

Bible Study Series on.....

The Letters to the

***COLOSSIANS
AND
PHILEMON***

12 Lessons

*Prepared by
PAUL E. CANTRELL*

2005

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AND

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Produced by:
PAUL E. CANTRELL
84 Northview Drive
Mechanicsburg, PA 17050

pecantrell@juno.com

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*Lesson One***“Introduction to the Colossian Letter”**

(Reading—Colossians 1:1-3)

The letter to the church at Colossae in the region of Phrygia (Asia Minor) was written by the Apostle Paul while He was in Rome as a prisoner (Colossians 4:18). He had made his appeal to have his case heard before Caesar while imprisoned in Jerusalem and later in Caesarea (Acts 21:27-26:32). The city of Colossae, as you would expect, was founded close to the Lycus River. It was one of three cities that were close together—Colossae, Laodicea, and Hierapolis. The city of Laodicea became more and more important over the other two cities. An earthquake around the time of Paul’s letter to the church at Colossae (some believe) led to the demise of the city after a few years. Ruins of the city have only been uncovered in the last century. The population of the city was mixed: (1) There were the long-time residents (native to the area); (2) A large population of Greeks that had a very strong influence over the area; and (3) A large body of Jews that had been settled in the area for some reason. The city of Ephesus was about 100 miles West of the tri-cities. These three cities were probably also included under the area that a Roman Proconsul ruled over in the province of Asia, even though they were in the region of Phrygia.

THE DATE OF WRITING

There is strong evidence that the Apostle Paul may have written four letters (and a possible fifth letter—Hebrews) while a prisoner in Rome (Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon) or just after his release (Hebrews). (Ephesians 3:1, 13; 4:1; 6:19-20; Philippians 1:12-20; Colossians 4:3, 18; Philemon 9, 10, 13). The Apostle was imprisoned for about 4-5 years—first in Jerusalem, then Caesarea, and finally two whole years at Rome (Acts 28:30-31). The dates for his imprisonment at Rome are placed at AD 61-63—so; the general dates for these four letters in particular would be around AD 62-63. Tychicus was the bearer of this letter (4:7).

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE CHURCH AT COLOSSAE

We are not certain as to exactly when and by whom the churches in Phrygia were started. Paul’s statement in Colossians 2:1 might be properly understood to say that he had not been in the city of Colossae or the other two cities as well. If this is correct, then, another possibility can be seen from the statement made in Acts 19:10 that all Asia heard the word while Paul and company were in Ephesus for almost three years. He taught in the School of Tyrannus which would open the door for people all over that area for miles to have heard the message. This is certainly a reasonable assumption based also on Paul’s statement in Colossians 1:23. If the church was started by someone hearing and responding to the Gospel while visiting in Ephesus, or whether someone from Ephesus went as far as Colossae to preach to them, the date for its start could be about AD 54-55. If this letter was written as late as AD 63, the church would have been established for about eight years at the most.

Paul seems to have been acquainted with these three churches in some way. They had learned also of Paul’s imprisonment at Rome as well. There is an indication that Epaphras may have been the one that had preached the Gospel at first to them (Colossae 1:6-7) and that the

church may have sent him to Rome to comfort Paul or that Epaphras chose to go to Rome to inform Paul of the grave condition of the church at Colossae (Colossians 4:12-13). Paul had nothing but praise for him. While at Rome, he was also imprisoned for some reason (Philemon 23). Another interesting person at Colossae that the Apostle seems to have known quite well was Philemon (Philemon 1, 19, 22). Philemon also had a slave that had left him and for some reason ran into the Apostle and was converted (Colossians 4:9; Philemon 10). Even though Paul may not have been to the city of Colossae, he certainly was not unknown to them, nor he to them. His desire to visit them upon his release from Roman imprisonment certainly might indicate this fact (Philemon 22).

PURPOSE FOR WRITING THE LETTER

The immediate news about the church at Colossae was brought to the Apostle Paul by a faithful minister for the church at Colossae, Epaphras (Colossians 1:6-8). He was also very concerned about the church at Laodicea and Hierapolis (Colossians 4:12-13). This letter also was to serve for the church at Laodicea (and possibly Hierapolis as well) (Colossians 4:16). The fact that Paul was sending Onesimus back to Philemon with a letter from him could have been one of the factors involved in the writing to the church at Colossae as well. The Holy Spirit inspired the letter, so how much He was involved in Paul's writing this letter we do not know.

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

- 1. Philosophical ideas** that were tainted by Jewish observances and Oriental concepts (Colossians 2:8, 11, 14, 16, 17).
- 2. They also advocated** the worship of Angels (Colossians 2:10, 15, 18, 19; 1:16).
- 3. Extreme Ascetic rules and regulations** were being fostered upon the church members (Colossians 2:20-21).
- 4. A System of ideas** that limited the greatness and the Authority of Christ and the sufficiency of His atonement (Colossians 2:8-10, 17, 19; 1:14-20).
- 5. Such supposedly** was calling Christians to a high spiritual life (Colossians 1:23, 28; 2:3-10, 16-18, 23; 3:1, 14, 15).

Some have suggested that here is where the first indications of the heresy that later became known as "Gnosticism." Paul had warned the elders of the church at Ephesus of this grave danger that was coming (Acts 20:29-30). Some have identified the teaching and writings of a man named Philo with the ideas that began to water down and undermine the teaching and

authority of Christ in the church. His writings had already influenced many Jews of Jesus' day. It is possible that his writings may have been adopted and adapted by someone in Colossae. The

Apostle John in later years had moved to Ephesus and wrote his strong Gospel and Letters to combat this vicious error in this general area.

COMMENTS ON COLOSSIANS 1:1-3

Greetings expressed from Paul & Timothy (1:1).

- 1) Paul was an Apostle of Jesus Christ.
- 2) He was not self-appointed, but chosen by God Himself.
- 3) No false teacher could make this claim with truthfulness.
- 4) He was a special messenger sent by Jesus Christ unto the world of lost people.
- 5) He was especially endowed with a message and miracles to back up his claim.
- 6) Timothy was not only a brother, but a fellow-traveler with Paul on at least two of his missionary trips.
- 7) He was also with Paul while imprisoned at Rome—but not in prison himself.

Greetings expressed to the church at Colossae (1:2-3).

- 1) They are called saints. They are a called out, separated people of God, cleansed and made ready for service to God. This term applied to all Christians—not just a select few.
- 2) They were called faithful brethren in Christ. They were loyal to their calling. They were holding on to their faith in Christ.
- 3) Paul & Timothy wanted God's grace (unmerited favor) to be continuously over them. We all continually need God's favor in our lives.
- 4) Also, that they would enjoy the peace that comes from being right with Deity....that calm assurance of being God's redeemed children. With God in charge, all is well.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

True or False

- ___ 1. Colossae is in the province of Asia.
- ___ 2. Ephesus, Colossae, and Laodicea are tri-cities in Phrygia.
- ___ 3. Colossae was the most populated city in the region.
- ___ 4. The date for writing this letter to Colossae was AD 65-66.
- ___ 5. The church at Colossae could have been established about 8 years or less at the time Paul wrote this letter.
- ___ 6. We know that Paul had visited all three churches in this area.
- ___ 7. Epaphras was a minister with the church at Colossae.
- ___ 8. Tychicus was the bearer of this letter.
- ___ 9. The early beginning of Gnosticism in the church is seen in this letter.
- ___ 10. Timothy was with Paul when he wrote this letter.

Lesson Two

“The Need for Gratitude for Brethren”

(Reading—Colossians 1:4-14)

Letters sent by God, but penned by inspired men, always have a positive note even in the worst of situations, as is illustrated in the seven letters in Revelation 2-3. Paul’s letters are no exception to this. Even though the church at Colossae was beginning to have some false teaching and practices fostered upon them, Paul begins the letter on a very positive note of thanksgiving. He truly was thankful for all who have responded to God’s invitation to come and taste of the waters of life freely. This is one of the reasons for entitling this lesson: ***The Need for Gratitude for Brethren***. We certainly need to be thankful, not resentful or hateful to our brethren in Christ, even when some are not living as they should or are teaching wrong things. Being thankful is a first step towards making the relationship better. We need not only to express this more, but to show it by our actions.

COMMENTS ON COLOSSIANS 1:4-14

I. PAUL’S THANKSGIVING FOR THEM. (1-3-8)**A. For their faith in Christ.**

- 1) Not faith only....but an obedient faith (James 2:24).
- 2) Their faith in Christ expressed in godly living (Matthew 5:16).

B. For their love to all saints.

- 1) 1 Peter 2:17—***“Love the brotherhood.”***
- 2) They were concerned about their brethren—all of them.
- 3) Christ died for all of His people....love them all.
- 4) Both Jew & Gentile—Black & White, etc.

C. For the hope that is laid up for them.

- 1) Happy that they had the hope of going to Heaven some day.
- 2) Eternal Life is something to look forward to.
- 3) This hope comes through the hearing & obeying the Gospel of Christ.
- 4) This hope was a motivation:
 - a) That changed their lives for the better;
 - b) But also caused them to bear fruit to the glory of God.
- 5) They had heard of this hope through Epaphras.
 - a) He was a dear fellow-servant of Paul.
 - b) He had been a faithful minister of Christ to them.
 - c) He may have been the one that started the church at Colossae after being converted by Paul’s preaching at Ephesus.
- 6) Epaphras had made known their love to both Paul & others.

II. PAUL’S PRAYER FOR THEM. (1:9-11)**A. That they would be filled with the knowledge of God’s Will.**

- 1) It is not enough to just hear the basic message of the Gospel.
- 2) This knowledge of God’s Will needs to increase....be filled with overflowing. that it may be complete.

- 3) This knowledge also needs to be directed by wisdom & spiritual understanding.
- 4) It needs to be understood correctly to avoid error.

B. That they might walk worthy of the Lord.

- 1) It is a blessing to be a Christian.
- 2) But such entails grave responsibilities.
- 3) Walk according to the greatness of your calling.
- 4) Show by your life's activities that you appreciate your great calling.
- 5) Be a means of influencing others by your life.

C. That they might be fruitful in every good work.

- 1) Fruit is born unto God when we abide in Christ & His Word abides in us. (John 15:1-8).
- 2) Godly living will bear much fruit.
- 3) Having our lives filled with good works cannot help but produce fruit (Titus 3:8, 14)

D. That they might increase in their knowledge of God.

- 1) To know God and His Son is Eternal Life (John 17:3).
- 2) Not just His Will, but to know Him in all His glory and power.

E. That they might be strengthened with all might.

- 1) Christians cannot remain static....must grow...mature.
- 2) This growth is reflected in strength....spiritual strength.
- 3) Be able to deal with all the fiery darts of the evil one (Eph. 6:11-16).

F. Might be patient & long-suffering with joyfulness.

- 1) Learn to be patient by experiencing tribulations of life (James 1:1-3).
- 2) Learn to suffer long with people & conditions that have to be dealt with.
- 3) The joyfulness comes from realizing what is taking place in our spiritual lives.

III. REASONS WHY THEY SHOULD BE THANKFUL. (1:12-14)

A. Because God had chosen them to be heirs of light.

- 1) This salvation was planned & prepared for by God (Eph. 1:4).
- 2) And when finalized in Christ, determined that the Gospel message was to be preached to all nations.
- 3) They had heard that message and responded to it.
- 4) They thus became the chosen heirs of God.

B. Because they had been delivered from the power of darkness.

- 1) Sin and Darkness holds mankind in bondage (John 8:31-32; Rom. 6:16-18).
- 2) There is no escape by man on his own.
- 3) Only by God's mercy and grace can man be set free from such bondage.
- 4) It is when he dies to himself and sin and turns to obedience to God that he will be set free (Rom. 6:1-6).

C. Because they have been translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son.

- 1) We have been made free from one relationship.....
- 2) Now, we have been placed into a new relationship found in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17)
- 3) It is in the realm of the rule or domain of Jesus Christ, the King.

D. Because they have been redeemed and forgiven.

- 1) We have been bought with a price...the precious blood of Jesus (1 Cor. 19-20; Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 1:18-19).

- 2) The forgiveness of sins means the removal of their curse upon our soul.
- 3) We no longer will have to pay the penalty of those sins.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

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

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

True or False

- ___ 1. The Apostle was convinced of the Colossians' faith by their actions.
- ___ 2. Love is something that must be shown for it to be real.
- ___ 3. Only those who have obeyed the Gospel of Christ and live faithful have the promise of Eternal Life.
- ___ 4. It is important that Christians grow in their knowledge of God's Will.
- ___ 5. A person cannot truly walk worthy of the Gospel of Christ.
- ___ 6. Spiritual growth is shown by how we deal with the fiery darts of the evil one.
- ___ 7. Not to be patient and long-suffering is a sin.
- ___ 8. To be an heir of God, one must be chosen by God.
- ___ 9. We are translated into the kingdom by God when we believe in Jesus.
- ___ 10. Forgiveness means that we will not have to suffer the just penalty of past sins.

Lesson Three

“The Pre-Eminence of Christ” (Colossians 1:15-22)

Anything that undermines the Deity of Christ or the all-sufficiency of Salvation in Him is religious error and brings the condemnation of God (Galatians 1:6-9). Some of the things being advocated by teachers at Colossae were doing just that and needed to be stopped. Our last lesson ended with an emphasis upon God’s redemption and forgiveness that came through Christ’s death on the Cross. He paid the price to redeem us. He made it possible for us to be set free from a Law System of righteousness and to come under a Grace System of righteousness. Man could not keep the Law of God perfectly; therefore, he could not free himself from the just penalty of his law-breaking. He was held in bondage by his sins. Man’s forgiveness of those sins by God does not belittle the Law of God, but rather upholds it by Jesus paying the penalty of our sins for us, in our stead. The Law was upheld in its sentence of death and God could justly forgive our sins (Romans 3:23-26). Upon our forgiveness, we were “added to” or “translated into” the kingdom of God’s dear Son and became an heir of God.

The writer now turns to place a strong emphasis upon both the Deity of Christ and the Pre-eminence of Christ.

I. JESUS IS THE IMAGE OF THE INVISIBLE GOD. (1:15a)

A. The Greek word for image is “EIKON” (Icon).

- 1) It is translated: Image, Likeness, Representation, Reproduction.
- 2) Vines Word Study: “*Essentially and absolutely the perfect expression and representation of the Archetype, God the Father.*”
- 3) John 14:9—“*...he that has seen Me has seen the Father.*”
- 4) John 1:18—“*No man has seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he has declared Him.*”
- 5) Jesus is no imitation—He is God, Himself!
- 6) He is a perfect representation of God...for He is God.
- 7) John 1:1—“*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*”
- 8) He is the embodiment of the Father.
- 9) The invisible God becomes visible to man in Jesus.

II. JESUS’ PRE-EMINENCE OVER CREATED THINGS. (1:15b-17)

A. “The first-born of every creature.”

- 1) The phrase denotes:
 - a) Priority
 - He was before all created things.
 - He pre-existed before creation.
 - He was pre-eminent.
 - b) Sovereignty
 - He is over all things...ruler.
 - He is creation’s natural ruler...for He created it.

B. “For by Him were all things created.”

- 1) The Creative energy was in Jesus to bring things into existence.
- 2) All created things are dependant upon Him.
- 3) Absolutely, all things—nothing existed but what He created—with the exception of Deity.
- 4) He did not say, “the rest of things were created.”
- 5) But he said: “the all things created.”
- 6) Where?
 - a) In heaven and earth—all space.
 - b) Visible and invisible realms of existence—all things in space.
 - c) The concepts of thrones, dominions, principalities, powers, Governments, and angelic hosts.
 - d) He is the originator of all things.

C. He again gives reasons for His pre-eminence.

- 1) **“All things were created by Him, and for Him.”**
 - a) He is the agency through which all has been created.
 - b) All things had their beginning in him.
 - c) All things depend upon Him.
 - d) But they were created for Him, His use, His glory.
- 2) **“He is before all things.”**
 - a) He ante-dates all creation as the Creator.
 - b) Before Creation...He is!
 - c) Not only the pre-existent One, but the ever existing One.
- 3) **“By Him all things consists.”**
 - a) Greek word: “to hold together” or “to adhere.”
 - b) Jesus is the means of cohesion of this universe.
 - c) Without Him, it would fall apart.
 - d) He is its means of unity, solidarity, orderliness.
 - e) Instead of a Chaos...it is a Cosmos...orderly universe.

III. JESUS’ PRE-EMINENCE OVER THE CHURCH. (1:18)**A. “He is the head of the body, the church.”**

- 1) The church was planned by God before the foundation of the world.
- 2) It was being made known through the Prophets in a mystery that it was coming.
- 3) John & Jesus both announced its imminent appearance.
- 4) And upon Jesus’ death, burial, resurrection, and ascension—He became:
 - a) The King over His new Kingdom;
 - b) The Head over His New Body, the Church.
- 5) Ephesians 1:19-23 emphasizes:
 - a) The greatness of this exaltation.
 - b) It is a position far above all principality, power, might, dominion, and every name that is named.
 - c) Not only in this world, but in that which is to come.
- 6) The Creator of this Universe is also head over the church.
 - a) He is the inspiring, ruling, guiding, sustaining power in the church.

b) He is its center of Unity and its Life.

B. The basis of this headship:

1) ***“who is the beginning”***

a) Greek word: “Arche”—origin, beginning.

b) He is the originator of the church.

c) Through Him, the church was made possible.

2) ***“the first-born from the dead”***

a) 1 Cor. 15:22—***“For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.”***

b) God’s power brought Jesus forth from the grave...from death!

c) So that He can give life to all those who will serve Him.

3) ***“that in all things He might have the pre-eminence.”***

a) Jesus’ rightful pre-eminence over all was denied Him by sin and rebellion of His creation.

b) But through his death and resurrection, He can again regain that pre-eminence.

IV. ALL FULLNESS DWELLS IN JESUS. (1:19)

A. *“It pleased the Father.”*

1) It was the Father’s good pleasure to elevate Jesus over all things.

2) All things were created by Him, thus His pre-eminence.

3) His work of Reconciliation, thus, His pre-eminence over the church.

4) It was right—it was good—it was a natural thing for the Father to do so.

B. *“that in Him should all fullness dwell.”*

1) Upon his ascension, all power resides in Jesus (Matt. 28:18).

2) All things are brought back together in harmony through Jesus.

3) In Him, there is harmony, unity, peace, completeness, fullness.

4) He is the center around which all things revolve.

5) In Jesus is found COMPLETENESS, FULLNESS.

6) There is nothing beyond Deity!

V. IN JESUS, THERE IS FULL AND COMPLETE RECONCILIATION. (1:20-22)

A. Through Jesus all things have been reconciled.

1) Sin, Disobedience, Rebellion have brought estrangement from God.

2) Sin enslaves and keeps man in bondage.

3) But Jesus paid the price to set men free.

4) Thus, forgiveness and reconciliation can be made possible.

a) Justice has been satisfied.

b) The attitude of enmity has been changed to friendship.

5) Man can again be at peace with God (Rom. 5:1).

B. This had to be done by Jesus in the flesh.

1) Man had to be identified with in order to atone for man’s sinfulness.

2) He took on human flesh in order to die in our stead.

3) His body became the instrument of reconciliation.

C. Reconciliation described:

1) So we can be holy—cleansed and set apart unto God.

- 2) So we can be unblameable—no fault or sin to condemn us.
- 3) Unreproveable—no longer any charge to be laid against us.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Christ is the creator of all things in Heaven and earth. He is the means and the ends of all creation. The whole creation adheres together in Him. But Christ is also the creator of the church. He is its means of existence. He is its means of reconciliation to God. In both instances, He is the pre-eminent One over all. Have you bowed the neck before such a ONE?

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

True or False

- ___ **1. Jesus is the Icon of Deity.**
- ___ **2. Jesus is the originator of all creatures that exist.**
- ___ **3. Jesus created things that were visible and invisible.**
- ___ **4. Jesus ante-dates all creation.**
- ___ **5. Jesus is what holds this universe together.**
- ___ **6. Jesus did not create Chaos, but a Kosmos.**
- ___ **7. Jesus is the only head over His church.**
- ___ **8. All fullness is found in Jesus.**
- ___ **9. Man's reconciliation is complete in Jesus.**
- ___ **10. Men can be right with God without Jesus.**

Lesson Four

“The Gospel that Paul Preached”

(Reading—Colossians 1:23-2:3)

In Lesson three, we looked at the strong emphasis that the Holy Spirit gave to the pre-eminence of Christ and the great blessing of Redemption through Christ. We become a child of God, we become an heir of God, and we have peace with God. Jesus can present us holy, unblameable, and Unreproveable before God some day. **But....there is a catch to all of this!** It is critical that we continue in what we have been taught and thereby stay in this relationship with God in Christ Jesus. God also wanted us to know about the Gospel Paul preached and why he was so zealous in its proclamation. He also wanted us to know why he was so willing to suffer afflictions to preach it.

I. THEIR NEED TO CONTINUE IN WHAT THEY HAD BEEN TAUGHT. (1:23)**A. “Continue in the faith”**

- 1) Left to themselves, the Colossians would have continued in heathenism and hopelessness.
- 2) But, they had hear “the faith”....the Gospel of their salvation.
- 3) They had obeyed that Gospel.
- 4) They needed to continue in what they had been taught.

B. “grounded and settled” in it

- 1) Their faith had been built on a sure and firm foundation.
- 2) They needed to be fixed in this faith.
- 3) They needed to be settled in it—make it a permanent abode.
- 4) 1 Cor. 15:58—“*Be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.*”

C. “Not moved away from the hope of the gospel.”

- 1) False teachers are subtle, plausible and speculative.
- 2) If not well-grounded, you can easily be moved away from “the faith.”
- 3) The hope of the Gospel was the Crown of Life that God offers to the Redeemed.
- 4) Which Gospel:
 - a) They had had preached to them;
 - b) Which was preached to every creature under heaven (God’s creation).

II. PAUL’S PREACHING. (1:23B-25)**A. He had been made a minister of Christ’s Gospel.**

- 1) But more.....
 - a) He was made a preacher of the Gospel by God’s own choosing.
 - b) He was made such by the dispensation (commission) of God.
- 2) But God’s choice of him was for their good—he was to preach to the Gentiles.
- 3) He was chosen to help make the Gospel known to its fullest extent.
 - a) To fulfill God’s promises and desires.
 - b) So that all peoples, nations, and tongues can have the privilege to hear this Gospel of hope.

B. He was also suffering afflictions because he preached the Gospel.

- 1) Paul was in Rome in prison (own hired house) as he wrote this letter.
 - a) He was there because he preached the Gospel.
 - b) He had constantly defended the Gentiles' right to the hope of the Gospel.
- 2) He not only was not ashamed of the Gospel, but gloried in it.
 - a) He was happy to suffer for the Gentiles....so they could be saved as well.
 - b) He was more than willing to give of himself for the good of others.
- 3) Christ had to suffer in order to bring the church into existence.
 - a) Now Paul & others were having to suffer to carry the gospel message to all.
 - b) The church was spread by suffering.
 - c) Paul was willing to gladly suffer for the body of Christ, the church.

III. THE MESSAGE OF PAUL'S PREACHING. (1:26-27)**A. It was a mystery, now being revealed unto mankind.**

- 1) Mystery—that which is secret—that which is hidden.
- 2) But since it has been made know—revealed—it is no longer a mystery.
- 3) That which had previously been hid to man's understanding is now made know to God's people (saints)....as well as to all mankind.

B. But he is also making known the riches of the glory of this mystery.

- 1) It is not something little, but big!
- 2) It is not average, but superb!
- 3) It is not poverty, but riches!
- 4) The unsearchable riches of God's mystery in Christ.
- 5) Paul had been making this known among the Gentiles.

C. He was preaching "Christ" and the hope found in Him.

- 1) Through Christ, hope could be offered to the Gentile world.
- 2) Christ dwelling in them was their assurance of eternal glory someday.
- 3) It was making known to the world that both Jew & Gentile could enjoy the same blessings in Christ Jesus.

IV. PAUL'S AIM IN PREACHING. (1:28-29)**A. To teach all who would listen.**

- 1) His preaching was not for a select few, but for all to hear.
- 2) To let every sinner know there is hope in Christ in the Day of Judgment.

B. To teach in all wisdom.

- 1) To make known to all—all the wisdom & knowledge given to us of God.

C. To warn all who will listen.

- 1) As he preached Christ, he warned of the rejection of Christ.
- 2) He warned of the danger of being turned away from Christ.

D. In order to present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.

- 1) Perfect, mature, full-grown person.
- 2) It is not enough to bring them into a relationship with Christ.....

- 3) But he needed to mature them in Christ.
- 4) For them to be like Christ...the highest of all standards.

E. God constantly gave Paul the help needed to do this.

- 1) He tirelessly toiled at this work.
- 2) He labored with full confidence of God working through and in him.

V. PAUL'S CONCERNED FOR THEM AND OTHERS IN THAT AREA. (2:1-3)

A. "what great conflict I have for you."

- 1) Deep anxiety or concern over them.
- 2) Paul was evidently told some things by the preacher from Colossae that caused him much concern.
- 3) Not only for them, but those at Laodicea & other places who have not seen him in the flesh.
- 4) Churches had been established over the area that he had not been able to visit in person.

B. His concern was:

- 1) That their hearts might be comforted, encouraged, confirmed, and made sure of in their minds or hearts.
- 2) That they would be knit together in love.
 - a) Would be drawn together by the love of God & their concern for one another.
 - b) That they would truly be one body...working together.
 - c) That they would not be broken and divided by false teachers.
 - d) That would make them an easy prey to their deives.
- 3) That they would be knit together in the riches of full assurance of understanding.
 - a) That they would be of one mind about Christ & hope found in Him.
 - b) That they would be firmly, greatly convinced about Christ and what He means to the world.
 - c) So that their understanding of the mystery of God, found in Christ, may be complete....and make them complete.
- 4) That they may be completely convinced that in Christ are hid all the treasures of wisdom & knowledge.
 - a) The richness of wisdom & knowledge are found in Christ.
 - b) All can come to a full depth of wisdom & knowledge by knowing Christ.
 - c) He is the exhaustless storehouse of all wisdom & knowledge.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

"For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe." (1 Corinthians 1:21). Christ is the demonstration of God's great wisdom. It is through Christ that mankind has the hope of glory. Do you have that hope?

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

True or False

- 1. The Christian must continue in the faith in order to be saved eternally.**
- 2. The Christian does not have to be grounded in the faith to go to heaven.**
- 3. A person can be moved away from the hope of the Gospel.**
- 4. Paul was especially chosen by God to preach to the Gentiles.**
- 5. Paul's being chosen by God was to benefit a lot of people—not just Paul.**
- 6. He was willing to suffer affliction because such brings greater joy.**
- 7. The church came into existence through suffering.**
- 8. Paul wanted to preach the Gospel through his wisdom and understanding.**
- 9. Paul wanted his preaching to bring people to perfection.**
- 10. Paul was not only concerned for the people at Colossae, but Laodicea as well.**

Lesson Five

“A Basic Warning Against False Teachers”

(Reading—Colossians 2:4-9)

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

I. PAUL EXPRESSES HIS CONCERN FOR THEM. (2:4)

A. The danger of their being deceived was real.

- 1) “Beguile you.”
- 2) Be mislead...deluded...led astray...fool you.
- 3) So, don’t be Naïve or Gullible—but alert & watchful.

B. How could they be deceived?

- 1) “With enticing words”
 - a) Persuasive speech
 - b) Plausible speculations or arguments
 - c) Smooth talk.
- 2) False Teachers would:
 - a) Use “reason” to lead men into error.
 - b) “Reason” would become the standard, not Christ’s Revelation to man.
 - c) They would be fluent in their ideas & reasons.
 - d) They had a storehouse full of sophisticated arguments.
 - e) They were false...but made to appear desirable.
 - f) Romans 16:18

II. PAUL’S PRAISE OF THEM. (2:5)

A. “Absent in the flesh”

- 1) Paul was far away from them in person—in prison at Rome.
- 2) Yet, he would like to be there with them—expresses concern.

B. “Yet am I with you in spirit”

- 1) He identifies with them in the spirit realm.
- 2) Reason he would like to be with them:
 - a) Not only to praise them in person;
 - b) But, to warn them in person.

C. “Rejoicing as I see your order & steadfastness of faith in Christ.”

- 1) What a delight to know of their faithfulness to God.
- 2) He saw through the eyes of Epaphras and/or the Holy Spirit.
- 3) He saw the signs of soundness in the faith.
- 4) “Your order”
 - a) Harmony, unity, and togetherness.
 - b) Like a marching army—all in step at the command of their leader.
 - c) They presented a solid front in the faith in Christ.
- 4) “Steadfastness”
 - a) Steadiness in the faith.
 - b) They had not been moved away from the Faith in Christ.

III. PAUL’S CHALLENGE TO THEM. (2:6-7)

A. “Walk in Christ as you were first taught & received.”

- 1) “Walk”
 - a) Continued action—going in a direction.
 - b) It is a voluntary walk—a personal decision & activity.
- 2) “In Christ”
 - a) The realm of their walk—in Christ.
 - b) In His teachings—in his steps.
 - c) Not walk outside of Christ, but in Christ.
- 3) “As you received Him”
 - a) Continue to walk in the One you first received.
 - b) You trusted Him to save you—now trust Him to guide your life daily.

B. “Rooted and built up in Him”

- 1) Jesus is the ground into which we sink our roots deep.
- 2) He is the foundation upon which we build a life unto God.
- 3) An Illustration:
 - a) A tree can only reach lofty heights by putting roots deep.
 - b) Height of the tree depends upon how deep it can go to sustain itself.
 - c) But in particular—deep roots sustain the tree in time of storm.
- 4) The Christian’s growth is both downward & upward.
 - a) It is pitiful to see a godless man trying to be steadfast in afflictions.
 - b) But even more so—to see a Christian struggling as a spiritual dwarf.
- 5) We are rooted and tied to Christ the Rock.
- 6) We are built up and strengthen as we remain in Christ.

C. “Established in the faith, as you have been taught.”

- 1) Established—to make firm and settled!
- 2) Not easily moved because roots are deep & sustaining—cannot pull p.
- 3) Firmly rooted & settled in the Faith in Christ.

D. “Abounding therein with thanksgiving.”

- 1) Not satisfied with little growth, but desiring abundant growth.
- 2) Keep on growing in the Lord.
- 3) Be strong & vigorous in God’s Truth.
- 4) Overflowing with faith.
- 5) But at the same time—gratitude goes to God for all of these blessings.

IV. PAUL'S WARNING TO THEM. (2:8)**A. "Beware lest you are spoiled"**

- 1) Paul's admonitions:
 - a) Hold on desperately to that which you have been taught about Christ.
 - b) Recognize Jesus' Lordship and walk in Him.
 - c) Be rooted firmly and anchored in Him—constantly growing stronger.
 - d) Be established in the faith you have been taught.
 - e) Abound in it with gratitude—because you know the Truth.
- 2) Some false teachers will try to spoil them— to take away these blessed things.
 - a) To spoil you....to enslave to their false teachings.
 - b) To lead you off as spoils of war—as prisoners to their teachings.
 - c) Your minds can be captured by their false ideas.

B. "Through philosophy and vain deceit"

- 1) Philosophy:
 - a) Man's search after speculative truth, rather than a revealed system of truth.
 - b) It is what man thinks he discovers on his own.
 - c) Satisfying the intellectual pride of men.
- 2) It becomes a choice between the wisdom of men versus the wisdom of God.
 - a) Man's wisdom is vain, empty, hollow, misleading & disappointing.
 - b) It is idle fancies, make-believe, high-sounding non-sense.
 - c) It is hollow & delusive speculations of men.
- 3) Such will undermine man's faith in the Word of God.

C. "After the traditions of men"

- 1) This gives the origin of man's philosophies.
- 2) Human reasoning, speculations, ideas formed into a philosophy.
- 3) Philosophy is based on human authority as opposed to divine revelation and authority.
- 4) That which men originate, rather than revealed by God.

D. "After the rudiments of the world"

- 1) The first concepts of the worldly-minded.
- 2) Like childish, faulty, and imperfect religious concepts.
- 3) The world's crude notions.
- 4) Material ways of looking at things.

E. "And not after Christ."

- 1) Instead of what Christ has said.
- 2) It did not have Christ as it's author, nor it's subject.
- 3) Their teaching displaced Christ—dethroned Him as Lord.

V. PAUL'S REASONS FOR HOLDING ON TO CHRIST. (2:9)**A. "The fullness of the Godhead"**

- 1) "Fullness"
 - a) Completeness.
 - b) The full & complete expression of Deity or the Divine Nature.
- 2) "Godhead"

- a) Godhood
- b) Divinity or Divine Nature.

B. “In Him (Christ)”

- 1) The fullness of the Godhead dwells in Christ.
- 2) Christ gives a full & complete expression of Deity.
- 3) For He is fully Deity (God).
- 4) He is Absolute & Perfect God.
- 5) He possesses the Divine Nature or characteristics.
- 6) All the infinite perfections of God are in Christ.
- 7) John 14:9—“*Whoever has seen Me, has seen the Father.*”

C. “Bodily”

- 1) God incarnate—God in human form.
- 2) Christ gives a full & complete expression of Deity even in human form.
- 3) He is not partial or approximate, or a temporary manifestation of God.
- 4) He is God in the flesh.
- 5) God is what He shows Himself to be in Christ and no other.
- 6) In Christ, we come to know the only true, the only real and living God.
- 7) He is the finality of the revelation of Deity to man.
- 8) 1 John 5;20
- 9) “*Deity in human flesh*”
 - a) A mystery beyond comprehension.
 - b) Yet, a fact that we must believe.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

False teachers try to rob Christ of His Deity—or—Deity coming in human flesh (1 John 4:1-3). It is very important what we think about Christ! False teachers would rob Christ of His glory. When we allow it, we are robbed of our salvation. Let’s continue in Christ by being rooted, established in Him, being built up and abounding in Him, and walking, growing, and being fruitful in Him.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

True or false

- ___ 1. To be beguiled is to be deluded.
- ___ 2. Words—reasonings of men could easily lead God’s people away from God.
- ___ 3. Paul did not feel that he could rejoice over them and their condition.
- ___ 4. A person cannot walk in Christ.
- ___ 5. A person who is established in the faith has a deep root in God’s Word.
- ___ 6. To abound in Christ is to grow in Him.
- ___ 7. The Christ’s security will not allow him to become a spoil of spiritual warfare.
- ___ 8. There is nothing wrong with the philosophy and traditions of men.
- ___ 9. Christ in the flesh presents the fullness of Deity.
- ___ 10. False teachers try to rob Christ of His Deity.

Lesson Six

“Completeness in Christ”**(Reading—Colossians 2:10-15)**

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

I. MAN’S NEED OF THIS COMPLETENESS. (Colossians 2:10)**A. Man needs to turn to Christ for that fullness or completeness.**

- 1) A “complete Christ” makes us to be “complete.”
- 2) The whole fullness of God is engaged in our behalf—so who else do we need or where else should we turn?
- 3) Christ supplies us with all that is required for our present and eternal welfare.

B. Christ’s greatness!

- 1) He is the head of all principalities and powers.
- 2) He is the very source of their existence.
- 3) Then, why turn to them when we have the greatest power of all in Christ?
 - a) We have access to all God offers to us through Christ.
 - b) No one or no thing can offer what He offers us and deliver it!
- 4) This completeness or fullness is “in Christ,” not another!

II. THROUGH CHRIST, WE HAVE RECEIVED A SPIRITUAL CIRCUMCISION**(Colossians 2:11)****A. We don’t need a fleshly, physical circumcision like the Jews.**

- 1) Circumcision of the Jewish male was an identification with God’s Covenant.
- 2) Those not circumcised lost benefits of the Covenant.
- 3) It separated Jew from Gentile.
- 4) Some Jewish Christians were trying to bind such on Gentiles in order to be acceptable with God.
- 5) The letters to the Galatians & Romans were both written to combat this error.

B. Followers of Christ have already received their special circumcision.

- 1) It is a greater circumcision—the true one—the spiritual one.
- 2) It was made without hands, but by Christ Himself.
- 3) Physical circumcision was only a shadow of the true circumcision to come.
 - a) The true made them complete.
 - b) They did not need physical circumcision.

C. What was that circumcision?

- 1) That which puts off the sins of the flesh.
- 2) Christ’s circumcision frees man from his sins.
- 3) **“Only God can forgive sins!”** (Mark 2:7)

- 4) Christ has that power to forgive sins—or to put them away forever!
- 5) No man has that power—not any principalities or powers on earth or in heaven.
- 6) Only God—Deity—Jesus can forgive!

III. WE WERE FORGIVEN BY CHRIST WHEN OUR FAITH IN HIM LED US TO BE BAPTIZED INTO HIM. (2:12)

A. This spiritual circumcision came when we were buried with Christ in baptism.

- 1) Our part in forgiveness:
 - a) Faith or trust in the promises of God that acts in obedience.
 - b) The act of faith that is needed—baptism—immersion in water!
- 2) In baptism:
 - a) Our sins are removed by God (cut off)!
 - b) It is a burial of the Old Man of Sin.
 - c) Then, a resurrection of a new man unto God (Romans 6:1-5, 16-18).
- 3) Baptism is the “grave” for the Old Man and a “birth” for the New Man!

B. The same power that raised Christ up—saves us!

- 1) Jesus’ resurrection from the dead was by God’s power.
- 2) It brought great hope for all mankind.
- 3) We can also be raised up from a spiritual death and live again in Christ.

IV. IN CHRIST, WE CAN BE MADE ALIVE AGAIN. (2:13)

A. Outside of Christ, there is death.

- 1) Man is separated from God by his sins (Isaiah 59:1-2).
- 2) He is spiritually dead (Ephesians 2:1, 5).
- 3) Spiritual death is the consequence of sin or transgressions.

B. But this death is brought on by following the flesh.

- 1) The flesh is contrary to the Law of God.
- 2) In their spiritually uncircumcised condition, they were dead.
- 3) Man will continue in his sins of the flesh & will also continue in death.

C. But we have been made alive in Christ.

- 1) Just as God gave life to Christ’s body in raising Him from the dead.
- 2) So, He gives life to us by removing our sins.
- 3) By forgiving our transgressions.
- 4) When? When our faith acts in repentance, confession, and baptism.

V. THIS FORGIVENESS WAS MADE POSSIBLE BY DOING AWAY WITH THE LAW SYSTEM. (2:14)

A. “Handwriting of ordinances”

- 1) Refers to the Law in general—all Law—including the Law of Moses.
- 2) The Law itself is good, just, holy, perfect (Romans 7:12).
- 3) But there is a grave weakness in the Law!
- 4) Man cannot live up to it!!!

B. How the Law is characterized!

- 1) It is against us!
 - a) It accuses us—it is a witness against us.
 - b) It brings guilt, shame, a curse, and the wrath of God.

2) It is contrary to us!

- a) It doesn't fit with us.
- b) It doesn't do what man needs done for him.
- c) Our inability to fulfill the Law or satisfy its demands exposes us to its penalty—death!

C. What God had to do with the Law in order to forgive us.1) He had to blot it out.

- a) The accusation against man was written down—such had to be erased!
- b) It had to be taken out of the way.
- c) Jesus took away the Law's condemning power over man.
- d) Christ is God's means of releasing us from the curse of the Law.

2) He had to nail it to His cross.

- a) The Law was not removed arbitrarily.
- b) But in the substitutional death of Jesus on the cross, the Law could be set aside.
- c) Its condemning power was broken over man.
- d) The debt was cancelled against us.
- e) Christ nailed it to the cross forever saying "*There is no longer condemnation to those who are in Christ.*"

VI. IN CHRIST, THE POWERS OF PRINCIPALITIES HAS BEEN BROKEN. (2:15)**A. In Jesus' death, He disarmed principalities and powers.**

- 1) Sin was the basis of their dominion over man.
- 2) Sin was the secret of their strength over man.
- 3) Jesus' death undermined their strength & power over man.

B. The cross was a sense of triumph over Satan's kingdom.

- 1) It shows their subjection under Christ—that He is greater than they all.
- 2) Angels are pictured as being made subject to Christ (Hebrews 1:1-14).
- 3) They are not man's mediator or savior, but are servants under Christ.
- 4) Our completeness is not in principalities or powers, but in Christ!

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Fullness or completeness is found only "in Christ!" No other can do what He has done for mankind. There is no point nor purpose to turn to another. The redemption of fallen man has been made possible through Christ's death on the cross. We appropriate the benefits of His death by faith in Him. But it is an active faith—expressed in being buried with Christ in baptism. Then, we are raised up to walk in "newness of life." All past sins have been forgiven. Those who reject Christ are still under a "Law System" to be righteous—which can only bring death!

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

True or false

___ 1. Plausibility of a thought does not necessarily assure it is true.

___ 2. Fullness or Completeness is only found in God, the Father.

- ___ **3. The Devil is the head over all principalities and powers.**
- ___ **4. Christ performs a spiritual circumcision upon those who believe and obey Him.**
- ___ **5. Baptism has to be an act of faith, not an act of merit.**
- ___ **6. Man's sins are removed when he is baptized into Christ.**
- ___ **7. Man can only be made alive in Christ.**
- ___ **8. Only God can forgive sins.**
- ___ **9. The Law has been put aside since it has no means of saving man.**
- ___ **10. The powers of principalities has been broken in Christ's death & resurrection.**

Lesson Seven

“Religious Errors to Avoid”

(Reading—Colossians 2:16-23)

Paul has laid a foundation up to this point to be able to properly deal with errors that the Colossians were to be watchful over and avoid. In Christ, there is fullness, completeness—we do not need anyone or anything else. The “Law System” has been replaced with a “Grace System.” Man could not be saved by Law-Keeping. He broke the Law and came under its curse. In that sense, the Law was against us and contrary to us—even though it was giving us guidance to perfection. Since no man, except Christ, has been able to live the Law perfectly—our only hope for salvation is the Grace of God through Christ’s death on the Cross. Understanding this concept is vital to our being made right with God. Religious error would teach in such a way to invalidate this great truth!

I. OBSERVANCES OF OLD TESTAMENT ORDINANCES ARE NOW INVALID. (2:16-17)**A. Jewish efforts to carry over these observances.**

- 1) Not only carried them over, but tried to bind them on Gentiles in order to be saved.
- 2) They were still holding on to the Old Testament ordinances themselves.
- 3) They were condemning those who would not observe them.

B. Paul’s strong statement: (Let no man judge you):

- 1) No man has a right to impose on you what Christ has set us free from.
- 2) They have no right to pass sentence upon you and condemn you.

C. Area of Judging:

- 1) Meats (food) & drinks.
 - a) Special regulations under the Old Covenant.
 - b) 1 Timothy 4:1-5
 - c) These regulations are no longer binding on us.
- 2) Holy days, New Moons, Sabbaths.
 - a) Feasts Days, Festivals of the Jewish people.
 - b) Sabbath day regulations and special Sabbaths, as well.
 - c) None of these are binding on us today.

D. Contrast between the Shadow and the Real.

- 1) These things were only shadows of the real to come.
- 2) They were only the prelude to the real that has come.
- 3) In Christ is found the real substance.
- 4) Christ is the real body that the shadows were fore-shadowing.
- 5) Thus, the shadowy is no longer of value, nor binding.

II. WORSHIP OF ANGELIC BEINGS IS UNWARRANTED. (2:18-19)**A. These false-teachers were advocating:**

- 1) Voluntary humility:
 - a) A spirit of lowliness, humbleness of mind.

- b) These false teachers would not announce their opinions with dogmatic certainty.
- c) They would rather put on an appearance of great modesty.
- d) Thus, they became the more dangerous to mislead Christians.

2) Worshipping of Angels:

- a) These false-teachers taught:
 - Sinful man is unworthy to approach God, Himself.
 - We must approach Him through an intermediate being such as an Angel.
 - Today, it is advocated we need to go through “the special saints” or “Mary, the mother of Jesus.”
 - Angels are inferior to God, but greater than man.
- b) From a rational standpoint, it sounded plausible.
- c) These teachers sounded pious and humble.
- d) But in reality, their pride was showing!

B. Paul’s warning:

- 1) “Let no man beguile you of your reward.”
 - a) The dangers of these things can cause you to lose your soul.
 - b) Don’t listen to these false teachers—listen to Christ!
- 2) He identifies the true spirit of these false teachers:
 - a) “They intrude into those things they have not seen.”
 - They had no business in this area.
 - They had no way of knowing these things—not revealed to them.
 - Yet, they dared to speak about these things.
 - Claiming a higher intelligence in understanding the deep things.
 - b) “They are vainly puffed up by their fleshly mind.”
 - Such are carnal, fleshly, earthly—and so is their reasoning.
 - It is not “revelation from God!”
 - Their so-called humility was a FARCE!
 - Their mind was full of vain deceit, self-confidence, and carnal wisdom.
 - They were rejecting the Revelation of Christ for their own ideas.
- 3) Such people reject Christ as the Head.
 - a) By not holding fast to the teachings of “the head.”
 - b) He is Lord, King, Master, Law-giver, etc.—not man!
 - c) Angels cannot substitute for Christ—they are inferior.
 - d) Neither can any other being—“saints,” mother of Jesus, etc.
 - e) Christ is our means of access to the Father—no one else!
 - f) False practices undermine Christ and cut man off from Him.
 - g) Complete unity & harmony is maintained with our connection with the head.
 - h) Being cut off from Christ leads to death!

III. SPECIAL LAWS OF MAN HAVE NO VALIDITY. (2:20-23)

A. If you died with Christ, why turn from Him to the worldly and vain wisdom?

- 1) When you died with Christ, you separated yourself from the world.

- 2) By now, you are in danger of going back to worldly wisdom.
- 3) You let worldly people sit in judgment over you.
- 4) You let them dictate laws of observances to you....WHY?
- 5) you are letting them bind their doctrines & commandments as though they were from God...BUT THEY ARE NOT!

B. These ordinances are the doctrines and commandments of men!

- 1) "Touch not, taste not, handle not."
 - a) Laws that men devise in regards to food & drink.
 - b) To go against these laws means you are contaminated as a person.
 - c) Usually, such laws are handed down by traditions of the past.
- 2) Even the Laws given by God to the Jewish people had a limited purpose.
 - a) They had a value in keeping the Jews as a separated people.
 - b) But, they had no permanent value for all people.
 - c) Such Laws are temporal, passing.
 - d) Jesus stated: "*Not what goes into the mouth that defiles, but what comes out from the heart.*"

C. Such rules & regulations boost the PRIDE of men!

- 1) At first, they may appear to show wisdom.
 - a) Such abstinences may appear pious, humble, lowly.
 - b) Neglecting of the body appears to men to be a tremendous sacrifice & shows great self-control.
 - c) Such may appear to men as indicating superior wisdom & piety.
 - d) Such may seem to show great regard for the things of God.
 - e) They may seem to indicate extra-ordinary service to God.
 - f) It is like saying....we obey all God requires and then some!
- 2) But, in reality:
 - a) We need to remember something:
 - This is man's system that he has devised, not God.
 - He has rejected what God has given & substituted His own ideas instead.
 - It shows his lack of love for God and his exalting of himself.
 - b) Observing all these laws may appear to be a great sacrifice:
 - And that is what he wants people to see—he wants the praise of men.
 - He does it to be seen of men.
 - c) These observances:
 - Have no real value to remedy the indulgences of the flesh.
 - It is the fleshly, carnal mind that is being satisfied.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Men are no different today! In the name of piousness and humility, they have invented fasts, festivals, holy days to be observed—binding them on people! They bind "penances," painful vigils, pilgrimages, self-inflicted tortures on themselves in the name of religion. They bind works of merit, "merit of the saints," prayers to the "saints" upon people in the name of religion. Men belittle, laugh at, and reject the teachings of Christ and substitute their own systems,

philosophies, commands, and doctrines upon people as though they were God! All of such things appeal to their pride and ego and present a pious look to the world about them. But they are all vain in their efforts. They turn their souls over to the worldly, carnally-minded people to save them and reject the Christ—their only Savior! God knows what is best for His people. We are safe when we stay with such. Let's observe no more days or ordinances than what He has given us. Let's not be rebellious, prideful, but submissive to our Lord and Master.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

True or False

1. A "Law System" for justification can only bring condemnation.
2. The special regulations under the Law of Moses are no longer binding on us today.
3. Things in the Law of Moses were a "shadow" of the real to come.
4. These false teachers were not teaching that we should worship Angels.
5. Paul states that these false teachers were vainly puffed by their fleshly mind.
6. Special Laws of man are helpful in showing our humility before God.
7. "Touch not," "Taste not," and "Handle not," were special regulations designed for the well-being of man.
8. Special rules that men devise tend to boost man's pride, rather than humility.
9. Teaching special regulations that men devise shows a lack of love for God.
10. Observing special days to be right with God comes from man's pride.

Lesson Eight

“Admonitions to Christians”*(Reading—Colossians 3:1-17)*

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

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

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

I. THE CHRISTIAN NEEDS TO SET HIS AFFECTIONS ON THINGS ABOVE. (3:1-4)**A. They had been raised up with Christ.**

- 1) They have died to sin, been buried with Christ in baptism, and raised up a cleansed person.
- 2) Therefore, they should be seeking heavenly things.
 - a) This is where Christ is...at the right hand of God.
 - b) He has been exalted and has all authority (Matt. 28:18).

B. Your affections ought to be there.

- 1) Your first emphasis, your first place in your heart—should be heaven.
- 2) Things on earth are not wrong in themselves, but....
- 3) When they take first place, they overshadow eternal things.

C. Reason for doing so:

- 1) You died to such things.
- 2) You are bound to a new family relationship that is spiritually oriented.

D. When Christ returns:

- 1) We will receive our longed for reward.
- 2) He is the giver of our life.
- 3) We will be with Him and glorified with Him.

II. THE CHRISTIAN MUST PUT OFF THE DEEDS OF THE OLD MAN. (3:5-9)**A. They must be mortified.**

- 1) Sentenced to death!
- 2) Deprived of their power.
- 3) Their strength destroyed in your life.

B. Basic terms that describe the deeds of the Old Man.

- 1) Fornication
 - a) Illicit sexual intercourse in general (outside of marriage).
 - b) One side of Gnostic doctrine failed to check this sensual indulgence.

- c) The doctrine of Christ can check it.
- 2) Uncleanness
 - a) Impurity or lustful, profligate living.
 - b) Any practice that defiles the body—even dirty-mindedness.
- 3) Inordinate affections
 - a) Depraved passion.
 - b) Longing for wrongful fulfillment of lust.
 - c) Uncontrolled passion
- 4) Evil concupiscence
 - a) Evil, wicked cravings.
 - b) Unholy desires, evil desires.
- 5) Covetousness
 - a) Greedy desire to have more.
 - b) Lust for other people's goods.
 - c) Putting an emphasis upon securing things.
 - d) Which is idolatry—worship of a false god—mammon.

C. These acts must be stopped because:

- 1) God's wrath is poured out on such...here & hereafter.
- 2) Such people are disobedient to their creator...knowing better.
- 3) You may have walked this way before, but no longer!

D. Must also put off:

- 1) Anger
 - a) An abiding, settled, habitual anger.
 - b) Usually carries with it the idea of revenge.
- 2) Wrath
 - a) Boiling agitation of feelings.
 - b) Sudden violent anger, passionate outbreaks, rage.
- 3) Malice
 - a) Ill-will, desire to injure, wickedness.
 - b) Harbor wrong feelings toward others.
- 4) Blasphemy
 - a) Slander, detraction, evil speaking.
 - b) Speech that is injurious to another's good name.
- 5) Filthy Communication
 - a) Foul speaking, low & obscene speech.
 - b) Filthy talk from your lips.
 - c) Foul-mouthed utterance.
- 6) Lying
 - a) Must stop lying to one another—misleading people.
 - b) You have died to that old way of living....made a decision!

III. THE CHRISTIAN HAS PUT ON THE NEW MAN. (3:10-11)

A. Outcome of putting on the New Man.

- 1) Constantly being updated in the true knowledge from God.
- 2) Leads to a perfect knowledge of all things.
- 3) You are becoming more and more like God.

B. Special Relationship Involved:

- 1) You no longer have arbitrary distinctions in society to separate you.
- 2) Every one in Christ is a brother or sister.
- 3) We are all one body—members of one another—united in Him.
- 4) Christ has destroyed all distinctions of His people:
 - a) No religious superiority;
 - b) No intellectual superiority;
 - c) No social superiority.
- 5) All become one great family in Christ!

IV. ATTITUDES & ACTIONS OF THE NEW MAN CHARACTERIZED. (3:12-17)**A. How God characterizes His people:**

- 1) His Elect
 - a) His chosen people.
 - b) The ones He has picked out for Himself from the world.
 - c) The ones He wanted!
 - d) Like an orphan—“Do you really want me?”
- 2) His Holy Ones
 - a) Cleansed, set apart ones.
 - b) Ones He has called to live holy, clean, upright lives.
- 3) His Beloved
 - a) Those God loved enough to die for!

B. The New Man identified:

- 1) Bowels of mercy
 - a) Heart full of mercy, affection for others.
 - b) Pity, heart of compassion.
- 2) Kindness
 - a) Gentle, gracious disposition towards others.
- 3) Humbleness of Mind
 - a) Devoid of pride, haughtiness.
 - b) Modesty, proper evaluation of one’s self in the sight of God.
 - c) Recognition that we are all made in God’s image, but have all sinned.
- 4) Meekness
 - a) A temper of spirit that accepts God’s dealings with us as good without disputing or resisting.
 - b) One who does not fight against God.
 - c) Also, taking the insults & injuries of evil men—so God can chasten & purify His people.
- 5) Longsuffering
 - a) Patiently puts up with injuries & insults.
 - b) Does not allow himself to be easily provoked or blaze up in anger.
 - c) Patient under ill-treatment of others.
- 6) Forbearing one another
 - a) To bear with, endure—willingness to help another.
 - b) Be understanding with people.

- 7) Forgiving
- a) To show one's self gracious, kind, benevolent.
 - b) Even if you have a legitimate complaint against them—show a kind, benevolent spirit.
 - c) Even as Christ forgave us—in the same manner.
- 8) Love (charity)
- a) Last, best, greatest, ultimate attitude of the New Man.
 - b) Love ties it all together—makes them useable.
 - c) Without love, all the other cannot accomplish their purpose.
- 9) Let God's peace rule in your hearts
- a) Tranquility of heart.
 - b) This is what Christ left with His disciples (Jn. 14:27).
 - c) Let this peace cause you to act as God wants.
 - d) Let it serve as your umpire—to keep you straight.
 - e) Don't let anything take away this peace.
 - f) You have been called into one body to this end.
 - g) Be thankful for what he has done for you.
 - h) Keep this peace within and among yourselves.
- 10) Let Christ's Word dwell in you richly.
- a) Entire body of truth given by Christ.
 - b) Let it come into your heart & life as a permanent home.
 - c) Richly, abundantly, plentifully.
 - d) This is God's means of talking to us—guiding us—enriching our lives.
 - e) In all wisdom—learning how to apply it in our lives.
 - f) Teaching & admonishing one another.
 - Teach, encourage as you learn.
 - This can be done by singing:
 1. Psalms—In Old Testament—Appropriate ones.
 2. Hymns—written for Christians (Inspiration in early church)
 3. Spiritual songs—not secular songs.
 - Sing with gratitude in your heart in praise to the Lord.
- 11) Do all in the name of the Lord Jesus
- a) Make all actions conform to His teachings.
 - b) Show respect for His authority over us.
 - c) Always being thankful for what He has done for us.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

It is this kind of life that will bring glory to God & His Son, be a proper response to the love of God shown to us, and...bring the greatest happiness, peace, contentment, and good influence to man and among men! It is worth the effort to put off the old man and put on the new man in Christ.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

True or False

- 1. The completeness in Christ leaves no room for the things men have to offer.**
- 2. Our affections cannot be set on things of this life.**
- 3. To mortify the deeds of the Old Man is to put them to death.**
- 4. Evil concupiscence is unholy desires of the flesh.**
- 5. Malice is to harbor wrong feelings toward another.**
- 6. God selected certain people in the church to be the elect.**
- 7. Bowels of mercy has reference to a heart that is compassionate.**
- 8. To forbear is to put up with something or someone that aggravates us.**
- 9. God's peace can only come to the thankful obedient child.**
- 10. To do all in the name of Jesus is to show respect for His authority.**

Lesson Nine

“Admonitions to Special Groups in the Church”**(Reading—Colossians 3:18-4:1)**

Most of the teaching of Christ is generalized! That is, it applies to all whatever their condition in life might be. Because Christianity is to be universal, it has to be designed for all men, not just a select group of people. However, there are some situations that need specific instructions because of the nature of the relationship. This is done in the latter part of chapter three of Colossians. These instructions are very basic in order to have an orderly society. They are critical to the home, the church, and to society at large.

I. WIVES ARE TO SUBMIT TO THE HUSBAND’S LEADERSHIP. (3:18)**A. The basic duty of the wife—submission in the home.**

- 1) Wives are admonished to recognize their proper role.
- 2) Submission is everywhere taught in Scripture for all.
 - a) “To be a Queen, she cannot be the King too!”
 - b) Her reign depends upon her supporting the King.
 - c) This is God’s arrangement—the way God wanted it.
- 3) Reasons given:
 - a) Man created first (1 Tim. 2:13).
 - b) Woman, the first to sin (1 Tim. 2:14).
 - c) Woman is the glory of man (1 Cor. 11:7).
 - d) Woman was of the man first (1 Cor. 11:8)
 - e) Woman created for man, not vice versa (1 Cor. 11:9).
- 4) This is not a superiority-inferiority issue, but a role issue.
- 5) There has to be a head in every family for it to function properly.
 - a) God designed the man for that role.
 - b) Man is to be looked to as the leader in the home.

B. Exceptions to the rule:

- 1) The husband has no right to ask her to do wrong, be dishonest, commit sin against man or God.
- 2) He has no right to ask her to go places or do things against her conscience.
- 3) He has no right to forbid her to obey God’s commands, nor forbid her to become a Christian or live the Christian life.
- 4) She is bound to obey God—especially when her husband steps out of his bounds of leadership.
 - a) God has not given him the right to go against His Word.
 - b) He invades the place and authority of God when he does so.

C. Caution to be noted:

- 1) The wife needs to be sure:
 - a) That her decision is based on a “thus says the Lord,” not her whims, fancies, or caprice.
 - b) By re-examining the matter very carefully & prayerfully—to be sure she cannot in good conscience comply with his wishes.

- 2) If she is right, then:
 - a) Try to win him to her views with love, kindness, and respect.
 - b) But, if she cannot—then, differ with him in mildness & gentleness.
 - c) Try to be a better wife to him and show she respects God's arrangement of his leadership.

II. HUSBANDS ARE TO LOVE THEIR WIVES. (3:19)

A. This is the same love that Christ had for the church.

- 1) It is an unselfish love—a sacrificing love.
- 2) It is a concerned love.
- 3) It involves:
 - a) Delighting in her—be pleased to dwell with her.
 - b) Cherishing her—protecting her—be willing to give self for her.
 - c) Seek her spiritual well-being.

B. Special warning—watch out for bitter resentment.

- 1) Don't become exasperated to the point of making hasty & severe decisions.
- 2) Don't be harsh with her—she is not designed for harshness.

C. His love to be shown by his proper leadership.

- 1) He should be reasonable, proper & just in his leadership.
- 2) He has no right to require anything wrong or contrary to God's will.
- 3) His decisions are for the good of all—not selfishly for self.

D. The ideal relationship:

- 1) Not one of autocratic commands.
- 2) Not one of submitting with resentment.
- 3) But where the husband's wishes are Law to the wife.
- 4) And where the wife's desires are the rule which he approves.

III. CHILDREN ARE TO OBEY THEIR PARENTS. (3:20)

A. This is the first duty of children.

- 1) To willingly submit to the care and government of parents.
- 2) Children are not old enough, nor wise enough, to make their own decisions.
- 3) God has implanted in the heart of parents:
 - a) A love for their children and their welfare;
 - b) This love will control the rule of parents for the good of the child.
- 4) Good order in the family & community demands this obedience.

B. Obedience involves:

- 1) Respect for parents
- 2) Open to be taught & trained by parents.
- 3) Willing to submit to their rebuke & discipline.
- 4) The principle of obeying Law prepares them for obedience to God.
- 5) Most crimes of the state comes from disobedient children.
- 6) This respectfulness & obedience needs to start early.
 - a) To become a habitual way of life as they grow up.
 - b) To form correct character in the child early.

C. Such action & attitudes are well-pleasing to the Lord.

- 1) Because God knows the outcome of such.

- 2) It will be a blessing to all concerned.

IV. FATHERS, PROVOKE NOT YOUR CHILDREN. (3:21)

A. Do not provoke:

- 1) Vex, fret & harass, continually irritate your children.
- 2) Don't over-correct them, exasperate them.
- 3) Don't be continually finding fault with their actions.
 - a) Children should not be flattered, but encouraged.
 - b) Not praised so much that they become vain & self-centered.
 - c) Yet, commended when they do well.

B. Reason....lest they be discouraged.

- 1) They will become sullen, morose, indifferent to motives presented to them.
- 2) They will become indifferent in their actions because all of their actions receive the same reception.
- 3) The child gives up any hope of pleasing the parent.
- 4) A parent who:
 - a) Always finds fault;
 - b) Always scolds, frets, & complains;
 - c) Is never satisfied with what the child does;
 - d) WILL destroy all desire to please and he will become an enemy.

C. A child needs help to learn loving and willing obedience to please parents.

V. SERVANTS, OBEY YOUR MASTERS. (3:22-25)

A. Obey, submit to your Masters in all areas.

- 1) Full obedience.
- 2) Christianity did not foster or advocate slavery....but....
- 3) Neither did it advocate a violent overthrow of it either.
- 4) Best approach....be good servants.
 - a) Not just when someone is looking.
 - b) Not just to court human favor.
 - c) But serve with a single heart—out of fear & respect to God.
 - d) Do your work heartedly—as though you are serving the Lord.

B. In contrast:

- 1) If you will not be good servants:
 - a) You can expect due punishment—even if you are a Christian.
 - b) Being a Christian will not keep you from receiving due reward of your actions.
- 2) But, if you do right:
 - a) Whether your Master rewards you or not—God will!
 - b) You have an inheritance waiting for you at the end of this life.

VI. MASTERS, BE JUST WITH YOUR SERVANTS. (4:1)

A. Some Christians were Masters.

- 1) The Letter to Philemon shows this.
- 2) It was these Christian Masters that could help change the deplorable conditions of slavery.

B. They were called upon to treat servants with:

- 1) Justness—fair dealing—as they would want to be treated.
- 2) Equal—equity, equality, equitable.
- 3) A servant could not go to Law Courts to get just due.
 - a) They had to depend upon the kindness & justness of their Masters.
 - b) The Christian attitude & actions of a servant can make a difference.

C. Masters:

- 1) Should give due consideration to those he has working for him.
- 2) He should show responsibility for the position he holds over others.
 - a) He is dealing with human beings, not machines.
 - b) He should treat them wisely & justly.
- 3) Greedy Masters will grasp for gain at the cost of a servant.
 - a) He will enrich himself off their labors.
 - b) But in the long run, he will be destroyed.
 - c) A man in want & fear cannot do the job he otherwise would do.
- 4) Also, remember:
 - a) You, also, have a Master whom you serve.
 - b) Remember His love, justness, and fairness.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

The home relationships are vitally important to all of our happiness. The well-being of society depends greatly upon the home functioning as God designed it. Submission is a key concept in the relationships in the home, as well as in the church and society. Rebellion will be punished (Gal. 6:7-8).

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION**True or False**

- ___ 1. The woman was created for the man, but not to be trampled upon.
- ___ 2. The husband has no right to ask his wife to do wrong or be dishonest.
- ___ 3. Love for the wife is to be like Christ's love for the church.
- ___ 4. Obedience on the part of children is to be "in the Lord."
- ___ 5. Problems in the home come from a lack of respect for God's authority.
- ___ 6. Fathers must be very careful how they discipline their children.
- ___ 7. Christianity advocates slavery.
- ___ 8. Slaves are encouraged to be obedient to their Masters.
- ___ 9. Masters are to be considerate of their slaves.
- ___ 10. Submission is a key concept in all relationships in life.

Lesson Ten

“Fellow-Workers in the Kingdom”**(Reading—Colossians 4:2-18)**

One of the marks of the genuineness of these letters of Paul is his personal remarks to and about people. These letters were written in an historical background with real people involved. The Colossian Letter has quite a few of these remarks about fellow-Christians. His basic exhortations to the church ends with chapter 4:6; and then, he begins to give the special insights to a lot of people in the church at that time.

I. CONCLUDING EXHORTATIONS TO THE CHURCH. (4:2-6)**A. Concerning prayer.**

- 1) Keep on praying—don’t neglect prayer in your everyday life.
- 2) Maintain a regularity in prayer.
- 3) 1 Thess. 5:17—**“Pray without ceasing.”**
- 4) Be always in readiness for prayer.
- 5) Be watchful, diligent—less a calamity suddenly takes you unprepared.
- 6) Always expressed gratitude to God.

B. Paul requested their prayers on his behalf.

- 1) He was a prisoner in Rome, awaiting trial.
- 2) Yet, he wanted an opportunity to preach—even in that situation.
- 3) He asked for their prayers to this end that a door of opportunity to preach would be given to him.
- 4) It evidently must have been opened (Phil. 1:12-14).
- 5) Paul wanted desperately to make the Gospel of Christ clearly & plainly known to all men, especially the Gentiles.
- 6) So, he would take advantage of every opportunity to preach Christ.

C. Show your wisdom by how you conduct yourself among unbelievers.

- 1) Be upright, honest—show integrity in your lives.
- 2) Make the best use of your opportunities among unbelievers.
- 3) Why?
 - a) Because what matters to the world is not preaching or profession so much as a godly life and moral integrity.
 - b) This is what impresses them.

D. And, by all means, watch your speech.

- 1) Watch your words, how to speak to others.
- 2) Let your speech reflect the grace of God.
 - a) Let your words be gracious, courteous, agreeable, winsome, attractive.
 - b) Let them be like salt on food—tasty, pleasant, beneficial.
- 3) Learn how to answer those who want to know what & why you believe.
 - a) Not with rashness or foolishness.
 - b) Be set for the defense of the Gospel, but in the right spirit.
 - c) 1 Peter 3:15

II. COMMENTS & INSIGHTS OF PAUL'S FELLOW-WORKERS. (4:7-14)**A. Tychicus (4:7-8)**

- 1) Bearer of this letter & the Ephesian letter also (Eph. 6:21-22).
- 2) He may have also been the bearer of the Philemon letter.
- 3) Tychicus would make know to them first-hand about Paul's condition.
- 4) Characterized by such terms as:
 - a) "Beloved brother."
 - b) "Faithful minister."
 - c) "Fellow servant."
- 5) Also, Tychicus wanted to know how they were doing—and give comforting words to them.

B. Onesimus (4:9)

- 1) He was sent with Tychicus along with a letter to Philemon.
- 2) He was probably a run-away-slave—converted by Paul at Rome (Phile. 6).
- 3) Characterized by such terms as:
 - a) "faithful & beloved brother."
 - b) "a person of integrity."

C. Aristarchus (4:10)

- 1) He had been a companion in Paul's travels at times.
- 2) Luke & He accompanied Paul on his voyage to Rome to be tried (Acts 27:2).
- 3) For some reason, Paul calls him a "fellow-prisoner."

D. Marcus (4:10)

- 1) This is John Mark (writer of the Gospel of Mark).
- 2) The one who went with Paul & Barnabas on the 1st mission trip and turned back.
- 3) The one that Paul did not want to take with them on the 2nd mission trip.
- 4) However, Barnabas did...and it helped Mark.
- 5) So, 16 years later, Paul speaks kindly about him.
- 6) If he comes, receive him as a faithful brother.

E. Jesus or Justus (4:11)

- 1) Jesus was a common name among Jews (Joshua also).
- 2) Justus was a Roman name meaning Just or Justice.
- 3) He and the others were all Jewish helpers with Paul—fellow-workers.
- 4) They were a comfort to Paul (Paregoria—soothing relief)
- 5) In contrast to unbelieving Jews that made Paul's conditions worse.

F. Epaphras (4:12-13)

- 1) Evidently, a preacher from either Colossae, Laodicea, or Hierapolis.
- 2) He was greatly concerned over the condition of the churches and possible problems indicated by this letter.
- 3) He was constantly in prayer on their behalf that they would continue in the faith on to maturity in Christ.

G. Luke (4:14)

- 1) The beloved physician.
- 2) Who had been with Paul on his 2nd mission trip—and, on his trip to Rome for trial.

- 3) He was still with Paul in Rome.
- 4) He had probably been a great help to Paul, physically, emotionally, and spiritually.

H. Demas (4:14)

- 1) Both Luke & Demas send greetings.
- 2) He was with Paul during his 1st imprisonment.
- 3) But no glowing terms are used to characterize him—as he did the others.

III. CLOSING REQUESTS. (4:15-18)

A. Pass my special greetings on to:

- 1) The church in Laodicea.
- 2) Also, to Nymphas (male or female).
- 3) To the church meeting in his/her home (house) (common practice).

B. After you read this letter, send it on to Laodicea to be read by them.

- 1) Same area, same problems, letter would help them as well.
- 2) They were acquainted with the same people.
- 3) Letters circulated, copied, collected together to form complete New Testament.

C. Be sure to read the letter coming from Laodicea.

- 1) Not sure how to understand.
- 2) Two possibilities at least:
 - a) Paul wrote a letter also to Laodicea that has been lost.
 - b) Or, the letter to the Ephesians was to be circulated in that area also, so they should be sure to get and read it.
- 3) The Ephesian & Colossian letters are like Twins—not identical, but alike.
- 4) They actually supplement one another—compliment one another.

D. Give encouragement to Archippus in his work.

- 1) He was a preacher of the Gospel.
- 2) Much depended upon him to keep the church faithful.
- 3) he could use all the encouragement & help they could give.

E. Recognize that this letter has my written greetings at the end.

F. Don't forget me in my confinement & trials.

G. May God's grace be with you all.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

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

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

True or False

- 1. Prayer is an important aspect of the Christian life.**
- 2. Paul wanted their prayers to God on his behalf that he would be given opportunity to preach the Gospel while a prisoner in Rome.**
- 3. Tychicus was a run-away-slave that Paul converted in Rome.**
- 4. Aristarchus was called a “fellow-prisoner.”**
- 5. Marcus was evidently John Mark who wrote the Gospel of Mark.**
- 6. Luke was with Paul in Rome at this time.**
- 7. No glowing terms are mentioned about Demas.**
- 8. Paul mentions the church at Laodicea.**
- 9. The Ephesian letter was being passed around among the churches.**
- 10. Churches meeting in homes was common in that period of time.**

Lesson Eleven

“Introduction to the Philemon Letter”**(Reading—Philemon 1-3)**

The Apostle Paul is believed to have written 13 or 14 of the New Testament Letters. Four of them are addressed to individuals: two to Timothy, one to Titus, and one to Philemon. Of the four, Philemon seems to be an exception to the rule. It is primarily a personal letter to a brother in Christ. The Apostle knew a lot of people and probably wrote a lot of personal letters (?), but this is the only one that we know of that was included in the Canon of the New Testament books. Its merit to be included is obvious. The Letter is a letter from a friend to a friend. It does not have the usual “official” indication of Paul’s Apostleship. Rather, he addresses himself as a slave of Jesus Christ (how appropriate). All the indications show that the Letter was written while Paul was in prison at Rome just before his possible release (AD 62-63).

PHILEMON, A FRIEND

The Letter is addressed Philemon (a beloved friend), Apphia (beloved), and Archippus (our fellow-soldier), and to the church in Philemon’s house. Philemon’s house had become an important center of Christian influence (verses 2, 4-7). The expression in verse 19 could indicate that he was converted by Paul (possibly at Ephesus). His wife and son were both as involved in the Lord’s work as he was. We are guessing, but the above things could indicate that he was a man of wealth (especially, since he had one or more slaves).

ONESIMUS, A RUN-AWAY-SLAVE

Onesimus may have been a native of Colossae, or at least had lived there long enough to be considered as a resident (Colossians 4:9). Slavery was highly practiced all over the Roman Empire. Many of these were taken as cities were overthrow and the people sold to be slaves. It is estimated that Rome’s population was close to 50% slaves. We don’t know how Onesimus became a slave. He could have been born a slave, or sold as a slave to Philemon. The very fact that a Christian owned slaves was not unusual at this time. In fact, there is no effort on the part of the Word of God to condemn it or to encourage the overthrow of the system. The best approach to dealing with slavery was to help correct some of its evils—and we know that the Word of God does this very thing (Colossians 3:22-4:1, etc.).

We are not given the details of why Onesimus had run away from serving Philemon. There would have been a need for some money to live on, so Onesimus may have stolen some things to sell or money to use to help him get to where he was going. Another writer suggested that Onesimus may have been sent to Rome on an errand, but just decided not to go back home to Colossae. For some reason, he is in Rome, and happens to meet up with the Apostle, whom he may have been acquainted with before. Upon his conversion to Christ, the Apostle Paul encourages Onesimus to go back home and make things right with Philemon. This was the occasion for the Letter that was sent along with Onesimus pleading his case.

OCCASION FOR WRITING THE LETTER

Whether this letter was the first or fourth of the Letters that Paul wrote at this time, we do not know. But it is interesting to note that Paul sent Onesimus back to Philemon with a letter at the same time that he sends out the other three letters. He returns with Tychicus, who seems to have the other two letters for that area (Ephesians & Colossians). Onesimus' willingness to go back and try to straighten out the matter shows his repentance. Paul's appeal on Onesimus' behalf was very simple and direct, but respectful not only of the Laws of Rome about slaves; but as well, he showed great respect for Philemon. But he also expressed great expectations from Philemon because of who he was and because of what Onesimus had become. While he had become "unprofitable" to Philemon, he had been very "profitable" to the Apostle and to others at Rome (verse 11).

OUTLINE OF THE PHILEMON LETTER

The outline of the Letter is simple, clear, and to the point; but it is a master-piece of gentle persuasion from an Apostle of Christ to a dear brother in Christ.

Verses 1-4—Introduction, about the writer, and to whom written.

Verses 5-7—Thanks to God for the good report about Philemon and his efforts.

Verses 8-21—Paul's request concerning Onesimus.

Verse 22—Paul's intention to visit upon his release.

Verses 23-25—Concluding remarks and greetings.

We are not sure if Paul did visit Philemon upon his release from prison at Rome. If he was released, it is likely that his visit was delayed for quite some time. He was re-arrested and taken to Rome and possibly died around AD 67 (4-5 years after he wrote this letter). The suggested route that the Apostle may have traveled upon his release is as follows:

1. Paul expressed the desire for the church at Rome to help him go to Spain to preach the Gospel (Romans 15:22-24).
2. He left Titus at Crete to set things in order among the churches (Titus 1:5).
3. If he was the writer of Hebrews, he expressed a desire to visit possibly at Jerusalem with Timothy (Hebrews 13:22-23).
4. To visit Colossae, he would probably have gone by Antioch (Philemon 22).

Much of the above is speculation on the basis of statements made by the Apostle in these letters. There is some evidences that Paul was released and traveled more before his death at Rome.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

There are three other short letters that found their way into the Canon of the New Testament: 2nd & 3rd John and Jude. We are the better for these letters. They give good insights to important truths that God wanted us to know. Each has it's own special thing to add to the New Testament teachings.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

True or False

- 1. There were only three letters written by Paul at Rome during his first imprisonment that he sent to Colossae.**
- 2. There are only four short letters (one chapter each) in the New Testament.**
- 3. The Philemon Letter was written about 67 AD.**
- 4. Epaphroditus was the bearer of the Letter to the church at Philippi.**
- 5. Slavery was very prevalent in the Roman Empire.**
- 6. We know that Philemon gladly did what Paul asked of him.**
- 7. Onesimus' willingness to go back to Philemon shows that he was truly converted.**
- 8. Paul and Philemon were good friends and could be asked to do any favor.**
- 9. Tychicus was the officer that took Onesimus back for punishment.**
- 10. Philemon had sent money to help Paul while in prison at Rome.**

Lesson Twelve

“Challenging the Best in People”

(Reading—Philemon 4-25)

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

THE CHALLENGE OF THE LETTER

In the first seven verses we see depicted a man and his family that would be considered to be committed Christians ready to do what they can for the cause of Christ. Look at this description:

Verse 1—“Dearly beloved friend and fellow laborer”

Verse 2—“To the beloved Apphia” (His wife) and his son (?) **“Archippus our fellow soldier”**

Verse 4—“I thank my God, making mention of you always in my prayers”

Verse 5—“Hearing of your love and faith... toward...the Lord...all the saints”

Verse 6—“Sharing of your faith” “acknowledgement of every good thing which is in you in Christ”

Verse 7—“We have great joy and consolation in your love....hearts of saints have been refreshed by you.”

Verse 2—“Church met in our home.”

The above certainly gives credibility to the godly life of Philemon. But....he was a slave holder! Can he be all that acceptable as a Christian and be a slave holder? We know that there are several Scriptures that are related to slaves and their masters (Colossians 3:22-4:1; Ephesians 6:5-9; 1 Peter 2:18-20) helping to regulate the attitudes and actions of both, but there is none that comes right out and condemns slave holding.

The question that needs to be answered.....we have no answer for! “Why did Onesimus leave his master?” We are not told why! Only that he had left and had possibly stolen some things to sell or some money to live on until he could find employment. Onesimus was not a Christian when he left, but became a Christian while at Rome under the teachings of the Apostle Paul (whom he possibly knew earlier at Colossae or Ephesus).

The challenge of the letter was to deal with the attitude of each of these men towards the other. Especially now that they are both Christians, how should they treat or react to each other? The letter does not state that slavery is wrong or sinful, but did give directions that would help to stop the mistreatment or wrong attitudes on the part of both.

THREE THINGS TO CONSIDER

1. Christianity helps us to be honest and have integrity. When converted, we need to make things right that are wrong. Onesimus had wronged Philemon. Some kind of a debt was owed to Philemon by Onesimus. Onesimus needed to deal with this situation honestly. He made the decision to go back and deal with it correctly. Paul's letter was written to try to help work out a solution to their alienation. He would have preferred to have kept Onesimus at Rome because he was very profitable to Paul. But more was at stake than Onesimus helping Paul. Christian principles say: ***“Go and make it right!”*** (1 Peter 2:11-17).

2. Christians should want to do what is right and not have to be made to do it. Paul did not tell Philemon that Onesimus could no longer be his slave. Rather, he did the greater thing—he challenged the best that was in Philemon. Look at the challenge in verses 9-21:

- a) To answer the request of Paul, the aged one, and also a prisoner for Christ.
- b) Look and see how profitable he has been to me **“in your stead.”**
- c) He did not want to coerce him, but that he would do it willingly.
- d) Maybe....in God's providence, Onesimus had to leave, so that he would become a Christian.
- e) How, he is not only a servant, but a brother in Christ as well.
- f) Receive him as you would receive me.
- g) Whatever he owes, put it on my account and I will pay it.
- h) But don't forget how much you owe me!
- i) Let me have joy of you in the Lord, refresh my love for you.
- j) I have confidence that you will do this and even more than I request.

What a masterpiece of gentle persuasion! It was polite and delicate in sentiment. His request had warmth, sincerity, and dignity in it. *“I do not enjoin, but I beseech you...”* How could anyone resist such a request?

3. In Christ, we have new relationships that make a difference. It is a special brotherhood that is held together by Christ and His love for us (vs. 15-17). Just look at the effect of Christ in the lives of these two men:

- a) Onesimus came back to face up to past problems.
- b) He had become a very profitable help to Paul.
- c) Paul was willing to stand good for what Onesimus owed.
- d) Philemon was challenged to forgive and accept him back as more than a servant—as a beloved brother.

And the Apostle Paul expected that Philemon would do just that very thing!

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

The Gospel challenges the very best in people to come out. The Lord set the example for us in all of these areas of excellence. Onesimus was trying to meet the challenge as a Christian.

Philemon was challenged to do so also; and Paul was confident that he would measure up. So with us today—let the Gospel challenge the very best with us.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

True or False

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

Lesson Thirteen

"Challenging the Best in People"

(Philemon 1-25)

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

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

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

a)

b)

c)

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

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

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

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

7. Who was Epaphras? (v. 23)

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

True or False

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

Conclusion

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

