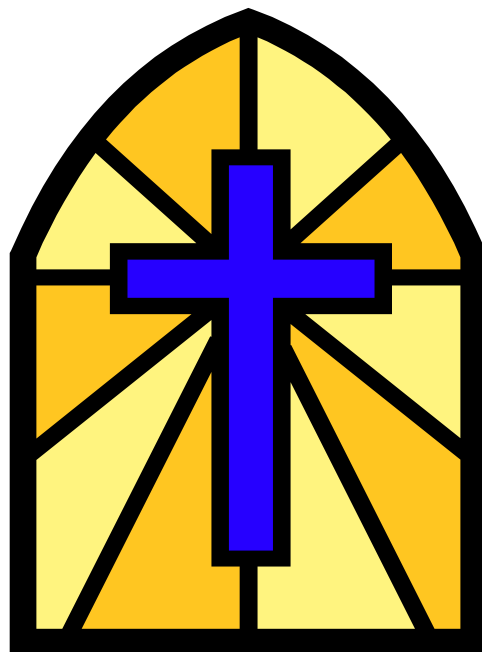


# **The Apostle Paul: His Life & Epistles: Survey, Outlines, Comments Romans – 2 Thessalonians**



By Rev. Dr. Willis C. Newman

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## INTRODUCTION

This commentary on the Pauline Epistles is a drawing together of years of research and writing on biblical subjects. In fact, you will note that I first put together these notes in 1993 – some 20 years ago. I have several works written at different times for different purposes and courses I have taught.

This volume is an attempt to bring together several manuals into one volume for an online course on the Pauline Epistles for our online Bible Academy, and to provide the written work for Newman Bible Academy in Liberia, West Africa. That explains the different styles and formats of different clusters of Epistles as they are presented here.

The New Testament may be sub-divided into several different groupings. For example, one division is as follows: the Gospels, Acts, Epistles, and Revelation. The Gospels tell of the life of Jesus Christ. Acts gives the history of the early church. The Epistles are letters written to the churches dealing with various problems, and expounding on the teachings of Jesus Christ. Revelation tells of the return of Christ to this earth, and the here after.

Another way to group the various NT writings is to group the Gospels and Acts together. This is valid, since Acts is a continuation of the Gospel of Luke. Along with this organization, the Epistles are divided into Roman – Galatians. A second grouping would be the Prison Epistles (Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon), in that they were written by Paul while He was in prison. The third grouping would be the Pastoral Epistles (1, 2 Timothy & Titus). Paul wrote these to two of His fledging protégés. The fourth group would be the General Epistles (Hebrews – Jude). These had various authors. The final work would be the book of Revelation of Jesus Christ, or His return.

Still another way to divide and teach the NT is this: first, the Gospels and Acts; second, the Pauline Epistles (Romans – Titus); third, the General Epistles & Revelation (Hebrews – Revelation). This is the approach I take at Newman Bible Academy – and also, it is the pattern I teach at Faith Evangelical College & Seminary. However, I must also make a qualification; Faith also breaks the NT down to single books in some cases.

The Pauline Epistles were all written by the Apostle, Paul. They contain very detailed instructions to the Church as to Christian theology, and dealing with practical problems within the church. One of my mentors at seminary, Dr. William F. Kerr, one remarked in class that when going to a church, the first book a new pastor should preach through is 1 Corinthians. He said that it covers how to deal with virtually every problem that will come up in a local church. If the pastor preaches through the book first, then the church will be instructed on how to deal with problems – before they occur.

Romans, on the other hand, some say, was the first Systematic Theology book ever written in the Christian church. Each Epistle has its own purpose and emphasis, and forms excellent commentary of how to conduct matters in the church. I will break down a historical context, author, purpose of writing, outline and commentary for all the Pauline Epistles. With this introduction, let me tell you a little about Esmie and Me, give a short segment on how to be saved, and then we will jump into the Epistles themselves.

### **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Dr. Willis C. Newman had eight years' experience in pastoral ministry in Portland, Oregon, USA before going into teaching at the Bible College and Seminary Level. At the pastoral level, over 900 people prayed to receive Christ as their personal Savior. He is a graduate of the University of Portland, Multnomah School of the Bible, Western Conservative Baptist Seminary, California Graduate School of Theology and Faith Evangelical Lutheran Seminary.

He is Associate Professor at Faith Evangelical College & Seminary, Adjunct Assistant Professor at a community college, formerly Principal of the Bible College of Tonga and Director of Polynesian Missions, a missions agency focused on the South Pacific. He served several years as the South Pacific Director of Faith Evangelical College & Seminary (formerly Faith Evangelical Lutheran Seminary, Tacoma, WA.). He also served as Professor at International College and Graduate School of Theology in Hawaii. While ministering in the Kingdom of Tonga, in 1991 Newman started a teaching site in that country for Faith Evangelical College & Seminary.

Newman returned to America in 1998, after serving seven years in Tonga (South Pacific). Since that time, he has been teaching in a community college, where subjects included psychology, sociology, and communication. He still teaches Bible and the social sciences at now Faith Evangelical College and Seminary in Tacoma WA, USA.

With his wife, Esmeralda (Esmie), they have started a website featuring free Bible studies, and an online Bible Academy. At this writing, over 20,000 individuals visit the website monthly, and over 1,000 have taken the free online Bible courses. Esmie, who holds a B.A. from the University of Washington, and M.A. from both Faith Seminary and Liberty University, also teaches at a community college. Newman has devoted over 30 years in tertiary education.

The Newmans have an extensive ministry in Liberia, West Africa, where they founded, along with Rev. Eric Sumo of Village Ministries, the Newman Bible Academy. They hold regular pastor's conferences in that land with hundreds of pastors attending.  
Dr. Willis Newman, 2013.

### **HOW TO BE SAVED**

The Bible gives us the message (gospel) of how to be saved. By this we mean how to gain forgiveness for our sin and how to gain eternal life. Summarized below are the steps of salvation as presented in the Bible. We invite you to receive Christ as Savior.

I. Agree in your heart with God that you are a sinner in need of His salvation:

"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).

2. Know in your heart that there is a penalty to your sin:

"For the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23a).

3. Believe in your heart that Christ died on the cross and rose from the dead to pay the penalty for your sins and to give you eternal life:

"But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8)... "being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus" (Romans 3:24).

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

"but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23b).

4. By faith pray to God: tell Him you believe the above in your heart and ask Him to save you through Jesus Christ. Remember that God is more concerned with the attitude of your heart rather than your exact words.

"For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one would boast" (Ephesians 2:8,9).

"if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in our heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved; for with the heart man believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses resulting in salvation" (Romans 10:9,10).

"Behold, I (Jesus) stand at the door (of your heart) and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door I will come in to him, and will dine with him, and he with Me" (Revelation 3:20).

"But as many as received Him (Jesus), to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:12,13).

**The following is a suggested prayer:**

Heavenly Father, I admit to you that I am a sinner in need of your salvation. I believe that Christ died on the cross and rose from the dead to pay for my sins and to give me eternal life. I believe that only through Christ can I be saved. I ask for and accept by faith your free gift of salvation. Please come into my heart and be my Savior and Lord. Thank you for doing so. In Jesus' name, amen.

**OVERVIEW OF THE APOSTLE PAUL**  
**His life, world, and ministry.**  
**By Dr. Willis C. Newman**  
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**Table of Contents**

Introduction to Paul of Tarsus. . . . .	6
Paul's pre-conversion background . . . . .	9
Tarsus . . . . .	9
His early preparation . . . . .	9
Paul's Jewish education . . . . .	10
The Conversion of Paul . . . . .	11
Paul's apostleship . . . . .	12
Paul's missionaries journeys . . . . .	12
The first missionary journey . . . . .	13
Controversy between Jews and gentile Christians . . . . .	14
The second missionary journey . . . . .	14
Corinth. . . . .	16
The third missionary journey . . . . .	17
Ephesus . . . . .	17
Paul the prisoner for the gospel . . . . .	20
Paul's defense to Felix . . . . .	21
Paul's defense to Festus . . . . .	21
Paul's defense to Agrippa . . . . .	21
Paul taken to Rome: appeal to Caesar . . . . .	22
Paul following his first imprisonment . . . . .	23
Crete . . . . .	23
Paul's death . . . . .	24
General historical context . . . . .	24
Commentary to Romans . . . . .	26
Commentary to First Corinthians . . . . .	37
Commentary to Second Corinthians . . . . .	59
Commentary to Galatians . . . . .	71
Bibliography Romans-Galatians . . . . .	92
Commentary to Ephesians . . . . .	98
Commentary to Philippians . . . . .	114
Commentary to Colossians . . . . .	124
Bibliography for Prison Epistles . . . . .	135
Outline for 1 Thessalonians . . . . .	135
Outline for 2 Thessalonians . . . . .	136

**Introduction to Paul of Tarsus**

Some called him the second founder of Christianity, and others despised the apostle Paul as

the one who perverted the teachings of Jesus. Indeed, he was a capable person of controversy who attracted the love and devotion of some, but also the ruthless attack of his many enemies. As a zealous follower of Jesus Christ, he suffered, and wrote that he was,

*beaten times without number, often in danger of death. Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent I the deep. I have been on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren. I have been in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure (2 Cor. 11:23-27).*

Physically, Paul was described in the apocryphal second-century, *Acts of Paul*, as “a man little of stature...partly bald, with crooked legs, of vigorous physique, with eyes set close together and nose somewhat hooked.” Another place describes him as, “*his personal presence is unimpressive, and his speech contemptible.*” (2 Cor. 10:10). In still another place, Paul writes, “*See with what large letters I am writing to you with my own hand*” (Gal. 6:11). Many believe that this admission suggests he had weak eyesight. Paul also spoke of a “*thorn in the flesh,*” which was possibly another physical affliction brought by Satan (Cf. 2 Cor. 12:7). However, Paul must have had a powerful physical constitution to withstand the hardships he encountered.

Paul also was a person, who at one time, held high professional and social status in his culture and religion. He writes of his Jewish heritage that he was, “*circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless*” (Phil. 3:5,6). In fact, Paul wrote that he was, “*advancing in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries among my countrymen, being more extremely zealous for my ancestral traditions*” (Gal. 1:14). While Paul appeared in one court before King Agrippa, the Roman governor of Judea, Porcius Festus, called Paul a man of, “*great learning*” (Acts 26:24).

Shockingly, however, Paul cast aside this exalted status, became a zealous Christian, and eventually was beheaded as a common criminal. His last days saw him shivering in a cold prison cell, deserted by some friends, and lonely. Luke and a handful of friends were with Paul as he penned his last writing to his protégé, Timothy (Cf. 2 Tim. 4:9-13; 21). But, even in his last days, Paul considered his life a triumph in Christ. He wrote,

*the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day (2 Tim. 4:6-8).*

Startling, however, Paul’s impact on the history of the world is astonishing. Consider, for example, perhaps one half of the New Testament books (depending on who actually wrote Hebrews) were written by Paul, which accounts for roughly over 28 percent of the written text. If one adds the portions in Acts that were written about Paul, and if he wrote Hebrews, then Paul has impressed himself on over 40% of the New Testament!

Further, for the past nearly 2,000 years, the New Testament has been the central document of Christianity, which in numbers now exceeds more than two billion souls worldwide, or, one

third of the world's population! The Muslims (Islam) come in a distant second in numbers of adherents with about 20%, and Hinduism is third with about 13%! However, that is not all.

Paul created the theological structure of Christianity, and with Peter created the astounding organization of the Church that swept and moved the world. The epistle to the Romans can be considered the first systematic theology of Christianity. The historian, Will Durant, who is in many ways unfriendly to Christianity, concedes:

The influence of Paul was not immediately felt. The communities that he had established were tiny isles in a pagan sea. For a century after Paul's death he was almost forgotten. But when the first generations of Christianity had passed away, and the oral tradition of the apostles began to fade, and a hundred heresies disordered the Christian mind, the epistles of Paul provided the framework for a stabilizing system of belief that united the scattered congregations into a powerful Church.<sup>ii</sup>

One of the most influential men of the past 1,000 years (probably the greatest religious leader) was Martin Luther. His vast influence extended far beyond religion to education, economics, politics, and language. His pivotal work at the Protestant Reformation formed the fourth leg of Christianity, which includes Roman Catholicism, Protestantism, Coptic, and Orthodox. One of the most powerful influences on Luther was the epistles of the apostle Paul. Luther writes,

You are in a position now rightly to discriminate between all the books, and decide which are the best. The true kernel and marrow of all the books, those which should rightly be ranked first, are the gospel of John and St. Paul's epistles, especially that to the Romans, together with St. Peter's first epistles.<sup>iii</sup>

In summary, then, this brief introduction of the apostle Paul reveals a driven man who was tremendous successful educationally, professionally, and possessed an impeccable family pedigree. He was a leader who wielded astounding influence, and, as we now say it, "he had it made in life." Yet, he turned aside from success, and took up a life of poverty, hardship, rejection, suffering, persecution, and physical torture. The world considered him as a slick, devious, troublemaking, religious shyster, and as scum of the world. He never even lived to see the powerful impact his life and writings would have on the world.

The question, then, comes down to this: why did Paul turn from a life of worldly success and comfort to the lifestyle of a despised, traveling evangelist, Bible teacher, church planter, and theologian? What were the forces that shaped his character, and motivated his decisions, zeal, and courage? In other words, what kind of a man was he, and what made him that way? Finally, what did he do to lay a groundwork that accomplished so much?

These are the questions that will guide us through this ebook. In seeking out the answers, we will examine Paul's early life and preparation, culture, education, conversion, ministry, history, politics of the time and geography.

Before we begin our examination of Paul's dynamic life, we need to first note our sources. They are mixed, and incomplete. The bulk of information is from his remaining writings, and Acts. The rest of the material is sketchy, and his life cannot be placed in a neat chronological flow. Many times one must fill in the gaps with educated guesses. Nevertheless, we can sketch a fairly complete picture of this great apostle – his life, world, and ministry.



## **Paul's pre-conversion background.**

### **His early preparation.**

The thread of Paul's life story begins in the city of Tarsus. He states, "*I am a Jew of Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of no insignificant city*" (Acts 21:39). He was also a Roman, a naturally born citizen of the Roman Empire (Acts 22:25-28). Since culture directly impacts the kind of person people become, it behooves us to examine where Paul's early formative years occurred.

Tarsus (modern Tarsus) was the main city in the Roman province of Cilicia located in the eastern part of Asia Minor, which is now known as Turkey. As the crow flies, Tarsus was about 100 miles northwest of one of Paul's main bases and powerful Christian centers, the city of Antioch in Syria. Situated about 10 miles inland from the Mediterranean Sea on the Cydnus River, Tarsus was a major seaport. Judging from its remains, Tarsus supported a population of around 500,000 souls.

Sprawled to the north of the city were the rugged Taurus Mountains. A major highway snaked its way northward out of Tarsus across the rocky plain, and up to the famous mountain pass known as the Cilician Gates, some 30 miles distant. The pass was of critical importance for east-west travel. For example, the Persians marched their invading armies through the pass, and later Alexander the Great chased them back over the same harsh route with his gallant troops.

During Paul's day, Tarsus was one of the five major centers for intellectual pursuits – especially for the Stoics. This university town was surpassed in influence only by Athens and Alexandria. Paul was probably sent early in his young adulthood to Jerusalem to study, then after his conversion to Christ he spent many years living and ministering to the Gentiles in Tarsus before teaming up with Barnabas to work in Antioch (Acts 11:25, 26; 22:17-21), and starting the missionary journeys. It was in Tarsus that Paul possibly endured some of the sufferings mentioned in 2 Cor. 11:23-27, and experienced the far-reaching revelation of heaven outlined in 2 Cor. 12:1-4.

This certainly was where Paul interacted with the philosophies of the day, which gave him powerful insight into the collision between Christ and secular thinking. This is evident when he presented powerful and effective interaction against the philosophers at the Areopagus<sup>iv</sup> at Athens, and in the market place there. Specific philosophies mentioned in Athens were the Epicurean and Stoics. The Epicureans followed Epicurus who promoted pleasure and happiness as the ultimate end of life. They believed pleasure was achieved by avoiding excesses, the fear of death, and searching after tranquility and freedom from pain, and by loving humanity.

The Stoics, whose one center was Tarsus, were followers of Zeno of Citium (ca. 320-ca. 250 BC.). He traditionally taught in Athens. The school attracted many adherents, and flourished for centuries, not only in Greece, but later in Rome where powerful writers, such as Marcus Aurelius, Seneca, and Epictetus, counted themselves among its followers. They were pantheistic, and believed there was a "purpose" steering life and history. Stoicism is essentially a system of ethics. Humanity was to conform and align itself to this purpose by means of tragedy and triumph. The view spawned noble virtues with stern morality. The Stoics were ascetic, and taught perfect indifference to things external. Nothing external could be good or evil. To the Stoics, both pain and pleasure, poverty and wealth, sickness and health were unimportant. Stoicism gave birth to pride and self-sufficiency. They stressed the

rational over the emotional. They pursued moral earnestness and a high sense of duty.

The schools in Tarsus were devoted to philosophy, rhetoric and the general education. Some of its philosophers were of some reputation, one being Athenodorus the Stoic, and another being Nestor the Academic. Athenodorus, a hero in the town, had the Emperor Augustus Caesar among his pupils.

Paul's father, and perhaps grandfather, was a full Roman citizen, which placed the family in the aristocratic elite of the city. Paul, however, must have been poor, because he later made his living by tent making (Acts 18:3), and the contributions of other Christians. The tent making business was not very profitable except in large cities, but must have been the business of Paul's father as it was the trade he taught Paul. It was the duty of Jewish fathers to teach their sons a trade. Schaff reports that, "Gamaliel is the author of the maxim that 'learning of any kind unaccompanied by a trade ends in nothing and leads to sin.'"<sup>v</sup>

The Jewish Paul grew up in the city, which was a crossroads of the east and west. Paul's early formation included some Greek education and influence, but also he was brought up in the Jewish culture and faith as taught at home and in the synagogue.

### **Paul's Jewish education.**

His parents recognized the great intellect of Paul, and sent him to Jerusalem in his young adulthood to receive further education in the Jewish faith. Some think that Paul may have spent more of his formative years in Jerusalem before he entered rabbinical school. At any rate, Paul studied in the rabbinic school with an intellectual giant, Gamaliel, who was held in great honor by all the people (Acts 5:36). Gamaliel was the grandson of Hillel who was considered one of the greatest of Jewish scholars. The school of Hillel was the more liberal of the two major schools of theology among the Pharisees. Gamaliel was one of the few who earned the title, "Rabban," which means "our master, our great one"

Gamaliel held an influential place in the Sanhedrin, which was the governing body of the Jewish religion. During the heated and bloody conflict between the Jews and Christians, Gamaliel was actually sympathetic toward Christians (Acts 5:38-39) – or at least he was not as bloodthirsty as others. His impact on Paul was great. Gamaliel stressed repentance as opposed to works, and that is seen in Paul's teachings. Paul's zeal, knowledge of the Law, clear thinking and love of God and the Bible was surely caught from Gamaliel.

Following his outstanding education in Judaism, Paul probably returned to his home town of Tarsus, and remained there for some years. This gave him even more educational opportunities. There is no record of Paul interacting with Jesus or His disciples during Christ's ministry.

As to family, Paul did have a sister and her family who lived in Jerusalem (Acts 23:16). Some say that Paul may have been married. According to his letter to the Corinthians, they believe he classed himself with widowers, but chose to remain single, but others maintain the verses mean that he never married (1 Cor. 7:7, 8). He did claim the right to be married (1 Cor. 9:5), and take along a wife on his travels. Some believe that his intimate knowledge of married life would assume his being, or having been married. It was also considered by the Jews a moral duty to be married (Cf. Gen. 1:28), and they even preferred early marriage.

He evidently was a member of the Sanhedrin as he cast his vote for the condemnation of Christians (Acts 26:10). However, some think this verse simply means he agreed with their

vote. According to the Gemara, a member of the Sanhedrin had to have a family of his own; therefore, Paul, the logic goes, must have been married. However, other scholars are uncertain if this requirement was established before AD 70, which would have been after Paul's death.

Some even assign a more than spiritual partnership between Paul and his female convert at Philippi, Lydia (Acts 16:13-15), and that he even addressed her in his letter to the Philippians as his true, genuine *syzygos* (Phil. 4:3). *Syzygos* as a noun can be either masculine or feminine, and may either mean generally an associate, a co-worker, partner, comrade, yoke-fellow, or it can be a proper name. Even Clement of Alexandria, and Erasmus held this view.<sup>vi</sup>

And, some people even speculate that the thorn in Paul's flesh (2 Cor. 12:7) was a wife who was separated from Paul because of some reason – perhaps his conversion to Christ. It follows that she was one of his chief antagonists who brought constant vindictive torment to Paul.

After Christ ascended, and the church began to spread, Paul returned to Jerusalem, and threw himself into the persecution of Jews who had turned to Christ. He was involved in the murder of Stephen (Acts 7:54-60). This motivated Paul to hunt down Christians, and destroy the church. Luke writes, *“But Saul began ravaging the church, entering house after house, and dragging off men and women, he would put them in prison”* (Acts 8:3; cf. Acts 9:1; Gal. 1:13; Phil 3:6; 1 Tim. 1:13; 1 Cor. 15:9).

Paul, in his misguided zeal, sought permission from the high priest to roam the countryside seeking out converted Jews to bind and return to Jerusalem for punishment. His first target was Damascus. This was around AD 33, some three years after the crucifixion and ascension of Christ, and the growth of the church had been phenomenal. It is on the road to Damascus that Paul encountered Jesus and underwent a revolutionary conversion.

### **The conversion of Paul**

While traveling on his way to Damascus, some 150 miles north of Jerusalem, with his entourage of Jewish thugs, Paul met Jesus. The story goes as such.

*And it came about that as he journeyed, he was approaching Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him; and he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?” And he said, “Who art Thou, Lord?” And He said, “I am Jesus whom you are persecuting, but rise, and enter the city, and it shall be told you what you must do.” And the men who traveled with him stood speechless, hearing the voice, but seeing no one. And Saul got up from the ground, and though his eyes were open, he could see nothing; and leading him by the hand, they brought him into Damascus. And he was three days without sight, and neither ate nor drank (Acts 9:3-9).*

While in Damascus, Ananias, a Christian who believed Paul's conversion to be real, went to Paul, prayed over him, and Paul regained his eyesight. He spent time in Damascus preaching Christ as the Son of God (Acts 9:20). Paul then went to Arabia, which was the kingdom of the Nabataeans that stretched from Damascus down to the Sinaitic peninsula. The area included parts of modern Syria, Jordan, Israel, and Saudi Arabia (Gal. 1:17). It is there he was alone with God rethinking the implications of Christ, his conversion, the

meaning of the gospel, and the Old Testament. This time frame would fit in between versus 21 and 22 of Acts chapter nine.

After a three year period from either his conversion or return from Arabia (Gal. 1:18), Paul was again preaching the gospel back in Damascus, but fell under the ill will of the Jews and the ethnarch under Aretas the king – who were planning to murder Paul (2 Cor. 11:32,33; Acts 9:22-25). Learning of the Jewish plot to kill him, Paul fled to Jerusalem. There he earned the trust of the Christians, but his boldness in preaching Christ earned Paul the fury of the Jews who also sought to put him to death (Acts 9:26-29; Gal. 1:18-20). The Christians hurriedly took Paul to the seacoast city of Caesarea where he escaped by taking a ship back to his home in Tarsus (Acts 9:30). There he ministered the Gospel in and around Tarsus in Cilicia and Syria, and his reputation continued to spread and encourage the Christians (Gal. 1:22-24). It is of this time that he probably received the revelation of 2 Corinthians 12:2ff., and also some of the sufferings related in 2 Corinthians 11:23-27.

Paul's conversion stands as a remarkable event in Christianity. It radically changed his life, which in turn altered the history of the world. Paul refers to his conversion as being supernatural in purpose and nature (Gal. 1:15). It was sudden (1 Cor. 15:8), a new creation (2 Cor. 4:6), a merciful act (1 Tim. 1:13), and it involved seeing Christ (1 Cor. 9:1). This conversion of Paul is a powerful proof of the truths of the Christian Faith. He was a man of great power, influence, intellect, and success; yet, he changed to embrace that which he was trying to destroy. By himself, Paul had no motive to convert to Christianity, and every motive not to convert (Gal. 1:10-14; Phil 3:4-7); yet, he did. He gave up popularity, power, success – everything – to be a Christian, and suffer the stigma of scorn for the sake of Christ. Only a supernatural occurrence could have produced his dramatic conversion, and changed his life.

### **Paul's apostleship.**

Along with his conversion, Paul was commissioned as an apostle of Jesus Christ. An apostle was one specially commissioned and sent forth as an ambassador bearing representative authority, powers, and a specific message and task. They were sent out by Jesus to proclaim the gospel of Christ, establish churches, and to institute the doctrinal foundation of Christian belief and practice (Acts 4:33; 5:12, 29; 8:1, 14-18; Eph. 2:19, 20).

The apostles were a special group of selected men in the New Testament who, it appears, had to have met three qualifications. First, they had to have seen or been with Jesus and been an eyewitness to His resurrection (Acts 1:22; 1 Cor. 9:1; 1 John 1:1-4). Second, they had to be invested with miraculous sign gifts (Acts 5:15-16; Heb. 2:3,4). Third, the men had to have been chosen by the Lord or the Holy Spirit (Matt. 10:1,2; Acts 1:26; Acts 9:15; 1 Tim. 1:1).

The term was applied to the 12 selected disciples of Jesus, to Jesus Himself (Heb. 3:1), and to complicate matters, even others outside this circle. For example, also called apostles were James the brother of the Lord Jesus (Gal. 1:19; 2:9; Barnabas who was a fellow worker with Paul (Acts 14:4, 14); Andronicus and Junias (Rom. 16:7); Silas (1 Thess. 2:6). However, except for Jesus who is on a plain all by Himself, these men were not on equal footing with the 12 apostles (Cf. Rev. 21:14), or Paul.

Paul clearly establishes his apostleship, for example, in Galatians where he wrote, "*Paul, an apostle (not sent from men, nor through the agency of man, but through Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead*" (Gal. 1:1; Cf. Gal 1:11,12, 17; Eph. 1:1; 1 Cor. 1:1; 2 Cor. 1:1; Col. 1:1). Paul's special assignment was to take the gospel to the

gentiles (Gal. 2:7-9; Rom. 1:5; Acts. 9:15). Paul did see the resurrected Christ (Acts 9:3-5; Gal. 1:12), he performed miracles (Acts 19:11,12), and as indicated, he was chosen and commissioned by Christ.

In summary, Paul was bound in hatred of Christ, was confronted by Christ, blinded, born again, healed, baptized, filled with the Holy Spirit, commissioned as an apostle, and began to witness immediately (Acts. 9:17-20). God had especially chosen, uniquely prepared, and appointed Paul to witness to the gentiles, kings, and Israel – of which he did (Acts 9:15; cf. 2 Tim. 1:11). From Paul's conversion, we not turn to the beginning of his missionary journeys.

### **Paul's missionary journeys**

Paul had been ministering in and around Tarsus for about nine years, when the church at Antioch of Syria became overwhelmed with converts. Barnabas, who had befriended Paul earlier in Jerusalem (Acts. 9:27), went looking for Paul to help in the grounding the believers in Christ (Acts 11:25). The year was about AD 45. Barnabas represented the apostles in Antioch, and was a Levite from Cyprus.<sup>vii</sup> They taught the disciples in Antioch for about a year. The work they established became one of the most powerful Christian centers of the early church on a par with Jerusalem and Alexandria. It was in Antioch that Luke was converted and grounded in the Faith.

In the meantime, a great famine broke out in Jerusalem. Paul and Barnabas collected funds from the Christians, and took the relief money to Jerusalem (Acts 11:27-30). When the two arrived at Jerusalem with the funds, it provided an occasion for further discussion between Paul and the apostles regarding the tensions between Christianity and Judaism, and also to come to common agreement so as to not have Christianity break into two rival factions. Indeed, this may have been when the confrontation took place between Paul and Peter described in Gal. 2:1ff.

When Barnabas and Paul returned to Antioch, they brought with them the young cousin of Barnabas, John Mark (Acts 12:25; Col. 4:10), whose mother was Mary who was a woman of prominence and influence in Jerusalem (Acts 12:12; cf. Acts 13:13; 15:38-40; 2 Tim. 4:11). This is the Mark who later wrote the Gospel of Mark.

### **The first missionary journey.**

Upon their return to Antioch, the Holy Spirit set aside Paul and Barnabas to depart on a missionary journey with Mark as their helper (Acts 13:1-5). The group sailed to the island of Cyprus, and enjoyed success by the conversion of a man of intelligence and influence, Sergius Paulus (Acts 13:7). Satan was there to oppose them, but the anointed Paul confronted the magician and cast a temporary blindness upon him. The miracle greatly impressed the proconsul (Acts 13:8-12). Fired up from their success, the missionary troupe set out for Asia Minor.

The new mission had danger and conflict. When they reached the mainland town of Perga in Pamphylia, Mark left the group and returned to Jerusalem (Acts 13:13). Why he left is not clear, but was probably because of failing courage and confidence. Mark's failure caused friction between Paul and Barnabas. Paul was the more zealous one who demanded great commitment, while Barnabas was more of a man of compassion, and, after all, Mark was his cousin. Perhaps Mark suffered culture shock, and the hardships of being an assistant to a demanding Paul were too much for him.

Paul and Barnabas pushed on northward into the interior, planting churches in several towns onward to Antioch in Phrygia. They then turned southward until they reached Derbe. Their pattern of church planting was established. They would first go to a local synagogue, and preach the gospel. Some would be saved, ejected from the synagogue, and then start a fledgling church. The missionaries were sometimes received warmly, but at other times with violence. We are told that great multitudes believed (Acts 13:49, 52; 14:1). Another pattern of the missionaries was to go to central areas first, then work outward to more rural areas. They used one-on-one witnessing, mass evangelism, and also went to those most likely to believe: the synagogues.

At Lystra, they performed miracles, and won the city. However, Jewish opponents of Paul won back the fickle crowd, and stoned Paul, leaving him for dead (Acts 14:19). The next day, he and Barnabas left for the last leg of their journey, Derbe. There many souls were converted to Christ. Paul and Barnabas were headed straight for Tarsus, but evidently decided to change their plan. They began to backtrack, visiting, encouraging, and bringing organization to the churches and new converts they had gained along the way. Eventually, they reached the coastline, boarded a ship, and returned to home base in Antioch, Syria in about AD 47-48. The first evangelistic journey was a great success!

### **Controversy between Jews and gentile Christians.**

While continuing their ministry at Antioch, a great storm cloud of controversy arose: differences between Jewish and gentile Christians. Many Jews thought that they were superior to gentiles, and that gentile Christians should become circumcised, join Judaism, and follow the law to be saved. To some Jews, Christ was just an addition to the Mosaic Law. These were the people labeled the “Judaizers.” Two grave problems arose. First, should gentile Christians become circumcised to be saved (Acts 15:1)? Second, should there be no socializing between Jewish and gentile converts, or should gentiles be accepted on equal footing (Gal. 2:11ff.; 3:28)? In other words, the issues were salvation and separation.

The battle lines had been drawn in the sand, and the debates raged. Probably this is the time Paul wrote Galatians, which was his first epistle (AD 49), and addressed these two issues that sorely divided the church. To resolve the feud, the leaders assembled at the great council at Jerusalem recorded in Acts 15. Paul presented his case of justification by faith alone, and Jews and gentiles being on equal footing in Christ. Paul’s great skills won the day for Christianity, and the apostolic leaders wrote a letter clarifying the issue. A certain Judas (called Barsabbas), and Silas traveled back to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas to deliver the letter, which was also directed to Christians in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia. Silas remained in Antioch, but Judas returned to Jerusalem.

### **Paul’s second missionary journey (Acts 15:36-18:22).**

God began to stir in the hearts of Paul and Barnabas to conduct another missionary journey; however, old wounds resurfaced between the two. The missionary team was selected (Acts:15:36-40). The missionaries were led by God to return to conduct follow up on the new churches and converts.

However, a sharp controversy arose between Paul and Barnabas over whether Mark could go along. Paul said no, because Mark had previously deserted the team. Barnabas wanted to give Mark another chance. The result was that two missionary teams went out rather than just one, and the result was that twice the work was done. Barnabas chose Mark and sailed for Cyprus, and Paul chose Silas (Acts 15:40-41), and later Timothy (Acts 16:1-5), and headed for Tarsus, then back to Derbe, Lystra, and Iconium. It was at Lystra that Paul met

young Timothy who became a trusted colleague of Paul.

God's sovereign plan can be seen even when conflict seems to thwart the work of God. It would seem that on occasion, that the better part of wisdom for good, that Bible believing Christians need to separate because of differences in personality or practice. Fortunately, later on Mark and Paul were reconciled (2 Tim. 4:11), and Mark even went on to write a gospel in his name. We do not know if Paul and Barnabas ever met again. The situation also teaches us that even great men of God are not perfect, and make mistakes. Finally, we learn from the council in Jerusalem that sometimes conflict can have good results, because critical doctrinal issues were clarified and resolved.

The purpose of the trip was to do follow-up work with the recent converts and churches, but God had other plans: to take the gospel to Europe (Chapter 16). Paul's team received the "Macedonia call" (Acts 16:6-10). We can learn some of how to determine the will of God in seeking how to serve Him. The disciples were busy in God's interests as a usual thing, they were seeking where to preach the gospel, and not serve themselves or seek their own personal interests. They were busy in prayer and devotion to God, holy living, winning souls, strengthening converts, planting churches. God was active and evident in their life and activities as they were active and interested in His interests while they were proactively moving out for God. The Holy Spirit closed and opened doors of opportunity for the team (Acts 16:6-10).

The team traveled to Troas, a seaport city on the Aegean Sea near the ancient city of Troy. There a vision came to Paul in which he saw a certain man of Macedonia appealing to them to come help them in Macedonia. The party set out to sea, and eventually arrived at Philippi (Acts 16:11-40), which was a leading city of the district of Macedonia, and was a Roman colony. This was the beachhead for the gospel of Christ on the European continent. The team eventually came upon a group of women outside the city by a river, and who were in prayer. Paul began to witness, and a prominent woman, Lydia and her household were saved.

Several things can be learned from this evangelistic interaction. The evangelists went to those most likely to respond, they initiated the gospel presentation, and God opened the heart of Lydia to believe as they presented the gospel (Acts 16:13-15). Opposition came from the business world and government, which ended with the missionaries being cast into prison. The missionaries gain victory through prayer and hymns of praise.

God intervened in a supernatural way with a violent earthquake that shook open all the prison doors. In the fear and chaos, the jailor became saved, and later his household. The judges set the group free from jail, but Paul asserted his Roman citizenship and demanded an apology from the magistrates. Paul had been illegally punished and jailed without trial, which placed great fear in the city fathers. His purpose was to not leave the new church under a possible embarrassing stigma, because of the illegal jailing incident.

Paul and his team left Philippi, and traveled into Thessalonica where some were converted. As usual, many Jews became jealous, started a riot, and forced the evangelists out of town. A good church was planted, to which the two epistles to the Thessalonians were written by Paul.

Traveling on, the missionaries brought the gospel to Berea, where many more were converted. The trouble makers caught up with them, and stirred up hard feelings against the

missionaries who wisely left town. We can learn that sometimes when overwhelming opposition confronts us it is better to retreat for another day; yet, in other cases like Philippi, it is better to stand and fight when the circumstances are in our favor.

Paul then traveled down to Athens. It is the home of democracy, which was cultivated during its golden age of about 450BC. Decline came to the city, and by the first century, Athens was primarily known just for her cultural prowess and university. In Paul's day this city was the political, economic and cultural center of Attica in eastern Greece. There Paul preached in the synagogues and daily did personal soul-winning work in the commercial and intellectual parts of town. He tried to win some Epicurean and Stoic philosophers to Christ. He spoke before the Areopagus, which was the city council dealing with religion and education. Some believed, but the results were meager, and there is no New Testament record of a church ever being in Athens.

From Paul's evangelistic sermon we can learn from the flow of his presentation (Acts 17:22-31). He first found the common ground from which to start the presentation: the "unknown god." Second He described God: who He is, what He has done in creation, what He is like, and His present and eternal rule. Third, Paul spoke of man's dependence upon God. Fourth, he told of man's need for salvation. Last, he gave the resurrection of Christ as proof of the claims of Christ.

Paul was preaching to the intellectuals, and the sermon had limited results. The people balked at the idea of a resurrection. However, Dionysius the Areopagite did believe, which confirms that belief in Christ and His resurrection is not an intellectual problem that is illogical, and unreasonable. Why? It is because membership in the Areopagus was a high distinction that required a degree of intellectual ability to sift through and analyze information, and come to reasoned conclusions. Furthermore, others also believed (Acts 17:34), and they, along with Dionysius, were there among the intellectual elite; thus, they too had a fair degree of intellectual ability. Rather, unbelief in the gospel is a heart problem where people refuse to believe out of hardness of heart (Cf. 1 Cor. 2:14), and a mind blinded by Satan (Cf. 2 Cor. 4:4). As with Lydia, God opened these few folks to believe the gospel of Christ.

From Athens, Paul traveled to Corinth (Acts 18:1-17) where he had a significant ministry. He entered with much fear (Acts 18:9; Cf. 1 Cor. 2:3). God encouraged him and promised to protect him in Corinth. Paul lived and ministered in Corinth for 1 ½ years, and established a great church where many were saved. Since Corinth played such an important role in Paul's ministry, it will help to learn more of the city and its culture.

### **Corinth**

Corinth is a city in Greece located on a narrow, four mile wide strip of land that separates the Aegean and Adriatic Sea as well as northern and southern Greece. The city was destroyed in 146 B.C. by the Romans and rebuilt in 46 B.C. This made the city about 100 years old at the time of Paul's visits. Corinth was the Roman capital of its province, and was about the fourth largest city in the Roman Empire with a population somewhere between 100,000 and several hundred thousand people.

Because of the dangers of sailing around the southern tip of Greece, most of the shipping of the Mediterranean world passed through the narrow isthmus by Corinth, and all the land commerce from north and south had to go through the city. Concerning sea transport, smaller ships were dragged across the isthmus on rollers, and as for the larger ships, their cargo was unloaded, packed across and reloaded on a waiting ship on the other side. Beside



the shipyards and docks, there was agriculture around the city with grain fields, olive groves and vineyards.

Corinth was a city where all the brutality of the west embraced the sensuality of the east. It had a very mobile population made up of sailors, businessmen, traders, government officials, dockworkers, soldiers, laborers, gamblers, slaves and athletes. The city was without an established tradition and aristocracy.

At Paul's time, Corinth was one of the most immoral cities perhaps in the world. For example, 1,000 sacred prostitutes were assigned to the temple of Aphrodite, the goddess of love. Travelers in the Roman world had the saying that to behave like a Corinthian meant to lead a low, shameless and immoral life – and this was in the eyes of the pagan world! At nights the city teemed with vice, drunkenness and multiple types of sin (Cf. 1 Cor. 6:9-11; Rom. 1:18-32). Gundry reports,

The south side of the market place was lined with taverns equipped with underground cisterns for cooling the drinks. Archaeologists have discovered many drinking vessels in these liquor lockers; some bear inscriptions such as "Health," "Security," "Love," and names of Gods.<sup>viii</sup>

Corinth was also the location of the Isthmian games, which were held every two years. These were second only to the Olympic Games held every four years. The games were great events, and included races, wrestling, boxing, discus, javelin, chariot races, wild beasts, fighting gladiators, trials of strength, jumping, horse races, and contests of art, music and poetry. People from all over the Roman world attended these games, and even the Roman Emperor, Nero, participated in the games.

Surprisingly, Corinth was also a religious center of Greece. Along with the temple to Aphrodite and Apollos, and others, the area flourished with the wild, erotic mystery religions. The most famous were the ones celebrated at Eleusis and Samothrace. Eleusis is only a few miles from Corinth. The ecstatic Delphic oracles were obtained only a few miles from Corinth.

While Paul was planting his great work at Corinth, he wrote 1 and 2 Thessalonians.

Having established the work at Corinth, Paul left, and reached on to further conquests for Christ. He sailed to Ephesus with Priscilla and Aquila, who stayed at the city to initiate gospel work. Paul, however, felt constrained to continue back through Jerusalem, and on to his home base, Antioch of Syria (Acts 18:18, 22). With this we finish our summary of Paul's second missionary journey, and turn to Paul's third missionary venture.

### **Paul's third missionary journey (Acts 18:23-21:26).**

The story of Paul's third journey begins with his retracing his steps back through Tarsus, and on to the Galatia region where he was encouraging the new churches and many converts. The story takes up in more detail when Paul reached Ephesus, which became his main base during the third journey.

In the meantime, after Paul had left Priscilla and Aquila in Ephesus, Apollos arrived in Ephesus. He was a godly Jew who was powerful in intellect and persuasion. He was a man learned in Old Testament Messianic Scripture. His doctrine about Jesus was accurate as far as it went, but it was incomplete. Apollos preached John's message of repentance to God.

He did not know of the baptism of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13; Rom. 6:3-10; Gal. 3:27; Col. 1:12). As God's timing would have it, Aquila and Priscilla invited Apollos to their home, and explained the ways of God, "more accurately" (Acts 18:24-26). From there, Apollos traveled to the Corinthian church, and continued with his influential ministry.

Following Apollos' shifting from Ephesus to Corinth, Paul arrived in back in Ephesus, and found the disciples converted by Apollos (Acts 19:1-7). From this small beginning, Paul build a ministry of significant influence in the region for Christ. He started a Bible college (Acts 19:8-20). The project started in the midst of an extended evangelistic campaign (Acts. 19:8). The college soon moved to rented quarters, where under Paul's leadership the school placed a great emphasis on evangelism as well as Bible content. God did many miracles. Multitudes were saved throughout the region (Acts 19:10, 17, 20, 26).

### **Ephesus.**

Ephesus was a commercial center, and the leading city of the province of Asia Minor. Situated at the mouth of the Cayster River, its harbor was an excellent export center, being located at the end of the Asiatic caravan route. The city also served as a landing port for Rome. Its population was about 330,000 people. The large theater at Mt. Pion could seat up to 50,000. The emperor cult flourished in the city with temples built to Claudius, Hadrian and Severus. Ephesus was destroyed by the Goths in AD 260. The church is described in Revelation 2:1-7, and in the epistle of Ephesians. Ephesus became the home of John the apostle, and the city became the headquarters of an extended line of eastern bishops. The council that condemned Nestorian Christology was held in Ephesus (AD 431). After this date, malaria hit the city, and it began to decline.

While in Ephesus, Paul received much opposition from the business world. Many were saved under his ministry with the result that they quit buying idols for the worship of Artemis (Diana). The temple of Artemis was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. It was huge and magnificent: a monument with 127 columns 60 feet high, and standing on an area 425 feet long and 220 feet wide.

Paul's chief opponent was one Demetrius, a silversmith by trade and business. He assembled a large group to oppose Paul and stop the erosion of his and other's businesses. He appealed to the civic pride of the Ephesians regarding the now tarnished fame of the city through the worship of Artemis. Of course, this was a lie to cover up the real reason for his displeasure, which was that he was losing money. The assembly rioted, and was in confusion. The town clerk finally quieted the mob, persuaded them that if there was just cause, they should take the matter up in the courts. He dismissed them.

Later, Paul resumed an itinerant ministry, traveling northward to Troas, Philippi in Macedonia, down to Corinth, then retracing his steps back north through Macedonia, then south toward Ephesus with the ultimate goal of Jerusalem. Much good work was accomplished for Christ, but there was the dogged opposition by the Jews. Paul wrote three of his epistles on this third journey. From Ephesus he wrote 1 Corinthians in about AD 56. From Macedonia he wrote 2 Corinthians in the same year. From Corinth, Paul wrote to the Romans in AD 57.

Back in Miletus on his way to Jerusalem, Paul called for the elders of Ephesus, gave them final instructions, and bade them farewell.

One significant thing to note is that the Christians were by that time meeting on the first day

of the week (Acts 20:6-38). For Christians, Sundays became the regular day of worship in honor of Christ's resurrection on that day. While observing the interaction of Paul with the elders of Ephesus, we can learn many things about Paul's style of ministry (Acts 20:17-38).

- First, Paul was personally involved with people, humble, a hard worker, his motivation was soul-winning service to Christ, and he was bold in ministry. He was without greed, very generous, set the example for others, and entrusted the converts to God. He also warned leaders of dangers to the church. Paul's life was one of dependence, devotion, duty, and desire.
- Second, in his teaching strategy, Paul taught in public, a Bible college, house to house, and he used the Bible – and, he taught with passion, sincerity, hard work, and with feeling. In other words, his heart was in the work.
- Third, the theological content of his teaching included the salvation message, the grace of God, the kingdom of God, and the whole council of God – the full scope of Christian doctrine.
- Fourth, we are given special insight on the doctrine of the church. The church belongs to God, was purchased by the blood of Christ, and church pastors are assigned by the Holy Spirit (Acts 20:28-32).
- Fifth, the duty of pastors is to shepherd the flock, maintain doctrinal purity, lead and guard the flock, guard themselves, follow Paul's example, and preach the Word of God.

Following the tearful farewell to the Ephesians, Paul returned by sea voyage to Palestine (Acts 21:1-14). From the area of Ephesus, in eastern Asia Minor, they touched in several places to say further farewells to the Christians, and they received several warnings for Paul not to return to Jerusalem because of the hatred of the Jews against him. However, Paul resolutely set his jaw, and faced into the sunrise as the ship set its sails eastward, and plowed on through the swells of the Mediterranean Sea.

The ship sidled up to the dock at Tyre, and Paul, with his party, stepped onto the dirt of Palestine. He stayed a few days at Caesarea at the home of Philip the evangelist. Final warnings came to him from a prophet named Agabus, who came down from Judea. Paul refused the warnings, and determined it was God's will for him to return to Jerusalem, which he did (Acts 21:15-26).

The doctrinal issues that brought trouble, and was resolved during the church council described in Acts 15, had not gone away. The savage antagonism against Paul continued. A malicious lie about Paul had been circulated by his enemies. Paul did teach gentiles that it was of no consequence from God's point of view whether or not they circumcised their sons. He never, however, taught Jews not to circumcise their sons or to disregard Jewish customs, which was the lie perpetuated against Paul.

Paul tried to placate the Christian Jews by participation in Jewish purification rites, which was simply a matter of Jewish customs, but were not related to the doctrines of salvation or sanctification. He was urged by the Christian leaders in Jerusalem to take action to show that he was a middle of the road Jewish Christian. Unfortunately, the attempt to give a "spin" or project a better public image did not work. Suffering was rising on the horizon, and was

about to visit Paul with multiple torments.

With this we end Paul's third missionary journey. However, a fourth segment of Paul's life was about to unfold that would eventually place him in the center of the Empire, the city of Rome. The story involves deceit, bloodshed, shipwreck, prison – and the continual conversion of souls for Jesus Christ.

### **Paul the prisoner for the gospel (Acts 21:19--28:31).**

As noted, Paul's strategy of trying to present the image of a moderate Jewish Christian failed miserably. Unbelieving Jews from Asia stirred up an assembled, bloodthirsty mob whose intent was to slaughter Paul. Lies and rumors were circulated about Paul to agitate the crowd even more. The milling mob was in confusion except for the one goal: to murder Paul. Hearing of the trouble, the Roman captain with his troops came to quell the riot, and placed Paul under arrest, thinking him to be an Egyptian who had stirred up a revolt with the Assassins who were radical freedom fighters. Paul asked for an opportunity to address the Jewish crowd, and the captain granted permission.

Paul got the attention of the mob, and gave his personal testimony, telling about his conversion and calling (Acts 22:1-16). Paul then told of his commission from the Lord to take the gospel to the gentiles. The statement enraged the mob of Jews who promptly sought his death.

Trying to resolve the issue, the Roman captain decided to flog Paul to extract the truth. Upon finding out that Paul was a Roman citizen by birth, the Captain quickly changed his strategy, and treated Paul with all the rights accorded a Roman citizen. Paul wisely appealed to his civil rights for his own protection, and to continue on with the gospel.

Paul appeared before the Sanhedrin, a group of 70 or 72 elders and teachers of the nation of Israel that functioned as a sort of supreme court. With permission from Rome, they ruled over religious and civil matters until the fall of Jerusalem (AD 70). The council, however, was under the rule of Rome who permitted them to govern Israel with limitations. At the time of Christ there may have been two Sanhedrins: one political, and the other religious. High priests presided over the body.

Somehow the Sanhedrin was able to interfere in the Roman proceedings of Paul and have him appear before the council rather than being directly taken to the Roman governor in Caesarea (Acts 22:30 – 23:10). During the inquest, the high priest, Ananias, commanded Paul to be struck when Paul began to speak in his defense. Ananias ruled as high priest from about AD 48-58, and was insolent, hot-tempered, overbearing, and wicked.

Paul replied harshly to the high priest, and then being informed that he was talking to the high priest, Paul seemed to retract the statement. It could have been that Paul did not recognize that it was the high priest because of his bad eyes. On the other hand, Paul's statement could have been sarcasm, or a challenge, meaning something like, "I did not think a high priest would ever act that way." It was illegal for a high priest to do such a thing, as prisoners were considered innocent until proven guilty. Jesus, at his trial, also challenged the legality of being struck on the mouth (John 18:20-23).

Seeing that justice would not prevail in the Sanhedrin court, Paul wisely switched his strategy, and pitted the Sanhedrin against itself by bringing forward a controversial

theological issue: the resurrection. He sided with his fellow Pharisees who believed in the resurrection, and challenged the Sadducees who did not believe in the doctrine. The result of Paul's move was that the council descended into hopeless confusion with even the Pharisees defending Paul!

Realizing that the Jewish Sanhedrin could not resolve the issue with Paul, the Roman captain escorted Paul to Caesarea (Acts 23:11-35). The Lord encouraged Paul by appearing to Him. The other three appearances were at Paul's conversion (Acts 9:5), in Corinth (Acts 18:9-10), and on his first visit to Jerusalem (Acts 22:17-18).

A ruthless scheme to murder Paul was foiled by Paul's young nephew informing the Roman commander of a Jewish plot to kill Paul. Paul was then delivered by armed and mounted guard to Felix, the Roman governor (procurator) of Judea from AD 52 to about AD 58. The governor agreed to hear Paul's case when his accusers arrived (Acts 23:17-35).

#### **Paul's defense to Felix (Acts 24:1-27).**

At the trial, Annanias led the group who had hired an attorney, Tertullus, to present the case against Paul. The attorney broadened the charge, accusing Paul to be an insurrectionist and saying that the commander (Claudius Lysias) exceeded his authority in removing the case from the Jewish court to the Roman court. The Jewish charge was profaning (showing contempt for religious things) the temple.

Paul defended himself by saying the Jews could not prove their case, establishing his good character, innocence and that he was merely a Christian exercising his religious rights. He then maintained that his original accusers, the unbelieving Jews from Asia, were absent from the hearing. Felix stalled the case, putting the Jews off by saying Lysias was also absent as a witness. Paul was left in custody, which was a loose military confinement. It also provided excellent opportunities for soul-winning among the Romans.

Felix was a weak man. Because of his wife, Felix feared Paul. Further, he was hoping for a bribe from Paul. To placate the Jews, Felix left Paul in jail for two years. Paul used the opportunity to often witness to Felix about spiritual matters.

#### **Paul's defense to Festus (Acts 25:1-12).**

After two years, the assignment of Felix was up, and his replacement was a man by the name of Porcius Festus. This exchange occurred about AD 58. The Jews pressured Festus to reopen the case, have Paul returned to Jerusalem, and murder him by ambush on the way. There was much Jewish unrest in Israel during those days. Indeed, about eight years later a Jewish uprising broke out in Caesarea that resulted in the death of some 20,000 Jews at the hands of the Romans.

Trying to please the Jews in the face of civil unrest, Festus tried to have Paul returned to Jerusalem to stand trial. Paul knew he would probably be killed on the way, and if he was tried in Jerusalem, the trial would be unfair. His only recourse was to appeal to Caesar, who at this time was Nero. This right of appeal was one of the cherished ancient rights of a Roman citizen. This tactic effectively thwarted the poisonous plans of the Jewish antagonists of Paul. But, the plot thickens.

#### **Paul's defense to Agrippa (Acts 25:13-26:32).**

While Paul remained under arrest, awaiting his appeal to Caesar, King Agrippa and his sister, Bernice (whom he was living with in incest) came to Caesarea several days later to

pay respect to Festus. It was a political and diplomatic courtesy call. This was Herod Agrippa II, the son of Herod Agrippa I (Acts 12:1), and great-grandson of Herod the Great (Matt. 2:1). About 30 years old, Agrippa was a friend of the Roman imperial family, and was allowed to rule the territories northeast of Palestine with the title of King. He appointed the Jewish high priest, and had control over the temple treasury.

Festus was perplexed over the case of Paul, and shared the issue with Agrippa. The latter was curious, and agreed to hear the case himself with his sister. Paul was not required to defend himself at this time, because of his appeal to Caesar, but he took advantage of the situation to witness for Christ. Paul explained his personal testimony, and gave his major definite purpose and mission in life. He had been appointed by Christ to be a minister and witness, sent to the gentiles with the objective to open the gentile eyes that they might turn from the darkness to light, from the dominion of Satan to God. The purpose was that the gentiles may receive forgiveness of sin and an inheritance among God's chosen. Paul asserted that the resurrection of Jesus Christ was at the heart of the Jew's complaint (Acts 26:8).

Festus was confused by Paul's presentation. This was because he was a Roman and could not understand Paul's reasoning. On the other hand, Agrippa, a Jew, understood Paul's logic, and may have come close to being converted (Acts 26:28). It could have been that he was unwilling to separate from his illicit relationship with his sister.

By application, we can observe the importance of understanding the cultural viewpoint of people as we go as missionaries with the gospel of Christ. Furthermore, people need to know a certain amount of truth about God before they can understand salvation through Christ, but that knowledge has to be presented in language and a format that the audience can relate to.

#### **Paul taken to Rome for appeal to Caesar (Acts 27:1-44).**

From his Caesarea jail, Paul eventually was placed in protective custody and shipped off to Rome. A Roman detachment of 100 soldiers was assigned to deliver Paul and some other prisoners to Rome. The leader was Julius. They boarded a ship, and sailed north staying close to the land. Their course took them around the northern coast of Cyprus, and on to Myra. The prevailing fall winds came from the northwest, which made it difficult for a coastal ship to navigate in the open ocean. At Myra they transferred to another ship, and sailed toward Crete, an island southeast of Greece. They managed to make it to Crete, landing at Fair Havens near the city of Lasea.

After some time, they decided to travel on toward Italy, but by this time the voyage would be extremely dangerous. Leaving Lasea toward the other end of the island of Crete, the ship was caught in a strong, treacherous east-northeast wind, and was blown out to sea. Paul had warned them in setting out, but was ignored.

Disaster loomed as the ship began to break up under the violent storm, and the terrified men gave up hope (Acts 27:16-20). Paul received encouragement from an angel sent by God, passed the encouragement on to the men, and predicted they would be saved. Paul, the prisoner, had risen to a place of commanding leadership.

After 14 days of being pitched about in the open sea, the ship approached the island of Malta, which is about 60 miles south of Sicily. The wind heaved the lurching ship onto the island's reef, and with the howling wind beating from the rear, the trapped ship soon began

to break up. The ship was abandoned, and the men, some swimming and others clinging desperately to planks and pieces of shipwreck, made it safely through to land.

Paul had an excellent ministry on the little island. He was bitten by a snake, and lived. He healed an island leader's father, which placed the crew in even better favor with the kindly islanders. After three months, the men boarded an Alexandrian grain ship that had wintered at Malta, and sailed onward to Italy. The ship eventually harbored at Puteoli, Italy, because the harbor at Rome was too small to handle the large grain ships.

Arriving at Rome, Paul was placed in house arrest. There he met with the Jewish leaders and explained the gospel and Messianic hope. Some were saved. Paul wrote what has become known as the prison epistles during his house arrest in Rome. These epistles are: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon.

Rome, at this time, with its suburbs, was a city of about 800,000 inhabitants with people of various races. The Jews, who numbered some 30,000, were despised and sometimes dreaded. The city, founded in 745 BC, was the capital of the Roman Empire. Nero was on the throne. The church at Rome originated probably through converted Jews returning from Jerusalem at the time of Pentecost. The majority of the church members were probably gentile Christians (Acts 2:10). Those in Rome were already acquainted with Paul through the letter he wrote and sent to them during his ministry in Corinth.

Evidently his Jerusalem persecutors did not show up to accuse Paul; thus, he waited in prison at Rome two years and was finally released. In the meantime, however, the gospel was spreading throughout Rome, the Praetorian Guard (Phil 1:13), and perhaps even on to England. The Praetorian Guard was a group of imperial guards separate from the army or Roman police. Its number in Rome was about 9,000. This group had heard the gospel through those fellow members who had been guarding Paul. It is perhaps by this group that the gospel reached England during the Roman invasion and occupation.

### **Paul following his first imprisonment in Rome.**

The book of Acts ends with Paul having an unhindered and remarkable ministry while under house arrest. Many came to him for teaching on the kingdom of God and the Lord Jesus Christ. After those two years and his release in about AD 63, Paul toured the churches in Asia Minor with Timothy and Titus. Paul left Timothy at Ephesus (1 Tim. 1:3) to take charge of the church and settle some internal problems. The epistle of 1 Timothy was written as a church manual to supplement the oral counsel Paul had given Timothy. The date of the writing was about AD 63.

### **Crete.**

Paul then traveled to the island of Crete for a short ministry, and left Titus to shepherd the believers there (Titus 1:5). Paul's interest in Crete was probably stimulated by his limited contact with the island while on his way to Rome as a prisoner (Acts 27:7-13). The brief contact motivated him to later return for this church planting missionary venture with Titus. It may, however, be too much to say that Paul and Titus started the work in Crete, but the Faith would not have been well established if the two had not pioneered the work on the island. When Paul left for the mainland, he wrote a letter to strengthen his lieutenant, who was still at work on the island. Paul expected Titus to join him at Necopolis, which was a city of the Epirus section of Greece.

Crete is a mostly mountainous island about 156 miles long, and ranges from seven to 35 miles wide. It is located SE of the southern tip of Greece on the lower fringe of the Aegean Sea. Cretans were in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:11). The island was subdued by the Rome in 67BC. There are rich plains growing orchard produce and upland basins providing forage for animal herds. Around 1500 BC., Crete was a mighty empire at its zenith. Based on Paul's epistle to Titus, at Paul's time the people of Crete were careless in morals: men were lazy and careless, old women liked to gossip, and young women liked to flirt. There was a Judaizing group at work in the haphazard church whose basic error was moral perversion.

While doing gospel work after his release from the Roman house arrest, Paul visited at least the following cities: Ephesus (1 Tim. 1:3), Crete (Titus 1:5), Nicopolis (Titus 3:12), Corinth and Miletus (2 Tim. 4:20), and Troas (2 Tim. 4:13). Being out of prison for several years, Paul could have even visited Spain during this period, which was a desire of his heart (Cf. Rom. 15:24, 28).

### **The death of Paul.**

Sometimes success energizes the ill will and jealousy of others. Such was the case of Paul. Evidently alarmed at the bold and successful evangelistic results of Paul, the Roman Emperor, Nero, recaptured Paul, slammed him back into prison, and eventually martyred the great apostle. Tradition says that Paul was beheaded just west of the city of Rome on the Ostian Way. The charge against him probably was treason, "shown by hostility to the established customs of society, and by weakening the Imperial authority," according to Ramsey.<sup>ix</sup>

Of great interest is the epistle of 2 Timothy, which was the final written work by Paul, and was penned as he waited in the cold, dank prison for his looming execution. One can gain insight into the final days of the great man on how he thought, what were his priorities, and what drove him. He could say, "*I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith*" (2 Tim. 4:7). His death was AD 66 or 67.

### **General historical context.**

It will be helpful to gain further historical context of the events surrounding Paul's murder. Nero (AD 54-68) was the Roman ruler during the time period in question. Christians did not suffer (except for minor incidents) from the hand of the state until Nero. He was brilliant, gifted in poetry and music, genial, humane – to begin with. Then he turned into a cruel monster. In AD 55 he ordered the murder of his brother followed with the assassination of his mother, his wife, Octavia, and the death by personal abuse of his second wife, Poppoea. Nero craved praise and popular applause, and was given over to unbridled vice and atrocities.

In the summer of AD 64, he turned his fury upon Christians, initiated by the burning of 14 of Rome's 15 precincts. It is said that Nero shifted the blame to the Christians to avert suspicion from himself. Christians were covered with the skins of wild beasts and torn to bits by packs of dogs. Others were slain by the cross or in flames. Many were burnt after sunset, becoming human torches to light the darkness. According to Tacitus, Christians were slaughtered not for any crime, but to gratify the cruelty of an individual. Though Nero did not issue a decree to exterminate Christianity, the influence and momentum of his prejudice spread throughout the empire.



Technically, Christianity was unlawful to the Roman Empire on two counts: first, it was classed as a secret society not recognized by Rome. Second, it was a proselyting religion, which was a characteristic forbidden by Rome. To Rome the reason for religion was to further the cause of the state. Otherwise, religion became a competitor and potential enemy of Rome. Practically, however, Rome generally practiced tolerance regarding the indigenous customs and religions of conquered lands – unless, of course, those forces became a threat to the Empire.

There were three types of false teachings that erupted in the Church in general, and were bitterly fought by Paul. They became more fully developed in later eras.

- First, there was the Judaizing perversion. This is the mixing of Judaism with Christianity - law with grace. In the end, Christ is merely a prophet, like another Moses, and His divine nature is overlooked. In later centuries, this teaching took the name of Ebionism, and was more fully developed.
- Second, there was the Paganizing (Gnostic) perversion. This was a mixture of pagan ideas and practices. The freedom in the gospel is reduced to antinomian licentiousness. Simon Magus was the first representative (Acts 8:10). This influence later spread through the empire in the several schools of Gnosticism.
- Third, there were the syncretistic perversions. From the early attempts by Philo to merge Judaism with Greek philosophy came the move to merge Christianity in the same manner with Judaism, paganism, or some combination of both. Normally, they came out as some mysticism mixed with ascetic holiness, or perhaps the opposite extreme: antinomian licentiousness.

With this we end our short story of the apostle Paul. We have examined his pre-conversion background, his conversion, appointment as an apostle, missionary travels, his time in prison, and his eventual death. Along the way we have given historical, geographical, cultural, theological, and political background to better understand the saga of this grand servant of our Lord Jesus Christ – Paul of Tarsus.

**THE EPISTLE OF ROMANS  
A GENERAL COMMENTARY  
By  
Rev. Dr. Willis C. Newman**

**INTRODUCTION**

**I. BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

**A. AUTHORSHIP**

There is almost universal acceptance that Paul wrote this epistle, even by the ancient heretics and modern liberal theologians. He is mentioned by name in 1:1. The letter was written from Corinth as seen by Cenchrea being named (16:1) which was the eastern port of Corinth. The date of the letter is A.D. 57 or 58. It was written by Paul at the end of his third missionary journey while he was in Greece (Acts 20:3). This was immediately before his return to Jerusalem with the offering from the churches of Macedonia and Achaia to be given to the poor saints at Jerusalem (Rom 15:26). Leaving Corinth, Paul traveled to Philippi for the Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread (Acts 20:6) and wanted to be in Jerusalem by Pentecost (Acts 20:16).

**B. PURPOSES**

1. First, Paul wanted to inform the church at Rome that he was coming to visit them after he had returned to Jerusalem with the collection (Rom 1:10-13; 15:24-26; 28,29). The letter was delivered by Phoebe, a deaconess of Cenchrea (16:1).

2. Second, Paul wished to present a full and detailed account of the gospel of Christ that he proclaimed (1:15).

3. Third, Paul wished to address the great issue of conflict between the Jewish and gentile segments of the church over salvation - the same issue of the first council in Jerusalem (Acts 15). The Judaizers were aggressive in maintaining that salvation included keeping the Law of Moses. The place of works, faith, Israel, the church in God's program is the platform by which Paul unfolds the epistle of Romans (e.g. 1:16; 2:9-10; 3:1-2, 9, 29,30; 9:4-5; 11:15,25)

**C. THEME.**

Romans sets forth in a systematic fashion the great doctrine of justification by faith. The theme is the gospel of Christ, that is, the righteousness from God which is received by faith. When we receive this righteousness we are justified.

**D. MAJOR DOCTRINES PRESENTED**

Included in the theological content are the doctrines of natural revelation (1:19-20), universality of sin (3:9-20), justification (3:24), propitiation (3:25), faith (chap 4), original sin (5:12), union with Christ (chap 6), election and rejection of Israel (chaps 9-11), spiritual gifts (12:3-8), and respect for government (13:1-7).

**E. THE APOSTLE PAUL.**

Paul was born at Tarsus, in Cilicia, Asia Minor, of Hebrew parents. He received a Jewish

education and attended a Greek university at Tarsus. He studied under the Jewish theologian, Gamaliel. He was present at Stephen's death and was a leader in the persecution of the Christians. On the way to Damascus he was converted, spent three years in Arabia for meditation and returned to Damascus. He fled from the enmity of the Jews to Jerusalem and from there to Tarsus.

From Tarsus he served the church in Antioch for a year. Directed by the Holy Spirit, he became the great Apostle for the gentiles. He made three missionary journeys to spread the gospel in the gentile world. Opposition of the Jews led to his imprisonment. His appeal to Caesar as a Roman citizen led to his journey to Rome, trial and acquittal. Probably after visiting Asia and Macedonia he was rearrested at Nicopolis, condemned and beheaded.

With his Hebrew religion, his Greek culture, and his Roman citizenship, Paul was providentially prepared to be the chief of the Apostles, a mighty instrument for the spread of the gospel and the extension of the church

## **E. ROME**

Rome, at this time, with its suburbs, was a city of about 800,000 inhabitants with people of various races. The Jews, who numbered some 30,000, were despised and sometimes dreaded. The city, founded in 745 B.C., was the capital of the Roman Empire. Nero was on the throne. The church at Rome originated probably through converted Jews returning from Jerusalem at the time of Pentecost. The majority of the members were probably gentile Christians (Acts 2:10).

## **F. THE BOOK OF ROMANS**

Romans is the first of the 21 epistles in the New Testament. Thirteen of these 21 were written by Paul, and are generally called the Pauline Epistles. The epistles are the specific documents written to give instructions to the church, the new organism/organization planned and designed by God, and now being created and unfolded within history. The O.T. was instruction to Israel and written to the Jew (though it is written for Christians as well). The gospels record the life of Christ in history. The Acts record the historical genesis of the church. The epistles are actual letters written to the church giving instruction of theology, duty, conduct, purpose, plan, structure, relationships and anything else the church needs to know to conduct the Lord's business during this age.

## **II. BRIEF OUTLINE OF ROMANS**

### **I. INTRODUCTION AND THEME (1:1-17).**

- A. GREETING (1:1-7).
- B. THANKSGIVING AND PRAYER (1:8-12).
- C. PURPOSE OF PAUL'S LIFE (1:13-15).
- D. GOSPEL DEFINED (1:16-17).

### **II. CONDEMNATION OF THE HUMAN RACE (1:18 - 3:20).**

- A. CONDEMNATION TO PAGANS: THE WISE MEN (1:18-32).
- B. CONDEMNATION TO THE MORAL MAN (2:1-16).
- C. CONDEMNATION TO THE JEW: THE RELIGIOUS MAN (2:17 - 3:8).
- D. CONDEMNATION TO ALL MEN (3:9-20).

### **III. THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD PROVIDED FOR MANKIND (3:21 - 5:21).**

- A. RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD EXPLAINED (3:21-31).

- B. RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD ILLUSTRATED IN ABRAHAM (4:1-25).
- C. RESULTS OF GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS: PEACE, HOPE, LOVE, RECONCILIATION (5:1-11).
- D. GOD'S GRACE IS GREATER THAN SIN'S CURSE (5:12-21).

#### **IV. GOD'S SANCTIFICATION FOR THE BELIEVER (CHAPTERS 6-8).**

- A. BELIEVER'S UNION WITH CHRIST AS BASIS FOR SANCTIFICATION (CHAP 6).
- B. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE LAW AND SANCTIFICATION (CHAP 7).
- C. THE OUTWORKING OF SANCTIFICATION (CHAP 8).

#### **V. GOD'S SALVATION FOR THE NATION ISRAEL (CHAPTERS 9-11).**

- A. ISRAEL'S PAST POSITION AND SELECTION (9:1-29).
- B. ISRAEL'S MISTAKE AND REJECTION: RIGHTEOUSNESS BY LAW (9:30-10:21).
- C. ISRAEL'S FUTURE RESTORATION (11:1-36).

#### **VI. PRACTICAL OUTWORKING OF OUR SALVATION (CHAPTERS 12-15).**

- A. PERSONAL GROWTH BY SUBMISSION & TRANSFORMATION (12:1,2).
- B. OUTWORKING OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS (12:3-8).
- C. PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS (12:9-21).
- D. BELIEVERS RELATIONSHIP TO GOVERNMENT (13:1-7).
- E. LOVE THE FULFILLMENT OF THE LAW (13:8-10).
- F. HOLY LIVING (13:11-14).
- G. CHRISTIAN LIBERTY (CHAP 14).
- H. IMITATION OF CHRIST (15:1-13).

#### **VII. PAUL'S MESSAGES AND FAREWELL (15:14 - 16:27).**

## **COMMENTARY**

### **I. INTRODUCTION AND THEME (1:1-17).**

#### **A. GREETING (1:1-7).**

In the greeting we see Paul introduce himself as a "bond-servant." Literally this mean a slave. The one who gives himself as a slave has no rights or will of his own, he or she serves only the will of the Master. The Lord or Master, in return, commits Himself to care for the slave (Deut 15:12-18). The gospel is also mentioned. Gospel means "good news," and is the good news that the death of Christ pays in full the penalty of our sin, and that forgiveness and eternal life is given those who entrust their salvation to Him by faith.

The Person of Christ is given. He is a physical descendant of David which placed Him in the line to be Messiah (vv 3,4), and is the Son of God, which is His Deity. The proof offered for His Person was Old Testament prophecy plus conformation by the resurrection of Christ.

The work of Christ is pointed out. Providing salvation was His work as seen in the "gospel" (v 1), "resurrection" (v 4), "grace" (v 5), "faith" (v 5) "called" (v 6). Our work, like Paul, is to proclaim the gospel of Christ to all (v 5).

Believers are called "saints." The word means holy or set apart ones. Every believer is a saint because we are set apart for God through our salvation (Phil 4:21; Col 1:2).

#### **B. THANKSGIVING AND PRAYER (1:8-12).**

Paul was full of thanksgiving for the work among the Romans. They were evangelizing, and he was grateful. He prayed often for those Christians, and requested that he might visit them to build them up in the faith.

### **C. PURPOSE OF PAUL'S LIFE (1:13-15).**

Paul considered himself under obligation to preach the gospel, he was eager to preach the gospel, and he was not ashamed to preach the gospel.

### **D. THE GOSPEL DEFINED (1:16,17).**

Defined, the gospel is the righteousness of God which is received by faith alone for salvation. Faith is the key to both salvation and our Christian walk.

## **II. CONDEMNATION OF THE HUMAN RACE (1:18 - 3:20).**

### **A. CONDEMNATION TO PAGANS: THE WISE MEN (1:18-32).**

Of the wise men of the world the condemnation is: "professing to be wise, they became fools." Mankind suppresses the truth (v 18) that God has revealed to them in natural revelation (vv 19,20) and chosen to reject God (vv 21-23). The result of this rejection is corruption and perversion expressed in idolatry, sexual perversion (specifically mentioned is homosexuality), enjoyment and promotion of sin. The catalogue of sins (vv 29-31) is very wicked.

It is important to note the sequence of man's separation from God. God revealed Himself, man rejected God, God gave man up, the result was vile wickedness. Man deliberately, forcefully, systematically has covered up and suppressed the truth about God. The reason is that man loves his sin above all else (Cf. John 3:19-20). Even today mankind rejects God by rejecting Jesus Christ and the Bible. God has not afflicted mankind with evil, but man has chosen and loves the evil which consumes society. God in His grace, however, has provided an escape to all those who come to Christ by faith. Not an escape from all the evil of the world, but an escape from the penalty it brings (2:4-6).

It is important to note that natural (general) revelation is sufficient evidence to condemn all mankind. Mankind has an intuitive awareness of God's existence (v 19).

### **B. CONDEMNATION TO THE MORAL MAN (2:1-16).**

Many people because of their moral lives think that they are good enough to go to heaven. They are, in fact, good people as compared to other. The problem is they measure themselves by their own made up standards or that of the society in which they live. God will measure mankind by His standard, however. His standard is His absolute truth which is Jesus Christ (vv 2-4, 12-16; Cf. John 14:6), which He will apply impartially to everyone (vv 5-11). God's judgment will be total, complete, accurate (v 16). No man or woman can measure up to God's standard (Cf. James 2:10), and therefore stands condemned.

The conscience of man is sufficient evidence to condemn all mankind. Even the lowliest native in the most obscure jungle has a sense of right and wrong. While it is true that standards of right and wrong differ from culture to culture, nonetheless, all mankind has a sense of right and wrong. This implies their intuitive knowledge of the existence of God who requires righteousness and will someday hold man responsible for his actions.

### **C. CONDEMNATION TO THE JEW: THE RELIGIOUS MAN (2:17 - 3:8).**

Considered in this text is the Jewish religion, although this may be applied to represent all religions and cults of the world. The Jews refused to keep God's law (2:17-29) and trusted in

religious rites and ceremonies. They also refused to believe God's law (3:1- 8), having even the privilege of receiving God's special revelation. The Jews and all religions stand condemned (v 8).

There are those who think that because they are very religious that they will be right before God. Religions are spread across the world, all having a system that supposedly will bring them righteousness and salvation. There are 11 major living religions in the world today. Many are sincere, but sincerely wrong, according to the Bible. Religious people, outside of Christ, stand condemned before God. All their religion will not help at all, no matter how devout they may be. True religion is of the heart toward Jesus Christ, not ceremonies and rituals of any kind (2:29).

#### **D. CONDEMNATION TO ALL MEN (3:9-20).**

In presenting his case, Paul now wraps up all mankind into one group and says that all stand condemned before God. All are guilty of sin (vv 9-18), all are accountable to God (v 19) and none can be saved by keeping the law (v 20). We are told that the law demonstrates the need for salvation; not to provide or aid in gaining salvation (v 20).

To sum up the case made by Paul, all mankind is totally without any righteousness before God (i.e. godliness, righteousness, right standing before God, holiness, purity). We are without righteousness on any basis, possibility or actuality. Man is not as bad as he can be and he can do good works, but none of these works can count toward gaining any merit or favor with God as a means of salvation. Intelligence, other gods, moral deeds, religious ceremonies, ritual, theology, social activity - nothing can save any person from the penalty of their sin. Mankind stands guilty and hopeless before God.

### III. THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD PROVIDED FOR MANKIND (3:21 - 5:21).

#### A. RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD EXPLAINED (3:21-31).

To begin with we need to explain and define some key terms concerning the righteousness of God. One concept is "justification" (v 24). This refers to the great problem: how can a holy and just God justify an unholy and unrighteous man? Justification solves the problem. It is that legal act of God by which, based on the righteousness of Christ, He both declares and treats the sinner as righteous. It is the legal act by God in which the righteousness of Christ is imputed (credited) to the believing sinner. The act is legal, restorative, instantaneous and complete.

Justification has many benefits (Rom 5:1-10): forgiveness of sin (Eph 1:7; Rom 8:33,34), restored to God's favor (peace and access to God) (Rom 5:1,8,9; Gal 3:26; 1 Co 1:30; 6:11), imputation of the righteousness of God (Rom 5:19; 2 Co 5:21; Phil 3:7-9), heirship (Titus 3:7), righteous living (Phil 1:1), deliverance of coming wrath (Rom 5:9) and assurance of future glorification (Rom 8:30).

Justification is sourced in the grace of God (Rom 3:24), grounded in the blood of Christ (Rom 5:9), the channel of reception is faith alone (Rom 3:28), it is guaranteed by the resurrection of Christ (Rom 4:24,25), and witnessed by good works (James 2:24).

The key point to remember is that justification means God credits the righteousness of Christ to the convert's account. God trades our guilt for Christ's righteousness. Christ takes our guilt, and in exchange gives us His righteousness. It is an eternally settled legal decision in the court room of the universe. Christ became our substitute and took our penalty.

We can never again be brought up on any charge of sin, because Jesus Christ paid the entire penalty of all our sins. It is not something for us to feel proud about, or to treat carelessly, but we are to humbly express our gratitude, worship, and service to the One who saved us from eternal condemnation.

Sin means breaking the Law of God, not living up to His Law (or His holiness as expressed in the Law), or exalting self at the center of our own universe (life), rather than God being the center of our life.

The righteousness of God means all that God demands and approves. It is found in Christ, and has been imputed to (credited to the account of) believers. Christ met, in our place, every demand of the Law. From this section of Scripture we see at least five factors concerning the Righteousness of God.

- God's righteousness is apart from the Law - man cannot earn it (v 21).
- God's righteousness is received by faith apart from the Law (v 22).
- God's righteousness is a gift from God (v 24).
- God's righteousness is based on Christ's blood (v 25).
- God's righteousness covers sins of O.T. saints (v 25).

Individuals are justified (saved) by faith alone, apart from any deeds or works of any law - solely by faith, totally unrelated to any religious ceremonies, words, rites, works, observances, memberships, baptisms, emotional experiences, morality....

The Atonement of Christ paid all the penalty for all sin for all time for all those who by faith cast their trust upon His work for their personal salvation. God was satisfied with the full payment Christ suffered for the penalty of our sin (v 25). The word, "propitiation" means Christ's Atonement fulfilled all the demands of the law, and God was satisfied with the required penalty.

## **B. THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD ILLUSTRATED IN ABRAHAM (4:1-25).**

We are told that Abraham's salvation was based solely on faith and separate from works (vv 1-5), and righteousness was accounted to him on the basis of faith, not works. He was justified by faith alone. Paul further illustrates by saying that even David said God's righteousness was granted apart from works (vv 6-8). If salvation was by works, then it would be considered as a wage earned. But salvation is by grace which is unmerited favor to undeserving, guilty, condemned sinners.

Paul takes closer aim at the Judaizers by saying that Abraham's faith was separate from Jewish circumcision (vv 9-12). Genesis 15:6 is before Genesis 17:10ff. The Judaizers maintained that if a person was not circumcised in accordance with the Mosaic Law, they could not be saved (Acts 15:1). They were wrong.

Paul continues with his argument, maintaining that Abraham's faith was separate from Mosaic Law (vv 13-15). God's promise to Abraham was through righteousness based on faith, not Mosaic Law. The Mosaic Law did not come until 430 years after the promise to Abraham (Gal 3:17).

Paul concludes his illustration by asserting that Abraham was justified (saved) by faith alone (vv 16-25), and applies to anyone today who by faith personally receives Christ as Saviour.

The results of God's righteousness is peace with God, the experience of hope and God's

love shed abroad in our heart by the Holy Spirit. We are saved from God's wrath and reconciled to God. Because of our position in Christ and His promises to us we can live above the trials that afflict us in this life. We grow in faith and endurance as we walk in faith in the face of trials. We see how God's great love was demonstrated to us.

#### **D. GOD'S GRACE IS GREATER THAN SIN'S CURSE (5:12-21).**

From this section we learn that sin and death entered the world and human race through Adam. The contrast is between death through Adam and life through Christ. As Adam's sin brought real, actual results, so did the death of Christ. The difference is that whereas Adam's result is automatic, we must receive Christ to be given life (v 17). Because of Adam's sin, his descendants could only produce sinners, thus we see the universality of sin to all human kind (v 12).

We also learn that Paul considered Adam to be a real, historical person, not a myth. Also, since death came into the world through Adam, this would eliminate any prehistorical race or beings on earth before the time of Adam. Sin actually came into the universe through Satan.

#### **IV. GOD'S SANCTIFICATION FOR THE BELIEVER (CHAPTERS 6-8).**

##### **B. BELIEVER'S UNION WITH CHRIST AS BASIS FOR SANCTIFICATION (CHAPTER 6)**

Definitions need to be given first, and we start with sanctification, which is: "that continuous operation of the Holy Spirit, by which the holy disposition (new nature) imparted in regeneration is maintained and strengthened" (Augustus Strong, Systematic Theology, p. 869).

The primary means of sanctification are the Word of God, prayer, Christian fellowship, soul-winning and works of goodness. Faith is the "trigger" that allows the operation of the Holy Spirit to work in our lives (Rom 1:17; Gal 3:11; Col 2:6).

Sanctification is that progressive and continuous work of the Holy Spirit by which He is transforming us into the likeness of Christ, purifies us and enables us to perform good works (Rom 8:29; 12:1,2; Eph 4:22-24; 1 Th 4:3).

As justification frees us from the penalty of sin (past), now sanctification is saving us from the present power of sin in our lives (present) and glorification refers to the future freeing us from the actual presence of sin (future). These are the three basic aspects of our complete salvation.

Our union with Christ means: "that intimate, vital, and spiritual union between Christ and His people, in virtue of which He is the source of their life and strength, of their blessedness and salvation (L. Berkhof, Systematic Theology, 1941, p. 449). This union is spiritual, intimate, dynamic, real, and powerful. It is a spiritual merging. We are connected to Christ.

In Chapter six it is important to distinguish between the sin principle within us and "sins" which we commit which are manifestations of our sin nature. In this chapter we see the method and dynamics involved in our spiritual growth. The question Paul brought up in verse one is: shall we continue in sin? The answer is: how can we go back to that which enslaved us in the first place? Paul then explains the dynamic of our release from the power of sin in our lives.

He said our new power source is our spiritual baptism (union) with Christ in which we are now united with Him to experience a new life which is His (eternal) life (vv 4,5). This eternal



life is the same as being born again, or regeneration.

Regeneration is that act of God in which He implants within us new life which makes holy the governing tendency of our soul. This new life is eternal and spiritual. We become a new creature, born from above and partakers of the divine nature of God. We are born into the family of God (John 1:12, 13; 3:3-7; 5:21, 24; Ephesians 2:1, 10; 4:24; 2 Corinthians 5:17; 2 Peter 1:4; Colossians 3:10; Galatians 2:20; 1 John 3:9; Galatians 5:17).

Being "crucified" (v 6) means separation in heart, mind and deed from the old way of life characterized by sin and rebellion against God. Rather than identifying with a sinful way of life, our new identification becomes Christ as we are being conformed into His image. Our position and power is in and from Christ.

We are given four key words that describe our part in the sanctification process. First, "know" (vv 3,6,9) the facts concerning our new position in Christ with all the possibilities, power, pleasures, problems inherent within. Think, dwell, memorize and meditate upon the truth which is the Bible. Step one: get our thinking right about God and our relationship to Him.

Second, "reckon" (v 11) the facts to be true, receivable, real, having great value. In other words, believe the Bible truth that one dwells on. This faith activates, triggers, turns into personal reality that which the Bible says to be true.

Third, "yield" (vv 13,16,19) to the facts as being desirable and eagerly wanted (not half heartedly or grudgingly tolerated) in one's behavior and attitudes. We make that choice and commitment.

Fourth, "obey" (vv 16,17) the facts as revealed in the Bible. Begin to act out new patterns of behavior. Act against unwanted habits of thinking, feeling, acting and replace those habits with godly ones. Act and feel like the Bible is true as it addresses individual situations in life.

## **B. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE LAW AND SANCTIFICATION (CHAP 7).**

The first thing we learn is that Christian believers are free from the Law as a means of sanctification (vv 1-6). Our focus is to be upon Christ, not the many commandments of the Mosaic Law. The Law cannot save us nor sanctify us - it can only condemn and point us to our need for a Savior. The Law is good, but the problem is we cannot keep it.

In Paul's metaphor of marriage we learn that just as a woman is released from her marriage if her husband dies, so we have been released from the law through our death with Christ. Further our new marriage is with Christ.

The second principle is that believers cannot be made holy by keeping the Law (vv 7-12). The Law is good. Its function is to bring to light the enormous power of sin which kills and Destroys.

Third, the Law is good but the problem is the flesh, the old sin nature in man (vv 13,14). Nothing is wrong with the Law, it is just that we cannot keep its demands. The Law of Moses is grounded in the very nature of God Himself; consequently, it is good and perfect.

Fourth, Paul illustrates in his own life that in his own experience as a believer he was helpless in trying to be sanctified by keeping the Law (vv 15-25). He speaks of sin as being a

disposition or power in man's life that produces individual acts of sin. His conclusion is that sin and the Law brings death (v 24). The bottom line is that the principle of sin is too powerful for the believer to overcome either for justification or sanctification.

### **C. THE OUTWORKING OF SANCTIFICATION (CHAPT 8).**

In working out our sanctification we first take note of the power of our position in Christ (v 1): there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus. He is our "righteousness and sanctification, and redemption" (1 Co 1:30b).

The Holy Spirit is the dynamic power working in our lives (v 2). He exerts life, power and procedures to bring change which the Law was unable and powerless to do. His work is regular (like a law), though it is dynamic and not mechanical like a natural law.

The victory is to walk in the Spirit which is setting one's mind on the things of the Spirit (vv 4-8; cf. 12:2; Eph 4:23; Gal 5:16,18,25). Paul clearly states that the Holy Spirit indwells every Christian (v 9).

As Christians we are adopted as children of God (vv 12-25) and the Holy Spirit helps us to pray in the will of God (vv 26,27). Many times we do not know how to pray in certain situations. We will have suffering and discouragement in this life (v 17), yet future glorification in Christ (18-30). The promise to believers is that God works all things to our ultimate good (v 28).

Christians have secure living in the promises of God (vv 29-39) who said He will not condemn us (vv 33,34) nor ever separate us from the love of Christ (v 35-39). Our salvation is secure in Christ who has called, justified and will glorify us according to His predetermined plan to conform us to the image of Christ.

### **V. GOD'S SALVATION FOR THE NATION ISRAEL (CHAPTES 9-11).**

#### **A. ISRAEL'S PAST POSITION AND SELECTION (9:1-29).**

Chapters 9-11 are parenthetical. Paul explains what will happen to Israel now that the nation rejected her Messiah. Such issues were: why did Israel refuse her Messiah? Is God true to His promises? Is God powerless to keep His promises?

Paul first shows Israel's past position and selection. Israel had an exalted national position of sonship, glory, covenants, Mosaic Law, tabernacle, messianic promises, patriarchs and Christ (v 1-5). There is the sovereign selection of spiritual descendants that is a remnant (vv 6-29). God's promises are, therefore, good and His plan is on course.

#### **B. ISRAEL'S MISTAKE & REJECTION: RIGHTEOUSNESS BY LAW (9:30-10:21).**

The Jews sought a righteousness by works (vv 30-33). They thought they did not need a Savior. Their zeal for the Law, however, did not count for righteousness (10:2).

Paul says salvation is by heartfelt faith and confession in Christ (10:9,10). God called the Jew and gentile together into one body, which is the new institution, the body of Christ, the church (10:12,13; cf. Eph 2:11-3:11).

Missionary verses are evident as we are to go to all the world and proclaim the gospel (vv 14,15). While it is true that God has elected His people out of His free choice and not on any merit on the part of sinners (9:11,23), nonetheless, they must believe the gospel message preached by those who are sent. The missionary principle is this: we are to go to all with the

gospel of Christ, we must send missionaries, evangelism is a honorable thing, faith comes by hearing the Word of God.

### **C. ISRAEL'S FUTURE RESTORATION (11:1-36).**

God's rejection of Israel is partial and temporary. The purpose is given (v 15). Israel rejected her Messiah, Jesus Christ, and lost her favored position. The gospel was then proclaimed to the gentiles who were joined with saved Jews in the new entity called the church. The purpose was to make Israel jealous and look to Christ to be saved (v 11). The casting off is only temporary because when Christ returns, then Israel will be regathered, judged, restored to favor and redeemed (v 26).

The fullness of the Gentiles (v 25) refers to the sum total or number of Gentiles who will be saved (Acts 15:14). When this number is completed, then Christ will return and God will again turn to and save Israel (v 26).

## **VI. PRACTICAL OUTWORKING OF OUR SALVATION (CHAPTERS 12-15).**

### **A. PERSONAL GROWTH BY SUBMISSION & TRANSFORMATION (12:1,2).**

To grow spiritually we separate ourselves to Christ for service. Our motive is the present position we have in Christ by the "mercies of God."

We are not to be conformed or pressed into the mold of this world, but transformed by mind renewal, that is, transform our belief and attitude systems by the Word of God made real to us by the Holy Spirit. The objective is to know and do the will of God. We reprogram our mental computers (i.e. our minds) with the Bible. The truth of God needs to become part of our value system

### **B. OUTWORKING OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS (12:3-8).**

Believers are to work together with a proper humble attitude, in unity and faithfulness. The spiritual gifts listed are prophecy, service, teaching, exhortation, giving, leadership and mercy. Revelation from the prophets was to be in agreement with the body of revelation already disclosed by God (i.e. according to the proportion of his faith). Prophecy in the sense of gaining new revelation (information) from God ceased with the completion of the book of Revelation (22;18,19).

Concerning revelation, the Westminster Confession of Faith states: "The whole counsel of God, concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man's salvation, faith, and life, is either expressly set down in scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of men. Nevertheless, we acknowledge the inward illumination of the Spirit of God to be necessary for the saving understanding of such things as are revealed in the word; and that there are some circumstances concerning the worship of God, and government of the Church, common to human actions and societies, which are to be ordered by the light of nature and Christian prudence, according to the general rules of the word, which are always to be observed" (Chapter I, Article VI). This statement reflects the view of historic Protestant church.

### **C. PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS (12:9-21).**

The list of principles includes acting with love, service, generosity, how to relate to one's enemies and overcome evil. Forgiveness is a theme of this section.

### **D. BELIEVER'S RELATIONSHIPS TO GOVERNMENT (13:1-7).**

Believers are to be subject to government. All authority is from God. Taxes should be paid. (Cf. 1 Pe 2:13-17; 1 Ti 2:1-4; Titus 3:1). The intent is not that just certain forms of government are ordained by God, only that God upholds the principles of government even if some governments do not carry out His desires of justice and government.

The proper relationship between government and citizens is that of obedience and submission and support on the part of the citizen. The individual who rebels against government rebels against God, because He established the authority. Citizens who obey need not fear authorities. Citizens are to show honor and respect to governmental officials.

On the other hand, government is a servant of God and responsible to Him. Leaders are to do good, commend those citizens who do well, prevent tyranny, execute justice, maintain order and give protection to citizens. This is the true role of government. However, some governments refuse to respect their God given role.

#### **E. LOVE THE FULFILMENT OF THE LAW (13:8-10).**

The essence of the law is to continually show love. This is not a prohibition against the use of credit or loans, but stresses the Christian's obligation to express love in all our relationships. Hatred, vengeance, holding grudges, and getting revenge have no place in a Christian's life.

#### **F. HOLY LIVING (13:11-14).**

Christians are to put on Jesus Christ and put away the night life, sexual sin, and fighting. We make no provision for sin, that is, stay away from those temptations and places that will lead us into sin.

#### **G. CHRISTIAN LIBERTY (Chapter 14).**

This section deals with conduct in matters that are debatable and not clear from Scripture. Some of these issues deal with hair styles, clothes, use of leisure time, jewelry, make up, music, worship preference and the like. Christians are not to condemn other Christians who differ in these matters. Christian can in good conscience disagree on these matters.

The example in Paul's explanation is the eating of some kinds of foods not permitted by Jewish law (Lev 11). Eating of these foods was very offensive to some immature believers. Mature believers were to refrain from eating of these foods, because to do so may have tempted the immature believers into doing something that was to them sin.

We are to refrain from doing things that are actually permitted by God; yet, would in some way lead another Christian into sin. A "stumbling block" (v 13) is a temptation to sin. Our personal convictions should not be used in any way to hinder others in spiritual growth. Our purpose is to have personal convictions and standards; yet, we are to create joy, peace, righteousness and the growth of fellow believers.

God will judge all Christians (14:10-12). This refers to the rewards Christians will receive at the judgment seat of Christ. Salvation is not the issue. We will be judged on the faithfulness by which we serve those tasks God assigns to us (Cf. 2 Co 5:10; 1 Co 3:10-15).

#### **H. IMITATION OF CHRIST (15:14-16:27).**

We are not to let the pleasing of ourselves be the goal of our life (v 3). We are to encourage others in the Faith (vv 4,5), glorify God, accept one another, praise God and give hope and encouragement.

## **VII. PAUL'S MESSAGES AND FAREWELL (15:14-16:27)**

### **A. PAUL'S PROJECTED PLANS (15:14-33).**

His purpose was to continue to preach the gospel (15:19,20,24). He would go to Jerusalem to deliver funds to needy Christians, and from there travel to Spain to preach the gospel. Paul said he had preached the gospel as far as Illyricum (15:19) which is the eastern shore of the Adriatic Sea, or the formerly Yugoslavia – now known as Croatia, Serbia and Kosovo, and region.

### **B. PAUL'S PERSONAL COMMUNICATION (16:1-16).**

Pheobe was to deliver the letter (i.e. Romans) (vv 1,2). She is called the "servant" of the church. This word can be translated "deacon" which leads some to believe she was a deaconess, and therefore this is the justification for that office in our churches today. Paul evidently dictated this letter to one Tertius who actually wrote the letter. Cenchræa was the eastern port of Corinth. Verse five speaks of a house church. Early congregations of that day met in homes. Several house churches in a city made up the church in that city.

Paul warns against trouble makers who teach false doctrine (vv 17-18). Satan is mentioned (v 20) as one who will someday be crushed by God who will establish peace (Rev 20:1-6). These false teachers were under the influence of Satan.

## **FIRST CORINTHIANS A GENERAL COMMENTARY BY REV. DR. WILLIS C. NEWMAN**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **I. BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

##### **A. AUTHOR**

The author is the Apostle Paul (1 Co 1:1). The record of Paul founding the church at Corinth some five years earlier (about A.D. 50-51) is found in Acts 18:1-18). The planting of the church was while Paul was on his second missionary journey. Paul wrote this letter from Ephesus (16:8) in about A.D. 56).

##### **B. PURPOSE**

Paul is writing to several bad reports he had heard about the church at Corinth, and to reply to several questions brought to him by a delegation from Corinth. The purpose can be identified by the key phrase, "Now concerning..." and are summarized:

1. To rebuke various conditions and practices in that local church.
2. To answer specific practical questions from the Corinthians.
3. To instruct on the doctrine of the resurrection.

##### **C. THEME.**

The theme of this epistle is the emphasis on the practical life of the local church at Corinth. Great stress is placed upon the need for unity and proper Christian conduct within that Christian community. Problems were very great in Corinth. They were caused by the clash between the conduct and concepts of Christianity and paganism – or the secular society and sacred Christianity. The Solution to these problems make up the content of the letter of First Corinthians. The condition of the church at Corinth can best be described by the words: selfishness, division, criticism, and toleration of evil. The common root problem was spiritual immaturity.

## **D. THE CITY AND CULTURE**

Corinth is a city in Greece located on a narrow, four mile wide strip of land that separates the Aegean and Adriatic sea as well as northern and southern Greece. The city was destroyed in 146 B.C. by the Romans and rebuilt in 46 B.C. This made the city about 100 years old at the time of Paul's visits. Corinth was the Roman capital of its province and was about the fourth largest city in the Roman Empire with a population somewhere between 100,000 and several hundred thousand people.

Most of the shipping of the Mediterranean world passed through the narrow isthmus by Corinth, and all the land commerce from north and south had to go through the city. Beside the shipyards and docks there was agriculture around the city with grain fields, olive groves and vineyards. Concerning sea shipment transport, smaller ships were towed across the isthmus on a tramway and for the larger ships the cargo was unloaded, packed across and loaded on a waiting ship on the other side.

Corinth was a city where all the brutality of the west embraced the sensuality of the east. It had a very mobile population made up of sailors, businessmen, traders, government officials, dockworkers, soldiers, laborers, gamblers, slaves and athletes. The city was without an established tradition and aristocracy.

Corinth was the most immoral city probably in the world at that time. For example, 1,000 prostitutes were assigned to the temple of Aphrodite, the goddess of love. Travelers in the Roman world had the saying that to behave like a Corinthian meant to lead a low, shameless and immoral life - and this in the eyes of a pagan world! At nights the city teemed with vice, drunkenness and sin of all kinds (Cf. 1 Co 6:9-11; Rom 1:18-32).

Corinth was also the location of the Isthmian games which were held every two years. These were second only to the Olympic games, held every 4 years. These games were great events and included races, wrestling, boxing, discus, javelin, chariot races, wild beasts, fighting gladiators, trials of strength, jumping, horse races and art, music and poetry contests. People from all over the world attended these games, and even Nero, the Roman Emperor, participated in them.

Corinth was also a religious center of Greece. Along with the temple to Aphrodite and Apollos, and others, the area flourished with the wild, erotic mystery religions. The most famous were the ones celebrated at Eleusis and Samothrace. Eleusis is only a few miles from Corinth. The ecstatic Delphic oracles were obtained only a few miles from Corinth.

## **II. BRIEF OUTLINE OF FIRST CORINTHIANS**

### **I. DEFILEMENT IN THE CORINTHIAN CHURCH (CHAPTS 1-6).**

- A. Position of the church in Christ (1:1-9).
- B. Pronouncement against division (1:10-4:21).
- I. Problem of divisions (1:10-17).
  - 2. Reasons for divisions (1:18-2:26).
  - 3. Results of division (chap 3).
  - 4. Paul's example of spiritual service (chap 4)
  - 5. Problems of church discipline (chapters 5-6).

### **II. DELICATE MATTERS IN PERSONAL LIVING (CHAPTERS 7-10).**

- A. Priorities of marriage and divorce (chap 7)
- B. Principles of Christian liberty (chapters 8-10).
  - 1. Foods offered to a pagan god (chap 8).
  - 2. Paul's example (chap 9).
  - 3. Instruction in Christian liberty (chap 10).

### **III. DISORDERS IN PUBLIC WORSHIP (CHAPTERS 11-14).**

- A. Various practices in public worship (chap 11).
  - 1. The role of women (11:1-16).
  - 2. The practice of communion (11:17-34).
- B. Place of spiritual gifts (chapters 12-14).
  - 1. The use and purpose of spiritual gifts (chap 12).
  - 2. Love superior to the gifts (chap 13).
  - 3. The purpose of tongues (14:1-25).
  - 4. The regulation of the gifts (14:26-40).

### **IV. DOCTRINE OF THE RESURRECTION (CHAPTER 15).**

- A. Proclamation of Christ's resurrection (15:1-11).
- B. Importance of the resurrection (15:12-19).
- C. Sequence of the resurrection (15:20-28).
- D. Practical benefit of the resurrection (15:29-34).
- E. Nature of the resurrected body (15:35-50).
- F. The body's change (15:51-58).

### **V. DIRECTIVES AND PERSONAL MATTERS (CHAPTER 16).**

- A. Giving for special collection (16:1-4).
- B. How to determine God's will (16:5-9, 12).
- C. Personal relationships in the church (16:13-24).

## **COMMENTARY**

### **I. DEFILEMENT IN THE CORINTHIAN CHURCH (CHAPTERS 1-6).**

#### **A. POSITION OF THE CHURCH IN CHRIST (1:1-9).**

1. The first of three great truths we can learn from this section is that God calls His people (vv 1, 2, 9). Our calling may be defined as: "that act of God by which all people who hear the gospel are invited to receive Christ as Savior and by which the elect, through its special efficacy (i.e. effectiveness, power) are not only invited but are actually brought to salvation" (William F. Kerr, unpublished class notes).

We are also called saints (v 2), which means we have been set apart for service to God, a great privilege. We are saints because we are "in Christ" (v 2), not because of any good within ourselves. In other words, we are saints by calling and position, not by working for the position by any good deeds. We are also referred to as a "church" which means an assembly of people that belong to God. The Bible divides the world population into two groups: those who belong to God and those who do not.

There is great blessing because of our calling. We have fellowship with Christ (v 9). We are partners with Him. Our relationship is intimate and His interests comes our interests. We are enriched (v. 5) by His riches we receive. A third blessing is that we are considered blameless

(v 8). We are unimpeachable. We are not sinless, but forgiven. No charge can be laid against us (Cf. Rom 8:33).

2. The second truth is that God keeps His people. We are "confirmed" by Christ (v 8). This term was used for a legally, valid confirmation of a sale by a seller to a buyer in the presence of a third party. Christ will legally guarantee us blameless when He comes again. However, this is our present position in Christ. We are also "sanctified" by Christ (v 2). This means to be included in the inner circle of what is holy, to be reserved for God and His service. The word comes from the same root as saint. The form of the word, sanctified, is in the perfect tense and passive voice which means that sanctification has been done to us by Christ with a resultant fixed state. Christ will also "keep" us until He comes (v 8). The God who saved us will keep us saved forever, because we are His.

3. Third, God relates to His people as Lord, Father, and the faithful one. He relates as our **Lord** (vv 2,3,7,8,9). To be Lord means to be owner and master who has full authority and control of something. Christ has full, lawful authority over us. He owns us. Our response is to yield to Lordship. God relates as "**Father**" (v 3). The context is of the strong Jewish patriarchal household of that day. As father, then, God protects, instructs, guides, is the head of the household, provides employment for the sons and daughters and disciplines for our own benefit and growth. God is a perfect father. God relates as the "**faithful one**" (v 9). God is absolutely reliable, credible and wonderful. God is good to His people, and will not disappoint us.

## **B. PRONOUNCEMENT AGAINST DIVISION (1:10-4:21).**

1. There was a serious problem of division and disunity in the local church at Corinth (1:10-17).

The divisions were over several issues: personalities, groups who championed various causes such as the role of women in the church, marriage and divorce, Christian liberty, speaking in tongues, eating of certain foods and the resurrection of Christ. Many times Christians become an intolerant, self-righteous clique. The root cause is spiritual immaturity (3:1-4). Quarrels are a symptom of deeper problems: carnal Christians living in the flesh, not the Spirit. They live by the world's standards and not the Holy Spirit and the Bible. Debates, discussion, sincere disagreements over matters of conscience are fine, but these are a different issue. Seeking for the wisest decisions and ways to handle things are fine, but seeking for power and positions are not.

The solution to this problem of spiritual immaturity was the Lordship of Christ (vv 10,13,17). Correction may also be needed, as Paul was doing, but in the proper attitude (v 10). To "exhort" means to call to one's side and appeal in a tactful, warm and brotherly tone of voice. The appeal is in the name of Jesus which means that Christ is always present. We are to agree in heart and be made complete (a medical term for knitting broken bones). All Christians cannot always agree on every point every time, but we can agree on the fundamental doctrines and not become bitter and mad over the lesser ones.

Paul sought to place the correct priority before the people, which was world evangelism (v 17). This was his objective, given by the Lord, and should have been what the Corinthians were focused on. His mention of baptism was to place it into proper perspective. Paul baptized some, but he is making it clear that baptism is not necessary to salvation.

In the New Testament time, baptism was the initiation rite by which a person became



identified with a particular group teaching mutually believed truth. The sequence was to get people saved, baptized and into a local church, grounded in the Faith, and sent out to continue the cycle (Matt 28:16-20; Acts 2:40-42); Mark 16:15,20; Luke 24:46-48; John 20:21; Acts 1:8; 5:42; 8:4; 10:42,43).

Paul was sent to preach the gospel which means to continually announce the divine message of salvation. His language was simple, understandable, plain.

### **Reasons for church divisions**

2. The reasons for the divisions in the Corinthian church were given (1:18-2:26). One reason is that the Corinthians did not understand the power of the gospel of Christ (1:18-2:5).

Paul taught that the Gentiles rejected the gospel (1:18,22,23) because they thought it was foolishness. The Gentiles trusted wisdom. For a Messiah to be a crucified (alleged) criminal who could take the penalty of sins for other men was absurd to them. Reason was their god. If they happened to be of the mystery religions nearby, then salvation was by ritual and ceremony.

To the Jew the gospel was a stumbling block, offensive, causing revulsion, anger and disapproval. The thought the Messiah would be a conquering, political savior who would restore the political glory of Israel and break the yoke of Roman rule. They could not conceive of a condemned and crucified Messiah.

Paul gives the true status of the world's wisdom: it cannot know God (v 21), it is foolishness (v 20), inferior (v 25), nullified (v 28), and in the future it will be destroyed (v 19). To believers, however, the gospel and Bible is the cornerstone of our life, our salvation, power, wisdom (1:18,24,30). The gospel is the good news (1:17), word of the cross (1:18), Christ crucified (1:23), and is to be proclaimed (1:17,21,23). Not all the wise and noble will reject Christ (1:26). Education in secular pursuits is not wrong. All truth is God's truth, but information must be measured by the Bible to determine if it is actually God's truth.

Paul speaks of the power of the gospel in our lives, teaching of our union with Christ (1:30). By the "union" with Christ is meant that intimate, mystical, life-giving, eternal, spiritual union (connection) in which the spirit of the individual Christian (while keeping their individuality) is interpenetrated, occupied and empowered directly by the Holy Spirit. Believers, therefore, become one with Christ and spiritually one with all true believers as we are united into the one spiritual body called the Church of whom Christ is the head and Christians are the members (2 Co 1:22; 5:17; 1 Co 6:15,17,19; 12:13; Col 1:27; 2 Ti 1:14; Acts 2:1-4; Ro 7:4; 8:9-11; John 15:1-10; 14:20; 17:21-23; Gal 2:20; Eph 3:16,17; 4:4-6).

It is because of our spiritual union and oneness with Christ that we as individuals can experience all our benefits as Christians. It is because of this union that we also have responsibilities to our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Many Christians have the idea that Christ lives outside them rather than being a Savior and friend that lives within. It is because Christ lives in us and us in Him (John 14:20) that we can say that the Christian life is the outliving of the indwelling Christ. Because we are in Christ, His eternal life, righteousness, riches, fellowship with the Father, transforming power, blessings, triumph over sin and death, love, compassion, faith, desire for holiness, legal

standing, labors, sufferings, sorrows, warfare, goals become ours. Because we are in Christ we are justified, sanctified, will be glorified. Because of our union with Christ, man cannot glorify in himself, all we have is from Christ.

Paul also spoke of the priority of the gospel ((2:1-5). It was his single purpose to preach the gospel (v 2). He did not rely or trust in superiority of speech or wisdom (v 1), persuasion (v 2) or the wisdom of man (v 5), but concentrated on Christ and salvation through Him (v 2). He used plain, simple, clear language and declared the full, clear proclamation of the gospel (v 1,4). Paul did use persuasion, motivation, strategy and plans, but he kept the message honest and clear and his trust was not in the methods, but in God and the power of the gospel to accomplish its results (vv 3-5).

The second reason for church division was that the Corinthians did not understand the nature of God's revelation (2:6-16).

In speaking of God's revelation (the Bible) we can learn that it should be constantly studied (v 6) and greatly valued (V 9). Paul stated that this wisdom is different than the world's wisdom (vv 6,7) and will last forever, whereas the world's wisdom will pass away some day (v 6,7). The Bible is a specific revelation from, planned by God and revealed by God to the Apostles, including Paul (vv 7-10).

The words "has prepared" and "revealed" are in the aorist tense and indicative mood. This means that the word expresses the occurrence of an event, or action as a single whole in past time (H.E. Dana & Julius Mantey, A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament, pp. 178, 194-195). The conclusion is that God's revelation was completed in that generation of Apostles, ending with John in about A.D. 95 (Cf. Rev 22:18-19).

Revelation as specific propositional information directly from God has ceased. However, God still gives us insight and wisdom into His propositional truth already recorded in the Bible, and lets His will be known throughout our life experience – primarily through the eternal principles recorded in the Bible. For example, we don't need to find out if we should love other Christians, or to evangelize the world. God has already revealed that to us in His Bible.

God uses our experiences in life, advice from wiser people, circumstances that come our way, opportunities that appear, mistakes we make, hardships we face, and common sense to guide us through life. Sometimes God impresses upon our hearts as to the direction He wants us to go. For example, the Holy Spirit may place upon our heart a lingering desire or motivation or assurance that He wants us to do certain things. Sometimes the Holy Spirit will have things stand out to us in the Bible, or show us insights that we had overlooked before.

As to the Bible, it is rejected by the natural (unsaved) person who cannot and do not wish to understand it (v 14), because they do not have the Holy Spirit to explain the words. They can understand the words, but the worldly minded do not believe or receive the Bible because it is simply foolishness to them. They lack the desire and ability. The spiritual Christian can understand, actually wants to, and does receive the things of God.

Now that we have seen some of the causes or reasons for the church splits in Corinth, we shift over and examine the results of conflict in churches.

### **Results of church conflict**

3. The results of the church divisions are in chapter 3.

The first consequence of the divisions is that their spiritual growth was hindered (3:1-9). Paul divided the human race into three categories: carnal and spiritual Christians and the unsaved. The carnal Christian (v 1,3) is spiritually immature. They do not know the Bible and in their relations with other people they are childish, arrogant, jealous and full of strife. They live like unsaved people. The result is that people are pitted against each other rather than united together in a common goal or cause.

The spiritual Christian loves the Bible, is dominated by the Holy Spirit and is rightly related to others (vv 1,2). The unsaved person does not receive the Bible, is controlled by their own desires, and unfortunately, resides under the eventual wrath of God (John 3:36).

Major information is given concerning Christian service and church growth (vv 5-9).

We are servants of God who gives us opportunity and assigns our areas of responsibility (v 5). Though human effort is required in the Lord's work, it is God who brings the results and success (vv 6,7). God gives rewards to faithful workers based on their own works toward the advancement of the interests of Christ. God also owns the works or results of Gospel work. They do not belong to committees, denominations, churches, preachers, administrators, etc.

The second consequence of church division is the loss of rewards for the believers (3:10-23). Believers are both enabled, given abilities and opportunity to serve God (vv 5,10). The sphere of service is evangelism and discipleship (v 10), with all the various means used to accomplish those tasks: church service, literature, preaching, missions, Christian schools, church planting, etc. Rewards are based on the amount and quality of Christian work (vv 10,13-15).

The primary evaluation of the Christian is faithfulness to the resources and opportunities which God has assigned (4:2). Rewards will be given in the future, and salvation is not the issue, but only rewards for Christian service (v 15). This judgment of Christians is called the Judgment Seat of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:10), which is different than the Great White Throne judgment where only the unsaved are judged as to the severity of their sentence (Revelation 20:11-15).

The actual rewards are sometimes referred to as crowns (cf. 9:25; 1 Thessalonians 2:19; 2 Timothy 4:8; James 1:12; 1 Peter 5:4; Revelation 2:10; 3:11; 4:4, 10).

Of special note, verse 16 speaks of the local church (1:1,2) as being a temple of God in which the Holy Spirit dwells. Elsewhere the individual is viewed as a temple of God (6:19).

4. Paul's example of spiritual service is given in chapter four.

Paul defines a minister as being a servant of Christ (v 1) who is to be found trustworthy (faithful) and a good worker for Christ (v 2). They are stewards of God's interests, who are responsible to carry out His work (vv 1,2). A steward is the manager of a household or estate, or a dispenser of goods. Ministers are to dispense the Word (mysteries) of God.

In terms of being critical of others, Paul warns that many times we do not have all the information to make accurate evaluation of various situations, and so do not be quick to judge others. Best to wait for the Lord to return, because He has all the facts and will judge the motives as well (vv 3-5).

Paul refers, though not by name, to the culprits in Corinth who had attacked him. He spoke

of their spiritual pride (vv 6-8). Pride is caused by the confusion of truth, that is, thinking one knows more than they actually do (v 6). The cover up of sin and thinking one has already "arrived" to spiritual maturity also contribute. Paul condemns pride. Its cure is to deal honestly and in gentle, patient love and be accurate with facts and reality.

The cost of spiritual service is given (vv 9-13). To serve Christ costs one status in the world system, material benefits, respect in the eyes of the world and loss of ease. Paul also set us the model to mimic (vv 14-17). He was a church planter, builder, soul winner, consistent in his work, a people lover (yet firm) and teacher.

5. The problems of church-discipline are discussed in chapters five and six. Sexual immorality is the problem Paul tackled first (5:1-8). The man Paul referred to was having sexual relations with probably his step mother. To permit such a sin in the church would bring even more corruption to the church. They were to remove or excommunicate the sinful person. They were to commit the brother to Satan, probably to the world system, of which Satan's chastisement would cause physical sickness or maybe even death.

Continual sin can lead to physical sickness or even death to the Christian (1 Co 11:30; 1 Jo 5:16-17). The goal is restorative (v 5), not merely punishment of someone who sins. The church attitude should not be complacent or self-righteous, but sorrowful and merciful.

In relationship to unbelievers (5:9-13), we are to be a message of hope among them, yet, we are to be different. In relationship to ungodly believers we are to restore them to fellowship, or disassociate ourselves from those who persist in sin. Restoration to Christ and His Church is always the objective in dealing with backsliders.

Paul speaks to the problem of lawsuits among believers (6:1-11). The Greek way of life was one of fighting and lawsuits. The Jews considered it sin against divine law to go to a non-Jewish court. The limitations specifically mentioned in this passage are that believers are not to go to secular courts against other believers. They are to resolve conflict within Christian circles. God desires justice. Christians may go to secular court against unbelievers, because the latter does not fall under the jurisdiction of the church. One's motive must be to seek justice, not to cheat someone or gain vengeance (cf. Rom 12:19). Paul gives the qualifications of Christians: we will judge the world and angels (vv 2,3).

Evidently, some Christians were using their Christian liberty to justify their sin (6:12-20). Some were saying that just as food and the body go together, so do sex and the body. Paul states that sexual immorality is to be rejected by Christians. Christian liberty deals with actions that are not expressly commanded or forbidden by God, but may be right or wrong depending on one's culture and situation.

The principles to guide this behavior, Paul says, are two: is the behavior helpful, or will it enslave me? We are to glorify God in all that we do, and make it our practice to flee any sexual temptation. Sex is only right within the bounds of marriage. Verse 19 states that our physical bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit.

## **II. DELICATE MATTERS IN PERSONAL LIVING (CHAPTERS 7-10).**

### **A. PRIORITIES OF MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE (CHAPTER 7).**

1. Paul deals first with the issues of celibacy and marriage (7:1-9). He maintains that both to live a celibate life or to get married is fine. Neither married nor unmarried is better than the other. Paul gives himself as an example of being unmarried (v 7). Paul may have been a

widower, or perhaps his wife either died or left him when he became a Christian (Cf. v 8). Some maintain that Paul was a member of the Sanhedrin (Acts 26:10), and that members of that body must be married. It is difficult, however, to establish that Sanhedrin members had to be married before A.D. 70.

The nature of Paul's ministry was very difficult for women, and he thought it best not to be married. His ministry involved much travel, hardship, and he could not have had much of a home life.

Of course, it is fine to be married (vv 2,7). Because of sexual desire with the potential of immorality, some cannot stay single (v 2). They need to marry. The first principle, however, is to look at how can we best serve God (v 35), it is not "I must get married." Marriage is elevated to a high status (Cf. Eph 5:28-33). Partners are to fulfill their obligations to one another. Specifically mentioned is to fulfill the sexual needs of one another. One is permitted to temporarily abstain from sex for prayer (v 5) and by mutual consent. Forbidden is cheating in marriage and polygamy.

2. Next, Paul considers marriage, divorce and remarriage (7:10-40). The views among evangelical Christians are wide and diverse concerning this issue. The following is the view held by me (this writer). All points expressed here are held as biblical somewhere under the broad umbrella of conservative scholarship.

The design of marriage is the propagation of the human race (Gen 1:28; 2:24), to express the physical, biological desire (1 Co 7:3,5), companionship (Mal 2:14; Gen 2:18), to illustrate Christ and the church (Eph 5:22-23) and it a contract relationship governed by both divine and civil law (John 4:17,18).

Divorce is wrong. God's ideal is one man married to one wife until the death of one partner (Matt 19:6). God hates divorce (Mal 2:16) because of the devastation caused to humans, God's personal experience (Hosea (2:2,7; 11:1-8), it breaks fellowship toward God, hinders the cause of Christ, and it gives the wrong illustration of Christ and the church. The ultimate cause of divorce is mankind's hardness of heart (Matt 19:8).

The ground for forgiveness is threefold. Christian's should avoid the divorce stigma. Though definite sin has been committed, there should not be a stigma concerning divorce in contrast to other sins which reduces the divorced person a "second class" Christian (Mal 2:7,8,11,12,14-16,17; 3:8,14).

Second, there is complete forgiveness for the divorcing Christian with the absence of guilt (1 Jo 1:9-2:2; Psa 32:5). All sin is forgivable before God, except blasphemy of the Holy Spirit. The latter is to reject Christ as one's Savior. There is, however, consequences as with any sin (2 Sam 12:9-14).

Third, the manner of forgiveness cleansing for sin committed before salvation is covered by Calvary (1 Co 6:11). That is, divorce before salvation is forgiven just as with any other sin. Divorce after salvation is cleansed by confession (1 Jo 1:9; Psa 32:1-5; 66:16-20; 103:8-14; Hosea 14:1-3).

The problem arises about divorce and remarriage. Can a divorced believer remarry? Or what are the grounds of divorce? The Bible seems to give some grounds for legitimate divorce. Some say that, yes, there is grounds for divorce, but not for remarriage. Others say that

legitimate divorce assumes the right of remarriage. A key Scripture for remarriage is 7:27-28 where it is stated that if one should remarry they have not sinned. The Scripture says,

“Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be released. Are you released from a wife? Do not seek a wife. But if you should marry, you have not sinned” (7:27, 28).

Bound means to be married, released means to be divorced. In other words, if you are married, then don't get a divorce. However, if you are divorced, stay single if you can, but you have not sinned if you remarry.

I do not say this to give people the belief that marriage can be treated carelessly, and anyone can get a divorce for any reason. No. Divorce is wrong. But, bad things happen in life. Sin happens. Divorce happens. I say this to give hope to those who have been divorced and/or remarried, and still want to serve God, and I believe it to be a correct interpretation of Scripture. To repeat, as with any sin, forgiveness and restoration is always available through Christ. He said He will never leave or forsake us, and that nothing can separate us from the love of God (Heb 13:4-6; Romans 8:28-39). Confession and humbling oneself before God is the remedy.

Grounds for divorce among Christians are "pornea" or when the death of one partner is involved (Matt 19:9; 1 Co 7:39). "Porneia" is the Greek word used for all sin and perversion. Desertion is another legitimate reason for divorce (1 Co 7:2,9,12,15,28; Deut 24:1-4). Grounds for the remarriage of an innocent partner may be implied by Scripture (1 Cor 7:10, 11, 27, 28) Any remarriage is to be with another believer (1 Co 7:39; 2 Co 6:14). The goal, however, in all these matters is for the couple to be reconciled with each other and to make the marriage work.

Many times a believer is married to a non-believer who wishes to divorce. The grounds for divorce are porneia (Matt 19:9) and desertion (1 Co 7:15). A believer in the home has a positive influence on the children and unbelieving spouse is the meaning of 1 Corinthians 7:14).

I now cover the issue of those Christians who wrongly divorce and remarry. To restore fellowship with God there needs to be genuine confession of the sin (1 Jo 1:9). The new marriage should not be broken up, even if it was sinfully made. Any return to a former spouse is forbidden (Deut 24:4). There is, as with all sin, inevitable negative consequences resulting from God's chastisement of His children (1 Co 11:28-32; 2 Sa 12:9-14; Heb 12:5-7).

To be chastised by God is a good thing in this regard. It brings correction, wisdom, insight and a greater appreciation of the grace of God to the repentant believer. The grace of God is always greater than sin. It also assures the restored person that they are a child of God. If we sin, and are not chastised by God, it means we are not a child of His (cf. Hebrews 12:5-8).

In the case of non-Christians who wrongly divorce and remarry the case is different. The actions will certainly contribute to the continued negative impact on society of broken families. As to sin, all are under condemnation; thus, this would only be one more to add to the final guilt (Rom 3:10-23; cf. Rom 8:1; Rev 20:11-15). Their judgment is not by Christians in this life, but by God (1 Co 5:12,13).

Concerning the virgins (7:25, 36-38), Paul refers to virgin daughters in a family. His point is

that celibacy is desirable (v 25), but if the daughter is getting beyond the age of marriageability, then the father may arrange a marriage if that is the need. This section probably is grounded in the culture of the day.

## **B. PRINCIPLES OF CHRISTIAN LIBERTY (CHAPTERS 8-10).**

In the area of Christian ethics, relationships and activities, there are things that are taboo in any culture and some things that are right in any culture. There is a third class that fall into a gray area: they may or may not be right depending on the circumstance. This category deals with our "Christian liberty" and is dealt with by Paul in chapters 8-10.

1. Foods offered to a pagan god is considered (chapter 8). The issue was that of leftover meat that had been offered as a sacrifice to heathen idols. If it had been a public offering, the leftover meat was sold in the market. The problem to the Christian was whether they should buy the meat, eat the meat should it be offered to them as a guest in someone's home, or if they could eat the meat at the celebration banquets following the pagan sacrifice. Paul appealed to the principle of love (vv 1,3) and said that eating the meat was fine (10:25), but if it damaged the faith of another believer, then do not eat the meat (10:28,29). He did condemn participation in the pagan sacrifice celebrations (10:14-22).

2. Paul's gave his example of service (chapter 9).

Paul refused to exercise all his rights as a Christian (9:1-14). Though Paul had many rights, such as having a wife and family and living solely from the gospel, he had foregone many privileges so as to better advance the gospel of Christ.

Paul explained the principles (9:15-27). He said he was under obligation to the gospel, and its effective proclamation was first (v 23). He lived so as not to offend the gospel or cause it to be discredited. He also conducted his life so as to build friendship and relationship bridges to the lost (vv 19-22). The missionary implications are striking. It is important to respect and identify with the cultures and people to which we are sent to minister.

3. Paul instructs in Christian liberty (chap 10). The principles he establishes are that we are to avoid living for self only and to separate ourselves from evil. Participation in the pagan sacrifices was worshipping demons (vv 14-22). He said to overcome temptation, and that many things may be lawful, but not profitable, edifying or to our advantage. We are to seek the good of others and not judge others by our conscience, or our personal set of standards of what we think is right or wrong. Our overall objective is to glorify God (v 31). We are not to give offence to others, that is give a wrong idea of what God is like (v 32). The main principle in matters that are unclear as to if they are right or wrong, is to let the best interests of the Great Commission be our guide.

4. Offered below is an extended commentary on this whole issue of doubtful things in the area of Christian liberty.

What about the question of doubtful things? Things such as adultery, stealing, lying and murder are obvious sins for the Christian to avoid in whatever culture or situation they find themselves. But what about social drinking, smoking, dances, wearing jewelry, having wealth, women with short hair, make up and wearing pants and other such things? Some Christians say yes, they are fine, others say no.

It becomes apparent that in the area of Christian ethics there are things that are taboo in any culture, some things that are right in any culture, and third, some things that fall into a gray

in-between area. In this latter area certain activities can be right or wrong depending on the situation or culture we are in.

Let it be noted that I do not accept the "situation ethics" as promoted by those such as Joseph Fletcher. It is clear that absolute standards set forth by God do exist. The Bible is clear on what is sin and rather extensive lists are given (e.g. Gal 5:19-21; 1 Co 6:9-10; Rom 1:28-32). We are to separate ourselves from sin (e.g. 1 Ti 6:11; 2 Ti 2:22; 1 Co 6:18; 10:14) and avoid even the appearance of evil (1 Th 5:22).

Paul addresses himself to the third, gray, in-between area in First Corinthians chapters 8-10. We will develop the principles he teaches under four headings: the problem of doubtful things, the effects of our actions on weak Christians, solutions to the problem and Paul's motivation.

### **The problem of doubtful things in Christian living.**

5. The problem is defined by Paul. The issue at stake in Paul's letter was that of eating meat sacrificed to idols. In their culture there were three views as to the nature of idols: the idols were the spirits of deified dead men, they were evil spirits, or the idols were merely dead images corresponding to nothing at all. If the first two views were believed to be true, then the Corinthians would worship the idols by sacrificing meat to them. The flesh left over from the heathen sacrifice was eaten sacrificially, taken home for private meals, or sold for bargain rates in the public meat markets.

The Corinthian Christians had discovered by their new found religion that idols were merely dead images and were reveling in this new knowledge. Worship of them was nothing, they thought, and they were flaunting their liberty in Christ before others. Not all, however, could experience freely this new freedom. The problem then was that some Christians whose conscience had not been programmed correctly, so as to guide them correctly in the matter of doubtful things, became guilty by doing something they felt to be wrong (1 Co 8:7). The individual then hardened his conscience so as to participate in what he believed to be wrong (1 Co 8:10), and the result was a disastrous guilt complex.

We do not have the problem of meat in our American culture, but we do have many more. One problem, for example, is music. Many of the Christian "liberated" flaunt rock music in the face of those who have been taught that it is wrong. The situation then becomes parallel to the problem in First Corinthians 8-10.

The root problem is lacking love for Christ. We are told that love builds (8:3), and the love in view is the love for God (v 3). This is further confirmed in verse 11 when it states that the sin of offending a brother is really against Christ. The thrust is that if we love Christ we will not sin against Him. The person who loves God is the one who can rightly solve the question about food offered to idols. Our love to God then generalizes out to others around us.

The net result is sin. This truth has already been mentioned above, but it is so serious that attention must be focused upon it. Sin is defined by Strong (Systematic Theology, p. 549) as "lack of conformity to the moral law of God, either in act, disposition, or state." The point is, that when we offend a weaker Christian we sin against Christ who purchased our redemption. Paul is saying: "Christ loved the brother enough to die for him. You do not love him at all by your action, Christ or your brother."



This points out the deadly deceitfulness of sin in our lives. Sin can fool us so much we do not even realize we have been tricked. In fact, sin had fooled the Corinthians to the degree that they believed that flaunting their Christian liberty was a virtue rather than a sin!

Before I proceed, let me get clearly before our minds the precise sin in view, the sin is where by our actions we tempt or encourage, or cause a fellow Christian to commit that act which they believe to be sinful when we know how they feel about such an act.

### **The effects on weak Christians.**

6. New Christians and those not mature in the Faith get a defiled conscience (1 Co 8:7). Paul explains to us that the weak conscience of the brother becomes defiled. A weak conscience is one unable to get rid of the feeling that something is wrong even if it is acceptable. It is not being fully clear as to whether an act is right or wrong. The practical result is heavy or gnawing guilt. Defile (8:7) means to stain or make impure.

A stumbling block is placed in front of the person with a weak, uncertain conscience by the one flaunting their Christian liberty (1 Co 8:9). Literally, a "stumbling block" is that against which the man with weak eye sight stumbles. How cruel to put objects in the path of one with poor eyesight. Think of the fear and discouraged state of the one with weak eyes. Paul uses this figure to illustrate the cruelty of damaging another's conscience.

The offended get a wounded conscience (1 Co 8:12). The figure speaks of striking a person in a weakened or sickly state, a cowardly act. The wounding is the inducement to do something believed to be wrong, to strike a blow when the conscience is in a weakened, confused, and uncertain condition.

The Christian is entrapped by sin (1 Co 8:13). Paul gives us a picture of an entrapped animal. The temptation placed before the weak Christian becomes the crooked stick in a trap to which the bait is attached and which springs the trap. The picture is of the helpless, tormented, seized Christian being held captive by the steel jaws of his conscience.

### **The solution to the problem of doubtful things.**

7. There are several solutions regarding how to respond to those activities and behavior that may or may not be appropriate for a Christian to be involved in. First, increase one's love to Christ. This gets at the root of the problem. To increase one's love for someone, we need to spend time with that person to know them more. Love is not necessarily a feeling, but seeking the highest good of the object loved, which in this case is Christ. Love stems primarily from an act of the will.

Someone said once, "Love Christ with all your heart, become occupied with Him, then do whatever you want." The idea is that if our love relationship runs deep with Christ, we will not want to commit sin, but will always desire to please Him.

The biggest proof of our love for God is our obedience to His will and interests (John 15:10). To find His will takes time, study of His Word, fellowship with Him and the decision to make His interests our interests. The pretension to superior knowledge or enlightenment is wrong, and reflects pride. The solution is not to discard knowledge, but to learn and know in the correct manner. That manner is to guide and build one's knowledge upon love for God. If the knowledge one gains does not lead to more love for Christ and people, then it is not learned correctly.

Second, do not program people's conscience with wrong information. One tendency in Christian circles is to rigidly program into the consciences of people things that are not Scriptural. The natural bent of man is toward systems, rites, rituals, lists of behavior, activities, and formulas that supposedly will make one right or pleasing to God. This is legalism. Many, for example, insist on getting to Heaven by keeping the 10 Commandments, but we are told that the purpose of the Law is to point us to Christ (Gal 3:24). Great elaborate religions circle the globe, and each has their own system to get right with God.

We Christians feed this tendency with the wrong information. We bring our own personal list of rules, customs and values with us when we become Christians, and further, the culture about us spills over into the church with its various beliefs and values of right and wrong. Many times, these values are not biblical, but because they are so important to us we "make" them biblical and impose them on others.

Sometimes we become thrilled with a popular speaker or book which has a list of rules to follow to become good Christians. The rules may or may not be biblical. Even if they might be good rules, many times we misplace our focus on the rules rather than Christ. Because we follow the rules we think we are good Christians, but our heart may be far from Christ, and even filled with pride and bitterness. Christianity is a religion of the heart: "for God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart" (1 Sa 16:7b).

From what has been said is not to imply that our minds should not be fed and programmed with principles and information. The point is that the information must be biblical and correct. The Corinthians, for example, had many rules and strong convictions, but they were the wrong ones, and even those who had the right information did not mix it with love. They had lost sight of true Christian priorities. Let us not load Christians with unbiblical rules and regulations, like loading a little fishing boat with huge rocks.

Do not be a stumbling block to weak Christians. This is Paul's main instruction: "Give no offence either to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God" (10:32). Not only by instruction, but also by example Paul indicates that he would not become a stumbling block to a weaker brother (1 Co 8:13). He then goes on to show by specific examples in his own life how he has not used his rightful liberty. All of chapter nine is devoted to illustrate this principle. Paul also issues a warning by way of the example of Israel and though they assumed themselves to be right and considered themselves to be of good standing, they fell (10:12). As Christians today, we must beware when our Christian liberty becomes more important to us than the spiritual growth of fellow Christians - for whom Christ also died.

We are to program people's conscience with biblical information. It is our duty to influence people toward biblical actions, attitudes and values. The culture around us seeks to influence people with such things as western materialism, sexual promiscuity, greed and violence. Every time we turn on a T.V., enter a classroom, look at a newspaper, or buy a new car we are having our mind influenced, or our values changed and reinforced. Even those who object to religious indoctrination themselves are attempting to indoctrinate their audience to a particular point of view. A so-called broad minded, liberal theologian, teacher, politician or philosopher can be as opinionated and bigoted as any conservative.

The whole of First Corinthians is an attempt to rightly educate people to a particular viewpoint of reality. Paul indicates (1 Co 9:16) that he is under compulsion to persuade

people to accept the gospel. We are told to renew our mind on biblical data (Rom 12:2). A person becomes like whatever they put into their mind. We need to fortify our minds and conscience against the ungodly barrage of missiles aimed at entrapping our conscience to foolish and sinful notions.

We are to keep a proper perspective on relationships. Certain attitudes are to be maintained toward others. First, is that soul-winning should be our goal. Three times Paul mentions this as his goal with people (1 Co 9:19,23; 10:33). He says outright that "I do all things for the sake of the gospel (9:23). Second, we are to seek our neighbor's good (1 Co 10:24). The natural response is to seek our own good at our neighbor's expense. This, however, is called selfishness which is the essence of sin.

Third, we must realize that what is right for one person may be wrong for the other. The adage is true that one man's dessert is another man's poison. We cannot allow ourselves the luxury of making everything black or white, because when we do we become other people's judges in matters in which we ought not to be. Furthermore, we face the problem of finding someone wise enough to make the impossible decision of what is black or white, right or wrong when the issue is simply a matter of personal opinion, preference or prejudice.

We must not judge another person by our own conscience. We cannot know what that person's background is, nor have we experienced the blows of life that they have come under. My grandfather often told me of an old American Indian saying: "Never criticize a man until you have walked a mile in his moccasins."

### **The motivation of Paul.**

7. What motivated Paul to be so given over to ministry and service to Jesus Christ? Several things motivated Him. Let's look at them.

Paul was motivated by edification – or to building up people's spiritual lives and the growth and maturity of the churches. He always sought that which built up the church and people. He did not let personal rights interfere with the growth of individuals. His was always the higher goal which overlooked petty things. Paul even refused rightful pay because of the harm it would cause the church at Corinth (1 Co 9:15-18).

We must always keep in mind, however, that there comes a time when one does not sacrifice one's personal liberty for the sake of self-righteous bigots and the narrow minded. Some people do nothing but sit on the sidelines, looking for something or someone to criticize or to find fault in others, or to start an argument to show off their knowledge. They try to impose their own expectations on other people. This becomes a different situation at this point. The principles discussed up to this point do not apply.

The sin, we remember, is having the weak, immature Christian brother or sister engage in an action they really believe (or at least are in doubt) is sin. Those who simply criticize, find fault, and judge are not being tempted to engage in something they think is wrong. Perhaps they criticize in an area of their lives that they have under control, and are using it as a smoke screen to call people's attention away from a real problem in their own lives.

On the other hand, the person may be having that same problem in their own life, but "project" in onto others because they cannot stand it in their own life. It also might be an area of supreme pride in their lives, pride that they are "perfect" in that area and they want people

to know about it. It may be that they are just being mean and are trying to pick a fight. Perhaps they are trying to have the pastor fired by constantly opposing them and criticizing them to other people. In other words, they are trying to gain power. Whatever is the explanation, they are not being led into a sin.

Here is another qualification. It could be that the person who criticizes us is right! We should never become so proud and defensive that we never evaluate the negative things others say about us. We don't need to take the blame and accept every negative thing said about us. But we do need to be open minded and have the attitude of, "Ok, let's sit down and look at the situation. If I am wrong, then I will accept responsibility and make corrections." Don't shift the blame of your mistakes to someone else, but quickly admit and correct your own mistakes.

Paul was motivated by evangelization. This motive has already been mentioned in another place, but here I want to emphasize that what Paul considered as being right or wrong was determined by how it advanced or detracted from effective evangelism. In other words, did the action or behavior cause men and women to come to Christ and be built up in the Faith? If it hindered this basic work, Paul stopped the behavior.

For example, pastors, evangelists, and teachers have the right to gain their living from the gospel. But, in some cases, money the pastor can rightfully accept might become a stumbling block to some receiving Christ. In that case, even Paul declined to accept a pay check. However, Christians need to share with the spiritual leaders such as evangelists, pastors, and teachers.

Paul was motivated by love. He loved God and the other Christians. His love was so great that he said he would quit eating meat entirely if it would be a cause of stumbling to others (1 Co 8:12,13). He did not demand his rights.

Paul was motivated by the glory of God (10:31). This is probably the chief goal or motive for all our behavior and attitudes. Everything else is a of bring glory to God, as the Westminster Shorter Catechism states: "Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever."

With this I end this section: we should be imitators of Paul as he was of Christ, and our sole purpose in life should be to bring glory to God, not to flaunt our Christian liberty in the area of doubtful things at the expense of weaker Christians – or to cause non-believers to call us hypocrites and turn away from our gospel message.

### **III. DISORDERS IN PUBLIC WORSHIP (CHAPTERS 11-14).**

#### **A. VARIOUS PRACTICES IN PUBLIC WORSHIP (CHAP 11).**

1. The role of women in relation to man within the church is explained (11:1-16).

In this difficult passage we first note that there are local cultural issues and eternal abiding principles involved. Paul's point is that "man is the head of a woman" (11:3). To establish his point, Paul appeals to the relations within the Trinity: as God the Father is the head of Christ the Son (11:3). Further, he bases his argument on the order of creation (vv 7-9) and the presence of angels in church (v 10). The principle, then, of the man's authority and headship over woman is not grounded in cultural preference, but is an absolute established by God from the creation of the world. From the very beginning, Eve was created to be a helper to Adam, not his boss. The context is the public worship service of a local church.

The use of a public head covering by women was a cultural "symbol" of submission on the

part of the woman (v 10) in both Jewish and Greco-Roman cultures. The principle of authority is absolute; the practice of the cultural symbol was relative to that culture. The garment was to be worn while the woman was praying or prophesying (v 5). It would seem that the particular symbol of a head covering is not required today, but if some women should choose to wear a hat in church, then they are not forbidden.

To balance the issue of authority vs. submission, Paul was quick to mention that men and woman are complimentary to each other. Further, the man is not to be a mean bully, but the relationship between men and woman should be that which is between God the Father and God the Son. As in the Trinity, the relationship should include mutual love, compassion, tenderness, respect, counsel, and sweetness. The loud ranting of the feminist nor the meanness of men are to be in the relationship.

Headship does not mean that women are inferior to men any more than Christ is inferior to God the Father. Women do not have less access to God nor are of less value. Man is not the dictator of women. What it does mean in the context of church life is that men and women play different roles and functions - just as God the Father and God the Son play in the economic Trinity. In this life, the analogy could be made to the different roles of the president and vice president of a bank. Evidently, the leadership of Christian institutions is the responsibility of men, with the vigorous, active help, counsel and support of the women.

I am aware that many wonderful Christian women are missionaries and pastors. However, that does not mean that Paul got his theology wrong, but it points to weakness of men to become leaders. Women who take the lead in the absence of men are to be commended.

2. The practice of communion is considered (11:17-34).

The early Christians held a "love-feast" in connection with the Lord's Supper. They came together for a fellowship meal, sent and received communications to other churches and had collections for the needy. Evidently in Corinth the richer people were greedily eating all the food before the poor people showed up for the feast. The Lord's Supper is to be a remembrance of the most pre-eminently selfless act of human history, the giving by God of His Son Jesus. The Corinthians, however, had turned the experience into a display of drunken greedy selfishness. Further, something that was to celebrate sweet unity had turned into sour disunity.

As to the communion service, Christians must be spiritually prepared for the service: our practice is to match our profession. Christians must be careful not to abuse the Communion because of the danger of chastisement from God which could include sickness or even death (vv 27-30).

The meaning of communion is a new covenant (v 25), new relationship with Christ and a new hope (v 26). The bread represented the incarnate body of Christ which was unselfishly taken (Phil 2:6-7) and given on the cross for the benefit of others (2 Co 8:9; Phil 2:8). The cup represented Christ's blood which was shed for us. The Lord's Supper is a memorial service to remember Christ's death, burial and resurrection for us, to remind us of His continual sustenance and nourishment of our spiritual lives and to proclaim our hope of His return.

## **B. THE PLACE OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS (CHAPS 12-14).**

1. Paul speaks of the use and purpose of spiritual gifts (chap 12).

Paul first speaks of the problem of the Corinthians not understanding the doctrine of

spiritual gifts (vv 1,2). They were confused by what they had learned while in their pagan religions. He also gives the test of spirituality as being those who exalt Christ (v 3).

Next Paul speaks of the patterns of spiritual gifts (vv 4-6). There are a variety of gifts (abilities), ministries (opportunities) and effects (results). All of these are allotted and blessed by the Trinity.

The purpose of spiritual gifts was to give each a responsibility and to bring profit and and common to the church as a whole (v 7). A spiritual gift is a special ability given to help establish the church. Every Christian has at least one gift, or ability. However, there are no gifts that every Christian must have.

He lists several gifts (vv 8-10): word of wisdom = the insight and communication of spiritual wisdom. Word of knowledge = the relating of practical doctrinal truth to life. Faith = unusual ability to trust God. Healing - ability to restore health and included the restoration of life (Acts 9:40; 20:12). Miracles = perhaps exorcising demons (Acts 19:12), causing physical disability (Acts 13:11), or death (Acts 5:5,9). Prophecy = the giving of new revelation from god. Distinguishing of spirits = ability to distinguish the Word of God from a true prophet from that of a satanic impostor (cf. 2 Co 11:14-15). Tongues and their interpretation = ability to speak and interpret previously unlearned languages (Acts 2:3,6,8,11).

These gifts were needed before the New Testament was written. Though there are those today who have unusual insight to understand and apply theology, this historical period in which Paul was writing was before God's Word was fully recorded in words in the Bible.

Some churches hold that with the exception of faith, these were sign gifts, or gifts used to confirm the establishment of the church and were temporary (cf. Heb 2:4; Eph 2:20). The last miracle recorded in the Bible occurred in about A.D. 58 with Paul the island of Malta (Acts 28:1,10). They divide the gifts into two categories with some gifts still remaining, but that the more miraculous sign gifts have ceased.

On the other hand, other Christian groups and churches believe the sign gifts of the Spirit did not cease with the New Testament, but are still with us and practiced today.

As all the parts of our body work together, each doing its own function, so are Christians to work together, exercising their gifts, for the common good of the church (vv 12-31). Verse 12 speaks of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, which is the spiritual joining of believers to the body of Christ. The body of Christ is the universal church. The universal church includes every born again Christian from the Day of Pentecost until the future Rapture when Christ returns. This experience is limited to the church age (1 Co 12:13; Acts 1:5; 11:15), is universal among all believers of this age (note "all" v. 12), and is experienced only once by Christians at salvation. The word, baptized, is past tense and the absence of the Holy Spirit indicates an unsaved condition (Rom 8:9).

The consequence of this Spirit baptism is that we are made members of the body of Christ (the universal church) and it accomplishes our spiritual union with Christ. Augustus, in his Systematic Theology (p. 795) defines the union with Christ as: "A union of life, in which the human spirit, while then most truly possessing its own individuality and personal distinctness, is interpenetrated and energized by the Spirit of Christ, is made inscrutably but indissolubly one with Him, and so becomes a member and partaker of that regenerated, believing, and justified humanity of which He is the head."

We are told that God gives and ranks gifts and not everyone has the same gift. Diversity of gifts are needed because of the complexity of the church. Everyone's gift is needed, and gifts are interdependent with each other.

### **Love superior to gifts**

2. Paul speaks of love being superior to the gifts (chap 13).

There are different types of love in the New Testament, and we all experience them in our lives. We have a different kind of love for our family, wife, friends, lust, motorcycle, food, etc. Agape love is extolled here by Paul. It may be defined as that which actively seeks the welfare of the object loved. Agape is not a wave of emotion, but a decided attitude of the mind that produces a deliberate policy of life.

Love is described as that which surpasses eloquence, brilliance, faith, and self-sacrifice. It displays patience, exerts kindness, forbids jealousy, blocks bragging, averts arrogance, promotes propriety, shuns seeking its own, prevents personal provocation, guards against a grudge, rejects pleasure in other's plights, rejoices with the triumph of truth, hides the negatives aspects of others, promotes positive thinking and stands tough through testing.

Prophecy, we note, has two phases. It can mean to give new revelation from God and it can be predictive in nature. It can, however, refer to simply proclaiming or preaching the Word of God as revelation already given. Knowledge can mean simply the ability to gain special insight into the Word of God.

### **Speaking in tongues**

3. Paul speaks of the purpose of speaking in tongues (14:1-25).

The first of several considerations in the issue of speaking in tongues deals with the reality of the tongues of the mystery religions around Corinth at that time in history in that culture. The Corinthians were very confused over the issue of spiritual gifts. The participants of those mystery religions would induce an emotional excitement which climaxed in an unintelligible, ecstatic verbal utterance.

They believed this speaking in a language unknown by man was taught by a god for private communication with the meaning only known to the god. The god took over the tongue of the participant to speak in tongues. The experience gave a privileged intimate contact with God; thus, they spoke in mysteries (secrets) and became known as "mystery" religions.

Probably the most famous was the Delphic Oracles. Her "secrets" came about by drug and hypnotic induced utterances interpreted by a priest and handsomely paid for by military and government leaders.

To the mystery religionist this utterance was the epitome of religious experience and gave rise to a religious "elite" among those who had gone through the encounter. In some religions it was considered the initiation requirement of entrance into the group. This experience was highly valued as a mark of spiritual superiority. As many new converts came into the church from the mystery religions they brought along with them this particular belief and experience. It became a source of conflict and pride in the church as "tongues" became the mark of spiritual superiority sought by many. Paul was writing to the

church at Corinth (chapters 12-14) to correct this pagan practice that had spilled over from the culture into the church.

That these mystery religions could have been in Paul's mind may be seen from several passages. Paul states: "You know that when you were pagans, you were led astray to the dumb idols, however you were led" (12:2). Again, Paul refers to the practice of those religions in working up an ecstatic experience when he refers to the "noisy gong or a clanging cymbal" (13:1).

The tongue of angels (13:1) could be another reference to the god taking over the language of the person. The "mysteries" are referred to twice (13:2; 14:2), and in this context probably refer to the mystery religious experience. A key point to recognize is that Paul was criticizing the Corinthians for their use of these mystery tongues in the Christian church.

This ecstatic experience is not gone from the world today, but is commonly practiced among many non-Christian religions, including Mormons and Hindus.

The second thing to consider was the valid experience of speaking in tongues which was a supernatural ability to speak a known language, but previously unlearned by the speaker (Acts 2:4,6). The purpose of this class of tongues was to be a sign of judgment to unbelieving Israel which confirmed the establishing of the church and marked the temporary rejection of Israel (1 Co 14:21,22). The only place in Scripture that defines what biblical tongues were is Acts 2:3,4,6,8,11. Clearly, the reference is to a known language, not gibberish.

The only definitive passage in the Bible telling the purpose of tongues is 1 Co 14:21,22. Here it is stated that tongues are a sign of judgment to Israel because of her unbelief in Christ as Messiah. Verse 21 refers to that historical fact that as Israel refused to listen to God's message, He would send another message but delivered in a foreign tongue (Isa 28:11ff.; Deut 28:49; Jer 5:15). The foreign tongue, the Assyrians, symbolized God's rejection. Historically this event was fulfilled in 586 B.C.

As Israel was scattered in A.D. 70 at the destruction of Jerusalem, it is held by many scholars that the purpose and reality of biblical tongues has not existed since that time. It is a fact of history that, indeed, tongues did pass from the life of the church, except in groups considered to be out of the mainstream of Christianity.

Other scholars believe speaking in tongues are still a valid spiritual experience of believers today. The Charismatic and Pentecostal groups are huge, and do practice tongues, prophecy, and miracles such as healing. One major line of evidence they use is that if any experience happened somewhere in the Bible, then it is still valid for today. However, if that was the case, then we should still be sacrificing bulls at church altars.

My own caution is that if you hold to the position that tongues, prophecy, miracles, dreams, visions, etc. are still a valid practice in the church today, then beware of the misuse and abuse in their use. Realize, also, that our Christian life experience must be defined by the Bible, and not the other way around. Many foolish decisions have been made because someone ignored biblical principles and common sense and thought they had a special word or revelation from the Lord. It was not a word from the Lord, but just a foolish thought that came to their mind.



Many prophecies have been given that have turned out to be wrong. In that case, the prophet turned out to be a “false prophet.” Remember this, also, the devil can also do miracles and spectacular spiritual things, and is the master of deception.

It is true that there is no plain, dogmatic, clear statement in Scripture that states that speaking in tongues ceased after the early Church, and are not for today. The conclusions are arrived at by inference and logic from biblical data.

By the same token, there is clear evidence that the gift of speaking in tongues is not for every person to exercise. Paul was clear, “Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit...to another various kinds of tongues, and to another the interpretation of tongues. But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills” (1 Corinthians 12:4, 10, 11; cf. vv4-11).

Many times those who do speak in tongues wrongly maintain that all believers must speak in tongues, and if they don't, then they are somehow inferior, non-spiritual Christians. Many churches have been split by the divisive dogmatism that all should speak in tongues.

On the other hand, all believers should seek a close and wonderful experience in our relationship with Jesus Christ. It is true that there are mighty movements of the Spirit of God. There are unusual spiritual movements and events that occur.

Principles learned are that church services are to be orderly; whatever was done was to be helpful to all in encouragement and edification. The reference to women being silent in church probably means that married women whose husbands were present in the assembly should not disturb the service by talking and arguing to their husbands, but wait until they got home. Parallel verses to consider include 1 Timothy 2:12 and First Corinthians 11:2-1.6).

#### **IV. THE DOCTRINE OF THE RESURRECTION (CHAPTER 15).**

##### **A. PROCLAMATION OF CHRIST'S RESURRECTION (15:1-11)**

The Corinthians (Greeks) believed only in the immortality of the soul, not a physical, literal resurrection (v 12). Paul was writing to correct this misunderstanding in the church.

Paul stresses the centrality of the resurrection of Jesus Christ and gives three reasons for its importance: the forgiveness of sin, and that Christ was our substitute for the penalty and guilt we carry (v 3). The third importance of the resurrection is that believers now have eternal life (v 4). As proof of His resurrection Paul offered the existence of the church (vv 1,9), eye-witnesses (vv 5-8), fulfilled Scripture (v 3) and the empty tomb (v 4). The grace of Christ's resurrection is shown in Paul's humility, conversion and response.

##### **B. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE RESURRECTION (15:12-19)**

The reality of resurrection supplies the ground of Christ's resurrection: if one assumes there is no resurrection, then Christ could not rise from the dead. Assumptions, however, are not real, and Christ's resurrection was real. If His resurrection was real, then so is ours. Christ's resurrection establishes great value to Christianity: otherwise our preaching and faith is vain. Christianity would just be another worthless religion if not for the resurrection of Christ. I mean worthless in the sense that religion cannot get us to heaven or give us new life although they may be of value here in this life.

His resurrection validates the truthfulness of Christian witness.

His resurrection guarantees the proof of cancelled sin: it is a "cancelled check" proving our sin debt is paid in full.

His resurrection provides the hope of eternal life, otherwise we are hopeless of ever being free from sin and our existence ends in the grave.

### **C. SEQUENCE OF THE RESURRECTION (15:20-28)**

How is the resurrection to unfold in history? We are told that Christ is the first fruits of the resurrection. This would mean that the resurrection has already started when Christ rose from the dead. Indeed, after Christ rose from the dead we are told, "and the tombs were opened; and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; and coming out of the tombs after His resurrection they entered the holy city and appeared to many" (Matthew 27:52, 53). Scripture is unclear if these resurrected saints were given glorified bodies, or if they died again.

When Christ comes again, another phase of the resurrection will occur at the Rapture (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). There will be a resurrection at the end of the one thousand year Kingdom and a second resurrection (Revelation 20:5,6). This first and second resurrection is after the Rapture and at the end of the Kingdom age. It is important to realize that resurrection life is only in Christ.

### **D. PRACTICAL BENEFIT OF THE RESURRECTION (15:29-34).**

The resurrection motivates us to be soul-winners. The phrase, "baptized for the dead" (v. 29) refers to getting new recruits by evangelism to replace the departed saints. If there are not new people coming to Christ, the church will be dead in one generation.

The resurrection motivates us to become sacrificial Christians from the example of Paul (vv 30-32).

The resurrection motivates us to holy living, to be careful of our choice of company and to maintain a good testimony to the unsaved (vv 33,34).

The resurrection serves as a rebuke to scoffers (cf. 2 Pe 3:3-9).

The resurrection warns the unsaved of judgment (cf. Jude 14,15).

The resurrection comforts saints in bereavement (cf. 1 Th 4:13-18).

### **E. NATURE OF THE RESURRECTED BODY (15:35-50).**

1. The body's relationships (vv 35-42).

There will be a physical connection between our present body and our future resurrected body as it says "this" (our present) body will be raised (vv 42,53). The organizing (i.e. formative) principle (i.e. force) will remain. There will be a continuous physical connection, but the degree or extent of the precise link is unclear other than the new grows out of the old. Paul's illustration is of a seed that decomposes and provides nourishment for the germ of the new plant.

The body will be divinely selected (vv 38,40). The new body will be similar to our present body up to a point, then radically different. There is a great contrast between the heavenly and earthly.

Our body will be substantially changed (vv 42,53). The original identity will be maintained, that is, our body will be changed, not exchanged. If we had a new body, then the event would be creation not resurrection. The particles of matters and atoms will be different. Even now the particles of our bodies are in a continual flux or change.

2. The body's design will be different.

Now our present bodies are subjected to decay, disease, death, dishonour and weakness (vv 42,43). The composition of our body is patterned from Adam (vv 45,47,49). The image corresponds to the original, which was Adam's body. Our body is structured as a natural body (v 44) being made from dust (v 47), and where the life sustaining principle is blood (v 50; cf. Lev 17:11; Matt 20:28)

In contrast, the design of our resurrection body is that it is characterized as imperishable, glorified and powerful (vv 42,43). It is patterned after Christ's body (vv 45,47,20,23; Phil 3:21). It will be structured as spiritual (vv 44,46), made from physical matter (flesh) which is adapted to new conditions (i.e. heaven), and real and genuine (v 44). The life sustaining force (principle) is spirit (Rom 8:11) and it is a mystery as to detail (1 Jo 3:2).

3. The body's change (vv 51-58).

The mystery is that the resurrection is now revealed to man (v 51). Paul says all will not sleep, that is, some will still be alive on earth at the resurrection (cf. 1 Th 4:15). The resurrection event (i.e. Rapture) will be immediate (vv 52,53). It is certain to happen.

Our resurrection will be a tremendous victory (vv 54-57) in the destruction of death, bestowal of abundant life and the condemnation of sin will be fully gone. It will be the completion of our entire salvation experience. It will be our glorified body, made like that of the glorified Jesus Christ.

The practical application (v 58) is that in Christian service we are to be steadfast, unmovable and faithful.

## **V. DIRECTIVES AND PERSONAL MATTERS (CHAPTER 16).**

### **A. GIVING FOR SPECIAL COLLECTIONS (16:1-4).**

We are to give systematically, proportionally (according to our resources) and all are to give something. Our attitudes should be that of generosity, cheerfulness (2 Co 9:7) and gratefulness. The result of our giving is accomplishment of the Lord's work and reward to us (v 10; cf. 2 Co 9:6; 8:5). This was a special collection taken, up by Paul to be delivered to the saints in Jerusalem, who were in deep poverty and need.

### **B. HOW TO DETERMINE GOD'S WILL (16:5-9, 12)**

Several principles are given here on how to know the will of God for our lives. We are to make plans (vv 5-8), consider the desire God is putting into our heart (v 7), realize that God's plan overrules all (v 7), look for doors for effective service (v 9) and respond to ready opportunities (vv 9,12). A key is to look for God's will for us, not our will for Him.

### **C. PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS IN THE CHURCH (16:13-24).**

We are to do all things in love (v 14) and be devoted to ministry to the saints (v 15). We are to submit to hard working, good Christian leaders (v 16), and refresh the souls of others with cheer and encouragement (v 18). We are to develop deep Christian relationships (v 20).

## **SECOND EPISTLE TO THE CORINTHIANS A GENERAL COMMENTARY**

BY

REV. DR. WILLIS C. NEVVMAN

## INTRODUCTION

### I. BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

#### A. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND.

Following his first letter, Paul had visited the church at Corinth because the problems addressed in that letter were still causing trouble (2 Co 2:1; 12:14; 13:1-2). After this visit, Paul wrote a second "stern but sorrowful" letter (2:4) that Titus delivered to Corinth (2:13; 7:6,13,14; 8:6,16,23; 12:18). This second letter has been lost to the church. Paul went on to Macedonia where Titus met him after the delivery of the second letter. Titus reported of repentance on the part of the Corinthians which brought much joy to Paul. From Macedonia Paul penned the second epistle (this letter, which is actually the third) to the Corinthians. Paul followed this letter up with his final visit recorded in Acts 20:1-4.

Second Corinthians was written by the Apostle Paul to follow up his prior communication. Paul was somewhat uneasy about his "lost letter's" reception by the Corinthians. He had written rather sternly about the divisions in the church and the case of the incestuous person. He feared that they might resent what he had written and that the cause of the gospel might suffer on account of it. Even the report of Titus did not relieve him of his anxiety. The church as a whole had taken kindly to his previous letter and had repented. Paul rejoiced in that. His enemies, the judaizers, however, had increased their efforts to undermine Paul's apostolic authority and claimed that he was changeable and cowardly and had not shown himself an Apostle by his works.

#### B. PURPOSE, THEME, DATE

Paul wrote this letter, therefore, for a threefold purpose: to express his gratitude and joy for the way in which the majority of the Christians had received his other letters, to remind them again of the financial collection, and to defend his apostleship against his Judaistic opponents. The epistle is one of the most personal, least doctrinal, and least systematic of the Pauline Epistles. The theme is the defense of Paul's authority. The date of writing is A.D. 57.

### II. BRIEF OUTLINE OF SECOND CORINTHIANS.

#### I. INTRODUCTION TO THE EPISTLE (1:1-11).

- A. Salutation to readers (1:1-2).
- B. Goodness of God (1:3-11).

#### II. FOLLOW UP ON THE PROBLEM AT CORINTH (1:12-2:13).

- A. Concerning Paul's plans to go to Corinth (1:12-2:4).
- B. Forgiveness to the repentant backslider (2:5-13).

#### III, THE GREATNESS OF THE APOSTOLIC MINISTRY (2:14-7:16).

- A. The victory of the ministry (2:14-17).
- B. The measure of successful ministry (3:1-3)
- C. The certification of ministry (3:4-18).
- D. The supernatural nature of the ministry (4:1-7).
- E. The pressure of ministry (4:8-18),
- F. The motivation for ministry (chapter 5).
- G. The character needed for ministry (6:1-10).
- H. Purity needed for ministry (6:11-7:1).
- I. Paul's joy over their repentance (7:2-16).

#### **IV. SPECIAL COLLECTION FOR NEEDY SAINTS IN JERUSALEM (CHAPTERS 8-9)**

- A. Example of the Macedonia churches (8:1-6).
- B. Reasons for giving (8:7-15).
- C. Principles for giving (8:16-9:5).
- D. Rewards for giving (9:6-15).

#### **V. PAUL'S APOSTLESHIP DEFENDED (10:1-12:18),**

- A. Paul commended by God (10:1-18).
- B. False apostles described (11:1-15).
- C. Paul's suffering as an apostle (11:16-33j).
- D. Paul's vision in heaven (12:1-10).
- E. Paul's unselfishness in ministry (12:11-18).
- F. Paul's urging their repentance (12:19-13:14).

### **COMMENTARY**

#### **I. INTRODUCTION TO THE EPISTLE (1:1-11).**

##### **A. SALUTATION TO READERS (1:1-2).**

Achaia is the geographical setting including the Roman province of southern Greece below Macedonia and which comprised Athens and the capital, Corinth.

Paul teaches several truths concerning God the Father: He is living (3:3; 6:16), gracious, merciful and comforting (1:2-3), faithful (1:18), enabling to His people (4:7; 6:7; 13:4), the Father of Christ (1:3) and His people (6:18).

About Christ, Paul teaches that He is the Son of God (1:19), the image of God (4:4), sinless (5:21), gives victory (2:14), judges (5:10), reconciles (5:19; 8:9), selects and sends His ambassadors (5:20), makes people new creatures (5:17).

##### **B. GOODNESS OF GOD (1:3-11).**

We are told that God is a Father of mercies, comfort (v 3) and deliverance (v 10). Christians may suffer so that they may be able to comfort others when they are under affliction.

Through suffering we learn to trust God and pray. Paul identified his sufferings and those of Christ (4:10; cf. Phil 3:10; Col 1:24). Suffering produces endurance, character, hope and purifies our faith (Rom 5:3-5; Jas 1:2-4; 1 Pe 1: 6,7). Suffering can be an encouragement to others (2 Co 1:6).

The dangers of verse eight included mob violence (Acts 19:23-41), sickness and those mentioned in 11:23,26).

Paul encourages the Corinthians to pray (v 11). Prayer was a major tool Paul used in gospel ministry. Help is given to pastors, missionaries, teachers, Christian workers and others when we pray for them. It is deadly to spiritual victory and work to let the busyness of our work crowd out prayer life (cf. Rom 15:30-31; Phil 1:9; Col 4:12).

#### **II. FOLLOW UP ON THE PROBLEM AT CORINTH (1:12-2:13).**

##### **A. CONCERNING PAUL'S PLANS TO GO TO CORINTH (1:12-2:4).**

Paul had planned to visit the Corinthians twice (v 16), but only made it once (between the letters of First and Second Corinthians). Evidently, this had caused his enemies to accuse him of indecision and being unspiritual (v 17) - rather petty evidence.

Paul also speaks of the spiritual sealing of the Holy Spirit on believers. The Holy Spirit is the seal. The seal assures security, ownership, protection, possession. The pledge is guarantee that God will fully accomplish and fulfill His promises (cf. Eph 1:13,14). A pledge is a deposit or down payment. This genuine experience occurs the moment a person receives Christ. Just as a seal, or stamp, placed on a passport indicates authority to travel in a country, God's seal of the Holy Spirit upon the believer indicates our authority as children of God through Jesus Christ. A seal marks a document as genuine and authoritative.

Paul reveals to us his attitude in dealing with his converts (2:4). He loved them deeply and was grieved in heart to have to write such a stern letter to them, which was a proof of his love for them. He did not lord it over the people, but worked with them with genuine interest and for their benefit (1:24). The meaning of 2:2 is: "If I hurt you, there will not be any happy people left to make me glad." Paul refers to his second letter in 2:4.

### **B. FORGIVENESS TO THE REPENTANT BACKSLIDER (2:5-13).**

The identity of the person who sinned is unknown. It probably was not the incestuous person mentioned in First Corinthians 5:1-5. The reasons are because of the severity of the punishment by Paul to that person and the letter referred to in 2:4 is probably not First Corinthians.

The offender had repented of his sins as a result of church discipline (v 6). Evidently some of the church members wanted to punish him further. The objective in church discipline is the restoration of the backslider, not to punish for revenge. Satan would have Christians punish much, forgive little and restore nothing. Discipline needs to be tempered with love, forgiveness and comfort. Repentance and change, however, must occur on the part of the guilty. One needs to mark well the destructive and real attacks by Satan in the church and lives of individuals.

### **III. THE GREATNESS OF THE APOSTOLIC MINISTRY (2:14-6:10).**

#### **A. THE VICTORY OF THE MINISTRY (2:14-17).**

Although this section was written by Paul to defend his apostolic office against the false teachers, present day pastors and Christian workers may also draw application, instruction, and encouragement to their own place of calling.

Our victory is in Christ who uses us as His instruments to impact the lives of others. Some gladly receive the gospel, while others reject us. We are to minister in sincerity, as before God, and not use the gospel as a means to deceive others to gain their money.

#### **B. THE MEASURE OF SUCCESSFUL MINISTRY (3:1-3).**

Paul states that the change in the lives of others is the mark of successful ministry. We are to minister with care as well. Emphasis is placed on the fact the change takes place first in the hearts of people. Christianity is a religion of the heart whose change by the Holy Spirit brings change in the total person. In contrast are the religions who focus only on outward things such as rules, rites, ceremonies and the like.

#### **C. THE CERTIFICATION OF MINISTRY (3:4-18).**

Paul mentions that our adequacy for ministry is from Christ. It is God who certifies us for ministry. The New Covenant (v 6) is the content of Christian ministry. The New Covenant is placed into contrast with the Old Covenant (v 14) centered on the Mosaic Law. The Law could not save nor give life, but only kill by pointing to our guilt, and desperate need for a Savior. This is why Paul referred to it as the "ministry of death" (v 7). The "letter" stands for

the whole Mosaic law.

The new covenant has as its dynamic the Holy Spirit who gives life (vv 6,8,17,18) and transforms us into the image of Christ. The law was glorious for its time, but now the glory of Christ is even greater. We are transformed from one degree of glory to another, progressively growing into the likeness of Christ. We don't become perfect Christians overnight, or even in this life. But, step by step we grow more mature as Christians.

The "spirit" and the "letter" do not refer to different ways to interpret the Bible, as some believe, but to two different ways of divine dealing. Some wrongly believe that the letter refers to literal interpretation while spirit refers to spiritual interpretation. That way they can "spiritualize" any piece of Scripture and interpret a particular text to mean something other than the original intent of the writer. For example, the Gospels tell of Jesus casting out real demons from a real person. A spiritualized version would interpret that text as there not being real demons, but that Jesus just helped a person get over some emotional or psychological problem.

God's moral law reflects the holiness of God and that can never be abolished. God is who He is. He is unchangeable. The Mosaic Law is good and holy. The problem is sinful man who cannot keep the law. The Mosaic Law as a specific expression of that moral law has been done away (v 11), it is the "Old Covenant."

Christians are under a higher principle, the standards of Christ as revealed in the New Testament (1 Co 9:21). We are to look to Christ to see how we are to think, feel, and behave. We are not under the Mosaic Law as a rule of life; however, many of the laws of Moses are repeated in the New Testament. All of the Ten Commandments are repeated except for the Sabbath keeping. The law also is a revelation of the righteousness of God (cf. Eph 2:14,15).

Christian workers are to minister as servants (v 6) and God has made us as ministers and servants of His and to others. Since it is God's ministry, then He is the one who certifies the gospel ministry.

#### **D. THE SUPERNATURAL NATURE OF GOSPEL MINISTRY (4:1-7),**

Paul did not pervert the Word of God. The treasure (v 7) refers to the gospel and the earthen vessels are our mortal bodies. The power and encouragement to minister the gospel comes from God (vv 1,7). Paul's effectiveness was due to the mercy of God (v 1). God may encourage us through other Christians who come to our aid and give us affirmation that what we are doing is right, and urge us to continue in ministry.

Satan blinds the minds of the unbelieving, a supernatural darkness that is removed when a person receives Christ (3:14,16). The purpose of the darkness is to keep the unsaved from understanding the gospel (v 4).

#### **E. THE PRESSURE OF MINISTRY (4:8-18).**

Unfortunately, Christian ministry involves affliction and rejection. The unsaved do not want to be reminded of their sin and are offended at the gospel of Christ. Many would rather persist in sin, or keep a few rules to salve their conscience, than turn to Christ which means living in opposition to sin. Satanic opposition is determined and real. He brings trouble and conflict to churches, which is a discouragement to the pastor. Lack of money to feed the family is another discouragement. Betrayals by friends, conflict in the marriage, jealousy, people looking down on us, people leaving the church are other forms of discouragement.

We minister in faith (v 13). We do not receive our reward here, but in heaven. Though we cannot see God, yet we believe that He is real, and that His message is true. We act, work, pray and live based on the realities of the Bible, not the opinions of mankind or fears within ourselves. Our trust is grounded in God and His word.

Our courage comes from keeping our focus on the unseen spiritual realities. We keep eternal values and perspective above the mere temporal world with its temporary pressures, promises, and pleasures. We believe that the pressures and troubles of this life and ministry are very small compared with the glory of the next life.

This life is short. It will soon be over. Eternity, however, is forever. God has temporarily placed us here for purposes known only to Him. He has given us a place to minister and work for Him. He knows where He has placed us, how many resources He has given us, and what our success will be. It is an honor to minister for Him. He will reward us for faithful and courageous service.

#### **F. THE MOTIVATION FOR MINISTRY (CHAPTER 5).**

The hope of the resurrection keeps us motivated (vv 1-9). Again we are told that we walk by faith (v 7). Our present body is temporary, but someday it will be glorified. Paul tells us that to be absent from this body is to be present with the Lord. He thus negates the doctrine of "soul-sleep" in which some believe that we go into a coma like sleep when we die until the day of resurrection.

The judgment seat of Christ motivates us (vv 10-13). Rewards for Christians for faithful Christian service are a reality. Salvation is not the issue at this judgment, but rewards or loss of rewards for Christians (cf. Rom 14:10-12; 1 Co 3:10-4:5; Matt 12:36; Gal 6:7; Eph 6:8; Col 3:24,25). This judgment occurs at the return of Christ for His church (1 Co 4:5; 2 Ti 4:8; Rev 22:12). There are seven judgments in the Bible that are of special importance.

- The judgment of believer's sins at the cross of Christ (John 12:31)
- The judgment by the believer to themselves – self evaluation (1 Co 11:31).
- The judgment of the believer's works (2 Co 5:10).
- The judgment of individual gentiles at the return of Christ to earth (Matt 25:32).
- The judgment of Israel at the return of Christ to earth (Eze 20:37).
- The judgment of angels at the end of the millennium (Jude 6).
- The judgment of the wicked dead (Rev 20:12).

Christ's love for us motivates (vv 14-21). His death was for our sins, but also stimulates us to live unselfishly for others as He did for us. He has made us into new creatures with a new purpose, status and identity. He has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, proclaim to others they can be reconciled to God through Christ. As such, we are considered ambassadors for Christ. An ambassador is the highest ranking diplomatic representative of one country to another. Our citizenship is in heaven (Phil 3:20), and we are representatives of heaven to the foreign country of earth.

The core of the gospel is given as the sinless Christ took our sin that we might have the righteousness of God (v 21; cf. Rom 3:21-26). Christ is our perfect substitute.

#### **G. THE CHARACTER NEEDED FOR MINISTRY (6:1-10).**

The worker is not to discredit the gospel ministry by sin, or scandal, but rather, enhance the Faith by our good examples (v 3).



The worker is to minister as a servant of God (v 4). His interests are to be our interests, His schedule our schedule, His priorities our priorities, His work our work. A minister is one who serves.

The worker needs endurance, purity, love, kindness, joy, even in the face of slander, misunderstanding and opposition.

The worker ministers in the power of God and with the word of truth (as opposed to deception) and the tools of righteous living.

#### **H. PURITY IS NEEDED FOR MINISTRY (6:11-7:1).**

We minister with openness to others (vv 11-13). This means transparent sincerity in our relationships with others. We show genuine interest in the lives of those to which we relate: we are not phony, false, make believe. We do not manipulate and use others for our benefit and at their expense. The minister's life should be one of honesty, sincerity, and integrity.

We separate ourselves from evil (vv 14-18). This injunction probably applies primarily to religious relationships as he speaks of Belial (Satan), idols and temples. He was speaking against pagan idolaters (cf 1 Co 10:14) and the false apostles (cf. 2 Co 11:2-4). We are not to be yoked or bound together with false religions.

We certainly seek to win those individuals to Christ (1 Co 5:9-10), but the temptation is great for religious unbelievers to lead true believers astray with false doctrine and compromise (cf. 2 Co 11:3). Cults pretend to be Christians and to believe the Bible, and sometimes try to worm their way into the homes of unsuspecting Christians. However, by twisting the truth of the Bible, they confuse and deceive Christians, and lead them away from the Faith.

There are basically three ways to quickly spot a cult pretending to be Christian so as to deceive the saints.

First, what do they think of Jesus Christ? If they do not believe that He is fully God, but is just a man, prophet, a created being by God, etc., then they are a cult. Christ is fully God, co-equal and co-eternal with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit. Christ is not "a" god, nor are there many gods, nor is He just one manifestation of the only One God.

Second, what do they believe about the Bible? If they say the Bible is just one of many holy books, and is somewhat on equal with other books like the Koran, Book of Mormon, or some other alleged holy book, then they are a cult.

Third, what do they believe about salvation? If they say you need to join their group, keep a list of rules, ceremonies, or some sort of works, they are a cult. Salvation is by faith alone in Jesus Christ. His sacrifice on the cross was entirely sufficient to pay all the penalty for all our sins, for all time, and His resurrection from the dead guarantees us eternal life.

Personally, we are to lead holy lives, separated from sin, and serve God with all fear and reverence (7:1).

#### **I. PAUL'S JOY OVER THEIR REPENTANCE (7:2-16).**

Paul speaks of his relief and joy from the good news brought to him by Titus about the Corinthians repentance. The sorrow they had experienced from Paul's severe letter was good in that it produced positive change in attitude and behavior, a change bringing them to

the will of God. True repentance brings hope. Wrong repentance brings despair. For example, the ungodly repentance of the world would be like that of Judas when he betrayed Christ (Matt 27:3-5).

Their repentance produced an earnestness to make amends for their wrongs, to vindicate their Christian testimony, to silence Paul's opponents (2 Co 2:5-11), correct their indifference, to express their concern for Paul (cf. 7:7), and to see justice done (2:6).

Paul's primary purpose in writing was for the benefit of the Corinthians (v 12). He displayed genuine loving concern as well as allowing the Corinthians to be assured of his love for him. His attitude toward them was important and can be imitated by us today.

#### **IV. SPECIAL COLLECTION FOR NEEDY SAINTS IN JERUSALEM (CHAPTERS 8-9).**

Though many view this section as expressing the normal pattern and principles for New Testament giving, these two chapters actually refer to a special one-time offering going for a single project. These two chapters can be viewed as a fundraising letter, such as raising money for disaster relief of some nature. Some very good principles are given toward wealth and sharing and are used as points of persuasion for a larger collection. These chapters do not directly teach the methods by which the local church is to raise money to pay the pastor's salary and other regular day to day expenses. This section raises funds above and beyond the normal giving for the local church.

##### **A. EXAMPLE OF THE MACEDONIA CHURCHES (8:1-6).**

To encourage the Corinthians to give, Paul set forth the example of the generous churches of Macedonia. They could not afford to give, yet they greatly desired to share what they had - which they did, in fact, beyond their ability to give. First, however, they gave of themselves to God in love, obedience and service.

We can learn that giving is a display of grace (vv 1,6), can be done even while poor (v 2), it is a way to have fellowship (v 4), but first, one must be dedicated to God (v 5). From what is indicated, the church at Corinth had not previously supported Paul as a missionary (11:8-9; 12:13; 1 Co 9:11-12).

##### **B. REASONS FOR GIVING (8:7-15).**

- The gifts are to be free will offerings (vv 7,8; 9:7).
- Giving exhibits the giving of Christ (v 9).
- Christ's generosity should motivate us to give.
- Since God looks at the willingness of our heart, then giving demonstrates our willingness of heart to follow God (v 12).
- Giving is to establish equality in the sharing of hardship and burden of others who do not have adequate resources (v 13,14).

In giving to poor people and countries, it is wise to use good judgment. Sometimes, people don't want to work, but rather to beg money from others. Also, if we give money to others, they become dependent upon our generosity. There is this saying. If you give a man a fish to eat, then he will need another fish the next day. However, if you teach the man how to fish, then he can catch his own fish every day.

Another danger in giving to some is that they are using a con game to trick us out of our money. They are deceiving us. They are dishonest and not needy at all.

Another caution is where the money is going. Is it a valid humanitarian need? Is it for legitimate effective missionary gospel work? Or is the money just going for perhaps a good purpose, but not for the ultimate purpose which is the effective fulfillment of the Great Commission? Or worst yet, does the money eventually end up with a terrorist group somewhere?

### **C. PRINCIPLES FOR GIVING (8:16-9:5).**

- The handling of money is to be honorable (vv 19-21). Proper accounting and records are needed, as well as safeguards to eliminate even the appearance of financial wrongdoing.
- Giving demonstrates the proof of our love for God (v 24).
- We are to give generously (9:1-5) as well as willingly (9:2), sacrificially (8:9) and cheerfully (v 7).

### **D. REWARDS FOR GIVING (9:6-15)**

- Generous giving results in generous reward from God, but stinginess brings meager reward (v 6).
- God rewards giving (vv 10,11).
- Giving brings glory and thanksgiving to God (v 12,13).

### **V. PAUL'S APOSTLESHIP DEFENDED (10:1-12:18).**

#### **A. PAUL COMMENDED BY GOD (10:1-18).**

There were still those in the Corinthian church, evidently Jewish Christians (11:22), who claimed greater authority than Paul's apostolic rank (10:7), and were arrogant and domineering over the church people (11:20). Paul's commendation, and thus his authority, was from the Lord Jesus (10:18), not just some other men. Our legitimate appointments in the church are from God (Acts 20:28; 1 Ti 1:12; 2 Ti 1:11), however, they are recognized and confirmed by godly church leaders (1 Ti 4:14; Acts 6:3,5,6). Paul claimed that God had assigned to him the actual territory he was to work in (10:13,14).

Paul also pointed out where the real war is in the Christian life and work: the realm of the thought life (10:3-5). Negatively, he said that though he walked in the flesh (in a human body) he did not fight the war using fleshly weapons (according to sinful impulses such as anger, deceit, etc.). The examples given in the context are the arrogant, domineering ways of the boastful (10:16,17) false teachers (11:13). Paul's enemies mocked his outward appearance and speaking skills, and treated him as inferior to themselves (10:10).

The realm of the conflict is in the mental and theological domain: the "speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God," and, "we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ" (10:5). The spiritual war is fought on the battlefield of the mind.

The first line of defense and major battle field of the Christian faith is in the area of proper understanding, acceptance and commitment to Bible and theological truth in relation to God, ourselves or the world around us. This is true whether in our own personal lives, Christian service, the pastoral ministry, literature ministry, evangelism or at the Bible college and seminary level - or wherever the gospel ministry of Christ happens.

#### **B. FALSE APOSTLES DESCRIBED (11:1-15).**

Paul is harsh in describing false apostles and teachers, even naming them servants of Satan (11:13-15). The satanic role in false doctrine is very real and not to be taken lightly by

Christian workers. This is why it is important to use spiritual weapons and means to carry out gospel work and to grow personally as Christians (cf. Eph 6:10-20). Our foe is too powerful to fight against by trusting the means and methods of this world. We use means such as teaching, writing, preaching, missions, etc., but those must be fortified by spiritual means and trust in God.

There are three things mentioned in this context that describe the strategy of false apostles. These tactics of Satan have worked for centuries, and are still used by him today with great effectiveness. His basic pattern is to attack the Person, character, work, and word of God. Sly, convincing, persuasive, subtle deception and lies are what Satan used in the Garden of Eden to deceive Eve. Those are still his hallmark.

False teachers lead people away from genuine devotion to Jesus Christ (11:3). This is the balance of Christian living: our theology must lead to greater fellowship and simple, personal, and pure devotion to Christ. Our Bible study is wrong if it is only an accumulation of more facts and concepts but is not related to life. The agenda of many is to lead us into philosophical speculation and social, political, economic involvements and concerns that detract us from Christ and His primary work. This deceptive distraction is satanic, according to Paul (11:3). He says that our "minds" can be led astray, again pointing out the importance of our thought life.

False teachers offer another gospel and different Jesus (11:4). They may pay homage to a Jesus Christ, but it is not the Jesus Christ of the Bible. We are careful to worship and serve the Jesus of the Bible. Other religions and cults maintain that Christ was a mere man or created being and that salvation is basically by some sort of works or efforts by mankind. The Jesus of the Bible is fully God and fully man united in one Person, the Person of Christ. The gospel is the good news is that Christ died on the cross, was buried and rose from the dead to pay the penalty of sins and give eternal life to those who, by faith, receive Him as Savior.

False teachers are deceptive (11:13). They disguise themselves as true Christian workers, but with the intent of leading the faithful astray. They even appear as preachers of righteousness. Their teaching may appear very moral, wise, brilliant and ethical. They ridicule evangelical theology. In contrast, the mark of a true Christian worker is to lead people to Christ and mature Bible based faith, marked by humble, sacrificial service (v 7-9), the exercise of genuine love to the flock, and has God's interests as their interests.

### **C. PAUL'S SUFFERING AS AN APOSTLE (11:16-33).**

Paul regretted having to list some important facts of his ministry to the Corinthians. He did not want to appear as boasting (11:16-20). The cost of Paul's discipleship and service to Christ is remarkable. It includes, for the sake of the gospel, numerous beating, being stoned, shipwrecked and often in danger of death. His motive for continuing in face of this traumatic and wicked abuse was his clear sense of calling as a servant of Christ (11:23) and his genuine, intense concern for the souls of men and women (11:29). This abuse was carried out against him from within and without the church.

The 39 lashes points to beatings inflicted in the Jewish synagogues. The Law permitted 40 (Deut 25-1-3) lashes, but only 39 were given, so that the number would not be exceeded in case of a miscount. One place Paul was beaten with rods (by Romans) was Philippi (Acts 16:23). He was stoned at Lystra (Acts 14:11-19). The historical record of the events in Damascus (v 32) is in Acts 9:24-25). One shipwreck is recorded in Acts 27:27-44.

#### **D. PAUL'S VISION IN HEAVEN (12:1-10).**

Paul speaks of an actual occurrence in his life when he was taken up into heaven and permitted to see things that he was forbidden to speak of back on earth. This may have happened when he was stoned and left for dead (Acts 9:24-25), some 14 years before. Paul was given clear visions and revelations from God. These kinds of communications ceased at the end of the New Testament era (Rev 22:18-19; Heb 1:1,2; 2:3,4; 1 Co 2:10; 2 Pe 1:3; Jude 3).

The "third" heaven is where Christ and His saints dwell and which Christ called paradise (Luke 23:43; cf. Rev 2:7). Someday all Christians will be in heaven and see the things Paul saw. This requires me to speak of another controversial and sensational subject. It has to do with life after death experiences. Some recount that when they had died, then they somehow went to heaven, saw things, even talked to people, then came back to this earth. Some say they have been transported to heaven, then come back to earth. They claim to describe heaven in graphic detail. Some write bestselling books telling of their experience. Is it true?

Their claims are subject to question as to validity. Maybe they did. Maybe they did not. I have a dear friend who was injured in an accident. By all accounts, he died on the operating table in a hospital. He recounts that he could see and hear the people declaring him dead. Then he went to someplace, perhaps heaven, but a voice told him to return to care for his family. But, the strange thing is that the place he went was a circus complete with Ferris wheels and all the entertainment of a county fair! That is heaven?

It is true that Paul did go to heaven and back. Isaiah records, "In the year of King Uziah's death, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple" (Isaiah 6:1). He lived to write about his experience, which perhaps was just a vision. Moses and Elijah came from heaven, or wherever they were, to talk to Jesus at His transfiguration (Matthew 17:3). However, Jesus called it a vision, which may lead one to think they did not set their feet upon the ground. Visions were common in the Bible.

Before I go farther, let me be clear that there is a spiritual realm with clouds of angels (both good and bad) and activities that occur just outside of our awareness. There is a heaven and hell.

My caution is in the form of several observations regarding those who claim to travel freely (or otherwise) between earth and heaven, then write books for lots of money. First, it could be a case of outright fraud. Second, it could be psychological hallucinations. Third, Satan, "disguises himself as an angel of light" (2 Cor 11:14). Fourth, Paul warned us, regarding his visit to heaven, that he, "was caught up into Paradise, and heard inexpressible words, which a man is not permitted to speak" (2 Cor 12:4).

Why, then, do people who claim to travel to heaven talk so freely of what they have seen and heard? People are not permitted to speak of those things, even the Apostle Paul. The issue is complex, and I only mention it to caution you to the claims of those who offer little evidence other than their own subject experience.

Paul speaks of his "thorn in the flesh" (12:7). It is unclear just what this was, though it appears as a recurrent physical ailment that caused pain and discomfort. Perhaps it was something like migraine headaches, eye trouble, malaria or epilepsy. Paul saw the affliction as the work of Satan, permitted by God. Though he prayed for healing, God did not permit it

(12:8,9). The handicap was given as a means of keeping Paul humble, because of the awesome things he saw in heaven (v 7), and that God could better express His grace and power through Paul's weakness (v 9). The power of God being exercised through him was more important to Paul than relief from his pain. God does not always heal illness.

#### **E. PAUL'S UNSELFISHNESS IN MINISTRY (12:11-18).**

Paul said he performed the signs, wonders and miracles of a true apostle (cf. Acts 2:22,43; Heb 2:4). That should have been enough to demonstrate his apostleship. One of Paul's miracles was a demon cast out of the servant girl (Acts 16:18), and other numerous miracles (Acts 19:11). One great miracle was a church planted in Corinth and given life by God (1 Co 3:6). He did not consider himself inferior to any of the Apostles.

Paul appeals again to the unselfishness of his ministry among the Corinthians. He did not take money from them, even when he had the right to earn his living from the gospel (1 Co 9:14). That was the only respect that he was different than the other Apostles. He did not take advantage of them, but loved them, seeking their welfare and not their possessions. Even Paul's helper, Titus, did not take money from them. That behavior should have also demonstrated his apostleship – or at least his sincerity in ministry.

#### **F. PAUL'S URGING THEIR REPENTANCE (12:19 - 13:14).**

Paul urged them to repent, appealing to the reality that we all stand in the sight of God and that his motive was for their spiritual growth - not merely the defense of Paul's reputation (12:19). He speaks strongly against various sins: strife, jealousy, angry tempers, disputes, slanders, gossip, arrogance, disturbances, impurity, immorality and sensuality. He was urging repentance from these sins (12:21).

Paul stated his plans for travelling to see the Corinthians for the third time (12:14; 13:1). His first visit was to plant the church (Acts 18:1), the second was the "painful visit" (2 Co 2:1) and this is the third visit he was planning. The second visit was painful because of the offence against him (2:5-11), but also because they were living in sin (12:21). His promise was to exercise church discipline, though he had no power, Christ did. Paul followed the writing of this letter with a three month visit. It was during that visit he wrote the letter to the Romans.

He challenged them to test themselves to see if they were Christians (13:5). Tests that we can measure ourselves against are: our faith in Christ (1 Jo 5:1), love for Christ (John 8:42), the witness of the Spirit (Rom 8:16; 1 Jo 5:5-7,10), our practice of righteousness (1 Jo 2:29), love for other Christians (1 Jo 4:7), victory over the world (1 Jo 5:4) and non-continuance in sin (1 Jo 5:18; cf 1 Jo 3:7-10).

He was not speaking of morbid self-pity in recalling and constant dwelling on all our shortcomings. However, genuine self-reflection and self-awareness are the starting place for genuine Holy Spirit powered change in our lives.

Paul used the authority God gave him to build up the church and individuals in their spiritual lives and faith, not to tear believers down and discourage them (13:10). It is wrong to abuse the authority God gives us in the church, but everything we do must be to advance and enhance the precious work and interests of God.

The last verse indicates that the early church had a well-defined view of the Trinity. In the presence of God there is grace, love and fellowship. Paul wrote, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all."

# **EPISTLE TO THE GALATIANS A GENERAL COMMENTARY**

**By  
Rev. Dr. Willis C. Newman**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **I. BACKGROUND INFORMATION.**

#### **A. THE AUTHOR.**

Paul has been considered the author of Galatians, except for a few radical critics. Evangelicals fully accept Paul. Internal evidence includes his name as writer in 1:1 and 5:2. Most of chapters one and two are autobiographical and agree with the course of Paul's life as recorded in Acts. The theology is consistent with Paul. External evidence includes the second and third century testimony of church leaders such as Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria and Origen. The early heretics, such as Marcion (second century), maintained Pauline authorship.

#### **B. THE READERS.**

Galatians is addressed to the Galatians. Galatia (2:2; 3:1) was in what is now central Turkey. North central Galatia was established when the Gauls migrated from western Europe through Italy and Greece with the key cities being Ancyra, Pessinus and Taviurn. South central Galatia was established by the Romans in 25 B.C. and included the cities of Antioch, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe. A debate has existed for centuries as to which part of Galatia (north or south) was Paul writing.

If Christians in North Galatia were the target, then the epistle was written on the third missionary journey, early from Ephesus (@ A.D. 53) or later (@ A.D. 55) from Macedonia. The arguments for this view, according to some, is that Paul seems to use Galatia to refer to North Galatia (Acts 16:6; 18:23). The churches would have been evangelized during the second missionary journey.

If Christians in South Galatia were the intended readers, then the epistle was written just after the first missionary journey probably from Antioch about A.D. 49. This would make it Paul's earliest epistle. The Jerusalem council (Acts 15) would have convened just after the epistle. The main evidence for the South Galatia theory is that the Jerusalem was not mentioned in the letter; yet, the decision of that council related directly to the central issue of the letter. Other evidence is that there is no record of churches being started in North Galatia, but there is in South Galatia (Acts 13,14).

Also, Barnabas is mentioned (but not introduced; Gal 2:1,9,13), and he only traveled with Paul on the first journey; thus, only the Christians in South Galatia would have known him. Other reasons, in addition, when added with the above, seem to favor the South Galatia theory. The renowned Sir William M Ramsay, based on his extensive archeological and historical research, favored the South Galatia theory.

#### **C. THE OCCASION OF WRITING.**

Assuming the South Galatia view, then Paul and Barnabas returned to Antioch from their first journey, having planted churches in South Galatia (Acts 13,14). Peter came down to Antioch to fellowship with the missionaries. Several other Jews from the Judaistic party may have come with Peter or at a later date (Acts 15:1,2; Gal 2:11,12,13). In face of Peter withdrawing

from Gentile Christians because of peer pressure from the Judaizers, Paul sharply rebuked him for his hypocrisy (Gal 2:11). No small controversy arose!

In the meantime, the Judaizers had infiltrated the churches of South Galatia and denied Paul's apostolic authority and they taught that circumcision according to the Law of Moses was necessary for salvation (Acts 13:45,50; 14:2,4,5,19; 15:1,2,5). Paul reacted to the situation with quick vigor, rebuking Peter and writing the letter to the Galatians to correct the heresy of the Judaizers. The explosive and tense situation initiated the following Jerusalem council to determine the correct theological view.

The Judaizer perversion was the mixing of Judaism with Christianity - law with grace. In the end, with this perversion, Christ is merely a prophet, like another Moses, and His divine nature is overlooked. In later centuries this teaching took the name of Ebionism and was more fully developed.

#### **D. THE PURPOSE OF THE LETTER.**

The aim of the letter is twofold: to defend Paul's apostolic authority, to expose the Judaistic error and defend the doctrine of justification by faith alone. The epistle is very much like that to the Romans: no justification by the works of the law. The Mosaic Law is not binding on Christians. The epistle is one of the most controversial writings of Paul. It abounds in strong feeling and vigorous argument. The contrasts are striking: grace and ritual, faith and works, fruits of the Spirit and works of the flesh. All religions that teach salvation by works are condemned by this epistle. Paul forcefully proclaims that we are both saved and sanctified by faith alone.

Paul's letter is one of his most influential. Romans is considered an expansion of Galatians. The latter played a key part in the Protestant Reformation of later centuries, being called the "cornerstone of the Protestant Reformation." Martin Luther was fond of the book, calling it "his wife." Luther's commentary on Galatians was widely read by the common people. John Bunyan, the author of the famous Pilgrims Progress, wrote this, "I do prefer this book of Martin Luther upon the Galatians, excepting the Holy Bible, before all books that I have ever seen."

#### **E. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE LETTER.**

This is what Luther himself had to say about the book, "I have taken in hand, in the name of the Lord, yet once again to expound this epistle of St. Paul to the Galatians; not because I desire to teach new things, or such as ye have not known before, since that, by the grace of Christ, Paul is now thoroughly known unto you, but for that we have to fear lest Satan take from us this doctrine of faith, and bring into the Church again the doctrine of works and men's traditions. Wherefore it is very necessary that this doctrine be kept in continual practice and public exercise, both of hearing and reading." This is taken from Luther's declaration in the preface of his commentary of Galatians.

### **II. BRIEF OUTLINE OF GALATIANS.**

#### **I. INTRODUCTION AND OCCASION OF THE LETTER (1:1-10).**

- A. Statement of Paul's credentials (1:1-5).
- B. Statement of the problem (1:6-10).

#### **II. PAUL'S AUTHORITY DEMONSTRATED (1:11-2:21).**

- A. Received directly from Christ (1:11-24).



- B. Confirmed by Jerusalem church (2:1-10).
- C. Demonstrated in rebuke to Peter (2:11-21).

### **III. JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH EXPOUNDED (3:1-4:31).**

- A. Vindicated by experience (3:1-5).
- B. Appealed to from Abraham (3:6-9).
- C. Proven by the Law of Moses (3:10-12).
- D. Defended from the work of Christ (3:3:13-14).
- E. Declared permanent over the Law (3:15-18).
- F. Defined by the purpose of the Law (3:19-25).
- G. Delineated by the believers position (3:26-29).
- H. Illustrated from civil law (4:1-7).
- I. Urged by personal testimony (4:8-20).
- J. Argued from Old Testament allegory (4:21-31).

### **IV. JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH IN CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE (CHAPTERS 5-6).**

- A. The issue of Christian liberty (5:1-12).
- B. The issue of sins of the flesh (5:13-15).
- C. The issue of victorious Christian living (5:16-26).
- D. The issue of a sinning Christian (6:1-5).
- E. The issue of giving, sowing, reaping (6:6-10).
- F. Summary (6:11-18).

## **COMMENTARY**

### **I. INTRODUCTION AND OCCASION OF LETTER (1:1-10).**

#### **A. STATEMENT OF PAUL'S CREDENTIALS (1:1-5).**

1. Paul maintained that he, indeed, was an apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ. He had not received that authority, position or status from any man, manmade institution or agency, nor was it delivered to him by any person. His commission was directly from Christ Himself. He said this to establish from the start his apostolic authority which was denied by the Judaizers.

2. Paul also establishes from the start what the gospel is, speaking of Christ: "Who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us out of this present evil age" (1:4; cf. 1 Ti 2:6; Titus 2:14; 1 Pe 3:18). This gospel was also in accordance with the will of God, thus, the message Paul proclaimed was God's message. The work "apostle" literally means "one sent forth." Paul was sent forth from God with a specific message directly given by God. God was Paul's authority. There is no higher authority in the universe. Consequently, the inspired words of this epistle are fully authoritative, true, and accurate.

3. Several phases or principles are seen in Christ giving Himself for our sins (v 4).

- First, His was a voluntary and final act. That is, nothing more can be added or done to obtain our salvation. The full penalty for our sins was fully paid forever.
- Second, His work satisfied the righteous demands of God's holiness which was horribly offended by man's sin. Divine justice was satisfied (Rom 3:24,25).
- Third, His work reconciles sinful man to the Holy God. Whereas once we were his enemies and destined for His wrath (Rom 5:9,10), now we are forgiven and have been established as His children (John 1:12,13).
- Fourth, His work was a substitutionary atonement, that is, Christ Himself took our judgment, becoming our substitute. He died our death and took our penalty, and in exchange, gave us His life and righteousness (2 Co 5:21).

- Fifth, His work was an act of grace (2:21). Grace is an act of undeserved favour on behalf of undeserving sinners who deserve and actually stand under the judgment of God.
- Sixth, His work is an act of deliverance. He has delivered and liberated us from this present world system which is hostile to God and will eventually be destroyed (1 Jo 2:17; 2 Pe 3:10-13). We were delivered from the penalty of sin at the time of our salvation, are being delivered from the power of sin in our present Christian life, and will be fully delivered from the presence of sin in the future, eternal, glorified state.

## **B. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM (1:6-10).**

1. The problem was that the Galatians were deserting Christ for a false gospel (v 6). They were retreating back into keeping the Law of Moses to be saved. The natural tendency of man is to work for his salvation. Any such teaching, however, is false. The gospel of Christ is exclusive. There is no other gospel. Also, it does not mean that one can accept Christ plus hang onto another religion.

2. In a scorching rebuke to those who preached salvation by works, Paul says they are outside of faith in Christ alone. He agrees with Jesus who said: "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the father, but through Me" (John 14:6). Salvation is by faith plus nothing. We do not work to get saved, neither do we work to keep saved. Good works are involved, but they are a result of salvation, not the cause. Even if an angel preaches another gospel, they are to be accursed (v 8).

In order to set up my next comments, I will place before you the clear words of Paul, "But even though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we have preached to you, let him be accursed" (Galatians 1:8).

3. The Mormon religion (as well as many others) would do well to take heed to this warning. We single out this religion because of the warning against angels giving the wrong message. Joseph Smith, its founder, relates that while in prayer a "messenger sent from the presence of God (appeared) to me, and that his name was Moroni...He said there was a book deposited, written upon gold plates...He also said that the fulness of the everlasting Gospel was contained in it, as delivered by the Saviour to the ancient inhabitants" (From introductory materials taken from the Book of Mormons). This document was later, allegedly, translated by Smith and became known as the Book of Mormon.

As a consequence of Moroni's message, the Mormon way of salvation is radically different than that of Christ: "Conditional or individual salvation, that which comes by grace coupled with gospel obedience, consists in receiving an inheritance in the celestial kingdom of God. This kind of salvation follows faith, repentance, baptism, receipt of the Holy Ghost, and continued righteousness to the end of one's mortal probation...All others are damned...There is no salvation outside The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints" (Bruce R. McConkie, Mormon Doctrine, 1966, pp. 669-667).

Another Mormon theologian says "redemption from personal sins can only be obtained through obedience to the requirements of the gospel, and a life of good works (James E. Talmage, The Articles of Faith, 1968, pp. 478-479).

I contrast their statements with those of the Apostle Paul. He wrote, "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast...For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from

works of the Law...because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight” (Ephesians 2:8, 9; Romans 3:28, 20).

I do not wish to cause trouble with Mormons. They are fine, dedicated, caring people. I simply wish to point out Mormonism as a clear example where an angel, again allegedly, gave a gospel to humans. Also, it is a clear example of Moroni’s gospel being drastically different than the gospel of Christ. I will let you draw your own conclusions.

## **II. PAUL'S AUTHORITY DEMONSTRATED (1:11-2:21).**

### **A. RECEIVED DIRECTLY FROM CHRIST (1:11-24).**

1. Paul expressly states that he got the gospel message directly from a revelation from Christ. It was not something made up by any man - or angel, for that matter. There are those who say that Paul and Jesus taught a different theology, but according to this record it was the same message. Paul was preaching what Christ told him to preach.

2. Paul related a short history of his life and conversion (1:13-24). He was high in Judaism before his conversion, and intently tried to destroy the church. God had a plan for Paul, however, He chose, prepared and called him to preach Christ to the Gentiles (vv 15,16).

3. Paul, in defense of his authority, is saying that:

- First, he was an apostle before he met any of the apostles. His appointment was from God.
- Second, when he did meet them (2:1-10) he was received as an equal and his message confirmed by them.
- Third, as an apostle he rebuked another apostle, Peter (2:11-21), who had nothing to say in return.
- Fourth, the other apostles recognized Paul's apostleship (2:7-10)
- Fifth, Paul pointed out that he was not after popularity among humans but rather received abuse for the gospel he preached; thus, his motive in preaching must be pure (1:10). He was a bond-servant of God.
- Sixth, Paul had held a high and respected position in Judaism, but had left it for something better. Again, his motives are appealed to: he would not have left a great position for a detested position which would have been in fact a lie.

From verses 11-17 we can conclude from these facts that we should believe the Gospel. Why? Because it is from Christ. Furthermore, Paul was converted from Judaism to Christ. It was a real event, otherwise Paul would not have converted. Then finally, Christ told Paul to preach the gospel; consequently, it is to be believed, because the content of the gospel requires us to believe it.

From verses 18-24 we can also conclude valuable principles for Christian service. Paul prepared himself, had the utmost integrity, and was focused. He sets an example for us.

4. Paul, following his conversion, went into Arabia. This was somewhere in the kingdom of a group of people called the Nabataeans, and their land stretched from near Damascus to the end of the Sinaitic peninsula. His point is that he did not go to Jerusalem, nor consult with men concerning his theology. Already an expert in Old Testament theology, Paul went off to be alone to study, think, meditate, receive further revelation from Christ and develop Christian theology. His study was for three years (1:18). Following that study Paul traveled to Jerusalem to get acquainted with Peter (Cephas) for 15 days, but left because of a plot against his life (Acts 9:29). The historical time Paul spent in Arabia was probably recorded

between Acts 9:21 and 9:22).

5. Paul also met James, the half-brother of Jesus Christ (1:19). James probably did not become a follower of Jesus until after His resurrection. After Peter left Jerusalem to minister among gentiles, James rose as the leader of the Jerusalem church and remained there until his death (Acts 12:17; 15:13; 21:18). He was the president of the first church council in Acts 15 (Acts 15:13,19). James did commit to the fact that gentiles need not keep the Jewish law; however, he felt bound to keep the law himself and to require other Jewish converts to do the same (cf Acts 21:17-26).

It is traditionally said that after Paul was sent to Rome, James was asked by the Jews concerning Jesus. James' confession was so powerful that many became saved, an event so fearful to the Jews that they hurled James from the pinnacle of the temple and stoned him to death. The high priest, Annas, assembled the Sanhedrin to secure James' condemnation, it is said. James was the author of the New Testament epistle bearing his name.

## **B. CONFIRMED BY THE JERUSALEM CHURCH (2:1-10).**

1. The events of this section would be recorded in Acts 11, following the South Galatia theory, or Acts 15, following the North Galatia theory. Paul went to Jerusalem because of a revelation from God (v 2), not because he was uncertain of his theology after preaching it for 14 years, or had been questioned by the apostles. His motive was for the Jerusalem apostles to consider what they were preaching, that is, if they were teaching that circumcision was necessary for salvation. The issues needed to be clarified. He needed their affirmation, or his work among the Gentiles would have been hindered.

2. Paul, again defending his apostolic authority, shows that his teaching is in the mainstream of apostolic teaching. He submitted his theology to the apostles and they approved and even considered Paul to be of apostolic rank (v 9). Paul even brought Titus along and he was not required to be circumcised (v 3). Titus was a gentile who was led to Christ by Paul (Gal 2:1,3; Titus 1:4) probably early in Paul's missionary work. Titus served his apprenticeship under Paul and worked with him many years in missionary work. Titus grew to be a faithful Christian worker (cf. 2 Co 2:13; 7:6,7,13-15; 8:6,16-18,23; 12:18; 2 Ti 4:10).

3. Titus became the test case for Paul. Titus was not required to be circumcised, though there was obviously great pressure brought by the "false brethren" (v 4) to have Titus circumcised. The false brethren were the Judaizers who had infiltrated the church to spy out and detect doctrines and issues that the Jews could use to further persecute Christians.

They also wanted to bring Christians into slavery to Judaism. Their gospel was: "unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved" (Acts 15:1). Many Jewish Christians were also swayed to the position of the Judaizers: "But certain ones of the sect of the Pharisees who had believed, stood up, saying, 'It is necessary to circumcise them, and to direct them to observe the Law of Moses'" (Acts 15:5).

4. Paul's case was that the truth of the gospel, salvation by grace through faith, was sufficient, and to compromise that grand reality was unthinkable. Even today to compromise the gospel of Christ with a salvation of works is unthinkable. Salvation is by grace through faith alone plus nothing. Christ paid it all and we can only receive His salvation as a free gift (Eph 2:8,9).

5. Paul had been entrusted with taking the gospel primarily to the Gentiles while Peter's primary target was the Jews. Today we are entrusted with the gospel to communicate it to our generation – everywhere in the world. Each of us have been given spheres of influence, whether in our family and friend network, a missionary in a foreign land or as an international evangelist or Bible teacher, to communicate the gospel of Christ.

The proclamation of the gospel has not been entrusted to governments, angels, armies, big corporations, political parties, other religions - but to the Christian church as a whole and Christians as individuals. This is the “trust” that God has transferred to His people. It is a trust of which all of us will someday be held to give an account.

### **C. DEMONSTRATED IN REBUKE TO PETER (2:11-21).**

1. In this dramatic section, Paul relates how he had to rebuke Peter (the reputed "chief" of the apostles) for actions that compromised the truth of the gospel. The occasion of this tense confrontation was Peter's visit to Antioch, perhaps soon after Paul, Barnabas and Titus returned to Antioch from Jerusalem. This rebuke was given as evidence that Paul did have apostolic authority.

2. The cause of the problem was that in Antioch both Jewish and Gentile Christians were eating together without observing the Jewish dietary laws. Peter joyfully participated in this practice. Having received the vision that all food was clean (Acts 10:9-15,28), Peter had a clear conscience. Certain Jewish Christians, however, came to visit from Jerusalem and they were shocked by the practice. As a result, so as to avoid trouble, Peter and even Barnabas separated themselves from the Gentiles and practiced the dietary laws to please the Jewish Christians. Peter preached right theology, but he was not practicing it in everyday life. This was hypocrisy (2:13).

In our own lives we must be careful not to live such that our way of life cancels out our message. Peer pressure, as with Peter, or sinful desires can lead us astray and cause us to do wrong things. When others look at what we do, and how our actions contradict the Word of God, they conclude that we do not really believe our own words and disregard our Christian witness.

Religious work can also be misunderstood by the unsaved. They may confuse salvation with church work, baptism, good works, faithful church attendance, prayers, Bible reading, church membership, having parents who are Christian, going through religious ceremonies, fasting - or any number of religious "works" that seem to earn us salvation.

3. Paul's case is that the gospel and law are mutually exclusive, they cannot be co- mingled or mixed together: "I do not nullify the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly" (2:21). Peter's actions gave the impression that the gospel and Law did go together. Just as oil and water do not mix together, neither do grace and law.

Paul concludes that if we turn to salvation through faith in Christ, and then discover that we have sinned in doing so, then Christ becomes a minister of sin (v 17). Such a thought is terrible. In other words, if salvation is not solely by grace and received by faith alone, then Christ is a sinner who has encouraged others to sin.

4. The secret of spiritual life is given (2:20).

Being crucified with Christ means to be "dead" to the Law as a means of Christian living. It is freedom from the enslaving power of sin and condemnation and to be alive with the

resurrection life of Christ within us. Christ literally, by the Holy Spirit, lives within our bodies. We surrender the lordship of our lives to Him and permit Him to live His life through us. He has ignited our spirits with eternal life. We permit that life to flow from within. Further, we give His priorities, attitudes, interests, love and concerns first place in our lives. As He lives a life of holiness and love toward God and others, so do we. Ours is a life of submission, devotion, surrender, obedience and identification with Christ. As He has sweet fellowship with God the Father, so do we.

Basic to this Christian life is our spiritual union with Christ. By the "union" with Christ is meant that intimate, mystical, life-giving, eternal, spiritual union (connection) in which the spirit of the individual Christian (while keeping their individuality) is interpenetrated, occupied and empowered directly by the Holy Spirit. They, therefore, become one with Christ and spiritually one with all true believers as we are united into the one spiritual body called the church of whom Christ is the head and Christians are the members (2 Co 1:22; 5:17; 1 Co 6:15,17,19; 12:13; Col 1:27; 2 Ti 1:14; Acts 2:1-4; Rom 7:4; 8:9-11; John 15:1-10; 14:20; 17:21-23; Gal 2:20; Eph 3:16,17; 4:4-6).

We live our lives by faith, trusting Christ in all that we do. We experience a live, vital and dynamic relationship with Christ Himself. In contrast, Christian life is not one of slavish external obedience to a dead list of dusty rules, impossible laws, boring religious ceremonies and judgmental expectations from others. Neither is the Christian life one of continuous ecstasy, rapturous glory and spectacular miracles exploding around us. We live a life of trust in a real Person who loves us and delivered Himself up for our salvation and lives His life through us, literally. Our Christian life also includes suffering, pain, and trouble which purifies our faith.

Christian life is a relationship and develops as other relationships in our lives. Sometimes relationships are vital, sweet, thrilling, exciting, real, intense, and interesting. Sometimes they grow stale, sorrowful and indifferent. Relationships take time, work, attention and cultivation to keep them alive, sweet and full of harmony. The same is true in our relationship with Christ. Any problems within that relationship, however, are of our own doing as He always desires the perfect relationship

Christian life has times of great victory, but also moments of suffering and defeat. Our life includes weariness, work, and wavering in our faith along with testing, trials and temptation. Living by faith means to believe that God will do what He said He will do. In other words, we live by the Bible, because that is the only place where God's words are recorded.

The Bible tells us that Christ lives within the Christian, therefore, we believe Him and live accordingly. We believe His promises, commands, warnings and encouraging words. It is upon Christ that, by faith, we cast our hope, gain our comfort, peace, joy, meaning of life. It is by faith that we live a life of obedience, holiness, godliness and prayer.

The Living Bible paraphrases faith thus, "What is faith? It is the confident assurance that something we want is going to happen. It is the certainty that what we hope for is waiting for us, even though we cannot see it up ahead" (Hebrews 11:1).

True faith always has three parts to it. First, it includes knowledge or information. Without some specific information, we don't have anything to believe. The content of what we believe is located in the Bible. Second, true faith includes some mental agreement or acceptance as true and factual the content of the knowledge placed before us. The third part of true faith is

an act of the will – or personal appropriation of what we believe. We have to act upon the truth we believe, and trust it to be genuine and real.

From here we move into the core of Paul's theology, justification by faith alone.

### **III. JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH EXPOUNDED (3:1-4:31).**

#### **A. VINDICATED BY EXPERIENCE (3:1-5).**

Paul says that he brought the gospel to the Galatians who received it by faith. The Holy Spirit worked in their lives and they were saved and the work was confirmed by miracles. Now they thought that faith must be joined with keeping the religious rules of the Mosaic Law (cf. 4:9,10).

Paul's point is that if "religion" could not save you to begin with, how can it possible keep you saved now after you are saved? The Holy Spirit does not work through Christians keeping a list of religious rules, but by dynamic, simple faith based on the Word of God. This is true whether the issue is getting saved to begin with or growing in our Christian life.

When we are saved by faith, the Holy Spirit comes to live within us. We are changed from the inside out – just as fruit is produced by the tree. As our lives begin to change in response to the Holy Spirit and the Word of God, we slowly note the difference. The things we used to like, we don't like any more, and we find that we love Christ and His people. Our attitudes, lifestyle and desires change. This change, witnessed by ourselves, and seen by others, is a vindication of our salvation through faith in Christ. Like someone said, it is hard to argue with a person who has had a powerful, personal experience.

#### **B. APPEALED TO FROM ABRAHAM (3:6-9).**

Paul next pointed to Old Testament Scripture and the life of the founder of Judaism and Christianity, Abraham (Gen 15:6). Abraham trusted in faith to be counted to him for righteousness. His move was a powerful counter to the Judaizers who, appealing to Moses, claimed to have the Old Testament on their side. Paul went back centuries before the Mosaic Law to the founder of Judaism.

Though the physical descendants of Abraham became the nation Israel, his spiritual descendants, however, are those who rely on faith for righteousness (justification), whether Jew or Gentile. God's promise was to justify by faith, not by works of the flesh. Justification, or righteousness, refers to the great problem: how can a holy and just God justify an unholy and unrighteous man? Justification solves the problem. It is that legal act of God by which, based on the righteousness of Christ, He both declares and treats the sinner as righteous. The act by which the righteousness of Christ is imputed (credited) to the believing sinner is legal, restorative, instantaneous and complete. (See notes on Romans 3:21-31).

#### **C. PROVEN BY THE LAW OF MOSES (3:10-12).**

The Judaizers thought the Law could justify, but Paul shows how it does just the opposite. The Law only condemns, because in order to be justified one had to be perfect, according to the Mosaic Law itself, "Cursed is he who does not confirm the words of this law by doing them" (Deut 27:26). Appealing again to the Old Testament prophet, Habakkuk (3:11), Paul proves that justification comes by faith, "Behold, as for the proud one, His soul is not right within him; but the righteous will live by his faith" (Hab 2:4). No one can be right before God by keeping the Laws of Moses. None. The Law curses; faith saves.

The Mosaic Law is perfect; there is nothing wrong with it. The problem is with mankind who

cannot keep it, because of our sinful nature. If we are trying to earn salvation by our good works, we are doomed, because we must be perfect. No human being is perfect. Many religions try to make up their list of rules to follow, hoping that by keeping them, or most of them, they will be acceptable to God. But in order to be saved, one must perfectly keep God's list, which is impossible.

#### **D. DEFENDED FROM THE WORK OF CHRIST (3:13-14).**

The Law condemns and curses us. Christ, on the other hand took our curse and condemnation upon Himself. His crucifixion placed the penalty of the Law upon Him, according to Deut 21:23. This action points to the vicarious substitutionary atonement of Christ. He stood in the believer's place of judgment and became our substitute.

There are two purposes for this act of grace. One is that the Gentiles might receive the promises given to Abraham, that is, to be justified by faith apart from works of the Law. Second, that believers might receive the Holy Spirit who is promised to all who believe, and gives eternal life. Paul states that if one does not have the Holy Spirit, they are not a Christian (Rom 8:9).

#### **E. DECLARED PERMANENT OVER LAW (3:15-18),**

1. Paul establishes two points: the promise of salvation by faith came before the Mosaic Law (430 years), and this promise cannot be invalidated by the Mosaic Law, because God cannot break His promise. This argument was to answer the Judaizers who might say that "Yes, faith came first, but when the Law came it nullified salvation by faith and established salvation by works."

Paul replies that a later covenant (contract) cannot invalidate or add conditions to an earlier contract that was ratified and established by the promise of God. If a contract has conditions in it that are not met, then one can sue for breach of contract; however, God's contract with Abraham was unconditional and made unilateral (by God alone) (v 18; cf. Gen 15:1-18): He promised to save by faith, period. He gave Himself no way to back out of the contract.

No conditions were placed on Abraham or God. Therefore, there is no basis, or conditions, to void the covenant, or contract. The promises of God are unchangeable, He cannot break or violate a promise or lie because of His holy nature (Heb 6:18). Since faith and works are mutually exclusively, to base salvation on works would necessarily break God's promise to save by faith.

2. God's promise was eternal (Gen 13:15; 17:7) and was fulfilled in Christ (the "seed" which is Christ; cf. Gen 22:16); thus, the promise was still in effect during the time of the Mosaic Law (cf. Gen 12:1-3, 7; 13:15; 15:18; 17:1-8; 24:7; Rom 4:1-25). The covenant with Abraham was twofold: it contained promises of land to the nation Israel plus spiritual promises given through the Jew to Gentiles, that is, Gentiles would be saved by faith as was Abraham. Abraham has both physical (Israel) and spiritual descendants (all true believers) (cf. Gal 3:6-9).

Paul bases his argument on the singular form of the word "seed" (v 16) as opposed to the plural form "seeds." This is a significant "proof text" for the inerrant, verbal inspiration of Scripture. God's inspiration extends even to the form of the words written in the Bible.

3. In reconciling the number of years, the 430 years extends from the final ratification of the Abrahamic Covenant to Jacob (Gen 46:1-4; cf. Exod 12:40) to the giving of the Law to



Moses. The time span was from Jacob going to Egypt (1876 B.C.) to the Exodus (1446 B.C.). There were, several reconfirmations given following the original promise to Abraham. In the context, Paul is contrasting the Age of Promise with the Age of Law. The so called "Age of Promise" refers to Abraham's time. The Age of Law refers to the historical time of the Moses and the Law given to Him by God.

As a side note, the Bible mentions twice that the enslavement of the Jews in Egypt was 400 years (Gen 15:13; Acts 7:6). This seems to contradict the 430 mentioned by Paul. Many explanations have been given such as that the 400 is rounded figures. Another explanation is that there is a distinction between the actual sojourn (430 years) and the time they were enslaved (400 years). They were not enslaved during the days Joseph ruled.

#### **F. DEFINED BY THE PURPOSE OF THE LAW (3:19-25).**

The argument here is that the Law was only temporary, it was given as a means of restraining sin, it was meant to point people to Christ, and the believer is released from the Law as a means of salvation or Christian growth (i.e. sanctification). The Law also describes the character of God and His Holiness.

Paul points out the inferior status of the Law and also the "unilateral" nature of God's promise to save by faith alone. In the case of the law there were mediators between two parties, God and the people. Consequently, this covenant was "bi-lateral." Angels represented God and Moses represented the people. This covenant was also conditional, that is, negotiations with conditions were agreed to by the two parties. The promise, on the other hand, had no mediator: God Himself gave the promise with no conditions (v 20; Gen 15:18).

God gave both the Law and the promises, but they had different purposes; therefore, they are not contradictory. He did not save by faith for a time, then change His mind and decide to save by works, then change back to saving by faith. He always saved by faith. The Law was good, but it had a fatal flaw: it could not give life to those "dead in your trespasses and sins" (Ephesians 2:1). That is why it is inferior: the Law cannot give life, but faith can. The Law could, however, prepare the way for the gospel. It accomplished this by showing the world it stood condemned and in need of salvation which could only be gained by faith in Christ.

The "tutor" (v 24) was a slave whose function was to care for the young between about six and puberty. These tutors were to train the child in moral training and protect them from the evils of society. In addition, they were to safely escort them to school where they could be taught. Christ is our true teacher, to whom the Law brings the believer.

#### **G. DELINEATED BY THE BELIEVERS POSITION (3:26-29).**

Resulting from our position in Christ we are sons of God, baptized (united) into Christ, one with each other in Christ, belong to Christ (ownership), are Abraham's offspring, and heir to Abraham's promise. Faith removes us from the watch care of the Law.

Baptism here does not mean water baptism, but our spiritual union with Christ (1 Co 12:13). As to being "clothed" with Christ, Paul uses a figure of speech. In Roman society when a youth reached adulthood he was given a new robe (toga) to wear that indicated he had been fully admitted into the family and state with all the rights that pertained to that position. In Christ, we have full acceptance into God's family, being clothed with His righteousness.

There is much confusion and dispute as to the application of this verse, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are

all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28). Many Christians believe this verse gives instruction that women may be pastors of a local church. Others Christians believe that it does not give that allowance. Here is their argument.

All believers are equal as to spiritual privilege, position, value, worth, and access to God (v 28). There are no inferior or superior Christians based on gender, race, ethnicity, or status in society. Paul did indicate, however, that there are distinctions of roles or functions we perform in spiritual service to God. The Trinity, for example, is made up of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. They are co-equal. They are all three perfect and of infinite value and worth.

There are, however, differences in roles they play in what is known as the "Economic Trinity." The Father planned our salvation, the Son made it possible by going to the cross and the Holy Spirit applies salvation to people. They all have equal value but different roles in the outworking of God's plan. The same is true of Christians in the church. Women, for example, are not to be pastors or theology teachers, that role have been assigned to men - but both are of equal value, worth, and equal access to God.

If it is believed that men and women are blurred together and no distinctions between roles can be made on the basis of gender, then it would be necessary to not distinguish between status in society or ethnic groups. There are in reality, however, clear distinctions between the groups listed in the verse. There are slaves and free people. There are different races and ethnic groups. There are differences between men and women.

It may be that women are permitted to be pastors of a local church, but I would suggest that it not be based upon this verse as a "proof" text.

#### **H. ILLUSTRATED FROM CIVIL LAW (4:1-7).**

The contrast is that before salvation by faith, we were as a slave under bondage, but afterward, we are as a son, an heir of God. Paul illustrates. The minor child, in Roman society, though an heir by birthright, lived in a state of virtual slavery, having no freedom nor decision making rights. He was placed under personal guardians and trustees guarded his estate. When adulthood came, a time appointed by the father, he was given full rights and freedoms.

In the same way, under the Mosaic Law we were held in bondage, but at the Father's appointed time, we are set free from the bondage of the Law and given the full rights of sons. That time was at Christ's first advent.

The "adoption" refers to that legal act of being admitted into the family of God. Adoption occurs when we receive Christ. We are admitted into the family of God, adopted as his children and made joint heirs with Christ. We become objects of God's special love, His fatherly care, the family name, likeness and love, fatherly chastisement, family comfort plus a family inheritance. We enjoy the liberties and privileges of the children of God (Rom 8:17).

#### **I. URGED BY PERSONAL TESTIMONY (4:8-20).**

Paul tells the Galatians, and to us today by application, to not be enslaved again to worthless religious works of the flesh (4:8-11). These rituals are worthless for justification or sanctification. Since the Galatians are in view, the "elementary things" (v 9) could refer to being enslaved to pagan religion. Others see it as reference to Jewish religious observances being foisted upon them by the Judaizers.

The special days would be the weekly Sabbaths, months referred to the new moons, seasons referred to seasonal festivals including Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles, years refer to the sabbatical and jubilee years. These observances were of no value in earning salvation with God.

Since these observances are of no value for salvation or Christian growth, it would be well for the Christian world to seriously consider why it observes many special seasons, days and other ceremonial rituals and rites. Spiritual life is by heartfelt faith in the promises of God for both salvation and Christian growth. Regular meetings for worship, fellowship and prayer are set down for us by the New Testament church. Baptism and communion are set down for us by order of Christ. Christ said that true worship is in spirit and truth (i.e. worship in spirit as opposed to external ceremony; truth, meaning genuine sincerity as opposed to hypocritical show).

Some denominations place a high value on ceremonies, rituals, special seasons and days, and the use of many symbols in their worship. When such liturgy is used as a symbol to remind and aid us in our heartfelt worship toward Christ, then I see nothing wrong with it. However, if outwardly participating in the motions and observances of the rituals is considered the actual worship, then there are problems. For example, outwardly reciting a written prayer with one's lips while the mind and heart are off in another direction and sin consumes the heart, then the prayer is worthless. God does not attend to it. It is not from the heart.

We also note from verse nine that Christians come to "know" God and be "known" by Him. The word "*gnontes*," from "*ginosko*" means to know personally and intimately. This kind of relationship is pointed out previously by Paul when he said the Holy Spirit moves us to call out to God as a small child would to their father. True religion is a pure, intimate, transparent, constant, honest relationship with Christ, not outward pomp, ceremony, ritual, observances and the like. To the Corinthians Paul described true religion as "simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ" (1 Co 11:3).

Paul appealed to the Galatian's former close relationship with Paul (vv 12-15). He wanted them to turn back to the gospel with the same eagerness they had received it. They had excitedly and gratefully received Paul when he brought the gospel message to them, but now they were turning from him because of the negative influence of the Judaizers. The phrase "plucked out your eyes" (v 15) may refer to an eye disease of Paul's, however, it is probably better seen as a figure of speech meaning they would give up everything for Paul. Paul did labor under illness.

By application we may note several pressures brought to mission and gospel work. We must suffer many hardships, whether physical or emotional discouragement. The latter comes from those we lead to Christ, but who drift into or are influenced by other groups who do not believe the gospel or have full confidence in the Bible. We take our encouragement and example from Paul who was zealous for the growth of those God had placed under his sphere of influence. Paul loved them, was pure in motive, communicated with them, prayed for them, and consistently taught the truth of the Bible.

The Judaizers tried to isolate the Galatians away from Paul (v 17), to drive a wedge between them. Their eager and determined strategy was from impure motives, using wrong and devious methods such as flattery, threat and untruths both in theology and by attacking Paul's character and apostolic authority. The Christian worker must not be surprised nor defeated by the constant efforts of Satan and his followers to undermine, discourage and

defeat true gospel work (cf. 2 Co 11:13-15). Our hope and confidence comes from the promises of God, and power and courage come from the Holy Spirit who enables and leads us (Eph 3:16; Col 1:28,29; 2 Co 4:16-18).

The nature of Christian work is that of Christ being formed in us (v 19). We are being transformed into the image of Christ (cf. Rom 8:29; Col 1:28,29). Spiritual life is the life of Christ reproduced within the believer. First, we are saved and given new, eternal life (John 3:3,5,8). Second, in our Christian growth we are transformed through the Word of God, obedience and Christ living His life in and through us (Gal 2:20). The project will be complete on the day of our resurrection when our bodies will be conformed to the pattern of Christ's resurrected body (Phil 3:20,21).

#### **J. ARGUED FROM OLD TESTAMENT ALLEGORY (4:21-31).**

Paul uses an illustration from the Old Testament to demonstrate the principles that those under the Mosaic Law are under bondage and rejected, but those under faith are under promise and accepted. His illustration is from Abraham, two of his wives, Hagar a slave woman and Sarah a free woman, and their two sons: Ishmael from Hagar and Isaac from Sarah. Grace and faith are represented by Sarah and Isaac while law and works are represented by Hagar and Ishmael. There are several contrasts between the two women that illustrate the contrasts between Grace and Law.

First, in ancient law the status of the mother drastically effected the status of the son (v 22). If we are to be under Law (Hagar & Ishmael) then we are enslaved to the law and its condemnation. If we are under grace (Sarah & Isaac) then we are free from the condemnation of Law, sin and death, and have eternal life and freedom in Christ.

Second, Ishmael was born in a natural way which required no miracle or promise. On the other hand, Isaac had a supernatural birth based on a miracle and promise (v 23). God had promised Abraham and Sarah they would have a son, but Sarah's age of childbearing passed with no son. At an advanced age of over 90 (Gen 17:17), Sarah conceived and bore Isaac, a supernatural miracle indeed (cf. Rom 4:18-21)! Christians have a supernatural rebirth based on faith in the promises of God (John 3:3,5,8,16).

Third, Paul contrasted Judaism with Christianity by saying Hagar represented the old (Mosaic) covenant while Sarah represented the new covenant, or Christianity. Again, those under Law and works are slaves while those under grace and faith are free from the law of sin and death (Rom 8:2).

Fourth, Paul said there are two Jerusalems (vv 25-26): the actual earthly city which was then under slavery to Rome and to the Mosaic Law. Sarah, in contrast, represented the heavenly Jerusalem, a place gained by grace through faith (Heb 12:22-24; Rev 21:2).

There are three comparisons in Paul's illustration that applied to his situation. First, as was mentioned before, Isaac's supernatural birth based on promise is compared to the Christian's supernatural birth based on faith in a promise (v 28).

Second, since Ishmael persecuted and tormented Isaac, so do false teachers torment and persecute true Christians (v 29). We can also note that the conflict between the Arabs (descendants of Ishmael) and Jews continue to this very day; therefore, we may expect continued conflict between true Christianity and those who pervert Christian teaching.

Third, Paul said that since the bond woman (Hagar) was cast out (Gen 21:10,12), then so should the Judaizers be cast out of the midst of the Galatians (v 30).

We may note two additional things regarding Paul's use of this story that he called an allegory. First, he fully accepted the historical story as factual history. Second, he used the story as an illustration, not as the type of allegories used by such men as Origen, Augustine and even some today.

In those types of allegory, the historical incidents are considered unimportant and the "true" meanings are hidden several layers down within the story and may or may not relate factual historical events. An allegory is a story in which people, places, things, events have a symbolic meaning which is instructive. Modern historical criticism considers most biblical stories as only symbolic or mythical, and certainly the stories that have a miracle attached.

However, Paul fully accepted the literal historical reality of Abraham, Hagar, Sarah, Ishmael and Isaac. He did not say the story of Abraham was an allegory, but that it contained a comparison from which we can draw a lesson. It was because of its actual historical truth that he could use it as a meaningful figure of speech to illustrate the contrast between Law and grace. He compared and contrasted characteristics of the literal historical conflict within Abraham's family to the characteristics of the literal historical conflict between Judaism with its system of salvation by works and Christianity with its grace, faith and promise.

There is another application we may draw from this issue of Law against grace. Those who demand that we must keep the Law for salvation and/or sanctification forget to mention the awful penalty and condemnation of Law. If we place ourselves into a system of Law for salvation we must keep the entire Law (Jas 2:10). If we fail, then the whole terrible punishment descends upon us.

Most of the time, the "salvation by works" religions make their system sound so moral, good and nice. If we adopt the system, they say, then we will be better off and kinder because of its purifying effect, plus we gain merit and favour with God. But do not forget, If we break the Law, only a minor infraction, and all of us have grossly broken the law many, many times, then nothing else remains but the terrible awfulness of eternal "hellfire and damnation."

We humans are rebels by nature and choice, incapable and unwillingly to keep the Law or make ourselves pleasing to God for salvation (Rom 3:10-18). We are enemies of an absolute holy, pure and righteous God, and justly stand under his wrath because of our vulgar, vile and terrible offensive to His holy nature (John 3:36; Rom 5:9,10). There is punishment and penalty to Law - do not forget that part of the system! Any system of salvation by works, in the final end, ONLY offers condemnation!

It may be that a religion of works will make us better off and kinder peace loving people, and better citizens of society – but for a means of gaining favor for salvation before God, it is worthless.

It is far more to our benefit to get into the salvation by grace, faith and promise system. There we are objects of His mercy and forgiveness, forgiveness because our penalty and punishment was taken by the blessed Lord Jesus: "Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ...But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having

now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him" (Rom 5:1,8,9). Christ is our only hope. Law and grace are mutually exclusive, they cannot be mixed or merged in any fashion or manner.

#### **IV. IUSTIFICATION BY FAITH IN CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE (CHAPTERS 5,6).**

##### **A. THE ISSUE OF CHRISTIAN LIBERTY (5:1-12).**

Briefly, the Christian life is one free from law, yet separate from sin and in the Spirit and unfolded by service based on faith and expressed in love. Paul clearly states, again, that Law (circumcision, etc.) and grace (Christ) do not mix (v 2). Christ releases us to liberty and freedom; Law confines us to slavery and condemnation.

We are told that we cannot keep just the part of the law we want to (v 3), but that we must keep the entire Law if we want to live within the sphere of that system. If we do, however, enter into that system, then the system of grace is of no value to us. The two systems are mutually exclusively, like oil and water. It is impossible to be justified by Law.

Verse four says those who now try to gain justification by Law have been "severed" from Christ and have "fallen from grace." The loss of salvation is not the focus. In the first place, those who maintain we can lose our salvation generally say we lose it by some sin which is the transgression of some law. Thus, salvation would be based on Law, which is just the opposite from what Paul has been preaching from the first chapter.

Secondly, the way of losing salvation, if this were the point of the verse, would be to turn one's back on grace and try to get saved by keeping the law. Grace means undeserved favor to those who justly stand under the penalty of Law. Further, grace maintains that the full penalty for all our sin has been fully and eternally paid (Heb 10:10,12,14) and that salvation is a free gift of God (Eph 2:8,9). If going back to Law means we lose our salvation, then grace has become a salvation of works, a salvation that can be nullified by the transgression of some condition (read Law). Something else, then, must be in Paul's mind.

What Paul is getting at, according to the context, is that there are two systems of proposed salvation and sanctification: Law and grace. Each operate in two distinct spheres that cannot be co-mingled, nor can they co-exist in a person's life and experience. The principles of one system cannot operate in the other, just as a car cannot operate like a boat in the ocean, nor can a boat operate like a car on dry land.

The dynamics of spiritual life, such as the Holy Spirit operating through us by faith working through love, cannot function if we are trying to live by the Law (5:5,6; cf. Gal 3:2-5). Those grace principles become ineffective in our lives. Paul is saying: "you Christians who are now trying to go back and be saved and sanctified by keeping the Law, you have departed from those dynamics and principles that operate in the grace system. Your spiritual growth is now at a standstill."

The principle of faith is stressed in that by faith we hope for salvation (justification) and that faith working through love is the course of our present life (sanctification) (vv 5,6). The Holy Spirit working in our lives is another dynamic (v 5). The Holy Spirit works through the Word of God as He ministers by our "hearing with faith" (3:2,5). We walk, are led by, obey, and live by the Holy Spirit (5:16,18,25). Becoming occupied with Jesus Christ in a transparent heart relationship is our focus and concern, not to become occupied with struggling to keep the Law as a matter of self-improvement with the hope that God will be pleased with our efforts.

Leaven (v 9) is the symbol of evil in the Bible. The lesson is that Law corrupts grace. The "stumbling block of the cross" (v 11) means that the doctrine of salvation by grace through faith offends the pride of those who think they can work for their salvation. Circumcision had once been the sign of the covenant between God and Israel. Now, however, it had no religious meaning. Paul is strong in saying that he wished the Judaizers would "mutilate" (v 12) themselves. This is the word for castration, a practice of the pagan priests of the cult of Cybele, a nearby cultic religion. The Christian life is one of falling in love from the heart with Jesus Christ. It is not a life of slavishly trying, stumbling, and failing to keep the Ten Commandments – or any other set of commandment.

## **B. THE ISSUE OF SINS OF THE FLESH (5:13-15).**

The word "flesh" (Gr. = sarx) (v 13) can mean several things in the New Testament: the material that covers the bones of a human or animal body, the body itself, human nature from an earthly descent, the outward side of life, and the like.

Paul uses the word here in the sense of the sinful human nature, or that part of the human which is the willing instrument of sin. This is the corrupt human nature that we inherited from Adam who obtained his in the fall into original sin. It is that capacity, desire, urging, tendency within us to sin against God and/or to exclude Him from our lives.

At salvation (i.e. regeneration) we are given a new nature, or capacity, to serve God (Eph 4:22-24; 2 Co 5:17; Gal 2:20; John 3:3,5,8; 2 Pe 1:4; Rom 6:4-8). Our sin nature is still with us, but its power to enslave us has been broken plus we have the new nature to serve and worship God and to live holy lives. In addition, we have the Holy Spirit within us to empower us for godly living.

2. There are three way to live the Christian life, but two will not work. The first is to live by the Law, which is known as legalism. Included in this Law would be the Ten Commandments and all the other laws we can find in the Bible plus those personal preferences and prejudices, biases, cultural customs, denominational traditions and rituals and anything else we can add. This is not the way to Christian victory and it actually feeds the flesh by causing pride, self-righteousness and meanness toward other people who do not keep all our rules and regulations.

The Law produces a negative goodness, not a positive goodness of loving and serving God and fellow man out of simple desire. A negative goodness is one which says "I don't do this or that or some other thing, therefore I am good before God." But the question comes back: "What, then, do you do?"

The second way of Christian living is by license, that is, to use our liberty in Christ as a basis for living in sin. This is a great problem in churches and people's lives because of the flood of sin and evil in the world. Sin is presented as so appealing to the flesh. It is true that the penalty of sin has been paid for the Christian, but it is also true that to return to sin will bring many negative effects to our live: e.g. divorce with its inevitable financial and family loss, disease such as AIDS, addiction, personal guilt, loss of ministry, loss of sweet fellowship with Christ and other Christians, loss of life in some cases, given over to the attacks of Satan, loss of spiritual power and perception in our lives, church fights, the scandalous loss Christian testimony, shame to Christ - and many other forms of God's chastisement. Not all the above list will happen every time, but we can sure that God will judge sin in the believer's life.

The third way of Christian living is by liberty in the power of the Holy Spirit and "faith working

through love" (5:5,6). The rest of this chapter tells us how to live this life. Christian love is the carrying out, or fulfillment of the Law (v 14). Jesus said: "you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets" Matt 22:37-40; cf. Luke 10:25-28).

Sometimes confusion comes when Paul maintains that the Law brings judgment and a curse to us (Gal 3:10-13); yet, here he says it is love. How can the Law be love and a curse at the same time? Again, there is no problem with the Law, but with people who cannot live up to the Law. The Law is perfect, we are sinners. We cannot love as the Law requires; therefore, we fall under its judgment. People can sink to low levels: "But if you bite and devour one another, take care lest you be consumed by one another" (v 15; cf. vv 19-21,26).

### **C. THE ISSUE OF VICTORIOUS CHRISTIAN LIVING (5:16-26).**

1. The first principle is that there is a constant internal war within the Christian between our old sin nature and the Holy Spirit (v 17). We are given a new nature (2 Pe 1:4; cf. above, B #1) at regeneration, a new life implanted within us when we are born again or regenerated. The old sin nature seeks to exclude God and serve sin; our new nature and the Holy Spirit seeks to include God and serve righteousness.

Even though the enslaving power of the old sin nature has been broken (Rom 6:6), there is still a war and we are the battle field! The war will not end until the next life. Our old nature is never eradicated in this life. There is victory; however, and growth in Christian living, as we gradually and progressively are being conformed to the image of Christ (Romans 8:28; Colossians 1:28; Galatians 4:19).

2. The key to victorious Christian living is walking, being led, and living by the Holy Spirit (vv 16,18,25). The word, "walk" (v 16) is literally translated as "keep on walking." As we depend upon, obey, and yield to the Holy Spirit's personal power and guidance we will not carry out the desires of the flesh in a constant way of living (v 16). In Romans, chapter six, Paul used the key words of "know" (vv 3,6,9), "reckon" (v 11), "yield" (vv 13,16,19) and "obey" (vv 16,17).

Though we will never be free in this life from our evil desires, yet we need not surrender to them. The enslaving power of sin has been broken. Sometimes the struggle is severe in the case of compulsive behaviors and temptations, and God uses counselors to help untangle us from those sins that have enslaved us over the years. Alcoholism, drug addiction, sexual deviancy are some of sinful patterns of life that are difficult to gain victory over. The Christian should not think that once we receive Christ we obtain automatic victory over all temptation and sin in our lives.

As Christians we still have weakness. Before we are saved, we easily follow the desires of the flesh, and could care less about following the Holy Spirit. Of course, we avoid some deeds of the flesh if it is to our disadvantage to indulge in them. When we become saved, in contrast, we still have that pull to give into the deeds of the flesh, but we also have the pull in the opposite direction of our new nature and the Holy Spirit.

It is important to remember that, in our weakness, if we do indulge in some deeds of the flesh and commit sin, we are still under grace, and our position in Christ is not altered. We do not lose our salvation. We will, as God determines, be chastised and corrected by God, and as



we confess our sins we are forgiven and restored to fellowship (1 John 1:9).

It is a "war" that rages within our souls. As with any war, it ebbs and flows. It is the same with our Christian life. Sometimes we are weak; sometimes we are strong. It is important to know that though we lose some battles, we will eventually win the war – though that will be in the next life. Many times in this life we will fall and fail. Through it all, we are assured that God will never abandon us" (Hebrews 13:5, 6).

3. The question comes: "How does one walk in the Spirit?" An important factor has to do with our minds. In other places Paul shares this secret by saying that our mind set on the flesh yields the things of the flesh while the mind set the Spirit brings forth His fruit (Rom 8:4-8). In another place Paul says we are to be renewed in our minds to escape the enslavement of this evil world system (Rom 12:2). Again, we are told to put on our new self by being renewed in our mind (Eph 4:22-24).

In two parallel verses speak of the same spiritual experience is described in one place as being "filled with the Spirit" (Eph 5:18) and the other place to "Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you" (Col 3:16). The word "filled" in Ephesians 5:18 carries the idea of control, like a drunk person is controlled and influenced by alcohol.

The process, then, of growth in spiritual life is the exchange of/the wrong values, attitudes and beliefs we have picked up over the years for those values, attitudes and beliefs of God. We learn to view things from God's perspective, rather than our own or the world's. The power, insight and guidance comes from the Holy Spirit as we read, study, pray upon, meditate on, believe, yield to and obey the Bible. We contemplate our own belief systems, evaluate them with the Bible and then modify and adjust our faulty beliefs where necessary.

Correction is made in doctrinal issues, and also in the ways we view life, work, personal relationships, attitudes, how we value things as being good or bad - and in all areas of our lives. Then as a matter of habit, we begin to act out in our behavior new behavior and attitudes.

4. Paul lists the deed of the flesh (vv 19-21). They fall into four categories. The first grouping is the sexual sins. Immorality (Gr. = *porneia*) refers to all forms of wrong sexual relationships. In God's view, the only proper sexual relationship is that within a heterosexual marriage. Impurity means moral uncleanness in word, attitude or behavior. Sensuality refers to an open, shameless practice of sexual sin.

Sexual urges are normal and powerful, but restraint is necessary. Don't be horrified at sexual desires. God created humanity to procreate and populate the earth. It requires sex to accomplish God's commands. We are sexual beings, and the temptation is strong. God designed sex, however, to be expressed and channeled only through heterosexual marriage.

The second group contains religious sins: idolatry and sorcery. Idolatry is the worship of another god by bowing to idols. It is believed that a spirit or god abides in some object which is usually the creation of man. This man made image is then worshipped as a god. Sorcery comes from the Greek, "*pharmakeia*" from which we get the word pharmacy. In pagan religions of that day, drugs were taken to induce a trance to better communicate with the god or evil powers. False religion is condemned in this category.

The third group is eight sins of society that disrupt harmonious human relationships: enmities

(hatred), strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions and envy. These impact and destroy relationships whether a marriage, family, work place, a local church, denomination, school - or international war.

Fourth, two sins of alcohol make up the final category. Drunkenness is the excessive use of alcohol and can probably be extended to drug use as well. The two often go together. Carousing refers to the sinful activities of drunken parties and orgies.

5. The number of sins of the flesh goes on, because Paul ended the list by saying "and things like these." In verse 21 he is not saying that if a Christian lapses into one of these sins they will lose their salvation. He is talking about people who habitually live this kind of lifestyle: "those who practice such things." Living in these lifestyles is an indication that one is not saved, because a genuine child of God cannot persistently live such a life as a continual practice of habit over a period of time (1 Jo 3:7-10).

When a Christian does sin, and we all do, we are to confess the sin to God and forsake the action, or put it away from our lives (1 Jo 1:9; Prov 28:13; Psa 32:5).

6. The power for victorious living is the Holy Spirit who exhibits within us a particular lifestyle and quality of life: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control and things such as these (vv 22,23). An important distinction to observe is that the qualities listed are produced by the Spirit, not the person. The Holy Spirit operates through the Christian who is in union with Christ. These qualities are the "fruit" (one package) which is the life of Christ being formed in the believer (cf. Gal 2:20; 4:19; 2 Co 3:18; Phil 1:21). We cooperate with the Holy Spirit by deliberately practicing these qualities. Soon changes will appear in our lives.

These qualities can be grouped into three categories. First, we have the qualities of mind: love, joy, and peace. These are inner qualities, though they have definite expression in outer behavior and relationships.

Second, there are the qualities of life that effect our relationships with others: patience, kindness and goodness. Our reaction to personal wrongdoing is not retaliation, but we are gracious to others and are good in character and action toward others.

Third, there are the qualities that direct our general conduct in life: faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. We are trustworthy, reliable, consistent, considerate of others and abstain from the deeds of the flesh.

7. Finally, we are told that the mechanism for victorious living is the crucified flesh and empowerment and leading of the Holy Spirit (vv 24-26).

The crucified flesh (old sin nature) is not self-mortification or punishment. Crucifixion with Christ means death to or separation from the ruling power of the old sin nature, and to be alive to the resurrection life and power of Christ. In position this occurred at the crucifixion of Christ. Elsewhere Paul states: "For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God" (Col 3:3). Before Paul said: "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me" (Gal 2:20). The power of the resurrection life becomes active the moment we become a Christian and are united to Christ.

The power and motivation for living comes from the Holy Spirit who indwells and leads us, and energizes those positive, godly qualities of life. We consider ourselves dead to our sin nature and yield ourselves alive to the life of Christ and obey the Holy Spirit as He ministers the Word to our lives. We walk step by step with the Holy Spirit, gradually learning to follow Him. The learning is by the trial and error method, not an instant overnight change.

#### **D. THE ISSUE OF A SINNING CHRISTIAN (6:1-5).**

The problem is taken up of how to relate to a Christian who is overtaken or caught in a sin. Six principles should govern such a disciplinary process.

1. Godly people should confront the person, not one new in the Christian Faith. The fruit of the Spirit must be evident in the life. Experience in life is helpful along with a mature knowledge of Scripture and people. Competence and wisdom is needed.
2. Second, restoration is the objective of dealing with a Christian overtaken in sin. Too often, punishment and excommunication is the first thought in mind. The word for restore (Gr. = *katartizete*) means to set a broken bone or mend a fish net. We do not want to shoot our wounded warriors, but get them to the spiritual hospital, mended, and back in action. Our purpose needs to be clear.
3. Third, we need a proper attitude: one of gentleness. Restoration is delicate work and long lasting damage can be done to the person, their family, the church. Further, many other people have already been damaged by the sin.
4. Fourth, sincerity and humility must be with the people doing the restoration. They are to examine themselves, realizing that they too can fall into sin. No one is immune.
5. Fifth, in the case of spiritual failure, all believers are to be involved by encouragement, prayer and "bearing one another's burdens." This does not mean that sins should be made a matter of public knowledge so that more can pray. Gossip and harm is the end result of that practice. But all involved in the fallen person's life need to help, but only the "spiritual" are to do the direct correction. Conceit and an arrogant, intolerance attitude against mistakes and sin are not to be a part of the restoration process.
6. Sixth, there is the warning of personal responsibility. We cannot blame the devil, our childhood, or other people for our own failing. It is true that sometimes circumstances do influence us beyond the breaking point. But to grow stronger and make corrections in our thinking, feeling, and behavior, we need to take personal responsibility for our sin, and then start the correction process under the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit, and maybe a competent, wise pastor or counselor.

#### **E. THE ISSUE OF GIVING, SOWING, REAPING (6:6-10).**

1. Paul takes up the principle of financial support of full-time Christian workers: Bible teachers, pastors, evangelists, missionaries and the like. The principle is that those who are ministered to are to share their material resources with those who minister the Word of God.
2. The vital principle of sowing and reaping is presented by Paul (v 7ff.). God cannot be fooled, because what we sow in life is what we will reap. If we plant wheat, then wheat will be our crop. If we plant pineapples, then pineapples are our crop. If we plant a coconut sprout, then a coconut tree will grow. The more we plant, the more we will grow.

The same happens in the spiritual world and life in general. If we treat people kindly, then

they will treat us kindly back. People mirror back to us our behavior. This is just a fact of life. If we plant laziness, then poverty comes back. If we do not study for the test, then a failing mark results. If we plant good spiritual seeds (works), then spiritual reward will return. When we plant evil, then evil will come back to us.

Applied to the context, if we spend our money to satisfy the pleasures of our flesh, then the eternal, spiritual results will fade away. On the other hand, if we give to support the Lord's work, or our own spiritual growth, then our reward and harvest will last forever.

3. Steadily doing good should be the mark of our lives, to all men but especially to Christians. The House of God comes first. We may not get reward and positive results immediately, but soon what we sow will come back to us - if not in this life, then in the next.

4. People cannot escape the consequences of actions accomplished: both good and bad results are guaranteed depending on the kind of seed sown. There is nothing we can do about the past, but what we experience in the future depends on what we do today. Happiness, peace, success and a good reputation must be planted today if we want to enjoy their good fruit tomorrow. In fact, something is being planted today by our attitudes, habits, actions; and something is bound to come from those things we plant. The sum of it all is this: do good to all men at every opportunity.

#### **F. SUMMARY (6:11-18).**

We are to watch out for those who deceive Christians for selfish advantage. We walk in humility and be crucified to the world and its agenda. Full surrender to Christ and His interests is the goal of our life. The important things to remember in Christian life is that we are a "new creation" in Christ - literally (cf. 2 Co 5:17). Outward religious form and ritual are meaningless and useless, what counts is our new life in Christ. This way of life involves a life of grace, faith, love, service. Finally, we are reminded again of the theme of this epistle, justification by faith alone.

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# **THE APOSTLE PAUL'S PRISON EPISTLES: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon**

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## **THE PRISON EPISTLES WITH INTRODUCTIONS, OUTLINES, PRACTICAL NOTES**

By Dr. Willis C. Newman

### **GENERAL INTRODUCTION**

The Prison Epistles are made up of the Pauline epistles of Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and Philemon. As a group, they deal more with general teachings and less with individual questions than do the earlier "travel epistles." They reflect a church maturing rapidly. They indicate that the second generation Christians was emerging giving rise to complacency. The readers had been grounded in the elements of the Faith and now needed more teaching to enlighten, stabilize and motivate them.

The historical period covering these epistles can be found in Acts chapters 20-28. Conservative scholars agree that the epistles were written during Paul's first Roman imprisonment. That they indicate being written from Prison is seen from Eph 3:1; Phil 1:7; Col 4:10; Philemon 9. Evidence shows that Tychicus was the bearer of the letters from Paul's prison location to the churches at Ephesus and Colossae (Eph 6:21; Col 4:7). He had a companion on the journey named Onesimus (Col 4:9) who was the subject of Philemon; thus, Ephesians, Colossians and Philemon must have come from the Apostle Paul at the same time and place.

In order to pinpoint when and where the epistles were written, we look at the probable sequence of Paul's final years plus examine the evidence for Roman imprisonment as the place of writing. The usual introductory issues concerning the Prison Epistles will be examined separately as we come to each epistle.

These notes were first written in 1989 while serving in the South Pacific. Here I updated and expanded on the Epistles.

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Lakewood, WA USA  
2013

### **I. PROBABLE OUTLINE OF PAUL'S FINAL YEARS.**

A. Paul returned to Jerusalem from his third missionary journey and was imprisoned at Caesarea for two years (Acts 24:26, 27). Caesarea was in Palestine just north of Jerusalem.

B. Paul was then transferred from Caesarea to Rome where he was kept in or near the barracks of the Praetorian Guard or in rented quarters at his own expense for two more years (Acts 28:30). He was transferred to Rome because of his appeal to Caesar regarding his court case.

C. Paul wrote Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians and Philemon while in prison at Rome in the year A.D. 61.

D. Paul was released from prison, made several trips and wrote 1 Timothy and Titus. He was released probably because his accusers from Jerusalem did not choose to press charges against him before Caesar and lost their case by default (Acts 24:1; 28:30).

E. Paul was shortly rearrested, wrote 2 Timothy and was martyred in Rome in perhaps A.D. 66.

## **II. EVIDENCE FOR ROMAN IMPRISONMENT AS SOURCE OF WRITING.**

A. Paul mentions the Praetorium Guard, a special body of about 9,000 troops assigned to the emperor in Rome. They were distinct from the regular army or the Roman police (Phil. 1:13).

B. His life was at stake with no higher appeal available, indicating the trial was to be before Caesar in Rome (Phil 1:20).

C. Paul mentions Caesar's household (Phil 4:22), a reference to employees in the emperor's palace or family members in Rome.

D. A large church existed at Rome which would make more understandable the "many" having the courage to preach (Phil 1:14). No church of large size existed at Caesarea, another suggested place of origin.

E. Traveling companions of Paul on his transfer from Prison at Caesarea to Rome are mentioned in the Prison Epistles. Luke, the "we" of Acts 27,28 is also mentioned in Philemon 24 and Col 4:14 as being with Paul.

F. The traditional view, and most accurate, until the 19th century was Paul's Roman imprisonment as being the place of writing the Prison Epistles.

## **III. OTHER VIEWS FOR SOURCE OF WRITING.**

Some maintain Caesarea as the place of writing; however, there is no indication of a final decision of his case (Acts 24) let alone a release. But he does expect a release in Philemon 22. There was also no threat of the death penalty because there was available the higher appeal to Caesar.

Some maintain Ephesus as the place of writing on the basis of verses such as 2 Cor 11:23; 1:8-10; 1 Cor 15:32; Romans 16:3,7,14. However, only one verse mentions imprisonment and then only in the general sense of the total scope of Paul's service and suffering. A specific imprisonment in 1 Cor 15:32 is not linked to Ephesus. Any positive evidence for imprisonment at Ephesus is lacking while positive evidence for imprisonment at Rome is clear. An Ephesian imprisonment is highly improbable, though not completely impossible.



For a detailed analysis of the arguments involved in this issue see Donald Guthrie (1970).

#### **IV. EVIDENCE FOR TWO ROMAN IMPRISONMENTS**

A. We are told that Paul left Trophimus sick at Miletus (2 Timothy 4:20). 2 Timothy was the last epistle written by Paul, penned shortly before his death, and while in prison at Rome.

B. Paul could not have left Trophimus before arriving at Jerusalem on his last journey and just before Paul's imprisonment at Caesarea. Why? Because Trophimus arrived with Paul in Jerusalem (Acts 20:4; 21:29).

C. Paul's leaving Trophimus sick at Miletus could not have been on Paul's trip to Rome to face trial before Caesar, because the escort never touched at Miletus.

D. The only way to make the event of 2 Timothy 4:20 possible was for Paul to have a time of freedom (about one year) after his first imprisonment at Rome and during an interval of ministry and travel.

**THE EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS  
WITH  
INTRODUCTION, OUTLINE, NOTES  
By  
Dr. Willis Newman  
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## **INTRODUCTION**

### **I. BACKGROUND DEVELOPMENT.**

#### **A. THE NATURE OF THE LETTER.**

The Ephesian epistle is a doctrinal treatise in the form of possibly a circular letter directed to the churches in Asia Minor. It was written by the Apostle Paul in about A.D. 61 from the city of Rome where Paul was being held in prison. The letter was carried concurrently with Colossians and Philemon. Ephesians (and Colossians) have as their historical occasion of writing the return of Onesimus to Philemon and accompanied by Tychicus (Eph 6:21-22: Col 4:7,8: Phile 1.10).

Ephesians is the most impersonal of Paul's letters. It was written after many churches had come into existence and Paul had time to contemplate the meaning of the new organism called the "Church." Ephesians is the one writing in the N.T. in which the word "church" refers to the Church Universal. The book is not directed to novices in the Christian Faith, but to more mature saints who needed to go on to fuller knowledge and life. Aristarchus, Epaphuas, Luke, Demas and Mark were with Paul at the time of writing.

#### **B. THE CITY OF EPHESUS.**

Christianity probably came first to Ephesus with Aquila and Priscilla when Paul made a brief stop there on his second missionary journey (Acts 18:18,19). On his third journey he stayed in the city about 3 years, founded a Bible college and the gospel spread rapidly throughout all Asia Minor (Acts 19:10).

The city was a commercial, political and religious center. The great temple of Artemis (Diana) was there. Ephesus was a major trading center, ranking with Alexandria and Antioch. After Paul, Timothy pastored the church at Ephesus for a time (1 Tim 1:3). Later the great Apostle John made the city his headquarters.

#### **C. THE PURPOSE OF THE LETTER**

The Apostle had just written a letter to Colossae, directed to correct specific error with the use of certain themes. With these thoughts still fresh in his mind he wrote them down in a general way in a letter to be circulated to a variety of churches throughout Asia Minor, and delivered probably first to Ephesus. The purpose is twofold:

1. To disclose the mystery of the Universal Church, sometimes called the "Invisible Church," or, "Church in Prospect." It is in contrast to the local church. The Universal Church includes all Christians from the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1ff) until the future Rapture of the Church at the return of Christ (1Thessalonians 4:13ff). It also includes all Christians living on the earth today. In contrast, there is the local church, which consists of a localized group of believers

carrying out the functions of the church.

2. To remind the believers to walk worthily in their daily life, a life to conform to their new position in Christ "in the heavenlies" (1:3,20: 2:6: 4:1-5:33: 6:12-20).

#### **D. THE AUTHENTICITY OF THE LETTER**

The early church accepted the letter as being written by Paul. This evidence is extensive and undisputed. Some Church Fathers who accepted it are Ignatius, Polycarp, Clement of Rome, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, and Tertullian. This traditional view was not disputed until the attack of the nineteenth century critics of liberalism.

The Epistle claims to have been written by Paul (1:3; 3:1); thus, the burden of proof shifts to the critic to prove that Paul was not the author.

The writer is described in terms that are like Paul's life and person (1:15; 3:1- 3,7,13,14ff.: 4:1,17ff.: 5:32: 6:19-22).

The structure is like typical Pauline letters: opening greeting, thanksgiving, doctrinal exposition, ethical exhortations, concluding salutations, benediction. As well, the basing of moral appeal on theological truth is common to Paul's approach.

#### **E. THE DESTINATION OF THE LETTER.**

Scholars are divided between two choices: the letter was written to the Ephesian church, or, it was a circular letter addressed to a wider, general audience spread over Asia Minor. This letter could be the same letter called "my letter...from Laodicea" in Col 4:16. The reasons for a circular letter theory are as follows:

The phrase "at Ephesus" (v 1) is missing in many of the best manuscripts: however, the phrase is in the bulk of manuscripts. The title is not a part of the letter itself. Generally letters began to acquire titles as they began to be circulated through the churches.

Patristic testimony suggests the two words were not in the text at an early date: e.g. Tertullian, Origen, Basil.

Some items are hard to square with the idea that Paul was writing to a single church where he was well known. There is an absence of any mention of his work while in Ephesus where he started a Bible college and had headquartered for so long. It does not appear the writer knew the readers personally (1:15; 3:2: 4:21). There are no terms of endearment or reference to beloved or faithful brethren.

There is an absence of controversy or any specific problems of particular churches.

## **II. CONTENT EVALUATION.**

### **A. MAJOR THEME DEVELOPMENT.**

The major theme of Ephesians is God's eternal purpose to establish and complete Christ's Body, the Church of Christ. The epistle contains the highest church truth, but nothing about church order. It is highly theological in nature.

1. The teaching of the Universal Church is unique. The Church is defined as the "body of Him" in: 1:22,23. The Church is identified with the "body" of Christ in 5:23-33). "Church" is mentioned six times and "body" two times and all of the references use the definite article which denotes specific, individual, definite identity, even to the point of marking contrast in addition to definiteness (Dana & Mantey, 1955, p. 137). Other factors concerning the Church

are recorded: Christ is the head of the Church (definite article) (1:22), this organism is called the church (5:23), the body (5:23), His body (5:23), one body (4:4), one faith (4:5), one baptism (4:5).

The one baptism refers to Spirit baptism (1 Cor 12:13). The use of the article cannot refer to a single, particular local church that Paul was addressing in Ephesus as that would eliminate all other local churches from being Christ's church: consequently, Paul must have in mind the Church Universal. In developing the theme of the Church Universal, Paul unfolds the truths in the following manner.

- Paul taught the church was predestined (1:3-14).
- Paul taught that Christ was the head of the Church (1:22,23; 4:15,16).
- Paul presented the Church as the building and temple of God (2:21,22).
- Paul presented the Church as the mystery of Christ (3:1-21).
- Paul spoke of the spiritual gifts given to the church (4:7-16).
- Paul presented the Church as the bride of Christ (5:23-32).

## **B. THE PROGRESSION OF THOUGHT.**

There are basically three lines of truth in Ephesians. First, the Christian's exalted position through grace. Second, Paul explains the truth concerning the Body of Christ. Third, He stresses a life lived in accordance with that position. The flow of the book starts with Christian understanding of the source of salvation and leads logically through to the practical outworking of that salvation. Whereas Romans is a sample of Paul's method of grounding believers in the fundamentals of the Faith, Ephesians is more advanced and maybe is more of the "Bible conference" type of teaching. The picture is of a complex church functioning as a single body, created out of Jew and Gentile, equipped with standards of its own and engaged in a spiritual conflict.

## **III THE DISTINCTIVE THEOLOGICAL CONTRIBUTIONS.**

### **A. REOCCURRING DOCTRINAL THEMES.**

God's sovereign purpose of establishing the Church (1:4,5,9,11,13,20; 2:4,6,10; 3:11)

The divine plan of redemption (1:7,14; 2:1-10; 5:2).

The contrast between the model of Christian conduct contrasted with former lifestyles (2:1ff.; 4:1,17; 5:1,8,15).

The sphere of the Christian's activities being "in the heavenlies," which refers to spiritual locality, not geographical (1:3,10,20; 2:6; 3:10; 6:12).

The energy force of the Church is the Holy Spirit. This teaching is unfolded as such:

- He is the seal of acceptance (1:13).
- He is the means of access to God.
- He is the source of revealed truth (3:5).
- He is the secret of universal power (3:16).
- He is the body of unity (4:3,4).
- He is the mentor of speech and thinking (4:30).
- He is the stimulus of joy (5:18).
- He is the armorer for conflict (6:17).

### **B. THE DOCTRINE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT (related to individuals).**

- Believers are sealed with (in?) the Holy Spirit (1:13; 4:30.)

- The Holy Spirit is a pledge of our inheritance (1:14).
- Believers come to God through the Holy Spirit's enablement (2:18)
- He gives strength in the "inner man" (3:16).
- He revealed God's plan to the apostles and prophets (3:5).
- Believers are to be filled with the Holy Spirit (5:18).
- Believers should pray in line with His wishes (6:18).
- Believers are not to grieve the Holy Spirit (4:30).

### **C. UNIQUE DISTINCTIVES OF EPHESIANS**

- The stress on Jew and Gentile being equal in the Body.
- The stress on unity in the things of the Faith (4:3-6).
- God's will and purpose,
- The phrase "in Christ" (or its equal) is found here more than any other epistle.
- The explanation of doctrine broken up by two prayers. One with the focus on knowledge (1:15-23). One with the focus on love (3:14-21).
- The prominence of words as "grace, love, holy, mystery, the heavenlies."
- The abrupt separation between the theological and practical sections (4:1).
- The hostile battle of believers against wicked spiritual forces.

### **D. THE DOCTRINE OF SALVATION (justification by faith alone).**

- God determined before creation who would be saved (1:4),
- God's choice was based on the good pleasure of His perfect will (1:5,9,11).
- God's choice was motivated by love (1:4).
- God's salvation is an act of grace, a gift apart from any works of man (2:8),
- Faith alone is the channel by which salvation is received (1:13; 2:8,9).
- Salvation is applied by the Holy Spirit (1:13).
- Salvation is communicated to man by the gospel message (1:13).
- God's purpose for salvation is to the praise of His glory (1:14).
- The ground of God's salvation is the blood of Christ (1:7).
- God's gracious activity in our redemption is necessary for our salvation (2:1,5).
- Included in salvation is spiritual regeneration, or to be born again – the spiritual rebirth (2:1,5).
- The result of our salvation is two-fold. Believers will be holy and blameless before God (1:4). Believers will engage in good works (2:10).

## **IV. SOME AREAS OF PRACTICAL RELEVANCE TO THE BELIEVER**

**A. THE AREA OF INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS (4:25-6:9).** Addressed are relations in church, marriage, family life, work.

### **B. THE AREA OF SPIRITUAL WARFARE (6:10-20).**

Paul teaches the reality of Satan, demons and their warfare against us (6:11,12). Paul said: be strong in the Lord's might, depend on Him, stand firm, and resist Satanic opposition (6:10,13,14). The spiritual defense against Satan and his followers is to take on the full armor of God (6:13-20). The armor is as follows:

- Truth: know, understand and practice truth.
- Righteousness: positional and practical.
- Soul-winning.
- Faith: believe God as revealed in the Bible.
- Salvation: be assured of your salvation.

- Word of God: our manual, battle plan, weapon.
- Prayer: continually, in God's will, for all, alertly, boldness.

This is the most extended passage in the instructions given to the church on how specifically to engage Satan in battle; yet, not a word is said on the casting out of demons. It would seem that if the pastor or church officials are to engage in the practice of exorcism there would be instruction or mention given somewhere on "how" to conduct the practice, or, even to practice the act in the first place.

Demon possession is real. In non-Christians, it is a possibility. This is not to say that every non-Christian is possessed by a demon. Christians cannot be possessed by demons, but they can be influenced, oppressed, and manipulated toward Satan's purposes (4:27).

### **C. THE AREA OF PRAYER.**

- Pray for spiritual knowledge and understanding (1:18-23).
- Pray for spiritual strength, to experience Christ's love, to know God's greatness (3:12-21).
- Pray with grateful praise and thanksgiving to God (5:19,20).
- Pray for boldness in soul-winning (6:18-20).

### **D. THE AREA OF THE GREAT COMMISSION (4:11,12).**

1. The plan or "how" of world evangelism is given. Five classes of ministers are listed: apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. Some Scholars believe that the apostles and prophets are no longer with us as their role was to lay the foundation of the Church (2:20; 3:5,6), and to give it credibility by receiving God's revelation (the New Testament) and by the exercise of "sign gifts," such as to perform miracles. The prophet was able to communicate new revelation from God because at that time the New Testament had not yet been written. The qualifications of an apostle were three-fold.

- They had to have seen Jesus and to have been an eyewitness to the Lord's resurrection (Acts 1:22; 1 Cor 9:1).
- They were endowed with so-called "sign gifts" with which they were empowered to perform miracles (Acts 5:15-16; Heb 2:3,4).
- They were selected by the Lord or Holy Spirit (Mt 10:1,2; Acts 1:26).

Indeed, those two offices were in the early church, and they did lay down the foundation. The main Apostles were the twelve. However, other scholars believe those offices are still with us today.

2. Evangelists, pastors and teachers are to equip Christians for the work of service. The goal of service is the growth (both in numbers and maturity) of the body of Christ, the Church. The evangelists, pastors and teachers are themselves gifts given to the Church Universal, not spiritual gifts given to individuals. The pastor has a more settled ministry whereas the evangelist and the Bible teacher may be itinerant (Acts 8:5,6 cf. 21:8), or settled such as a teacher in a Bible college or seminary (Acts 19:9,10).

In larger local churches all three may be employed on the church staff. Another application of this truth is that these three offices point to the three major functions that should occur in any local church. Evangelists engage both in personal or mass evangelism and/or in teaching (equipping) Christians to evangelize. Missionaries may be any of the three. Church planters are specially gifted pastors or evangelists, the "entrepreneur" type. Many times person may be assigned by God to all three of these positions at different times in the servant's life. That

is, for example, they may be a pastor for a while, then an evangelist, then finally, a Bible teacher.

## **Epistle to the Ephesians: with Outline, commentary, and Notes**

### **I. BELIEVERS ARE PREDESTINED TO BLESSING (1:1-14).**

#### **A. GOD'S PROMISE AND PROVISION OF BLESSING (vv. 1-3).**

- The promise was from the eternity past.
- The blessing is spiritual, heavenly, eternal as opposed to earthly and temporal (Cf. 1 Peter 1:3-9).
- The realm of blessing is in the heavenly places.
- The provision for the promised blessing is in Christ.

#### **B. GOD'S BASIS FOR BLESSING (vv. 4-14).**

1. The predetermined selection for objects (Christians) of blessing was by God (v. 4).
  - The selection was an expression of God's love, believers being the object (v. 4).
  - The choice was grounded in God's good pleasure (v. 5).
  - The choice was designed to make believers holy and blameless (v. 4).
  - The purpose was to glorify God (v. 6,14).
2. The sacrifice that made blessing a reality was by Christ (vv. 7-12).
  - He paid the ransom: His blood to God for our sin.
  - He removed the curse of the law, the punishment for violated law.
  - He released us from sin's bondage to the freedom of grace.
  - He accomplished the feat by His blood, the substitutionary atonement.
3. The sealing with the Holy Spirit (vv. 13,14).
  - "Seal" means ownership, protection, permanence, security, possession, presence.
  - "Pledge" means a deposit, down payment, certainty.
  - This transaction or position is appropriated by faith and occurs at salvation.
4. This section of Ephesians focuses on the atonement of Christ. Several ideas are involved. God is a holy, just and righteous God whose Holiness (as revealed in His Law) was offended and brought about the need for punishment to the offender, mankind. God would not be holy and just to let sin go unpunished.

Christ took upon Himself the curse of the sinner's disobedience to the Law, paying the penalty due for our sin for the purpose of rescuing the guilty sinner, and which produced the believers redemption from sin's bondage.

In taking the liability for our guilt, Christ became our substitution for sin's penalty. The believer's guilt (or, our liability to punishment) was imputed or transferred to Christ. God's wrath was appeased, His holiness satisfied. The penalty of our sin was not finite, but eternal; thus, Christ's payment was that of eternal, infinite punishment, or, its equivalent in value. Only Christ could produce that infinite value, because He is fully infinite God.

The ransom was paid to free us from the slavery of sin and conveys the idea of price, bargain, or exchange. The ransom was paid to God. The result of the payment of our ransom price by Christ was our redemption in which Christ brought the believer out of the slavery of

sin unto the slavery of service to Himself. The entire package involves the release from the penalty, power, and eventual presence of sin.

The picture is of a slave market with people being in slavery to a cruel slave owner. Slaves, however, can be bought and sold upon an agreed price. When the buyer of a slave pays the negotiated price, then the ownership of the slave transfers to the new owner. Christ, then, purchased the Christian from the original slave owner, which is identified as being in "bondage to sin." The agreed price was His blood shed upon the cross. Christians have been ransomed and released from sin's power and penalty.

This transaction is also known in theological terms as Christ's vicarious substitutionary atonement. Vicarious is defined as, "endured or done by one person substituting for another."

Christ's Atonement brought reconciliation between God and the believer. God was reconciled to the believer. God was greatly offended by the sin of mankind. That offense has been removed because of Christ's Atonement. No change occurred in God, but in the relationship between God and man.

## **II. BELIEVERS ARE PRAYED FOR (1:15-23).**

### **A. THE GROUND (BASIS) OF PAUL'S PRAYER (vv. 15,16).**

Paul prayed because of the believer's spiritual blessings. Because believers have a new relationship with God that includes massive new blessings, privileges, and a new status, Paul can rightly and effectively pray for us. Before we were Christians, Paul's prayer would have no effect, because we were in a position of enmity toward God, and not in possession of the blessings of God.

Paul prayed because of the new, positive spiritual relationships: the Ephesians faith toward God; their love toward one another.

### **B. THE REQUEST OF PAUL'S PRAYER (v. 17).**

1. The purpose of the prayer was that the believers would know God intimately in their experience of communion and fellowship with God. They were to grasp, or realize in their own awareness and personal experience God's character and will.
2. The means of gaining that experience was by true spiritual insight and by correct spiritual attitudes. Prayer is the means of gaining this insight. The spirit of wisdom is insight into the true nature of things. The spirit of revelation is the unveiling of the subject in view, in this case, God. At the core of this process is knowing the Word of God (the Bible) and believing the contents - both in theology and where the Word touches our life experience. The Bible is known by reason, understood through insight from the Holy Spirit, applied (made real in experience) by faith, kept alive by prayer, worked out by obedience, empowered by the Holy Spirit.

### **C. THE CONTENT OF PAUL'S PRAYER (vv. 18,19).**

1. Paul wanted them to know in the core of our being the past: the factual knowledge about the hope of our calling. Paul had just taught on the subject in the previous verses (vv. 4-6) about the Christian's election and predestination, and God's love and grace toward the believer. This would take care of the problem of Guilt both legally, and in our own personal lives. We are saved. It is a fact.



Hope does not mean like we have just taken a test and “hope” that somehow we passed, but that we don’t really know for sure. The kind of Christian hope referred to in the “hope of our calling” means an established certainty – a settled fact. Our hope is an assured, or convinced, expectation that a thing will, in fact, happen in the future. It is an expectation to come into actual possession of the things promised by God. Our ultimate hope is this: of whatever shape and/or content, we shall forever enjoy infinite happiness in the presence of Christ.

This kind of hope is the full conviction and confident anticipation, based on a credible and durable promise, to come into actual and full permanent possession of the promised object or condition.

It is like knowing we have \$1,000 in our checking account at the bank. We also have the rent to pay on our house. We then write a check for the rent payment of \$500, and put it in the mail. Our “hope” is that the \$1,000 will be enough to cover the check. Though the finished financial transaction has not yet occurred in time, it is still in the future, we “hope” or know the check will be covered. The bank guarantees that the money is safe; God guarantees our salvation is safe.

Maybe this is a better illustration. When we work at a job, we are promised by the company that we will be paid for our labor. If we did not believe the promise, we would not work. But, we do put forth our labor with the assured expectation (i.e. hope) that when the future payday comes around, we will be in actual possession of our paycheck.

2. Paul wanted the Ephesians to know the future: God's glorious inheritance, which is the believer, and for them to realize in experience by faith the believer's inheritance and completed redemption (v.14). This would take care of the problem of fear. This fact should change our self-image and realization of who we are, and how much we are valued by God. We Christians are considered by God to be His inheritance. Believers are part of the riches of God! Our inheritance includes our redemption from the slavery of sin (1:14) and all of its attendant blessings. Believers are God’s inheritance.

Think of our position in Christ this way. If we are part of God’s riches, and His inheritance, think of how much He will desire to keep track of us and protect us. We humans diligently desire to protect and maintain any inheritance we receive. How much more will God protect and maintain us, as we are His valuable inheritance. Though suffering may come to us in this life along with material loss, sickness, pressures, and eventual death, eternally we are the treasures of God, which He purchased with the dear blood of His Son, Jesus Christ.

I wish to spend some time on this wonderful reality for the believer. The whole world belongs to God with all its wealth. Yet, He considers His elect, Christians, as a special inheritance and treasure apart from all else. This truth has a profound, powerful, and practical result for our lives as Christians. It involves how we see ourselves, other Christians, make decisions, live our lives, and respond to the difficult circumstances of life as they buffet us.

If we believe, and it is true, that we now have the rights to a great inheritance in our salvation, and will have full possession in the next life, then we are happy. Our ultimate inheritance is reserved for us in Heaven (1 Peter 1:4). However, it also means that we might believe that in the meantime we are somewhat left to our own devices while living in this life.

For example, pretend that you have a wealthy father who will pass one million dollars on to

you at his death. But, while he is still alive, he gives you nothing, and you have to care for, support, and protect yourself – waiting for the future inheritance.

In contrast, consider that you yourself, the believer, are the actual inheritance belonging to God. He will protect, care for, and look out for you. You have great wealth in yourself to God. He greatly values you.

Let me give another example. Say you go to a dealership and pay \$50,000 for a huge diamond ring set in an exquisitely crafted 25 carat gold ring. It is of enormous value to you. You will want to protect it, keep it in safe keeping, and watch out for thieves. You will want to show it off to others. Why? Because the ring is of tremendous value to you. Something is worth what people will pay for it. You have invested and paid a fortune for the ring.

Now, let me go back to us being an inheritance of God. God has invested enormously in us; consequently, we are of great value to Him. How has He invested? What did He spend on us to make us valuable? Consider this. I take the basic ideas here from a sermon on this text by Charles Spurgeon.

First, He has spent enormous love on us. We are dear and precious to Him. He has loved us for so long, and so dearly, and so intense, that there is a wealth to the believer. Think of it this way, think of how precious and valuable to you is something that you dearly love. In fact, the thing loved may have little material value, but to you it is priceless. He loved us so much, that He sent Christ to die for us.

Second, He has spent a wealth of wisdom on us believers. A material, such as wood or iron, may be shapeless and worth little. But when a wise man puts forth thought and applies his skill to shape the formless matter into a beautiful painting or statue, it carries great value. God has thought about us, planned for us, shaped us, and figured out how is the best way to save us. That process gives us great value. The greatest part of God's applied wisdom deals with how best to bring about our redemption.

Third, He has spent suffering for us. God created the expanse of universe, lofty mountains, vast oceans, and the animals, birds, insects and other creatures that populate His immense domain. Yet, He did not need to suffer to produce them, nor does He need to suffer to maintain them. For the believer, however, God had to suffer all the agony and despair of the bloody sacrifice of Jesus Christ upon the cross. He had to do that, and He did it willingly. We consider it to be of great value when we suffer and struggle, and work, and toil toward a goal, such as getting a college degree. How much more does God value us? We saints cost Him dearly. We are the riches of glory of His inheritance.

Fourth, He spent great and unusual effort and work to save us. When He created the rest of the universe, He just spoke and it appeared. However, in the making of a Christian, it took the careful attention and working of the entire Godhead. It took them all to make this new creature called a Christian. The Father must plan for salvation; the Son must redeem us for salvation; the Holy Spirit must regenerate or apply salvation in our experience.

Fifth, God has spent great effort, attention, planning and time in developing us by His Divine workmanship (Ephesians 2:10). Someday we will be complete in Christ, the finished product He envisioned for each of us individually. However, we are not there yet. He saved us in a point of time, but the process of perfection extends all our lives. In the process of development, He uses people interacting in our lives, circumstances to buffet us,

opportunities for us to succeed, protection when we are involved in risky behavior, and failures to strengthen us. He works all things, all the events of our life, after the counsel of His will. The point is that God has invested greatly in our development.

Sixth, God has made us unique in the universe. There is nothing like us in the universe of God's creation. Things in this life are of great value when they are unique and different from all else – such as a painting, or novel. We saints are of a unique composition of matter and spirit. Angels are of spirit, not matter. Animals, rocks, trees, water, stars, moons, dogs, crickets, fish are all of matter – not spirit.

We are told that we are being, “conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren” (Romans 8:29). We saints are of a different class of creatures in the universe. Paul wrote, “Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature” (2 Corinthians 5:17). We are of a unique, special mix of matter and spirit, the material and immaterial. We are partakers of the Divine nature on the one hand (2 Peter 1:3, 4), on the other hand we are of matter like the gopher.

Seventh, God has purchased us with an infinite price, the death of Christ upon the cross. We can never understand the cost of the believer's salvation. It is of a value more that we can count or envision. Paul wrote, “In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace, which He lavished upon us...who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory” (Ephesians 1:7,8, 14).

When we think of the great expenditure God has invested in us, it assures and encourages us. What He has spent so lavishly upon us, He greatly values. We are a product of His workmanship – His planning, purchasing, crafting, polishing, and admiring. Because of His great grace, love, faithfulness, and skill, He has made us into something of enormous value to Him. Our value is so much, that He is excited that we are, “the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints.”

What He values and loves, He will care for, protect, bring to completion, and utilize to His glory, “For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus” (Philippians 1:6).

3. Paul wanted the Ephesians to know the present: to experience the greatness of God's power, to live with spiritual vitality, to draw strength for the Christian life, to enjoy the relief of sin's forgiveness, to grow in wisdom and insight into the problems, issues, and solutions of life, to encounter and grip the sense of redemption by His blood, to grasp the knowledge of God's will, to rest in the vital sealing of the Holy Spirit (vv. 7,8,9,11,13). This would take care of the problem of lack of confidence in living out our life here on earth.

However, God also wants us to know that in the future, His power is sufficient to raise us from the dead, and that He can produce what He has promised us in terms of delivering our future life. Eternal life, and all the riches in glory reserved in heaven for us are of no consequence. What He has planned will actually happen. You can count on it. Believe it.

#### **D. THE MANIFESTATION OF GOD'S POWER (vv. 20-23).**

- God's great power was demonstrated in the past by Christ's resurrection and ascension.
- God's enormous power is demonstrated in the future by Christ's head over creation.

Adam lost headship. Christ gained the headship over creation. The transfer will be completed in future.

- God's infinite power is demonstrated in the present by Christ's headship over the Church blessing in the Church.
- God's vast power will be demonstrated in the present and resurrected lives of believers, and all that it involves.

### **III. BELIEVER'S ARE SAVED BY GRACE (2:1-10).**

#### **A. THE GREAT LOSTNESS OF MANKIND (vv. 1-3).**

- All humanity is dead, spiritually, without hope and ability to respond to God.
- All humanity is ruled by Satan, the "prince of the power of the air."
- All humanity is living in sin, by nature and desire disobedient and wrathful.

#### **B. THE GREAT MERCY OF GOD (vv 4-6).**

- God was motivated by love.
- God moved to mankind in our helplessness.
- God made believer's alive, the spiritual rebirth.
- God saved the believer because of His mercy, through an act of grace.
- God raised and seated the believer in Christ in the heavenlies.

#### **C. THE GREAT PURPOSE OF GOD (vv 7-10).**

1. To make believers eternal objects, displays, and trophies of His grace (v. 7).
2. The means, or mechanism, of God's purpose (vv. 8-10).
  - Salvation is by God's grace.
  - Salvation is received by faith, which involves: hearing and understanding the gospel; admitting (believing) to the truth of the gospel message; receiving, personally trusting Christ alone for salvation.
  - Salvation is a gift that can never be earned by works but only received -- a gift.
  - Salvation results in good works, which is in keeping with God's creative design for the saved.

### **IV. JEWS AND GENTILES ARE UNITED IN ONE BODY (2:11-22).**

#### **A. FORMERLY JEWS, GENTILES WERE SEPARATED (vv. 11,12).**

Before the formation of the Church, God dealt exclusively with Israel, as a nation, through whom Gentiles must come for salvation. Other nations, however, were used by God to accomplish His will. For example, Egypt was used as an incubator to develop and nurture the people of Israel under Joseph.

The world was divided into two groups: Jew and Gentile. When God established the Church (Christ's Body) then a new way of dealing with man occurred. The way to God was through Christ exclusively, whether Jew or Gentile. The old covenant with Israel, centered in the covenant of Law, was abolished (v. 15). Under the old Covenant of Law, the Gentile was hopeless. Technically, one can look at the world now in three ways: Gentiles, Jews, and the Church. The Church is now made up of both Gentiles and Jews who are saved through Christ – that is, Christians. Following details of the Old Testament predicament of the Gentiles.

- Gentiles were separated from Christ.
- Gentiles were excluded from the commonwealth of Israel.
- Gentiles were strangers to the covenants of promise.
- Gentiles had no hope.

- Gentiles were without God.
- Gentiles were saved under the Old Mosaic Covenant if they became Jewish converts.

#### **B. ALL BELIEVERS NOW MERGED INTO CHRIST'S BODY (The Church) (vv. 13-19).**

- Gentiles are now brought near to God through Christ's blood (v. 13).
- Christ established peace by bringing both Jew and Gentile together (v. 14).
- Christ abolished the Law by becoming its penalty (v. 15).
- Christ reconciles both Jew and Gentile to God through the cross (v. 16).
- Christ is the way of access to God for both Jew and Gentile (v. 18).
- Christ becomes the believers ground for heavenly citizenship and family rights (v. 19).
- Christ becomes our means of sanctification, or, Christian growth (v. 22).
- Summary: Christ, not the Law, becomes our ground for salvation and Christian growth.

#### **C. THE CHURCH IS LIKENED TO A TEMPLE (vv. 20-22).**

Paul uses the metaphor of a temple in describing the new organism called the Church, or, Christ's body. There are four phases highlighted in this picture. The prophets are New Testament prophets, and with the Apostles they received and recorded the New Testament revelation. (See note on Ephesians 4:11,12). There are three characteristics of this temple.

- The building's ownership is that of God: He is the planner, designer, owner, developer, builder, and resident.
- Christ is the Cornerstone, that from which the foundation is given form and direction.
- The Apostles and prophets make up the foundation, formed around the cornerstone.
- Individual Christians are the stones of the temple building in an ongoing building process.

#### **V. BELIEVERS ARE EQUAL IN CHRIST'S BODY (3:1-21).**

##### **A. THE CHURCH IS A MYSTERY (vv. 1-6).**

1. The mystery (i.e. the Church) was previously unknown to man in the Old Testament, but is now known by special revelation through Christ.
2. The mystery was the Church, which puts Gentiles on equal footing with the Jewish people.
  - Gentiles are fellow heirs through Christ (v. 6).
  - Gentiles are fellow members of the Body (Church) (v. 6).
  - Gentiles are fellow partakers of the promise of Christ (v. 6).

##### **B. PAUL'S CONCEPT OF MINISTRY WITHIN THE CHURCH (vv. 7-13).**

- His ministry was from God (v. 7).
- His ministry was to all mankind (v. 8).
- His ministry is related to the spiritual realm (v. 10).
- His ministry involves evangelism, teaching and missions.

##### **C. PAUL'S PRAYER FOR SPIRITUAL STRENGTH (vv 14-21).**

- This spiritual strength is in our intimate experience of Christ in the inner man.
- It is gained by love, faith, prayer and understanding spiritual truth.
- The Trinity is in view: the Holy Spirit (v. 16), The Son (v. 17), The Father (v. 19).

#### **VI. BELIEVERS ARE TO WALK (LIVE) IN UNITY (4:1-16).**

##### **A. THIS IS A UNITY OF EXPERIENCE AND RELATIONSHIP (vv. 1-3).**

1. Unity involves a common experience in personal life and responsibility to others.
2. Unity involves a harmony of relationships which requires work and humility.

3. This section begins the practical section of Ephesians. Paul begins with "therefore" which refers back to the doctrinal section of the first three chapters. In other words, based on our wonderful position we have in Christ, we ought to act in conformance with that position. The next extended portion of Ephesians can be organized around the five word, "walks" (4:1,17; 5:2,8,15). Here we are to walk in a manner worthy of our new position and status in Christ (4:1).

#### **B. THIS IS A UNITY OF DOCTRINE (vv. 4-6).**

1. Unity does not mean in every detail of every doctrine, but unity and agreement in the fundamental truths.
2. Unity is grounded in (based upon) the God of the Bible as revealed in the Bible.
  - The seven "ones" are derived from the Trinity. They are the common ground of all Christians.
  - No unity is possible if the focus is on another God.

#### **C. THIS IS A UNITY OF PURPOSE (vv. 7-16).**

1. Evangelists, pastors, teachers equip the Church: training, organization, leading, helping. Some theologians maintain the ministry of Apostles and Prophets ceased after they laid the foundation of the church. Others say their ministry and office extends down to today. Some believe in Apostolic Succession where the position and authority was passed on through appointed apostles.

2. The goal is the growth and maturity of Christ's Body, the Church. Growth is for both individual Christians and the Church as a whole. The end goal is maturity and service. Our leaders are to put into place training, organization, opportunity, funding, follow-up for Christian service, especially the Great Commission: the evangelization and discipleship of the entire world. Christians are to be trained in these activities. The pastor is not required to do all the spiritual work, but to train, equip, and engage others to do the work of the ministry.

3. Verse-eight probably refers to Christ's descent to Hades at His death, then leading the host of captives (men formerly held captive by Satan, but are now saved) on to Heaven at His resurrection and ascension. The facts are, "We who descended is Himself also He who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things" (Ephesians 4:10).

Hades was divided into two partitions before Christ. The wicked were locked in one part, and believers rested in Abraham's Bosom. The saved, at one time, were the captives of Satan. However, they became saved, but at death were temporarily sent to Abraham's Bosom (Luke 16:22). When Christ finished His work on cross there was a major change. Let me explain it this way.

At His death, Christ descended, in spirit, into Hades and preached to the dead – both saved and unsaved (Ephesians 4:9; Acts 2:27; 1 Peter 3:18, 19; 4:16). Christ announced that the Atonement had been made complete which was a message doom for the unsaved but victory for the saved. No second chance was given.

Many believe that at Christ's Ascension He released the OT saved from Sheol and led them to Paradise above in heaven (Ephesians 4:8; Proverbs 15:24; Psalm 68:18; Revelation 1:18; Mathew 27:50-53; Hebrews 12:22, 23).

4. God gives spiritual gifts, or abilities to every believer. He also gives gifted men and women to the Church as a gift for the up building of the Church. Evangelists, pastors, Bible teachers

are themselves gifts given to the Church. Spiritual gifts are abilities given to individuals. They are two different kinds of gifts. The Evangelists, pastors and Bible teacher are gifted people who have been given as gifts to the Church. (Cf. Luke 16:19-31; Heb 4:14; 7:26; 9:24). Believers now go directly to Heaven when they die (Phil 1:23).

## **VII. BELIEVERS ARE TO WALK IN PERSONAL HOLINESS (4:17-32).**

### **A. THE CHRISTIAN'S OLD AND NEW SELF (4:17-25).**

1. This section explains how to grow in our Christian life. It is a putting off and a putting on. The first step is negative, and refers to the second "walk," and here it is to not walk as ordinary people who care nothing about Christ. A major focus is our mental outlook or worldview. Our thinking translates into feelings, actions, and finally a lifestyle. This emphasis corresponds with Romans 12:2.
2. Step one: lay aside the old self which is mentally futile, ignorant, sensual, greedy.
3. Step two: renew the mind (v. 23). (See also Romans 8:4-7: 12:1.2).
4. Step three: put on the new self.
  - The new self is in the likeness of God.
  - The new self is characterized by righteousness.
  - The new self is holiness based on truth. Truth is in the Bible.

### **B. THE CHRISTIAN'S FLESHLY CONFLICTS (4:25-32). (putting on the new self).**

1. Do not lie...but speak the truth (v. 25).
  - Why? Because we are members of one another.
2. Do not blast with anger...but keep short accounts (vv. 26,27).
  - Why? Because festered anger allows Satanic control.
3. Do not steal...but work for your money (v. 28).
  - Why? Because you will have some to share with others in need.
4. Do not speak "rotten" words...speak helpful words (vv. 29,30).
  - Why? Because this will help others and not grieve the Holy Spirit.
5. Do not be bitter...but be kind, forgiving, etc (vv. 31,32).
  - Why? Because that is what God is like.

## **VIII. BELIEVERS ARE TO WALK IN LOVE (5:1-6).**

### **A. CHRISTIANS ARE TO LOVE ONE ANOTHER.**

This is the third "walk" in the development of our Christian life: walk in love, just as Christ also loved you" (5:2).

### **B. CHRISTIANS ARE TO ABSTAIN FROM EVIL PRACTICES.**

Here Paul give another catalog of sinful practices that harms our relationships and service to Christ – and gives the world cause to mock Christians.

### **C. THE PURPOSE IS BECAUSE SUCH PRACTICES ARE NOT OF GOD'S KINGDOM.**

Christians live in an alternate reality from those outside of Christ. Our mental attitudes, worldview, interests, priorities, and purposes in life are from an alternate vantage point from the rest of the world. We live to advance the kingdom of Christ.

## **IX. BELIEVERS ARE TO WALK AS CHILDREN OF LIGHT (5:7-14).**

### **A. THE RESULT IS GOODNESS, RIGHTEOUSNESS AND TRUTH.**

Verse eight introduces the fourth “walk” in the process of Christian growth. We are to walk, or live, in accordance with our new identity as Christians – as those united with Christ. This includes the good, right, and true.

### **B. CHRISTIANS SEEK GOD'S WILL.**

Learning what is pleasing to God (v 10) involved practice, dedication, focus, learning from our mistakes, looking to those more mature than us – and time.

### **C. CHRISTIANS EXPOSE DEEDS OF EVIL.**

One of the best “disinfectants” of evil practice is to expose it, or bring it to the light of the community or world. In exposing corruption can, however, be very dangerous in some cases. Consequently, it is important to pick your fights. Exposing corruption takes great courage. It is easier to turn a blind eye and take the path of least resistance. However, like one man said, “All it takes for evil to reign is for good men to do nothing.”

Another pitfall in having exposing evil as your cause is that it brings bitterness to one’s soul, and we become known for what we are against rather than what we are for. Sometimes when we focus on the evils of the world, we lose sight of the gospel and love of Christ.

Another caution in exposing faults in others is that we become faultfinders of other people, and that can result in the harmful sins listed in 4:31. We must be careful, wise, and patient in dealing with other people who may be taken up in sin.

## **X. BELIEVERS ARE TO WALK IN THE HOLY SPIRIT (5:15-6:9).**

### **A. CHRISTIANS ARE TO DISPLAY CAUTION AND CARE (v 17).**

### **B. CHRISTIANS ARE TO BE FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT (vv. 18-21).**

1. The experience is repeatable. constant, a command, and is likened to control, influence.
2. The experience is compared to being under the influence of alcohol.
3. The experience can be seen in four specific ways.
  - By sweet communication with other people.
  - By sweet communication with God.
  - By an attitude of thankfulness.
  - By an attitude of servanthood.
4. The experience is reflected in and is the basis of happy married life (5:22-32).
5. The experience is reflected in and is the basis of successful family life (6:1-4).
6. The experience is reflected in the work place (6:5-9).

## **XI. BELIEVERS ARE TO STAND AGAINST SPIRITUAL FORCES (6:10-24).**

### **A. SPIRITUAL WARFARE IS A FACT (cf. 1:20-22; 2:2).**

### **B. SPIRITUAL WARFARE IS A STRUGGLE AGAINST SATAN (vv. 11,12).**

Satan has agents and evil schemes (vv. 11,12).

Involved are world forces of darkness.

Involved are spiritual forces in heavenly places.

### **C. SPIRITUAL WARFARE REQUIRES A SPECIFIC STANCE.**

1. Christians must rely upon the power of God (Cf. 1:19-23; 3:16).
2. Christians must stand firm, resist and take on the armor of God.



#### **D. SPIRITUAL WARFARE HAS A DEFENSE AGAINST SATAN (vv. 13-20).**

1. The first piece of spiritual armor is loins girded with truth. Satan's attack: falsehoods, lies. The believer's defense: know, practice, understand truth in everyday life. Be genuine and sincere (cf. 4:25).
2. The second piece of spiritual armor is the breastplate of righteousness. Satan's attack: evil lifestyle. The believer's defense: practice practical righteousness (cf. 4:17-24).
3. The third piece of spiritual armor is the gospel of peace. Satan's attack: evangelistic indifference. The believer's defense: active soul-winning (cf. 1:13; 3:8; 4:11.12: 6:19,20).
4. The fourth piece of spiritual armor is the shield of faith. Satan's attack: worry, fear, doubt. The believer's defense: faith, trust, believing God as revealed in the Bible (cf. 3:12,13,17).
5. The fifth piece of spiritual armor is the helmet of salvation. Satan's attack: salvation by works. The believer's defense: be assured of One's salvation through Christ (cf. 1:13,14).
6. The sixth piece of spiritual armor is the sword of the Spirit. Satan's attack: exaltation of reason and experience over the Bible. The believer's defense: believe the Bible as the sole for authority for faith and practice, the final judge in all matters that it touches, even to science and history (cf. 3:2-5: 4:14,15).
7. The seventh piece of spiritual armor is prayer. Satan's attack: prayerlessness. The believer's defense: pray continually, in the will of God, for everyone, alertly, and for evangelistic boldness (cf. 1:15-19; 3:14-21: 6:18-20).
8. See comments in the introduction to Ephesians, 1V. D. the area of spiritual warfare. End of Ephesians.

**THE EPISTLE TO THE PHILIPPIANS  
WITH  
INTRODUCTION, OUTLINE AND PRACTICAL NOTES**

**By  
Dr. Willis C. Newman  
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## **INTRODUCTION**

### **I. THE BACKGROUND DEVELOPMENT**

#### **A. THE NATURE AND OCCASION OF THE LETTER**

The epistle is a personal letter of Paul to a church very precious to him - the church at Philippi. He had close ties of love to these church members. The letter was written by the Apostle Paul (1:1: 4:10-20) from prison in Rome (1:13,14: 4:22) in about A.D. 61.

The occasion of writing was to acknowledge a gift of money from the church brought by Epaphroditus, a church member (4:10-18). There was about a decade between the time Paul, Silas and Luke planted the church in Philippi. At the start of his ministry the church generously supported him on at least two occasions before this letter (4:16). People's interest, however, had waned through the years. The news of the disaster at Jerusalem and Paul's imprisonment in Rome had renewed that interest.

Upon hearing of Paul's confinement the church sent him another gift by Epaphroditus who became almost fatally ill while with Paul (2:27). When he recovered, Paul sent him back with this letter, a thank-you note to the Philippians (2:25-30). Taking the opportunity to commend Epaphroditus, Paul also wrote his friends about various issues.

These people were very close to Paul (2 Cor 8:1-6) and this is the most personal letter he ever wrote to a church. Little is ever said about doctrinal error. Paul spoke freely of his tribulations and spiritual ambitions. The key verse is 1:21: "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." He used the first person pronoun over 100 times.

#### **B. THE PURPOSE OF THE LETTER.**

- Paul called for a plea to unity among those within the church (2:1-11; 4:2).
- Paul wanted to give a report on his present circumstances (1:12-26).
- Paul urged them to have Christ's attitude of unity, humility and obedience (1:27-2:18).
- Paul sent a note of praise and explanation in sending Timothy & Epaphroditus (2:19-30).
- Paul warned them of false teachers and told them to walk worthy of Christ (3:1-21).
- Paul urged them to joy, prayer and contemplation of all the good and virtuous (4:4-9).
- Paul thanked them for their recent gift and previous generousities (1:5: 4:10-20).
- Paul desired to express his love to his close friends, relieve their anxiety and let them know God was using his imprisonment to advance the gospel (1:8-15).

- Paul wanted opportunity to give thanksgiving to God for the Philippian's love for him and their continuing progress in Christian life (1:1-11).

### **C. THE CITY OF PHILIPPI.**

Philippi was a small but important city in Macedonia. It was founded by King Philip of Macedonia, father of Alexander the Great. Philippi's greatest fame came from the battles fought nearby, in 42 B.C. between the forces of Brutus and Cassius and those of Antony and Octavian (later Caesar Augustus). The city became a Roman colony, a military outpost with special privileges.

### **D. THE DESTINATION OF THE LETTER.**

The church was founded by Paul (with Luke and Silas) on the second missionary journey. Paul went to Philippi in response to a vision (Acts 16:9-40). The church was the first church to be started in Europe (Acts 16). Philippi was the "beginning of the gospel" in that Area (Phil 4:15,16; 2 Cor 11:9). The Jews there were too few to have a synagogue (the requirement being at least 10 men); thus, the church must have been mainly Gentile. No mention is made of Jewish opposition. Lydia, the Philippian jailor and family and probably the slave girl were the first converts and church members (Acts 16:14,16,17,18,34).

When Paul departed, he left probably Dr. Luke there to carry on the work. The "we" section of Acts ends at the close of the Philippi evangelistic and church planting campaign. Luke may have been a native of Philippi and almost certainly had been a student at the very famous medical school located in that city.

Paul visited Philippi at the end of his third missionary/evangelistic tour, prior to spending the winter at Corinth (Acts 20:1-3; 2 Cor 11:9). At the breaking of spring he went back to Philippi and spent the Passover season with his dear friends and converts (Acts 20:3,6). Apparently several letters traveled between the church and Paul.

## **II THE CONTENT EVALUATION.**

### **A. THE DOMINATE THEME OF THE GOSPEL.**

No definition is given of "gospel" in this letter, but the heart of the gospel is seen historically in the statement "obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the cross" (2:8). The application of the gospel is seen in the statement "having a righteousness which is through faith in Christ" (3:9). Christ died for people - people can have His righteousness. The core of Paul's work was the gospel. His work was the sum total of all that activity and work required to successfully carry out that evangelistic enterprise whose chief ministry is the preaching of the gospel. Following is how the gospel is presented in this letter.

The gospel was something in which they had joint participation (1:5).

The gospel was confirmed or witnessed to by Paul's courage (1:7).

Paul's life was geared to the progress of the gospel (1:12).

Paul defended the gospel (1:16).

Believers are to conduct themselves worthy of the gospel (1:27).

Believers are to strive together for the faith of the gospel (1:27).

Believers serve together for the furtherance of the gospel (2:22).

Believers are to struggle together for the cause of the gospel (4:3).

Paul preached the gospel at Philippi (4:15).

Paul employed the term "gospel" in three ways: as a body of faith; as a message; as a sphere of activity bounded by preaching the gospel.

## **B. THE DOMINANT THEME OF JOY.**

Joy is a dominant theme. Paul's circumstances were glum: his enemies were trying to undermine his work, death was a real possibility, he was a political prisoner - yet he was full of joy and told his readers to be likewise. The following is how Paul found joy, along with his instruction to his readers, and we today may learn from his example.

- Paul was joyful in remembrance of the Philippians (1:3,4).
- Paul was joyful because Christ was preached, whatever the motives (1:18).
- Paul was joyful because his followers were growing in humility (2:2).
- Paul was joyful in his personal sacrifice for Christ (2:17).
- Paul was joyful because of the gifts and goodwill of friends (4:10).
- Paul told the Philippians to be joyful: in their faith; (1:25,26); in their sacrifice in proclaiming the gospel (2:18); in Jesus Christ (3:3); in the Lord at all times, rejoice (4:4).

## **III. THE DISTINCTIVE THEOLOGICAL CONTRIBUTIONS.**

### **A. THE PASSAGE ON THE KENOSIS (2:5-11).**

This section is one of the most important portions of Holy Writ concerning the Kenosis, the self-humiliation or self-emptying of Jesus Christ when He became a man. At the same time, He was still God. Kenosis means emptying, or somehow limiting His qualities of being God when He became man. He is the God-man. The phrase "emptied Himself" (2:7) is the issue of focus. The question is: to what extent did Christ relinquish the prerogatives of deity when He came among men?

#### **1. How Christ emptied Himself.**

He veiled His glory (John 17:5).

He did not surrender any attributes (qualities) of God, nor did He cease to be God, but He took on the limitations of humanity.

He voluntarily waived the full exercise of certain divine prerogatives (qualities and rights) during His earthly life (Mt 24:36). An illustration is that of a champion prize fighter restraining his power when play-boxing with his small child.

#### **2. The importance of the doctrine.**

The false theory states that Christ gave up certain attributes of God: thus, He ceased to be God while on earth. If this is the case, then, He did not have sufficient value to pay for the sins of the saved.

### **B. THE PASSAGE ON THE INCARNATION (2:5-11).**

Along with Colossians chapter one and Hebrews chapters one and two and John chapter one this passage is one of the great passages on the incarnation of Christ. Incarnation refers to the preexistent Christ taking on human flesh.

1. Christ "existed in the form of God" (2:6). He is of the same nature and essence as God.

2. Christ considered "equality with God not a thing to be grasped" (2:6). He did not consider His coequal and coeternal equality with God the Father as something to be forcibly retained, or, something to be exploited to His own advantage.

3. Christ was "made in the likeness of men" (2:7). Christ, in the form of God, took on the body or flesh of man. He did not exchange bodies of any kind, but assumed humanity - a first

time onetime event. Christ became the first born of a new order of creation of which men in their glorified bodies will follow (Cf. Romans 8:28-30; Philippians 3:20, 21).

### **C. THE PASSAGE ON THE RESURRECTION (3:20,21).**

- The believer's citizenship is in Heaven.
- Christ will return from Heaven.
- Christ will transform our earthy body to conformity with His.
- Christ has the power to change our bodies and rule all.

## **IV. UNIQUE CHARACTERISTICS AND ASSORTED TEACHINGS.**

### **A. THE UNIQUE CHARACTERISTICS OF PHILIPPIANS.**

1. The letter is warmly personal.
2. There is a Christocentric emphasis of which Paul shows his subordination (1:21).
3. The doctrinal element is at a minimum (2:5-11; 3:9-11,20,21).
4. Women are recognized for their work (4:3; Acts 16:15,40).
5. The inclusion of overseers and deacons may be because of their superintending the raising and sending of Paul's gift (1:1).
6. Several key words are repeated.
  - Gospel is used nine times. Everything is seen in light of the gospel, whether the financial gift (1:5) or his own trial (1:16))
  - To rejoice (verb or noun) is used 14 times. Paul seems to desire joy for his friends above everything else.
  - To think is used ten times, more than any other letter.
  - To abound is exceeded only in Ephesians.
  - Salvation, fellowship, glory are other terms.
7. There are two outstanding examples.
  - There is Christ's example of obedience to God's will (2:5-11).
  - There is Paul's passion to achieve the goal Christ had given him (3:2-15).
8. There were problems evident in the church.
  - There were rivalries and personal ambition (2:3.4 4:2).
  - There was the teaching of the Judaizers (3:1-3).
  - There was the problem teaching of perfectionism (3:12.14).
  - There was the influence of sinful, sensual lust and materialism (3:18.19).
9. Paul gives a significant autobiographical sketch (3:4-14).

### **B SOME ASSORTED TEACHINGS IN PHILIPPIANS.**

- Paul mentioned the Faith advancing because of suffering (1:12,13).
- The correct Christian experience is the outworking, whatever our circumstances, of the life, nature and mind of Christ living in us (1:6,11; 2:5,13).
- Paul was Nero's prisoner; yet, the epistle shouts with triumph!
- Paul emphasized the idea of servant hood for himself and the church because of the example of servant hood displayed by Christ (2:5-8).
- The entrance to exaltation both for Christ and the believer is service (2:17-30).
- Humility, self-denial and the obedience of Christ is the means sovereignty over all things and people (2:5-11). These are virtues for the believer as well.
- Paul believed Epaphroditus' recovery was an answer to prayer; sick, and God does heal (2:25-27).
- All Paul's life was summed up in Christ who was the driving motive in Paul's life. He utterly devoted his being to the cause in which he was convinced (1:21).
- Some favorite verses: 1:21,23b; 3:10,20: 4:8.13).

## **V. SOME TEACHINGS OF PRACTICAL RELEVANCE.**

### **A. PAUL SET THE EXAMPLE FOR EVANGELIZATION.**

- This is seen by his reputation among the Praetorian guard (1:13).
- Paul penetrated Caesar's household with the gospel (4:22).
- Preachers divided over him, and the major issue was the gospel (1:12-16).
- Paul continually pushed evangelism, even while suffering as a political prisoner.
- His instruction to the church was to strive together for the gospel (1:27).

### **B. PAUL ENCOURAGED THEM IN THEIR CHRISTIAN LIFE.**

- He encouraged them in their suffering for the gospel (1:27-30).
- He encouraged them to continue their witness (2:16).
- He encouraged them to cultivate joy and peace (4:4-7).
- He encouraged them toward high and holy thoughts (4:8).
- He encouraged them to follow Christ (3:13-17).

### **C. PAUL INSTRUCTED CONCERNING MENTAL HEALTH (4:4-9).**

- He said to cultivate an attitude of joy, thankfulness, patience, awareness of God (4:4-6).
- He said to not worry and be anxious (4:6).
- He said to pray with thankfulness and trust, not "fear" talk or complaining (4:6,7).
- He said to keep positive mental thoughts and concepts (4:8).
- He said to continually practice his approach to life (4:9).

### **D. PAUL TAUGHT ON GIVING (1:5; 4:10-19).**

1. Those who gave to his support would be rewarded as though they themselves had preached the gospel to the people he had reached.

2. Giving to support the work of the gospel through evangelists, pastors, teachers, missionaries results in the supplying of the giver's needs by God (4:17,19). This is not to endorse the teaching that if we give to gospel work God will make us rich. He promised to supply our needs, not our wants. Our minimal physical need is basic food and clothing, with which we should be content (1 Timothy 6:8). By His grace and kindness God sometimes gives us more, and that we are to enjoy as well (1 Timothy 6:17). (For more on money and faith see: 1 Timothy 8:6-19; Matthew 6:19-21, 25-34; 2 Cor 8,9).

3. There is no necessary connection between happiness and wealth (4:11-13).

4. God is the supplier of financial gain (4:19).

5. Giving to the Lord's work is pleasing to God (4:18).

6. There is no necessary connection between spirituality and financial possession; that is, being wealthy is not a sign of spiritual health, nor is being in poverty a sign of carnality (4:12).

7. It is right for the Lord's workers to allow people the opportunity to give to them that the giver may receive blessing from God (4:10,17). This is not to suggest that this principle sanctions the unbridled greed displayed by some religious leaders.

## **Epistle to the Philippians with Outline and Notes**

### **I. PAUL'S GREETINGS (1:1,2).**

**A. ALL THE SAVED ARE SAINTS IN CHRIST.**

**B. PAUL AND TIMOTHY WERE SERVANTS (SLAVES) OF CHRIST.**

**C. TWO CHURCH OFFICES ARE MENTIONED: DEACON, ELDER (Cf. Acts 20:17,28).**

### **II. PAUL EXPRESSED HIS THANKSGIVING (1:3-8).**

Paul exhibited joy in the Philippian's partnership with him in world evangelism and missions and shows his gratitude and genuine affection.

#### **A. PAUL PRAYED FOR THE PHILIPPIANS.**

- He was thankful to God for the support of the Philippians (v. 3).
- He prayed with joy and often for his supporters (v. 4).
- He viewed the Philippian support to be vital participation in mission work (v. 5).

#### **B. PAUL WAS SURE OF THE PHILIPPIAN'S SANCTIFICATION (v. 6).**

- God started the work of salvation, eliminating sin's penalty (past justification).
- God continues the work of salvation by crushing sin's power (present sanctification). This does not mean that Christians become sinless in this life, but that the bonds of sin's slavery have been broken and we can now progressively grow into the likeness of Christ. We still have the old sin nature, but we also have a new nature and the Holy Spirit to make godliness possible.
- God completes the work of salvation, removing sin's presence (future glorification).

#### **C. PAUL HAD GENUINE AFFECTION (vv. 7,8).**

### **III. PAUL OFFERED SPECIFIC PRAYER (1:9-11).**

Paul requested that their love and knowledge may increase so as to distinguish between higher matters and side issues plus be filled with the fruit of righteousness.

#### **A. HE PRAYED THAT THEIR LOVE WOULD ABOUND (v. 9).**

#### **B. HE PRAYED FOR BOUNDARIES FOR LOVE (v. 9).**

- The love was bounded by real knowledge.
- The love was bounded by all discernment.

#### **C. HE PRAYED FOR DISCRIMINATION (v. 10).**

He wished for them to discriminate between important issues and avoid the trivial.

#### **D. HE PRAYED FOR DEFINITE ENDS (v. 11).**

The end product is that they would be blameless before God, through righteousness in Christ.

### **IV. PAUL SPOKE OF HIS CURRENT SITUATION (1:12-26).**

Because of his imprisonment the majority of the local Christians gained boldness to witness even if with not always the right motives. Paul rejoiced in the widespread preaching of the gospel. In his uncertainty of the future, he desired both to be with Christ and to remain to be of help to the believers.

#### **A. HIS CIRCUMSTANCES ADVANCED THE GOSPEL (v. 12).**

#### **B. HE SAW HIS CIRCUMSTANCES IN LIGHT OF THE GOSPEL (v. 13).**

- C. HE CLAIMED HARSH CIRCUMSTANCES STIMULATED BOLD WITNESS (v. 14).**
- D. THE GOAL OF MINISTRY WAS TO PREACH CHRIST (vv. 15-18).**
- E. THE SOURCE OF SPIRITUAL STRENGTH: PRAYER, THE HOLY SPIRIT (v. 19).**
- F. PAUL'S MAJOR PURPOSE IN LIFE: EXALT CHRIST AND HIS CAUSE (vv. 20-16).**

**V. PAUL GAVE A SERIES OF EXHORTATIONS (1:27-2:18).**

**A. PAUL SAID TO BE STEADFAST IN THE GOSPEL (1:27-30).**

He told them to walk worthy of the gospel.

He told them to work unified around the gospel as a common goal.

He said that suffering for the gospel was a sign of favor from God.

**B. PAUL SAID TO BE UNITED (2:1,2).**

1. He gave the experience of being in Christ (the "if" is better translated, "since").

- Believers experience encouragement.
- Believers experience comfort.
- Believers experience fellowship.
- Believers experience affection and compassion with others.

2. He then made requests of them based on their common experience.

- He requested they be like-minded.
- He requested they be of the same love.
- He requested they be one in spirit.
- He requested they focus on one purpose.

3. The idea is this: since believers experience common love, fellowship, etc., then that is motive to be like-minded, etc.

**C. PAUL SAID TO BE HUMBLE (2:3-11).**

1. He contrasted selfishness and conceit against regarding others as more important.

2. He contrasted personal interests against having other's interests at heart.

3. He gave Christ's attitude as our example.

- Christ was exalted in position, rank, status.
- Christ rejected selfishness and conceit.
- Christ obeyed unto a shameful death, concerned for the vital interests of others.

4. He said Christ's humility resulted in His exaltation.

**D. PAUL SAID TO KEEP GROWING (2:12-18).**

1. He said to exercise genuine obedience to God (v. 12).

2. He said to work out their salvation in cooperation with God (vv. 13-16). He did not tell them to work for their salvation. They were already saved, but needed to grow in spiritual maturity.

- He said to work without complaint.
- He said keep a good testimony.
- He said to hold forth the Word of God.
- "Working out" means to complete, not to work for one's salvation.
- God works in the believer in two ways: to motivate and enable.

3. He spoke of the reward to the discipler: joy in the day of Christ (v. 16).

4. He spoke of the sacrifice and joy in Christian service (v. 17).

5. This section mentions five areas of personal growth, areas to "work out our salvation"

- Quality of life: joy and grumbling point to this dimension (v. 14 cf. 17.18).
- Spiritual life: faith points to this dimension (v. 17).



- Character of life: blameless, innocent, crooked, perverse, above reproach (v. 15).
- Activities of life: doing, holding forth, running, toiling (vv. 14,16).
- Relationships of life: note the disputing between people (v. 14).

## **VI. PAUL PRESENTS THE EXAMPLE OF TIMOTHY AND EPAPHRODITUS (2:19-30).**

Timothy is commended for loyalty to Paul who hopes to send Timothy to Philippi. Epaphroditus is sent with the epistle and Paul shows appreciation for his assistance. Epaphroditus is to be honored for his unselfish sacrifice.

### **A. PAUL DESIRED TO SEND TIMOTHY (v 19).**

### **B. PAUL DESCRIBED THE CHARACTER OF TIMOTHY (vv 20-22).**

- Timothy had a genuine concern for God's people.
- Timothy had a kindred spirit with Paul in the spread of the gospel.
- Timothy sought the interests of Christ, not his own.
- Timothy was loyal to his co-workers.

### **C. PAUL SPOKE OF EPAPHRODITUS (vv. 25-30).**

- He was sent home because of the concern of the Philippian Christians.
- His sickness was healed by God.
- He was commended by Paul for his faithful service.

## **VII. PAUL WARNED ABOUT FALSE TEACHERS (3:1-4:1).**

Paul speaks of his own renunciation of Judaism in the face of his exceptional status and success in that religion. He counted everything loss for Christ's sake and his greatest desire is to know Him better. He was still straining toward things greater. He had not attained perfection in His life on this earth. Perfection is yet future for all of us.

### **A. PAUL DENUNCIATED THE JUDAIZERS (vv. 1-3).**

1. Judaizers were those who professed Christ but insisted that one must also keep the Jewish laws and ceremonies both for salvation and Christian living (Gal 2:14). They were confused on the gospel. The Jewish rite of circumcision was a major issue for them (Acts 15:1ff.). Paul called them dogs, evil workers (v. 2), deceitful workmen (2 Cor 11:13), false brethren (Gal 2:4). (See Acts 11:2; Gal 2:12; 6:12; Titus 1:10).

2. The characteristics of Judaizers are mentioned.

- They had a false circumcision, or, form of religion.
- They worshipped in confidence of the flesh, by religious ceremony and rite.

3. The characteristics of true worship are mentioned.

- Christ is the true circumcision, trust in Him alone by faith.
- Worship is in the Spirit of God, a spiritual matter not outward form.
- The glory is in Christ, not religious ceremony, rite, form, ritual, etc.

### **B. PAUL GAVE HIS EXAMPLE OF CHRISTIAN LIVING (vv 4-14).**

1. He rejected any confidence in the flesh, the means of status in Judaism and the world.

- He rejected advantages inherited by birth: class, citizenship, wealth, reputation.
- He rejected advantages granted by one's profession: status, privilege.
- He rejected advantages gained by energy and zeal: wealth, reputation, position.
- He rejected advantages earned by competence and skill: fame, position, respect.

2. Paul had a far greater system of values (vv. 7-14).

- He considered works of flesh as rubbish.
- He considered Christ of far greater value, which included: God's righteousness by faith; knowing Christ in experience and fellowship; being resurrected from the dead; his goal was growth in Christ - he had not gained spiritual perfection (vv. 12-14).

### **C. PAUL ENCOURAGED CHRISTIANS (vv. 15-21).**

They were to share Paul's pursuit of Christlikeness. awaiting His return (vv. 15-17).

He warned against moral laxity, worshipping the belly (vv. 18.19).

The realization of the Christian pursuit is the resurrection of the body (vv. 20.21).

## **VII. PAUL TAUGHT OF PEACE IN THE CHRISTIAN LIFE (4:2-20).**

**A. HE TOLD OF PEACE IN PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS (vv. 2-4).** Paul illustrated unity with Euodia and Syntyche, who were hostile to each other. He wanted them to be united, and to get along with each other.

### **B. HE TOLD OF PEACE OF MIND AND EMOTION (vv. 5-9).**

1. He said to practice the virtue of gentle patience, do not retaliate and get even with those who do not look at things like you. Recognize that God is alive, real and near. It is God who is in control of the universe, not man (vv. 4,5).

2. Another key is to counteract worry by thankful prayer, but do not let the prayer become constant repetition of "fear talk" (v. 6). Sometimes we repeatedly ask God to deliver us from problems with the result being greater focus on the fearful problems which then produces more fear than faith.

He said to focus the mind on pleasant, positive, godly, solution oriented things (v. 8).

The next step: actively step out and begin to practice the correct behavior (v. 9).

A simple formula is offered below.

- Worry about nothing (if it is "something." we are forbidden to worry about it!)
- Pray about everything.
- Be thankful in all things.
- Trust the ever present God for a positive outcome.
- Dwell on the positive and biblical.
- Step out in faith in godly action.
- Be happy.

3. Helpful principles regarding our emotional life follow this outline

### **C. HE TOLD OF PEACE REGARDLESS OF THE CIRCUMSTANCES (vv. 10-13).**

- Realize that outer circumstances have no necessary connection to inner contentment.
- Accept life's pressures as always being there. Expect changes, do not expect a paradise.
- Contentment in this life is learned by experience. Learning takes time and practice.
- Realize that hardship is not terrible.
- Believe that Christ will grant the inner experience of peace.

### **D. HE TOLD OF PEACE IN FACE OF FINANCIAL PRESSURE (vv. 14-20).**

Paul deals with giving in this section. The entire letter is a thank you note for the generous

gifts of the Philippians who supported Paul in his ministry. He lists at least five principles. (For a summary of His teaching on giving in this epistle see Introduction to Philippians, V., D., Paul taught on giving.

1. Paul taught that it was right to give to gospel ministry (v. 14).
2. Paul told of the fact of their giving (vv. 15,16).
3. Paul said their giving would bring profit to them (v. 17).
4. Paul said their giving resulted in two things (v. 18).
  - Those in gospel ministry would have their needs met.
  - God would be pleased, considering their gifts as an acceptable sacrifice.
5. Paul said that God is the source for giving: He gives that we might give (vv. 19,20).

## **IX. PAUL'S CONCLUSION (4:21-23).**

### **A. EXCHANGE OF GREETINGS.**

### **B. CAESAR'S HOUSEHOLD MENTIONED.**

### **C. BENEDICTION.**

## **Emotions and worry**

Emotions are generated by our thoughts, thus fearful thoughts bring the emotion of fear, angry thoughts bring angry feelings, loving thoughts bring loving feelings, etc. The principle follows, then, that to change our feelings we must first change our thoughts. Feelings are directly under the control of our thoughts, which in turn are under our control (2 Cor 10:5).

An important principle is this: what we think about the most is what we will eventually end up doing. The thoughts we hold in our mind today have direct bearing on actions we will do in the future. Every person has a constant stream of "self-talk" chattering away just below their conscious awareness. The corresponding mental pictures are also engaged. This "self-talk" is a result of what we have programmed our mind with in the past, and is, at the same time, programming our mind for the future. Our minds can be thought of as a highly sophisticated computer.

To monitor, control and change the self-talk, simply write out on a piece of paper your uncensored thought. Get a pencil and paper, sit down and begin to jot down whatever (everything) that comes to mind. Learn to focus on self-talk chatter. Begin to argue back on paper against the destructive self-talk. Look up and memorize the Scripture verses that bring the proper perspective to your unbiblical self-talk. Another way to handle worry is to think through what would be the worst possible thing that could happen in a particular situation, then write down a plan of action.

In the case of unpleasant events, evaluate the situation, chart the course of action to solve the problem and dismiss the negative thoughts and focus on the desired results. If you can solve the problem, then solve it, do not worry it to death. If you cannot solve the problem, then forget about it, or set it aside until you can solve it. Worry only makes life miserable.

Another way to renew our mind is to visualize ourselves as the kind of person we want to be, that is, Christ like. Remember that we are constantly visualizing anyway, but with practice we can retrain our minds to focus rightly.

Learn to recognize the destructive and distorted ways in which we view events and circumstances that happen to us. Listed below are several common distorted patterns.

- Focusing only on the negative things of life.
- Discounting the positive things that happen, not counting them as valid.
- Thinking that bad things (habits) will always afflict us.
- Looking at things and people as either all good or all bad.
- Falsely taking responsibility for negative events or other's problems.
- Magnifying incidents (others) as more awful, fearsome than justified.
- Mistakenly thinking that our feelings are evidence for the truth.
- Automatically jumping to a negative conclusion that is untrue.

Worry is a sin. It displays unbelief in God, directly disobeys God and brings devastation to our lives and those around us. Worry wastes time, energy, creativity, relationships, health, opportunities, and has no profit or benefit. God said to quit worry and trust Him. Worry is a sickness all are afflicted with, some of us more than others, and it is a rare person who avoids it completely. If we, however, think of it by its proper name, sin, then it is easier to come to grips with.

Worry normally comes over some imagined dreadful thing that will happen if people think bad of us. Worry over what people think of us, however, is making our worth and value dependent upon the wrong thing: what others and we think and value in contrast to what God has said. Human value exists because of our being created in the image of God and because Christ's righteousness has been imputed to those who receive it by faith. Our righteousness is based on what God has done, not a righteousness by works, the latter being impossible.

Problems are not terrible, you can stand it: so relax, enjoy God, life, people, work, your wife/husband, etc. We were created to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever, not to become consumed in bitterness, worry, hatred, stewing over problems, fearing bad news and living in dread over what ill fortunes may come our way. Don't borrow trouble. Live one day at a time.

Above all, we must sincerely search our hearts to determine if there is unconfessed sin. If there is, then we must confess the sin and put it away and right the wrongs committed. We must keep in mind that personal and spiritual growth is slow. We do not become perfect overnight, in fact, not even in this life! Keep expectations realistic. The power for change is found in God (2:13).

Sometimes the feelings of worry and depression take on a life of their own. In that case, we may need counseling. On occasion, doctors can give medications that will help bring negative feelings under control.

**THE EPISTLE TO THE COLOSSIANS  
WITH INTRODUCTION,  
OUTLINE AND PRACTICAL NOTES**

By

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## **INTRODUCTION**

### **I. THE BACKGROUND DEVELOPMENT.**

#### **A. THE NATURE, OCCASION, PURPOSE OF THE LETTER./**

1. The letter was written by the Apostle Paul (1:1,23: 4:18) during his first imprisonment in Rome, A.D. 60-61. (See introduction to Prison Epistles). External evidence from Ignatius on claims Pauline authorship. Tychicus was evidently the carrier of the letter (Eph 6:21: Col 4:7).

2. Epaphras, evidently the pastor of the church at Colossae, reported on conditions while visiting Paul in Prison. A peculiar false teaching had crept into the church which boasted of mysteries, secret knowledge and wisdom and discounting Christ. The epistle Colossians was to offset this heresy. This heresy was of the same order as the Galatian heresy. with the exception being its focal point being on the person of Christ rather than salvation by grace through faith. The outstanding passage deals with Christology (1:14-22) and the climax is Paul's summarization of his teaching of Christ (2:9). It is the twin epistle to the Ephesian epistle.

3. The theme is the supremacy, pre-eminence and all-sufficiency of Christ. including:

- The Person and work of Jesus Christ (1:15-23).
- Heresy concerning Christ (2:8-23).
- The believer's union with Christ (3:1-4).
- No passage in the N.T. more fully sets forth the eternal glory of the pre-existent, omnipotent, exalted and eternal Son of God than 1:15-23.

4. The purpose of the letter is twofold:

- The quick correction of false doctrine.
- The encouragement to walk in Christlikeness.

#### **B. THE CITY AND DESTINATION.**

Colossae is in an area of mountainous beauty 100 miles inland of Ephesus in modern Turkey. It is located near Laodicea and Hierapolis (Col 4:13). Colossae was an ancient commercial center that was in decline and decadence at the time of its evangelization. Located on a rocky ridge overlooking the Lycus valley, Colossae was noted for the glossy black wool produced by the sheep raising industry. The Lycus River is a tributary of the Meander. The town was of significant importance during fifth century B.C. Persian wars. Philemon and his slave, Onesimus came from Colossae. Cults flourished in this part of Asia Minor. The worship of the heathen goddess Cybele was deeply rooted in Colossae.

Paul seems not to have known the believers there (1:4,7: 2:1). Epaphras was the major

figure in the evangelization and development of the church (1:7; 4:12,13; Phile 23; Acts 19:10). Probably the city was evangelized during the time Paul operated the Bible college in Ephesus with Epaphras being both Paul's convert and student who went back to his town to win souls and plant churches.

### **C. GNOSTICISM EXAMINED.**

Gnosticism was a fusion of Philosophy and religion which was not fully developed at this point in time, but greatly infected the gospel of Christ. Its major features included the following.

A higher esoteric knowledge was required to enable one to lift oneself out of the toil and evil of materialism into the enlightenment of God.

A special feature was the worship of angels (2:18). They taught that angelic beings were go-between agents that controlled planets, determined access to God and were needed for deliverance from the limitation placed upon us by our earthly existence. It was taught that one must pass through a series of these demi-gods to gain access to Christ, who was himself simply another demi-god. Matter was thought to be evil.

According to this thought, there were other demi-gods above Christ that one must advance through to reach God.

The ascetic influence was a part of Gnostic thought. It was the human effort toward salvation, showing the sincere motive of the person to rise above their fleshly hindrances, and get closer to God.

This false teaching was a philosophy labeled empty deceit by Paul (2:8). His crushing answer to the Gnosticism teaching is in 1:19; 2:9: Christ is the "fulness" of God, which was the word used by the Gnostics to describe the entire host of intermediary beings between God and man.

### **D. THE COLOSSIAN HERESY**

1. The Colossian heresy was a unique local development brought on by several factors. Colossae was on a trade route from the East: therefore, it was heavily influenced by Oriental religions passing through.

The population was made up of Phrygian gentiles whose religious roots spawned the emotional and mystical. Gentiles were in the majority in the church (1:27; 2:13).

They greatly desired to attain to the "fulness" of God; consequently, when teachers came through claiming to have special knowledge that led to a "fuller and greater" experience with God they were eager to accept the new teaching.

2. The nature of the false teaching.

- It was syncretic, that is, a mixture. It contained Jewish legalism, Greek philosophic speculation, and oriental mysticism.
- Jewish legalism was brought maybe by contacts with the Jewish population in Asia Minor, evidenced by the reference to ceremonialism (2:11) and Paul's saying these ceremonies and feasts were a shadow of things to come (2:17).
- Circumcision rites were practiced (2:11,16).
- The worship of angels was practiced (2:18).

- They taught voluntary self-humiliation by asceticism (2:18-23).
- They practiced abstinence from certain foods and drinks combined with the observance of feasts and ceremonial days (2:16).

## **II. CONTENT EVALUATION.**

### **A. PAUL'S COUNTER AND THEME DEVELOPMENT.**

1. In general, Paul stressed the cosmic significance of Christ as Lord of creation and Head of the Church. He boomed out that any doctrine, practice or intermediary detracting from the uniqueness and centrality of Christ is opposed to the true Faith.

2. In specifics, Paul countered on the following points.

- In Christ dwells all the fulness of the Godhead, bodily (2:9): 1:15.18.19). This positive presentation of Christ took away their system of advancing through go-between demi-gods to reach God. It established Christ's deity and sliced away their error that matter is evil.
- Paul countered their exclusivism which taught that perfection was the privilege of only a few: "all" are complete in Christ (1:28).
- Paul asserted that Christ is head over all (2:10-15). This statement stripped away their belief that Christ Himself is a go-between.
- He levels charges against the Judaizers and their legalism (2:8,11,13,14-23).
- Paul hammers home that true spiritual knowledge and understanding are in Christ, not the teachings of Gnosticism (1:19; 2:3).
- Paul deftly demonstrates that the true "death of the body" is in the spiritual mortification of the fleshly desires and lusts (chapter 3).

### **B. THE DISTINCTIVE THEOLOGICAL CONTRIBUTION IS CHRISTOLOGY.**

1. Concerning the person of Christ.

- Christ is pre-eminent over all creatures and even creation itself (1:15-19: 2:19).
- Christ alone is the head of the Church (1:18).
- Christ is head of all authority, principalities, powers, agencies, the center of the universe (1:15-19; 2:10).
- In Christ dwells all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (2:3).
- All the fullness of deity rests in Christ; thus, he is equal with God (1:19: 2:9).
- God is perfectly pictured in Christ (1:15).

2. Concerning the work of Christ.

- Christ created and controls everything (1:14-22).
- Christ reconciled all things by His death. He is the remedy of separation from God. Eventually He will bring full unity between God and all. even though He will use judgment to accomplish this feat (1:20).
- Christ's death defeated all hostile principalities and powers (2:15).

3. Concerning Christ's work in redemption.

- Believers have forgiveness of sins in Christ (1:14).
- Believers are reconciled to God through the blood of His cross (1:20,22).
- The law that was against believers was abolished on the cross (2:14).
- Christ's death and resurrection can be applied to the believer's life (2:20: 3:1).

## **III. POINTS OF PRACTICAL RELEVANCE.**

### **A. PAUL'S SKILL IN HANDLING THE PROBLEM**

1. Paul had a genius in beating his opponents in argument; yet, reducing the gulf between he and his converts to gain them for the gospel (Cf. 1 Cor 9:19,20).

2. Paul's approach to the Colossians was milder than with the Galatians. Perhaps he did not know them personally. Because of his reputation of stirring controversy, he may have started using a more subtle approach.

3. Paul's basic method of countering the heresy:

- He did not use a point by point rebuttal of the opponent's position.
- He gave a positive presentation of Christ: His person, pre-eminence and work.
- He stressed that every authority, teaching, practice or intermediary that detracted from the uniqueness and centrality of Jesus Christ is opposed to the true Faith.

### **B. THE APPLICATION OF CHRIST'S WORK TO THE BELIEVER.**

- Believers need not seek the help of good angels, nor fear the harm of had angels.
- The Colossian's mistake had been a failure to hold fast to Christ as Head (2:19).
- In Christ, believers have attained to fulness (2:10), which is experienced through their union with Christ (3:1-4).
- Since believers have all they need in Christ, there is no need for sonic special enlightenment (2:3).
- Believers need to put their sinful tendencies to death and put on Christ, not impose sever ascetic discipline on the body (3:5-17).

### **C. THE EXAMPLE OF EPAPHRAS.**

1. He was a faithful minister of Christ (1:7).

2. He (we assume) was a former convert, Bible school student of Paul's, and the one who started the church in Colossae: yet, he maintained his roots and came back for advice and to return his gratitude for the one who had ministered, helped and trained him. He never forgot those who helped him.

3. He had taught his congregation very well (2:6).

4. He desired to acquaint and encourage Paul with the work in the Lycus valley (Phile 23).

5. He perhaps left Archippus in charge of the work; thus, he realized he must work with others (4:7; Phile 2).

6. His visit to Paul was twofold:

- To encourage Paul by expressing the Colossian's love to Paul.
- To gain instruction for the church to combat false teachers.

7. See following references for more 1:4,7: 4:12,13).

### **D. ASSORTED PRINCIPLES.**

1. The propaganda of the false teaching was harmful to the church (2:8,10,18,20).

2. Paul was greatly concerned for the church; consequently, so should we (2:1).

3. The gospel is called the word of truth which bears fruit throughout the world (1:5,6).

4. Intellectual theology and doctrine was linked to personal practice (3:2-4:0).

5. The context of all the theology, practical advice in living – everything -- was vitally linked to the goal and motive of world evangelism.

- Paul was in jail for his evangelizing and church planting efforts.
- The church in Colossae was built out of Paul's soul-winning efforts.



- The main point of the letter was to conserve the results of soul-winning, mission work and church planting -- that it would keep its message clear and continue to expand.

## **The Epistle of Colossians with Outline and Notes**

### **I. PAUL'S INTRODUCTION TO THE EPISTLE (1:1-14).**

#### **A. GREETING TO THE COLOSSIANS (1:1,2).**

- Paul was called by the will of God.
- Saints and brethren are in Christ.

#### **B. THANKSGIVING FOR THE COLOSSIANS (1:3-8).**

- Thanksgiving and prayer continual (v. 3).
- Thanksgiving for their faith and love based on hope (vv. 4,5).
- Thanksgiving for the spread of the gospel (v. 6).
- Thanksgiving for example of Epaphras (vv. 7,8).

#### **C. PRAYER OFFERED FOR THE COLOSSIANS (1:9-12).**

1. The prayer for the Colossians was constant (v. 9).
2. The request was for the Colossians to fully understand the will of God through the means of spiritual wisdom and understanding (v. 9).
  - "Knowledge" (*epignosis*) is limited to moral and religious knowledge in the New Testament. It means a full, complete knowledge, the penetration of the matter and grasping accurate comprehension.
  - "Wisdom" (*sophia*) means sound, God given practical judgment that is needed in light of the various demands placed of the Christian life.
  - "Understanding" (*synesei*) means clear insight and diagnosis along with sensitive application of spiritual truth to specific problems. (See #6 below).
3. The purpose was for the Colossians to walk worthy in Christ (v. 10).
4. The results of such a walk in Christ.
  - Bearing fruit in good works (v. 10).
  - Growing in spiritual maturity (v. 10).
  - Experiencing spiritual strength (v. 11).
  - Expressing heart felt thanksgiving (v. 12).
5. The experience of thanksgiving is centered in our salvation experience, our full deliverance from the guilt, penalty and corruption of sin plus full, permanent citizenship in the kingdom of Christ (vv. 13,14).
6. Following is a summary overview of the application of spiritual wisdom. The analysis is confined to data in this general section of Colossians. It is not comprehensive on the subject and only intends to point to and illustrate broad, general themes concerning spiritual growth and problem solving.
  - The process of solving spiritual problems: Learn the appropriate information; gain perception to give accurate diagnosis to problems; exercise skill and sensitivity in personal application of therapy or problem solving.
  - The nature of spiritual categories: faith, love, hope. biblical mental attitude (vv. 4,5),

humility (v. 7), patience (v. 11), perseverance (vv. 3,9), character (holy, blameless, beyond reproach), (v. 22).

- The means to gain spiritual wisdom: the systematic study and application of the Bible. All wisdom and knowledge are found in Christ (2:3), and the only way we can know of Christ is from His Bible. The experience and example of others give insight (1:7). Personal experience brings learning (1:7). Prayer activates learning (1:3,9-14). Focus on spiritual realities and activities brings learning (3:1ff.) Personal practice produces change (1:10). The divine power of God energizes, directs and illuminates spiritual "course corrections" in our lives.

## **II. THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST UNFOLDED FOR ALL (1:15-2:23).**

### **B. CHRIST PRESENTED IN HIS FULNESS (1:15-29).**

1. Christ is the image of God. He is the visible expression of the invisible God. Christ is God, full deity (v. 15,19: 2:15).

2. Christ is the first-born of all creation (v. 15). This does not mean that Christ is the first created thing in creation, but that He preceded and presides sovereign over creation. The next verse says Christ created all things, which would be impossible if Christ was part of creation. He could not have created Himself. The creator is necessarily prior to any creation, both logically and chronologically. First born refers to His preeminent position.

3. Christ is the creator of all things (vv. 16,17).

- He is the designer and creator of all creation, both material and invisible.
- He is the reason for all creation.
- He is the sustainer of all creation.
- He is the organizer and administrator of all.

4. Christ is the head of the Church (v. 18).

5. Christ is the firstborn of the Dead (v. 18). He is the beginning of a new order of creation, the first of future millions to be resurrected from the dead to possess an eternal, glorified body. In this way Christ could be first in everything.

6. Christ is fully God (v. 19). He has the complete, total fullness (powers/attributes) of the Godhead. This is one of the most powerful statements of Christ's deity in the New Testament (See also 2:9).

7. Christ is the reconciler (vv. 20-23). This does not mean that "all" includes Satan and those in Hell, because he includes things on earth and in heaven, not under the earth (Cf. Phil 2:10). The saved are reconciled to God because they had departed from Him before salvation.

- Reconciliation's need: man is separated from God by sin nature and acts (v. 21).
- Reconciliation is provided by Christ's substitutionary sacrifice (v. 20).
- Reconciliation's design: present the saved acceptable, blameless before God (v. 22).
- Reconciliation is received by faith in the hope of the gospel (v. 23).

8. Christ is the center of Paul's ministry (vv. 24-29).

- The ministry involves suffering (v. 24).
- The ministry was a stewardship entrusted by God (v. 25).
- The ministry's message is Christ in you, the hope of glory (vv. 26,27).
- The ministry's task: proclaim Christ to all in the power of Christ (vv. 28,29).

- The ministry's goal: the salvation and maturity of all men in Christ (v.28).

## **B. CHRIST EXALTED IN HIS PERSON (2:1-23).**

### 1. Christ is preeminent over religious education (2:1-7).

- Encouragement, unity in love, and great benefit comes from the true knowledge of Christ who is the fountainhead of all wisdom and knowledge.
- Believers are not to be persuaded away from Christ, but are to remain stable in their walk of faith in Christ.
- Christians are to avoid speculative philosophy because it detracts from Christ: His fullness of person, provision, power (vv. 8-10).

### 2. Christ is preeminent over religious observances (2:8-17).

- Victory over the flesh comes from our union with Christ. not ceremonies such as water baptism and circumcision (vv. 11,12).
- Eternal life comes to us from regeneration, not religious rites (v. 13).
- Forgiveness of sin is gained through the sacrifice of Christ (vv. 13,14). The penalty (debt) of our transgressions is removed by Christ's work, not by our religious works.
- Victory over the spiritual forces of evil is accomplished by Christ. not by man's works of religion (v. 15).
- The reality of spiritual things is found in Christ, not in religious observances such as special diets, sacred days, seasonal celebrations (vv. 16,17).

### 3. Christ is preeminent over religious mysticism (2:18,19).

Mystic "revelations" do not cause spiritual growth. Visions can be caused by displays and routines of false humility. Visions can involve angel worship. as objects of worship and givers of special knowledge. Visions are vain, without adequate, accurate, genuine cause or content. Visions are harmful, keeping us from the true source of spirituality.

God through Christ causes true spiritual growth.

### 4. Christ is preeminent over religious asceticism (2:20-23). Asceticism means rigorous self-denial, strict behavior, and active self-restraint with the goal of becoming pure for God.

- Man-made taboos are unnecessary for the believer (v. 230).
- Man-made taboos may appear to be very religious (v. 23).
- Man-made taboos will give no victory over the flesh and are worthless.

## **III. THE EXPERIENCE OF CHRIST UNFOLDED IN BELIEVERS (3:3-4:6).**

### **A. CHRIST EXPERIENCED INWARD (3:1-17).**

#### 1. Christ in the believer's mental life (vv. 1-4).

- The point: become in practice what we are in position (v. 1).
- The process: focus one's mind on Christ so as to understand and assimilate spiritual values and realities (v. 2).
- The reason: believers are in Christ, not of the world (v. 3)
- The reward: believers will be glorified with Christ (v. 4).

#### 2. Christ in the believer's experience (vv. 3,4).

We are told that our life is hidden in Christ and that He is our life. This refers to our experience of union with Christ. Below I give a definition of the doctrine and its implications to the believer's spiritual life.

The doctrine of the union with Christ is sometimes avoided because of excesses or misuse

of the teaching by some groups such as some extreme mystics. The believer's union with Christ is a reality, clearly taught in Scripture, but is impossible to completely understand by mortal man.

Union with Christ is an experience. It is that intimate mystical life giving, eternal, spiritual union (connection) in which the spirit of individual Christians is interpenetrated, occupied and empowered directly by the Holy Spirit. The believer becomes one with Christ, yet keeps his or her individuality. This is the mechanism by which all believers from the time of Pentecost until the future rapture are united into one spiritual body called the Church Universal. Christ is the head of this body and Christians are the members. This experience is also known as the baptism of the Holy Spirit where believers are immersed into living union with Christ. (John 15:1-10: 14:20: 17:21-23; Acts 2:1-4: Romans 7:4: 8:9,-11: 1 Cor 1:30; 6:15.17.19: 12:13: 2 Cor 1:22: 5:17: Gal 2:20: Ephesians 3:16,17; 4:4-6: Colossians 1:27; 2 Timothy 1:14).

There are three vital implications of this experience in the believer's life.

First, it is because of our spiritual union and oneness with Christ that we as individuals can experience all our benefits as Christians. This experience is accomplished without believers losing their personality and uniqueness as a created beings of God. I make a clear disclaimer of all that is pantheistic, that is, the belief that the universe and God are one. This union also forms the basis of our responsibilities to our fellow Christians.

Second, many Christians have the idea that Christ lives outside them rather than being a Savior and friend that lives within. It is because Christ lives in us and us in Him (John 14:20) that we can say that the Christian life is the outliving of the indwelling Christ. Christianity is not adopting a set of ethics, committing to a system of teaching, or joining an organization (though these may be involved as a result of our union). But rather, the experience is a living, dynamic union with the Person of Christ.

Third, because we are in Christ, His eternal life becomes ours. His righteousness becomes ours, His riches in the universe becomes ours. His fellowship with the Father becomes ours. His transforming power becomes activated in us. His blessing becomes ours. His triumph over sin and death becomes ours. His fellowship with all believers becomes ours, His love, compassion and concern becomes ours. His faith becomes ours. His desire for holiness becomes ours. His legal standing in the universe becomes ours. His labors become ours. His suffering becomes ours. His sorrows become ours; His warfare becomes ours. His goals become ours. It is because we are in Christ that we can be justified, are being sanctified, and will be glorified, because Christ is justified, sanctified, and glorified, and His becomes ours because we are united to Him.

### 3. Christ in the believer's lifestyle (3:5-17).

Believers are to cast off the evil practices and habits of the flesh: anger. wrath. malice, slander. lies, immorality, greed, etc. (vv. 5-9).

Believers are to actively adopt and adapt to a new kind of lifestyle (vv. 10-17).

- Be renewed in the mind (v. 10).
- In Christ all are equal before God in value, access and privilege -- regardless of race, previous religion, nationality, or station in life (v. 11). (See "c" below).
- God's chosen adopt a life style marked by compassion, humility, patience, forgiveness, love, etc. (vv. 12-14).
- Believers are to thankfully let Christ's peace rule them - not wrangling and hassle (v.

15).

- Believers are to thankfully let the Bible dwell within them (v. 16). This is a parallel verse to Ephesians 5:18 where we are commanded to be "filled with the Spirit." The result is happy, nice, spiritual Christian fellowship. The spiritual songs are to teach and admonish. Someone said that it does not matter how many times we have been through the Bible, but what counts is how many times the Bible has been through us.
- Thankfully do everything in the name of Christ (to His glory, cf. 1 Cor 10:31) (v. 17).

4. Verse 11 regarding no distinction between people refers to equality in access and privilege to God. Concerning this equality, all have equal value, access and privilege before God, regardless to race, sex, and station in life, profession, class or age. One does not need any other mediator than Christ. In fact, there is no other mediator, not even angels nor saints (1 Timothy 2:5). No man, woman, institution, group or class of men or women stands between God and man. This is the doctrine of the priesthood of the believer. In some circles this doctrine is wrongly taught that any person can interpret the Bible any way they wish and that pastoral leadership is wrong because all are equal.

To answer: in the first place, the doctrine of the believer's priesthood does not give Christians the right to believe like an infidel and still call themselves Christian. Secondly, God has established distinct administrative roles in the outworking of His plan and purpose for the world and the church. Necessary to this organizational system are functional roles that include authority and submission. For example, in this same context Paul instructs wives to submit to husbands (v. 18), children submit to parents (v. 20), and slaves obey their masters (v. 22). God did not instruct wives, children and slaves to revolt and start a liberation movement. The instruction does not teach, however, that one is to obey the one placed over them if the superior requires disobedience to God.

## **B. CHRIST EXPERIENCED OUTWARDLY (3:18-4:6).**

1. Christ in the believer's home life (3:18-21).

- Wives be subject to husbands.
- Husbands love wives and refuse resentments against them.
- Children obey parents which pleases God.
- Fathers encourage, do not frustrate children.

2. Christ in the believer's work life (3:22-4:1).

Slaves (workers) sincerely obey masters (bosses) as though you were serving Christ, because ultimately we are serving Christ who will also reward us.

Masters (bosses) are to impartially rule with care, justice and fairness and are responsible to God for their actions. The requirement is integrity.

3. Christ in the believer's prayer life (4:2-4).

- The approach to prayer is with commitment, attention, and thankfulness.
- The request in prayer is for soul-winning boldness, sensitivity, clarity.

4. Christ in the believer's soul-winning life (4:5.6).

- Behavior toward the unsaved must be godly. The walk must match the words.
- One must be alert and aware of evangelistic opportunities.
- One must speak appropriately to the situation.

5. Subject matter of Colossians applied to life.

- Correct and attend to the priorities of life (1:1-14).
- Correct and attend to the doctrinal life (1:15-2:23).
- Correct and attend to the thought life (3:1-4).
- Correct and attend to the personal life (3:5-17).
- Correct and attend to the home life (3:18-21).
- Correct and attend to the work life (3:22-4:1).
- Correct and attend to the prayer life (4:5,6).
- Correct and attend to the soul-winning life (4:5,6).
- Correct and attend to the Christian service life (4:7-18).

#### **IV. PAUL'S CONCLUDING REMARKS (4:7-18).**

##### **A. KIND WORDS TOWARD TYCHICUS AND ONESIMUS (4:7,9).**

##### **B. GREETINGS SENT BY PAUL'S GROUP IN ROME (4:10-14).**

##### **C. MESSAGE TO LAODICEA AND ARCHIPPUS (4:15-17).**

##### **D. PAUL'S GREETING AND PARTING GOODBYE (4:18).**

## **THE EPISTLE TO PHILEMON**

### **I. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND.**

#### **A. ANALYSIS OF PHILEMON**

Philemon was a member of the church at Colossae, belonging to the wealthy class. He had slaves, there was a church in his house, and he was kind to the saints. He was most probably a convert of Paul during the latter's ministry at Ephesus, since this letter intimates personal acquaintance. He was a very active convert. Apphia was probably his wife, and Archippus his son. Paul was a prisoner at Rome when he wrote this personal letter to Philemon about Onesimus.

#### **B. ANALYSIS OF ONESIMUS**

Onesimus was a slave of Philemon. He had probably stolen and ran away. He fled to Rome, where he met Paul and was converted. Paul would gladly have kept him for the work, but sent him back to Philemon, his master, with this letter. Onesimus ought, as a Christian, to seek the forgiveness of his master. The Onesimus means profitable, or useful. His conversion made him such.

This letter is not an attack against slavery, but it gives guidelines on how Christians could practice their faith within that evil system. Some say that Onesimus was freed and later became the pastor of the church in Ephesus.

### **II. THE BOOK ITSELF.**

#### **A. THE INTRODUCTION (1-7).**

There is a salutation and thanksgiving for Philemon's Christian love and faith.

#### **B. THE PLEA (8-21).**

Paul has authority as an apostle to command Philemon in respect to Onesimus, but rather appeals on the basis of love. He tells of the change in Onesimus and appeals to Philemon to receive him as a brother, and that Philemon would do even beyond what Paul said. Paul undoubtedly delicately suggested that he should set his slave free. Paul is willing to pay what Philemon lost.

**C. THE CONCLUSION (22-25).** The request is for a lodging, salutation and benediction. The spirit of Christianity banishes slavery.

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## **FIRST EPISTLE TO THE THESSALONIANS**

### **I. BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Thessalonica was the capital of one of the four districts of Macedonia. It was a large industrial center. The Jews had a synagogue there. The majority of the Christian church were Gentile Christians.

The church at Thessalonica was founded by Paul on his second missionary journey (Acts 17:1-14). He was driven from the city by persecuting Jews. He passed on to Berea and Athens. From Athens Paul sent Timothy back to Thessalonica to encourage the new Christian converts (1 Thess. 3:1-2). Later, Timothy joined Paul at Corinth and had reported on conditions at Thessalonica (3:6). From Corinth Paul wrote the two letters to the Thessalonians in A.D. 51.

The occasion for the writing of this letter was the condition of the church. Paul was forced to leave the church after being there only a very short time. The result was a lack of

experienced Christian leadership in the church. Though persecuted they clung to their faith. Yet there were some faults to be corrected. Main issues addressed are:

- Paul had been slandered and needed to defend himself (2:9-10).
- Some neglected their daily work under the expectation of the nearness of Christ's second coming (4:11,12).
- Some heathen practices persisted (3:2-3; 4:1-12).
- Anxiety was felt for those who had died (4:13-18).
- Some friction existed among the church officers (5:12-15).

## **II. BRIEF OUTLINE OF FIRST THESSALONIANS**

### **I. Church Planting in Thessalonica (chapters 1-2).**

- A. The reception by the Thessalonians (chapter 1).
- B. Paul's manner of church planting (chapter 2).
  - His hard work and integrity (2:1-12).
  - Opposition to his work (2:13-20).

### **II. Paul's Plan to Follow-up (chapter 3).**

- A. Paul's plan to send Timothy (3:1-5).
- B. Timothy's good report (3:6-8).
- C. Paul urging toward spiritual growth (3:9-13).

### **III. Practical Matters Discussed (chapters 4-5).**

- A. Instruction on sexual matters (4:1-8).
- B. Instruction on personal relationships (4:9-12).
- C. Instruction on the return of Christ (4:13-18).
- D. Instruction on the Day of the Lord (5:1-11).
- E. Instruction on assorted duties (5:12-28).

## **SECOND EPISTLE TO THE THESSALONIANS**

### **I. BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Second Thessalonians was written by Paul soon after the first, and also from Corinth in A.D. 51. Some information had come to Paul concerning the conditions in the church. The persecutions seemed to have grown worse, and wrong conceptions about the time of Christ's second coming were entertained, so that some again were idle and others anxious. Hence Paul wrote this letter to encourage them in their persecution, to write about the second advent of Jesus Christ, and to motivate them to a quiet, sober, and diligent life.

The outstanding passage in this Epistle is that concerning the Lawless One, the Antichrist. Other verses telling of the Antichrist include Daniel 9:27, Matthew 24:15, and Revelation 11:7; 13:1-10.

## **II. BRIEF OUTLINE OF SECOND THESSALONIANS**

### **I. Introduction and Greeting (1:1-2).**

### **II. Encouragement in their Affliction (1:3-12).**

- A. Paul's commendation to them (1:3-4).



B. Paul's statement of God's future vindication (1:5-12).

### **III. Doctrinal Clarification on Christ's Second Coming (chapter 2).**

A. The day of the lord has not yet come (2:1-2).

B. Sequence of the Day of the Lord (2:3-12).

C. Second coming relative to believers (2:13-17).

### **IV. Encouragement to Christian Living (chapter 3).**

A. Prayer request by Paul (3:1-2).

B. God as source of Paul's strength (3:3-5).

C. Instruction to live an orderly life (3:6-18).

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<sup>i</sup> Cited by J.I. Packer and M.C. Tenny, eds., *Illustrated Manners and Customs of the Bible*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1980), p. 547.

<sup>ii</sup> Will Durant, *Caesar and Christ in The Story of Civilization*, 9 vols., (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1944), v. III, p. 592.

<sup>iii</sup> John Dillenberger, ed. *Martin Luther: Selections from His Writings*, (New York: Anchor Books, 1962), p. 18.

<sup>iv</sup> The Areopagus in Athens was the council in charge of religious and educational matters in the great city of Athens. It met on the Hill of Ares, west of the Acropolis. See Acts 17.

<sup>v</sup> Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1882), v. I, p. 293.

<sup>vi</sup> For a more detailed discussion, see Schaff, pp. 293, 294.

<sup>vii</sup> F.F. Bruce, *New Testament History*, (New York: Doubleday, 1969), p. 243.

<sup>viii</sup> Robert H. Gundry, *A Survey of the New Testament*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1970), p. 276.

<sup>ix</sup> Wm. M. Ramsay, *St. Paul the Traveller and the Roman Citizen*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1962, reprint), p. 361.