must be a *reproducing* ministry**

“And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.” 2 Timothy 2:2.

A church not busy growing will be busy dying. A dying church is marked by gossip, dissention, lack of respect for the leaders, poor teaching, and no spiritual growth in the lives of believers. A sure sign that a church is vital (alive) is that it will be \_\_\_\_\_ to its ranks. At the same time, believers will be growing spiritually as they are being properly disciplined by the leaders of the church. Mature believers bear much fruit and therefore are able to reproduce.

### 2. **An *enduring* ministry**

“Remember that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead according to my gospel, for which I suffer trouble as an evildoer, even to the point of chains; but the word of God is not chained. Therefore I endure all

things for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.” 2 Timothy 2:8–10

As already stated, if you are in ministry, you will face resistance and many trials. It takes a great amount of faith to remain steadfast in the face of hardship, but that is precisely what we are called to do. If we are truly followers of Jesus Christ, then we must take up our cross daily, dying to self and follow Him.

### 3. A *studying* ministry

“Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” 2 Timothy 2:15.

The Holy Spirit will most certainly help us to understand God’s word, but it does not come without diligence in study. Proverbs 25:2-3 (NIV) says “It is the glory of God to conceal a matter; to search out a matter is the glory of kings. As the heavens are high and the earth is deep, so the hearts of kings are unsearchable.”

The Word of God is a treasure trove of wisdom. The Bible is the very mind of God revealed to men. When we study the Bible and put God’s words into our mind, we begin to know God and think like God thinks.

To teach the word of God to others requires a greater understanding of the Scriptures than just knowing the books of the Bible and the people and places mentioned in its pages. Bible study is a lifelong discipline that requires many hours of digging out the meaning of its verses in a systematic way so the minister can communicate its essential truths.

### 4. A *holy* ministry

“Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: ‘The Lord knows those who are His,’ and, ‘Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity.’ 2 Timothy 2:19

Habitual sin and unrighteous living are like cancer or gangrene eating and rotting away the spiritual life of a believer from the inside. God will not bless any ministry whose leaders are engaging in unconfessed sin and unrighteous living.

All believers – even those in full-time ministry – are attacked with the same trials and temptations that everyone in this world face on a daily basis, but **all** Christians are called to resist these temptations with their whole heart, mind, soul and strength. Paul stressed six times in his letter to Titus the need for good

deeds as the result of salvation (Titus 1:6; 2:7, 14; 3:1, 8, 14). James 4:7-10 gives a simple prescription to heal us and set us free from sin:

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

Paul's pastoral letters have spoken to ministry leaders and laymen and women of every age and generation. They remind us that Christian leaders are called to **the highest standards of ethical behavior and morality**.

Godly leaders in the church are shepherds who lay down their lives for the sheep. Christians should always be on the alert for the wolves that come in sheep's clothing seeking for those they can devour. Paul's pastoral letters are intended to guide ministry leaders on how to have a healthy church that is a growing church able to reproduce.

### Questions for Lesson 11

1. Why was raising young leaders like Timothy and Titus such an important part of Paul's ministry?
2. How will Paul's instructions to Timothy and Titus help today's ministers train and develop the next generation of ministry leaders?
3. What will happen to the ministry that will not expose and eliminate false doctrines when they appear?
4. What is the effect on the ministry when proper worship is established and maintained?
5. Review the Four Keys to an enduring, successful ministry that Paul wrote about in 2 Timothy, chapter 2. How can these Keys guide you in your particular ministry?

## SGM BIBLICAL STUDIES NT 202-12

### PHILEMON

#### Lesson Outline

- I. Onesimus was a believer and an escaped slave who came to Paul for help and advice.
- II. Paul made a personal appeal to Philemon to accept his escaped slave back in the bond of brotherly love.
- III. Paul's Contribution to Christianity

#### Philemon

**Author:** Paul

**Approximate Date Written:** A.D. 60

**Original and Primary Audience:** Philemon, who was probably a wealthy member of the Colossian church

**Purpose:** To convince Philemon, a believer, to forgive his runaway slave Onesimus, another believer, and to accept him as a brother in the faith

**Setting:** Many people owned slaves in the Roman Empire, and evidently some Christians had slaves, while others were slaves. Paul does not directly condemn the institution of slavery in his writings, but in this letter, he makes a radical pronouncement by calling this slave Philemon's brother in Christ. On the surface this is a private and personal letter to a friend, but when viewed through the mind of Christ, it transforms the master-slave relationship and calls upon both to love one another as brothers who are equals in the eyes of God.

#### “The Bond of Brotherly Love”

Pastors and other ministry leaders often have to face difficult situations presented by societal issues that may have no place in the church. Paul had his share of problems as the church expanded beyond the immediate culture of the Jews and began to impact the Gentile world. How to deal with a runaway slave was one of those issues Paul had to confront.



Roman, Jewish and Greek cultures overflowed with barriers that separated, categorized and kept people in their places. These artificial, man-made barriers were intended to give order and structure to society. People were expected to respect these social boundaries or face consequences that sometimes could be severe. In the Roman world, cultural boundaries existed between:

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

All had their assigned places in the Roman world. And in many cases, these assigned places kept people separated from one another.

In our society today, we tend to label and divide people based upon man-made ideals or values such as:

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

Shrewd politicians and ruling elites often use all of the above to separate and sometimes pit one group against another. But when Christ comes into the heart of the believer, all of these man-made barriers are *supposed* to come down. Paul addressed this issue in several of his letters. In Galatians 3:26-28 and Colossians 3:11 he reminded believers that all are sons of God through faith in Jesus Christ. Because all are baptized into Christ, all are clothed (covered) with Christ. Therefore, there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female “for all are one in Christ Jesus.”

A second thing that is supposed to characterize the life of the believer is \_\_\_\_\_.

Jesus’ teachings on forgiveness were clear:

“For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.” **Matthew 6:14-15**

“Then Peter came to Him and said, ‘Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?’ Jesus said to

him, 'I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.'" **Matthew 18:21-22**

"And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses. But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses." **Mark 11:25-26**

Paul continued Jesus' teachings on forgiveness in his own letters. For example, Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 2:10-11,

"Now whom you forgive anything, I also forgive. For if indeed I have forgiven anything, I have forgiven that one for your sakes in the presence of Christ, lest Satan should take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices."

Now Paul was about to put all of these teachings to the test in the lives of two believers, Philemon and Onesimus. Onesimus, a slave of Philemon, had stolen from his master and run away to Rome. (As a slave, Onesimus was Philemon's property. So by running away, he was technically guilty of an act of theft.) There he came into contact with Paul, and heard the good news, the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

"Slavery mocks Christian compassion and brotherhood; it assaults the biblical principle of equity before God. Through forced subjection and inhumane practices, slavery tramples on God's creation: 'He who oppresses the poor shows contempt for their Maker' (Prov. 14:31). But rather than attacking social structures and relationships, Christianity works within the human conscience. In this way, a more thorough and lasting change occurs. When Christian ethics and cultural practices conflict, the Christian response is reformation of the heart and mind rather than revolution over social institutions." (Knut Larson, *Holman New Testament Commentary, I & II Thessalonians, I & II Timothy, Titus, Philemon*, © 2000 Broadman & Holman Pub., p.406)

After his conversion, Onesimus faced a difficult problem: he had been reconciled to God through the forgiveness of His Son, but now he must seek a way to be reconciled to his earthly master, Philemon. Paul intervenes in this delicate situation by sending Onesimus back with this letter in hand. He urges Philemon to

extend forgiveness to the slave who ran away – he had left him as his property, but now he was returning as his brother in Christ.

A curious thing about this story is that we never know what happens to Onesimus. We are left hanging with the questions:

- **Does Christian forgiveness and brotherly love really work?**

“Because Paul was an apostle, he had the authority to command Philemon to forgive Onesimus. However, in this letter Paul does not use his authority to force Philemon to do as he asks; rather, Paul tries to persuade Philemon by love. Love, to be effective, does not require force. There is nothing stronger than love.” *The Applied New Testament Commentary*, © 1996 by Tomas Hale and Stephen Thorson, Kingsway Pub., U.K.

- **When put to the test, will Philemon react in his flesh and punish this slave, or will he forgive?**

“No one knew better than Paul how great a risk he was taking. A slave was not a person but a living tool. A master had absolute power over his slaves. ‘He can box their ears or condemn them to hard labour – making them, for instance, work in chains upon his lands in the country, or in a sort of prison-factory. Or he may punish them with blows of the rod. The lash or the knot; he can brand them upon the forehead, if they are thieves or runaways, or, in the end, if they prove irreclaimable, he can crucify them.’” *The Letters to Timothy, Titus and Philemon*, © William Barclay Estate 2009

- **Will Philemon refuse to accept his slave, Onesimus, as his equal in Christ or will he accept him as a true brother and equal?**

“The one thing that people need above all else is to be received. No matter how low or base, useless and unprofitable, sinful and derelict, crippled and diseased, ugly and unattractive, unapproachable and distasteful – a person needs to be received and brought into the fellowship of Christ and believers. For too long, the church and believers have shunned and shut out the lowly. Christ loves and longs for every human being – man, woman and child – to be reached for Him. We must always remember; we are debtors to Christ and to the world, every man, woman, and child. Christ has saved us and given us the fellowship with Himself and God the Father and with one another. Therefore, we are spiritual debtors to all.” *The Preacher’s Outline & Sermon Bible* ® Vol. 3: *1 Thessalonians – Revelation (New International Version)* © 2000 by ALPHA-OMEGA MINISTRIES, INC., pp.323-324

We will never know for certain if Philemon passed this test of Christian love and forgiveness and responded as Paul urged him – to receive him back, “no longer

as a slave, but better than a slave, as a dear brother. He is very dear to me but even dearer to you, both as a man and as a brother in the Lord.” Philemon 1:16 (NIV)

On the surface, Paul’s letter to Philemon seems to lack any real significance. It is a deeply personal letter written by Paul to a specific individual over a single issue that has little relevance in our world today. But if we look beyond the surface at the underlying theme, we understand how Philemon develops the theme of our transition from bondage to brotherhood that is brought about by the essential character of Christ-like love and forgiveness. Just as Philemon was shown mercy through the grace of Christ, so he must graciously forgive his repentant runaway who has returned as a brother in Christ. In the same way, all Christians have been shown mercy through the grace of Christ, and so we must also graciously forgive those who have repented of their sins and come to us as brothers and sisters in Christ – even if they may have wronged us in the past.

Paul wrote this letter as his personal appeal to Philemon to receive Onesimus even as he would receive Paul. But in this letter, we also see reflected in Paul’s personal appeal to Philemon, the appeal of the Son of God, our Great High Priest and Intercessor, on our behalf before the throne of His Father in heaven. If we look beyond the surface, we see the appeal of the Son of God to His Father on our behalf to receive us into His presence, even as He received Jesus into His heavenly home:

“Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.” **Hebrews 7:25**

“Now this is the main point of the things we are saying: We have such a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, a Minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle which the Lord erected, and not man.” **Hebrews 8:1–2**

So in the end we see how this letter goes beyond this immediate circle of believers – Philemon, Onesimus, and Paul – and how this letter should speak to the church as a whole.

## THE APOSTLE PAUL’S CONTRIBUTION TO CHRISTIANITY

“Christ is the rock on which the church is founded. Through Him comes faith in God for salvation from sin; and from Him comes love to the human heart, which makes men view personality as sacred because God is the Creator of both man’s physical and spiritual being and because He is the basis for hope concerning the future.” Earle E.

Cairns, *Christianity through the Centuries* © 1954, 1981, The Zondervan Corp. p.45

Although the Apostle Paul was not the first to give the gospel to the Gentiles, it was Paul who was given the grandest vision to fulfill the Lord's intention to include the nations in His plan of redemption. Earle E. Cairns wrote, "As no other in the early church, Paul realized the universal character of Christianity and dedicated himself to the propagation of it to the ends of the Roman Empire..." In his letters, Paul constantly noted that he was chosen by God in Christ and anointed by the Holy Spirit to be His apostle to the Gentile nations.

Paul never forgot his Jewish heritage or his training as a rabbi; at first, he always went to the local Synagogue in every new place he visited. He said, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, 'The just shall live by faith.'" (Romans 1:16–17). However, by the time Paul reached Rome as a prisoner of the Empire, it had become clear to him that the prophecy in Isaiah 6:9-14 was being played out before his eyes; Jews would not listen or hear the message of salvation in Christ because their hearts had become hardened beyond repentance. God's (and Paul's) patience with their stiff-necked and chronic resistance to hearing the truth of salvation by the Son of God was finally exhausted. Except for a small remnant of Jews who heard and believed, God's judgment was to abandon them to their rebellion and hardness of heart. This was being displayed by Paul's proclamation, "Therefore let it be known to you that the salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will hear it!" (Acts 28:28).

There is no doubt that God had uniquely situated Paul at this most critical moment in history. Roman Palestine was a major crossroads between East and West. The Roman, Greek, and Hebrew cultures intersected where the young Saul of Tarsus grew up and was educated. Saul sat at the feet of the great Jewish rabbi Gamaliel. His religious education was completed in the shadow of the Greek educated Herodians who dominated the political landscape. Saul was born a Roman citizen and as a freeborn Roman, it made him a man of the world. His citizenship gave him special privileges which he would use without hesitation whenever they helped him carry out his mission.

Because of his background, Paul the Apostle was able to navigate comfortably through the urban cosmopolitan centers that lay in front of him. He understood the thinking of both Jews and Gentiles and His personal encounter with the living, resurrected Christ had transformed Him by the renewing of his mind, that he "may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God"

(Romans 12:2) to all who had ears to hear and hearts to receive what the Holy Spirit had to speak to them about the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Lord supernaturally chose Paul to be His Apostle (Acts 9:1-19). When His servant Ananias wondered at the Lord's choice, the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake." (9:15-16).

The letters of Paul form a bridge between the Gospels and the Hebrew Scriptures. At the same time, his letters form another bridge between the gospel of salvation that Jesus preached and the competing religious and philosophical systems His disciples encountered to the ends of the world.



Although it is clear that Paul depended upon the Holy Spirit's guidance in his propagation of the gospel (Acts 13:2, 4; 16:6-7), Paul was strategic in his methods. Paul concentrated on Roman centers, going first to the synagogue where he would be readily received as a respected Jewish rabbi. His Pharisaical training allowed him to present from the Hebrew Scriptures (remember that the Christian New Testament was yet to be formed) Jesus as the Messiah and Savior of both Jews and Gentiles. "When opposition arose, he turned to a direct proclamation of the gospel to the Gentiles in any place that he found suitable. His principle was to preach to the Gentile after he had given the message to the Jew... After founding a church, Paul would organize it with elders and deacons so that the church might be

\_\_\_\_\_ after his departure. He sought to build on solid foundations.” (Earle Cairns, p.64).

Throughout his ministry, Paul was careful not to be a burden upon the infant churches he planted on his missions. Whenever necessary, Paul took responsibility for supporting himself while he ministered in a new place. “For you remember, brethren, our labor and toil; for laboring night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, we preached to you the gospel of God.” 1 Thessalonians 2:9. By his example, Paul taught the churches he started to be \_\_\_\_\_ and able to stand on their own without personal supervision from Paul. “You are witnesses, and God also, how devoutly and justly and blamelessly we behaved ourselves among you who believe; as you know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father does his own children, that you would walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.” **1 Thessalonians 2:10–12.**

The end result of Paul’s work was to leave behind him strong churches able to stand on their own without supervision. The leaders installed by Paul were equipped to preach the pure gospel of salvation and make disciples able to disciple others. Thus, the churches planted by Paul were \_\_\_\_\_ also.

Paul’s letters served three important functions: (1) They were written to encourage believers to keep the faith even when facing persecution. (2) They were written to confront the problems of living in immoral pagan environments. Christians are called to live by the highest standards of morality. And (3) They were written to expose and counter false prophets and teachers who were leading believers astray.

“It will be noticed that each of these letters grew out of a definite historical crisis in one of Paul’s beloved churches. The greatness of these ‘tracts for the times’ is revealed by the fact that the principles that Paul developed to meet emergencies in first century churches are still relevant to the church in modern times. Human beings face similar problems, and similar principles are useful even if the temporal and spatial environment is different. The Pauline Epistles are of value to any church in the solution of its problems. Paul always balanced theological formulas by practical application.” (Earle E. Cairns p.65).

Jesus Christ did not come to launch a new religion. He did not produce a body of work to define his doctrines or offer religious instruction for whosoever would believe in Him. Jesus’ entire public ministry was intended to reveal to the Jewish nation that He was in fact, the long-awaited Messiah and Savior that the Hebrew prophets wrote about and of equal importance, to bring correction to the

distortions of Mosaic Law that His Father had given to Moses. The Gospels record Jesus' epic confrontations with those Jews who refused to believe in Him. The Gospel writers included His teachings correcting misinterpretations of the Law and Hebrew religious traditions. Matthew, Mark, Luke and John highlighted the Son's demonstrations of His Father's love and forgiveness for sinners. But Paul was anointed by the Holy Spirit with the task of interpreting and communicating to a vast audience all the theological and practical applications of everything the Apostles of Jesus had written and preached concerning Him.

Paul faced strong opposition all of his life from enemies outside of the Christian church that wanted to stamp it out and from enemies inside the church who wanted to corrupt the pure gospel of salvation by grace and faith alone. He was not afraid to confront anyone – even the Apostle Peter – if he thought they said anything untrue or acted in a way that threatened to lead the flock astray. “With such faith and courage, it is little wonder that Paul was able to carry the message of salvation to the Gentile nations of the Roman Empire and to start Christian culture on its triumphant westward march across Europe. He was the unique interpreter of the meaning of Christ's life and death in terms of salvation for sinful man. He kept the faith free from admixture of legalism and rationalism. He worked out the details of organization in the Christian churches and was in constant correspondence with them to help them solve their problems in a Christian manner. As no one else did. Paul realized the cosmic significance of Christ for time and eternity: and, as the ‘apostle of the nations’ (Rom. 11:13; 15:16), he interpreted Christ to the Gentile world.” (Earle E. Cairns, p.69).

## Questions for lesson 12

1. What can we learn from the way Paul handled the problem of the runaway slave described in his letter to Philemon?
2. What does the letter to Philemon teach us about brotherly love and Christians?
3. What does the letter to Philemon teach us about equality among believers?
4. Earle E. Cairns described the three factors that built the strong, healthy churches that Paul planted: self-governing, self-supporting, and self-propagating. How do these factors make successful church planting movements today?
5. How do Paul's letters help us to confront and take away false doctrines in the church today?



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In 2013 he earned his M.Div. from Andhra Christian Theological College in Hyderabad, India and in that same year was officially ordained into the ministry in a holy convocation administered by Indian pastors representing AG, CSA, and other independent ministries. In 2017 he completed his D.Min. from Covenant Bible College & Seminary, Florida, USA. He and his wife, Deena, now live near Atlanta, GA where he continues to preach, teach, write, and publish his books and study guides.

#### Books Written by Frederick Osborn

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4. *Disciple-to-Disciple: Making Disciples Like Jesus*
5. *Disciple- to-Disciple: Making Disciples Like Jesus, Study Guide*
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7. *Exploring the Old Testament: Vol. One – The Pentateuch*
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15. *Kingdom Discipleship: Becoming a Disciple Like Jesus, Study Guide*
16. *Kingdom Economics*
17. *Living in Dystopia: A Christian Guide Victory in an Orwellian World*
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