

Sunday School Lessons

Bancroft Mission

Prison Epistles

Ephesians

Colossians

Philippians

Philemon

Lesson One

Introduction:

The prison epistles—[Ephesians](#), [Philippians](#), [Colossians](#), and [Philemon](#)—are so named because they were written by Paul, the apostle, during one of his incarcerations. It is generally accepted that Paul wrote the prison epistles during his first Roman imprisonment. The exact date he wrote each of the prison epistles is unknown, but the two-year period he spent under house arrest in Rome has been narrowed down to the years AD 60–62. Paul’s imprisonment in Rome is verified by the book of Acts, where we find references to his being guarded by soldiers ([Acts 28:16](#)), being permitted to receive visitors ([Acts 28:30](#)), and having opportunities to share the gospel ([Acts 28:31](#)). These details, along with Paul’s mention of being with “those who belong to Caesar’s household” ([Philippians 4:22](#)), support the view that Paul wrote the prison epistles from Rome. Paul’s Roman incarceration produced three great letters to the churches of Ephesus, Colossae, and Philippi, as well as a personal letter to his friend Philemon.

Three of the prison letters, also called the imprisonment or captivity letters, were bound for three churches. Two of these churches (in Ephesus and Philippi) he founded on his second missionary journey ([Acts 20:1–3](#)). One (in Colossae) he had never visited but was familiar with. Paul’s letters reflect his pastor’s heart, full of love and concern.

Colossians was written explicitly to defeat the heresy that had arisen in Colossae that endangered the existence of the church. In his letter, Paul dealt with key areas of theology, including the deity of Christ ([Colossians 1:15–20](#); [2:2–10](#)), the error of adding circumcision and other Jewish rituals to salvation by faith ([Colossians 2:11–23](#)), and the conduct of God’s people (chapter 3). The letter to the church at Ephesus also reflects Paul’s concerns for the beloved, especially that they would understand the great doctrines of the faith (chapters 1–3) and the practical outworking of that doctrine in Christian behavior (chapters 4–6). The epistle to the Philippians is Paul’s most joyful letter, and references to joy abound within its pages ([Philippians 1:4](#), [18](#), [25–26](#); [2:2](#), [28](#); [3:1](#); [4:1](#), [4](#), [10](#)). He encourages the Philippian believers to rejoice in spite of suffering and anxiety, rejoice in service, and continue to look to Christ as the object of their faith and hope.

The fourth prison letter was written to Paul’s “friend and fellow laborer,” Philemon ([Philemon 1:1](#)) as a plea for forgiveness. Philemon’s slave, [Onesimus](#), had run away from Philemon’s service to Rome, where he met the aging apostle and became a convert to Christ through him. Paul asks Philemon to receive Onesimus back as a brother in Christ who is now “profitable” to both of them ([Philemon 1:11](#)). The theme of the book of Philemon is forgiveness and the power of the gospel of Christ to undermine the evils of slavery by changing the hearts of both masters and slaves so that spiritual equality is achieved.

While the prison epistles reflect Paul’s earthly position as a prisoner of Rome, he makes it clear that his captivity was first and foremost to Christ ([Philemon 1:9](#); [Ephesians 3:1](#); [Colossians 4:18](#); [Philippians 1:12–14](#)). Paul’s time in prison was for the purpose of spreading the gospel in the Gentile capital of Rome. The Lord Himself told Paul to “take courage! As you have testified about me in Jerusalem, so you must also testify in Rome” ([Acts 23:11](#)). Paul’s time in captivity is no less profitable to us today than it was to the first-century churches he loved so well.

These lessons are not designed for a “verse by verse” study but rather a glimpse at each chapter. Attempting to glean from each chapter a “lesson to learn and apply.”

Lesson Two

Ephesians

Introduction (From the Message Bible):

What we know about God and what we do for God have a way of getting broken apart in our lives. The moment the organic (living) unity of belief and behavior is damaged in any way, we are incapable of living out the full harmony for which we were created.

Paul’s letter to the Ephesians joined together what has been torn apart in our sin-wrecked world. He begins with an exuberant exploration of what Christians believe about God, and then, like a surgeon skillfully setting a compound fracture, “sets” this belief in God into our behavior before God so that the bones—belief and behavior—knot together and heal.

Once our attention is called to it, we notice these fractures all over the place. There is hardly a bone in our bodies that has escaped injury, hardly a relationship in city or job, school or church, family or country, that isn’t out of joint or limping in pain. There is much work to be done.

And so, Paul goes to work. He ranges widely, from heaven to earth and back again, showing how Jesus, the Messiah, is eternally and tirelessly bringing everything and everyone together. He also shows us that in addition to having this work done in and for us, we are participants in this most urgent work. Now that we know what is going on, that the energy of reconciliation is the dynamo at the heart of the universe, it is imperative that we join in vigorously and perseveringly, convinced that every detail in our lives contributes (or not) to what Paul describes as God’s plan worked out by Christ, “a long-range plan in which everything would be brought together and summed up in him, everything in deepest heaven, everything on planet earth.”

Chapter 1

Notice in these 23 verses there are 32 references to “Him”, “Himself”, “He”, and “His.” Looks like He is telling us something very important: “It” is not about us, but about Him.

I. Ephesians 1:4-6, “just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, 5 having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, 6 to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved.”

A. God chose us “before the foundation of the world.”

1. The Prophet Isaiah said (55:6), “Seek the LORD while He may be found, Call upon Him while He is near.” God can be “found” when He is “near.” That is Him choosing us when we experience the desire for Him.

2. While God did not plan on Adam’s sin, He had already made provision for Adam, and all mankind’s, recovery—“before the foundation of the world.”

3. The purpose
 - a. To be “holy” and “without blame” before Him.
 - b. To be His “sons” (and daughters—His children).
4. Sonship, holiness, and adoption are by “grace.”

II. Ephesians 1:9-12, “having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, 10 that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth—in Him. 11 In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, 12 that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory.”

- A. “His” will, ... “His” good pleasure... “He” purposed... in “Himself.”
- B. His will, purpose and pleasure are that all mankind would be gathered to Him.

From Deverne Fromke in his book “The Ultimate Intention”, “So our Father is ever seeking to move beyond the shallows to the ocean depth itself—from living in our purposes, to become alive to His purposes. Notice the progression of our fellowship with Him and with others. First, we are called into the “fellowship of the gospel” (Philippians 1:5). This is wonderful, for we share in the common experience of God’s wonderful grace. But it is only a beginning. Then as we learn to walk we are led in the “fellowship of the Spirit” (Philippians 2:1), and thus we recognize the call to walk after and be filled with the Spirit. But the Holy Spirit lives only to make Christ more real and so we are called in a (deeper) “fellowship with His Son” (1st Corinthians 1:9). What could be more wonderful? But as we share His mind and grow in this fellowship we are, like Paul, called into a “fellowship of His sufferings” (Philippians 3:10). Here is the call to those who would enter into a faithful ministry, like the Lord Jesus, living unto the Father and sharing His resurrection power and authority.”

We are convinced that none will continue along in this “fellowship of sufferings” unless they have, as Paul exhorted Timothy, moved into a larger fellowship in the Father-Himself and His own purposes.”

III. Ephesians 1:13&14, “In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, 14 who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.”

- A. The saints of God have an “inheritance”—Sonship.
- B. The Holy Spirit is the “down-payment.” It is the Holy Spirit that does, and is doing, the work of transforming us into full sonship: Divine participation in relationship with the Father.

IV. Ephesians 1:16-18, “do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers: 17 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, 18 the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,”

Lesson Three

Ephesians 2

Introduction: Today's lesson will look at our present standing with God through Christ Jesus. We will also see that Father has an eternal purpose for our redemption and our oneness with Jesus and all of God's children.

I. Ephesians 2:1-3, "And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, 2 in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, 3 among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others."

A. We were spiritually dead.

1. We were part of a different realm than God.

2. Now: Colossians 1:13, "He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love,"

B. God has made a "nature change."

1. Ephesians 2:3 NLT, "All of us used to live that way, following the passionate desires and inclinations of our sinful nature. By our very nature we were subject to God's anger, just like everyone else."

2. This does not mean that we never sin but rather, we now have the Holy Spirit residing in us. The Holy Spirit immediately lets us know that we no longer have the nature of a sinful person but the nature of the Son of God: Jesus.

II. BUT GOD. Ephesians 2:4, "But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us,"

A. Gave us life—Ephesians 2:5, "even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),"

B. Raise us from the dead (literally: dead ones—the realm of those who have not received Jesus)—Ephesians 2:6, "and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,"

C. United us with Christ Jesus—Ephesians 2:6 NLT, "For he raised us from the dead along with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms because we are **united with Christ Jesus**."

D. Shown us kindness instead of anger.

1. Kindness—Ephesians 2:7, "that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus."

2. Anger—Ephesians 2:3 NLT, “All of us used to live that way, following the passionate desires and inclinations of our sinful nature. By our very nature we were **subject to God’s anger**, just like everyone else.”

III. Grace, Grace, Grace. Ephesians 2:8&9, “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, 9 not of works, lest anyone should boast.”

IV. God’s eternal purpose. Ephesians 2:10, “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”

A. “His workmanship.”

1. Jeremiah 18:3&4, “Then I went down to the potter’s house, and there he was, making something at the wheel. 4 And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter; so he made it again into another vessel, as it seemed good to the potter to make.”

2. Isaiah 43:21, “This people I have formed for Myself; They shall declare My praise.”

3. Father has made us brand new—2nd Corinthians 5:17, “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.”

4. Although we are not what we are going to be (God is still working on us), we are not what we used to be—We are “New Creations”; His handiwork; His workmanship.

B. God has a purpose for making us “alive in Him.” Ephesians 2:10, “...for good works, God prepared BEFOREHAND that we should walk in them.”

1. We are all going to heaven some day; but that is not the purpose for His “workmanship.”

2. We are “brand new creations” (a new species of being) to fulfill His will.

a. When Adam sinned, and thereby bringing sin into the entire human race, he fell from fulfilling God’s eternal purpose.

b. Hebrews 13:21, “make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.”

3. As we saw in the last lesson, Father wants an eternal relationship with us. But He also wants to fulfill His purpose through us while on earth.

V. Unity of Believers—Ephesians 2:14, “For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation,”

A. In Paul’s world there were two groups of people: Jews and Gentiles. In the world in which we live there are many groups: Religious, denominational, racial, nations, etc. Paul here shows us that in Christ Jesus, WE ARE ALL ONE.

Lesson Four

Ephesians 3

I. Ephesians 3:1-7, “For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you Gentiles—2 if indeed you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which was given to me for you, 3 how that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I have briefly written already, 4 by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ), 5 which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets: 6 that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel, 7 of which I became a minister according to the gift of the grace of God given to me by the effective working of His power.”

Paul shares reason for his imprisonment as well as his assignment from God.

A. “For this reason.”

1. Ephesians 2:19-22, “Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, 20 having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, 21 in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, 22 in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.”

2. Two “reasons.”

a. Preaching that Jesus was the Messiah: Acts 28:18-22 NLT, “The Romans tried me and wanted to release me, because they found no cause for the death sentence. 19 But when the Jewish leaders protested the decision, I felt it necessary to appeal to Caesar, even though I had no desire to press charges against my own people. 20 I asked you to come here today so we could get acquainted and so I could explain to you that I am bound with this chain because I believe that the hope of Israel—the Messiah—has already come.”

b. Preaching that all that are “in” Christ are ONE: Colossians 4:3, “meanwhile praying also for us, that God would open to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in chains,”—Ephesians 3:3-5, “how that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I have briefly written already, 4 by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ), 5 which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets: 6 that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel,”

B. “The Mystery of Christ” (Ephesians 3:4).

1. Colossians 1:27, “To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.”

2. Romans 8:9, “But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.”

C. Ephesians 3:7, “of which I became a minister according to the gift of the grace of God given to me by the effective working of His power.”

Paul's attitude toward being a minister was one of humility.

- 1st Thessalonians 2:4, "But as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who tests our hearts."
- Ephesians 3:8, "To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ,"

II. Ephesians 3:8-13, "To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, 9 and to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ; 10 to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, 11 according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord, 12 in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through faith in Him. 13 Therefore I ask that you do not lose heart at my tribulations for you, which is your glory."

A. Purpose of the "mystery."

1. Verse 9 ESV, "and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God, who created all things,"

2. The Greek word "ages" here is different than in Ephesians 3:5.

- a. Verse 5— "ages"= generations.
- b. Verse 9— "ages"= world.
- c. Ephesians 3:9 KJV, "And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the **beginning of the world** hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ:"

B. Ephesians 3:10, "...to the intent..." and 11, "according to the eternal purpose..."

The "intent" and "purpose" of creation, the Cross, the Resurrection, and the church (not the building but the Body of Christ).

1. To make know to "principalities and powers in heavenly places" (verse 10):

- The Love of God to us.
- The Love of God to each other.
- The Fellowship and Relationship of the Body of Christ (just like Jesus had "before the creation of the world) with the Eternal Father.

C. Ephesians 3:12, "12 in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through faith in Him."

1. "Boldness" not arrogance.

2. Confidence.
3. Rest.
4. We can **feel at home** in the presence of God, or with God's presence in us.

5. Hebrews 4:14-16, "Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. 15 For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. 16 Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need."

III. Ephesians 3:14-21, "For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, 15 from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, 16 that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, 17 that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height—19 to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. 20 Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, 21 to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen."

A. Verse 15, "...family of heaven..."

1. The Trinity.
2. The Witnesses (Hebrew 12:1, "Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, ...")
3. The present Church.

B. Verse 16, "...be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man."

1. Our strength is in the Holy Spirit.
2. "strengthened with might" is in the passive imperfect tense. We continue to receive strength from the Holy Spirit. This "strength" is not a "one-time" occurrence; we continually live by the Holy Spirit.

C. Verse 17—our "roots" are in Christ's love for us and our love for Him.

D. Verse 20, "to do."

1. Love God.
2. Love One Another.
3. Accomplish whatever task the He gives.

THIS IS ACCOMPLISHED BY LIVING FROM THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Lesson Five

Ephesians 4-6

In chapters 1-3 Paul dealt with who we are in Christ, Christ in us, and God's eternal purpose. He is moving us from Vertical living to Horizontal living; from "being" to "living."

He instructs us as to how to live with our fellow believers, with family order, and to live victoriously over every enemy.

I. Ephesians 4:1-6, "I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, 2 with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, 3 endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. 4 There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism; 6 one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all."

Paul constantly experienced, "Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches" (2nd Corinthians 11:28). Most of the problems were a result of believers living according to the flesh or the world's system instead of living according to the Holy Spirit.

Many have commented about "hypocrites" in the church. Listen to this analogy: The hospital is full of sick people. However, not all that are sick are in the hospital. Those in the hospital are getting help. The same with the church. There are many problems in the world. Those in the church are receiving help; they are growing and becoming whole in every way.

II. Ephesians 4:7-16, "But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. 8 Therefore He says: "When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, And gave gifts to men." 9 (Now this, "He ascended"—what does it mean but that He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth? 10 He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.) 11 And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, 12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, 13 till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; 14 that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—16 from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love."

Paul gives us the victorious life of Jesus, "he ascended far above all the heavens."

Although all are "gifted", he gives the reason for Apostles, Prophets, Evangelist, Pastors and Teacher (some separate "Pastors" from "Teachers" while others say these speak of one gift).

- Purpose of the ministry gifts— "... the equipping of the **saints for the work of ministry**, for the edifying of the body of Christ,"
- Length of time for ministry gifts—" till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the

fullness of Christ; 14 that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—"

- Body of Christ function—" from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love."

III. Ephesians 4:17-5:21 "This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, 18 having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; 19 who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. 20 But you have not so learned Christ, 21 if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: 22 that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, 23 and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, 24 and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness" 25 Therefore, putting away lying, "Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor," for we are members of one another. 26 "Be angry, and do not sin": do not let the sun go down on your wrath, 27 nor give place to the devil. 28 Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need. 29 Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers. 30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. 31 Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. 32 And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you." 5:1 "Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. 2 And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma. 3 But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints; 4 neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. 5 For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. 6 Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. 7 Therefore do not be partakers with them. 8 For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light 9 (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), 10 finding out what is acceptable to the Lord. 11 And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them. 12 For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret. 13 But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light. 14 Therefore He says: "Awake, you who sleep, Arise from the dead, And Christ will give you light." 15 See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, 16 redeeming the time, because the days are evil. 17 Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is. 18 And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, 19 speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, 20 giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, 21 submitting to one another in the fear of God."

Paul says to the Ephesians, “You are new creatures in Christ Jesus, now live out of the New Man, not the Old.

Now, Paul focuses on the family and compares the family to the Body of Christ.

IV. Ephesians 5:22-33, “Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. 23 For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. 24 Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. 25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, 26 that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, 27 that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. 28 So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. 29 For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church. 30 For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. 31 “For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” 32 This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church. 33 Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.”

A. When Paul teaches that a wife is to “submit” herself to her husband, he is using a military term which denotes rank. Every good military General will agree that the Private is indispensable.

1. The scripture teaches that in the Body of Christ wives and husbands are equal. However, they have different roles.

2. 1st Corinthians 11:3 ESV, “But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God.”

a. The Father (God) and the Son (Jesus) are equal.

b. This scripture teaches Divine order.

3. Just as the Father and Son are equal, the husband and wife are equal. There is a Divine order in the home; the husband leads his family, wife and children, spiritually.

a. The husband “stands at the gates” of the home and prevents any terrorist; physically, spiritually, and otherwise from entering his domain.

b. The turns inwardly and teaches, or oversees the teaching, the Divine truths of God’s Word. Verses 25-28, “25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, 26 that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, 27 that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. 28 So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself.”

4. Jesus “makes intercession for us” for the church (Romans 8:34). The husband intercedes for his family.

B. The husband is not the “prophet, priest, and bully.” He loves his wife and family by providing for them in every way.

V. Instructions to Fathers and Children: Ephesians 6:1-4, “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 2 “Honor your father and mother,” which is the first commandment with promise: 3 “that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth.” 4 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.”

VI. Instructions to Employers and Employees: Ephesians 6:5-9, “Bondservants, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in sincerity of heart, as to Christ; 6 not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, 7 with goodwill doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men, 8 knowing that whatever good anyone does, he will receive the same from the Lord, whether he is a slave or free. 9 And you, masters, do the same things to them, giving up threatening, knowing that your own Master also is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him.”

VII. Victorious Living: Ephesians 6:10-20, “Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. 11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. 12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. 13 Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. 14 Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, 15 and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; 16 above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. 17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; 18 praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints—19 and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, 20 for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.”

A. The enemy comes at us from various ways. He is trying to gain control away from the Holy Spirit to himself.

1. He is always attacking spiritually. 2nd Corinthians 10: 3-5, “For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. 4 For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, 5 casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ,”

2. Our “weapon” is always the Word of God.

a. Hebrews 4:12, “For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”

b. Matthew 4:4, “But He answered and said, “It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.’”

3. Our “weapon” is always Prayer. Ephesians 6:18, “18 praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints”

Lesson Six

Philippians

Introduction to Philippians (From the Message Bible):

This is Paul's happiest letter. And the happiness is infectious. Before we've read a dozen lines, we begin to feel the joy ourselves—the dance of words and the exclamations of delight have a way of getting inside us.

But happiness is not a word we can understand by looking it up in the dictionary. In fact, none of the qualities of the Christian life can be learned out of a book. Something more like apprenticeship is required, being around someone who, out of years of devoted discipline shows us, by his or her entire behavior, what it is. Moments of verbal instruction will certainly occur, but mostly an apprentice acquires skill by daily and intimate association with a "master," picking up subtle but absolutely essential things, such as timing and rhythm and "touch."

When we read what Paul wrote to the Christian believers in the city of Philippi, we find ourselves in the company of just such a master. Paul doesn't tell us that we can be happy, or how to be happy. He simply and unmistakably is happy. None of his circumstances contribute to his joy: He wrote from a jail cell, his work was under attack by competitors, and after twenty years or so of hard traveling in the service of Jesus, he was tired and would have welcomed some relief.

But circumstances are incidental compared to the life of Jesus, the Messiah, that Paul experiences from the inside. For it is a life that not only happened at a certain point in history, but continues to happen, spilling out into the lives of those who receive him, and then continues to spill out all over the place. Christ is, among much else, the revelation that God cannot be contained or hoarded. It is this "spilling out" quality of Christ's life that accounts for the happiness of Christians, for joy is life in excess, the overflow of what cannot be contained within any one person.

Philippians 1

I. Paul's Thanksgiving and Prayer: Philippians 1:3-6, I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, 4 always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy, 5 for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now, 6 being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ;"

A. Paul experienced "Joy" (gladness) because of their "co-laboring" with him in spreading the Gospel.

B. God "began the good work within you."

1. Our forgiveness of sin is complete and final.

2. God, through the work of the Holy Spirit is transforming us into the complete nature of Jesus.

a. Romans 12:2, “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”

b. 2nd Corinthians 3:17&18, “Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. 18 But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.”

C. Philippians 1:6, “..., that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ;”

1. Experiencing Jesus in His fulness will be wonderful and beyond our current human imagination.

2. The scripture promises that when we “see” Him, we will become “like” Him—1st John 3:2, “Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.”

3. One of the great experiences is “seeing” Jesus without any human or earthly concepts. When He comes, we will “see Him as He is.”

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

A. Paul gives instruction on “agape” (the God kind of love).

1. He wants our love to abound.

2. He also does not want us to be ignorant— “in knowledge.”

3. Have “discernment” along with love.

4. The teaching here is to love but also to have discernment. That is, to “approve” which is to recognize after examination.

a. We are told to help those in need. However, Paul also said, “For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat.” (2nd Thessalonians 3:10).

b. Paul is not being hard hearted. He wants us to love with the love of Jesus but also to be aware of charlatans and those who only want to gain without responsibility.

B. He goes on in verse 11, “being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.” Love with knowledge and discernment is the fruit of righteousness and glorifies God.

III. Philippians 1:12-18, “But I want you to know, brethren, that the things which happened to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel, 13 so that it

has become evident to the whole palace guard, and to all the rest, that my chains are in Christ; 14 and most of the brethren in the Lord, having become confident by my chains, are much more bold to speak the word without fear. 15 Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife, and some also from goodwill: 16 The former preach Christ from selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my chains; 17 but the latter out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel. 18 What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached; and in this I rejoice, yes, and will rejoice.”

- A. Paul had a “one track” mind: that the Gospel would be preached.
- B. Paul had great joy “in his chains.” He was not enjoying his confinement but was rejoicing that others were inspired to be obedient after seeing his obedience.
- C. Even though some were only trying to bring more persecution, knowing that when more became believers it would bring more hardship on him, he still rejoiced.
- D. What tremendous lessons we can learn in attitude and obedience.

IV. Philippians 1:21-25, “For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. 22 But if I live on in the flesh, this will mean fruit from my labor; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell. 23 For I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. 24 Nevertheless to remain in the flesh is more needful for you. 25 And being confident of this, I know that I shall remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy of faith,”

Paul anticipated the greatness of being in the presence of Jesus. Yet, he was unselfish in that his desire was for others.

V. Philippians 1:27&28, “Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel, 28 and not in any way terrified by your adversaries, which is to them a proof of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that from God.”

- A. The unity and love of believers is convincing to them of their sinfulness and need for Jesus.
- B. John 17:21, “that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me.”

Notes

Lesson Seven

Philippians 2

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

A. Paul, and every pastor's, great joy; the saints would be in unity and love.

B. 1st Corinthians 6:7, "Now therefore, it is already an utter failure for you that you go to law against one another. Why do you not rather accept wrong? Why do you not rather let yourselves be cheated?" is a commentator on Verse 4, "Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others."

II. Philippians 2: 5-11, "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, 6 who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, 7 but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. 9 Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, 10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, 11 and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

A. "Let this mind be in you" implies we have a choice. Whether to live for self or "let" God be the center of our lives.

B. Jesus' humility resulted in His exaltation.

1. It is TRUE that when we humble ourselves, He exalts us.

2. TO BE HUMBLE WITH THE DESIRE OR AIM TO BE EXALTED IS NOT HUMILITY AT ALL; IT STILL HAS "US" AT THE CENTER.

3. It is true that when we praise God He intervenes. But to praise so that He will intervene is not praise at all.

4. This is why Paul stressed, "Allow this attitude to be in you."

C. It is because of Jesus' humility and obedience that "every knee should bow, and every tongue confess."

Acts 4:12, "'Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

III. Philippians 2:12, "Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling;"

The Mirror Bible offers a good paraphrase and comment on this verse: “Considering this amazing outcome of what our faith sees and celebrates, I strongly urge you my darling friend to continue to have your ears tuned to that which inspires your conduct to give full expression to the detail of your own salvation in a most personal and practical way. See salvation in its earth-shattering awesome and ultimate conclusion. I know that my personal presence encourages you greatly but now I want you to realize an inspiration in my absence that supersedes anything you’ve known before. This would mean that even if you were never to see my face again or receive another Epistle from me, it will make no difference at all to your faith.” Comment—the success of Paul’s ministry was not to enslave people to him but to his gospel! He knew that he would be more present in his message than in his person! **Ministry success is not measured by how many partners you can congregate, but by how absent you can preach yourself!**

IV. Philippians 2:14, **Stop, stop, stop** complaining complaining, complaining—
“Allow the attitude of Jesus to be in us.”

VI. Philippians 2:19-30, “But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly, that I also may be encouraged when I know your state. 20 For I have no one like-minded, who will sincerely care for your state. 21 For all seek their own, not the things which are of Christ Jesus. 22 But you know his proven character, that as a son with his father he served with me in the gospel. 23 Therefore I hope to send him at once, as soon as I see how it goes with me. 24 But I trust in the Lord that I myself shall also come shortly. 25 Yet I considered it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, fellow worker, and fellow soldier, but your messenger and the one who ministered to my need; 26 since he was longing for you all, and was distressed because you had heard that he was sick. 27 For indeed he was sick almost unto death; but God had mercy on him, and not only on him but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow. 28 Therefore I sent him the more eagerly, that when you see him again you may rejoice, and I may be less sorrowful. 29 Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness, and hold such men in esteem; 30 because for the work of Christ he came close to death, not regarding his life, to supply what was lacking in your service toward me.”

- A. The value of non-complaining, non-argumentative co-workers.
- B. God’s work does not go forward without “no-name” people.
- C. If we never receive any “atta boys” or congratulations or commendations we keep on serving “as unto the Lord” (Colossians 3:23, “And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men,”

Notes

Lesson Eight

Philippians 3

(Note to teachers—this is a long lesson and lesson nine is short; you may want to combine the two)

I. Philippians 3:1 NLT, “Whatever happens, my dear brothers and sisters, rejoice in the Lord. I never get tired of telling you these things, and I do it to safeguard your faith.”

A. Paul gives us a great lesson here of the necessity of repetition—Romans 10:17, “So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” Literally: by hearing and hearing and hearing and hearing; ad infinitum.

B. Charles Finney is a great example.

Charles Grandison Finney (1792-1875) was an American Presbyterian minister and leader in the Second Great Awakening in the United States. He has been called the "Father of Old Revivalism." Finney rejected much of traditional Reformed theology, teaching that people have complete free will to choose salvation.

Mr. Finney was a trained attorney. He used his skills learned in his training to preach. That is, he would say the same thing in several different ways just as he would to a jury. This proved very effective.

II. Philippians 3:3, “For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh,”

A. Paul gives the great contrast between the result of “self-effort” and faith.

Romans 2:29, “but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God.”

III. Philippians 3:4-7—Paul’s credentials in the “Jew’s Religion.”

A. He counted it “loss for Christ.”

B. We must cut off all that replaces Jesus.

IV. Philippians 3:8&9, “Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith;”

We have a beautiful analogy in Matthew 17:1-8, “Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, led them up on a high mountain by themselves; 2 and He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light. 3 And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him. 4 Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, “Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, let us make here three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” 5 While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!” 6 And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their faces and were greatly afraid. 7 But Jesus came and

touched them and said, “Arise, and do not be afraid.” 8 When they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only.”

- They saw the glory of the Lord—2nd Peter 1:16-18, “For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty. 17 For He received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” 18 And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain.”
- They saw Moses and Elijah.
 - Moses represents the Law.
 - Elijah represents the Prophets.
 - Luke 16:16, “The law and the prophets were until John. Since that time the kingdom of God has been preached, and everyone is pressing into it.”
- Peter, in his Old Covenant understanding, wanted to build three tabernacles (literally-three monuments).
- Matthew 17:8, “When they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only.”
- THE WAY OF RIGHTEOUSNESS IS NOT IN THE LAW OR THE PROPHETS: IT IS IN JESUS ONLY.

V. Paul’s main desire: Philippians 3:10, “that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death,”

A. To “know” Him intimately.

B. Genesis 4:1, “Now **Adam knew** Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, and said, “I have acquired a man from the LORD.”

V. Philippians 3:11-14, “if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead. 12 Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. 13 Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, 14 I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”

A. Clearly, from too many references to list, Paul had the assurance of his salvation.

B. The Classic Amplified Bible gives a very good perspective of verse 11, “That if possible I may attain to the [spiritual and moral] resurrection [that lifts me] out from among the dead [even while in the body].”

C. In verse 12 Paul gives us the reason for being apprehended by Christ: “...that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me.”

Lesson Nine

Philippians 4

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

Paul continues to encourage the Philippians, and us, to keep our faith in Jesus only.

II. Philippians 4:2&3, “I implore Euodia (pronounced U-ah-D-ah) and I implore Syntyche (pronounced Soon-to-K) to be of the same mind in the Lord. 3 And I urge you also, true companion, help these women who labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the Book of Life.”

Wow, the early church had problems too.

III. Philippians 4:6&7, “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; 7 and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”

A. Verse 6 in the NLT says, “Don’t worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need and thank him for all he has done.”

B. Peace comes through prayer, faith, and trust.

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

A. Think on These Things.

B. The Mirror Bible (a paraphrase) reads verse 8 as, “Now let this be the 1conclusive reasoning of your thoughts: consider that which is 2true about everyone as evidenced in Christ. Live 3overwhelmed by God’s opinion of you! Acquaint yourselves with the revelation of 4righteousness, which includes everything that endorses likeness. Make it your business to declare mankind’s redeemed 5innocence. Whatever 6promotes friendship takes priority. Discover how 7famous you are in the light of the gospel; you are in the limelight! Ponder that which is 8excellent. Study stories that celebrate life.”

(The word 1logitsomai suggests a logical reasoning by taking everything into account; 2alethes, that which was hidden, but is now uncovered; the truth as it is embodied in Jesus. Eph 3:21. Overwhelmed, 3semnos, from sebomai, to refere, to adore; 4dikaios, righteousness, from dikay, two parties finding likeness in each other, where there is no sense of inferiority, suspicion, blame, regret or pressure to perform; The gospel is the revelation of the righteousness of God; it declares how God succeeded to put mankind right with him. It is about what God did right, not what Adam did wrong. Rom 1:17. The word righteousness comes from the Anglo-Saxon word, “rightwiseness;” wise in that which is right. The Hebrew word for righteousness is tzadok, which refers to the beam in a scale of balances. In Colossians 2:9-10, it is in Christ that God finds an accurate and complete expression of himself, in a

human body! He mirrors our completeness and is the ultimate authority of our true identity. Of God's doing are we in Christ, whom God made to be our righteousness. 1 Cor 1:31. Blameless innocence, 5hagnos; Rom 4:25, Heb 1:1-3, Heb 10:14,17. Pro-friendship 6prophileo; 7euphemos, from eu, well done, good and phemos, famous, in the lime light, from phao, to shine; Jesus said, "you are the light of the world, a city set on a hill. The word 8arete, is often translated, virtue, from airo, to raise up, to elevate; 9epainos, commendable, praise worthy, from epi, to super impose, influence upon, and ainos, story.)

V. Philippians 4:10-12, "But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at last your care for me has flourished again; though you surely did care, but you lacked opportunity. 11 Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: 12 I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need."

Paul learned, through experience, that his joy and peace came from Jesus. Let us learn from Paul and not from experience.

VI. Philippians 4:13, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."

A. This is not a carte blanche statement.

B. We can do, through the power of the Holy Spirit, everything God has told us to do.

VII. Philippians 4:14 NIV, "Yet it was good of you to share in my troubles."

Paul was very appreciative of their help.

VIII. Philippians 4:16-19, "For even in Thessalonica you sent aid once and again for my necessities. 17 Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that abounds to your account. 18 Indeed I have all and abound. I am full, having received from Epaphroditus the things sent from you, a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God. 19 And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus."

This is promise to those who give.

IX. Philippians 4:21-23, "Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren who are with me greet you. 22 All the saints greet you, but especially those who are of Caesar's household. 23 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen."

Paul's concluding remarks to the Philippian church.

Notes

Lesson Ten

Colossians

Introduction (From the Message Bible):

Hardly anyone who hears the full story of Jesus and learns the true facts of his life and teaching, crucifixion and resurrection, walks away with a shrug of the shoulders, dismissing him as unimportant. People ignorant of the story or misinformed about it, of course, regularly dismiss him. But with few exceptions, the others know instinctively that they are dealing with a most remarkable greatness.

But it is quite common of those who consider him truly important to include others who seem to be equally important in his company—Buddha, Moses, Socrates, and Muhammad for a historical start, along with some personal favorites. For these people, Jesus is important, but not central; his prestige is considerable, but he is not preeminent.

The Christians in the town of Colossae, or at least some of them, seem to have been taking this line. For them, cosmic forces of one sort or another were getting equal billing with Jesus. Paul writes to them in an attempt to restore Jesus, the Messiah, to the center of their lives.

The way he makes his argument is as significant as the argument he makes. Claims for the uniqueness of Jesus are common enough. But such claims about Jesus are frequently made with an arrogance that is completely incompatible with Jesus himself. Sometimes the claims are enforced with violence.

But Paul, although unswervingly confident in the conviction that Christ occupies the center of creation and salvation without peers, is not arrogant. And he is certainly not violent. He argues from a position of rooted humility. He writes with the energies of most considerate love. He exhibits again what Christians have come to appreciate so much in Paul—the wedding of a brilliant and uncompromising intellect with a heart that is warmly and wonderfully kind.

I. Colossians 1:1&2, “Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, 2 To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ who are in Colossae: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

A. “To the saints.” This is how Paul, and the Father, sees those in the Family of God.

B. Although Paul would go on this letter to address some corrections, he also points out their good qualities.

1. Verse 2—Faithful.
2. Verses 4&8—Loving.
3. Verse 5—Hopeful.

II. Colossians 1:6, “which has come to you, as it has also in all the world, and is bringing forth fruit, as it is also among you since the day you heard and knew the grace of God in truth;”

Something to think about: When Paul says here “in all the world” and again in verse 23 “to every creature”, what did he have in mind?

Are these two statements hyperbole? Or is this a fulfillment of Matthew 24:14, “And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.”?

Something to think about.

III. Colossians 1:9, “For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;”

A. This is the first hint of what Paul is going to “deal with” in this letter.

B. Colossians 1:15, 19& 20, and 23, “He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.” 19&20, “For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell, 20 and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross.” 23, “if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister.”

IV. Colossians 1:15-18, “He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. 16 For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. 17 And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. 18 And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.”

A. Christ above all—Preeminence.

B. The Colossians had moved from “Jesus centered” to “man centered.”

C. From DeVern Fromke in his book “The Ultimate Intention”: “Either God is the center of our universe and we have become rightly adjusted to Him, or we have ourselves the center and are attempting to make all else orbit around us and for us...The overshadowing theme of religious writing is man’s fall, his various needs and God’s provision for meeting them. In this way God is always related to man’s benefit, blessing and future. It is man who becomes central; but is that God’s intention?...We can also understand how the Father ‘marked out for Himself’ a vast family who would share His life, nature, spirit, vision, purpose and dedication. We can further see how this family purpose was to be accomplished both through and for His Eternal Son.”

V. Colossians 1:23, “if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister.”

God’s work of salvation, maturity, and “ultimate intention” is contingent upon our faith in Jesus; not law, works, philosophy, or any other thing or person.

Lesson Eleven

Colossians 2

Part of the problem in Colossae was their desire to feel important and relevant based on their wealth and intellect. Heresies abounded in the church at Colossae. Paul addresses some of this in the second chapter of Colossians.

Some background: “Cities grow as they develop commercial centers that provide jobs for their residents. The ancient city of Colossae was built on a major trade route through the Lycus River Valley in the Roman province of Asia Minor (in the southwest corner of modern-day Turkey). There the Colossians manufactured a beautiful dark red wool cloth (colossinum) for which the city became famous. But Colossae’s importance as a business center diminished significantly around 100 BC, when the neighboring city of Laodicea was founded as an active and commercially aggressive competitor. The two towns, along with neighboring Hierapolis, were destroyed by earthquakes in AD 17 (in the reign of Tiberius) and again in 60 AD (in the reign of Nero). Rebuilt after each earthquake, Colossae never regained its early prominence, and by 400 AD the city no longer existed.”

Some of the heresies: A Judaistic legalism, involving circumcision (2:11; 3:11), ordinances (2:14), foods, holidays, and so forth (2:16), a severe asceticism (2:16, 20-23), worship of angels (2:18), and glorification and worship of human knowledge (2:8).

Paul’s answer: He does not preach a system nor a philosophy, but a person—Jesus Christ.

“The only safeguard against a false intellectual system is a strong and positive Christian theology.”

1. Christ our inheritance (1:12).
2. Christ our indweller (1:27).
3. Christ our sufficiency (2:10).
4. Christ our motivator (3:17).
5. Christ our master (4:7).

I. Colossians 2:1&2, “For I want you to know what a great conflict I have for you and those in Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh, 2 that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, and attaining to all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ,”

Paul’s quest:

A. Galatians 4:19, “My little children, for whom I labor in birth again until Christ is formed in you,”

1. Paul did not want the Galatians, and us, to just be saved but to continue to grow in maturity. This is our quest also; “that Christ be formed in us.” That we would be more and more like Jesus in our nature.

2. From Thayer's Greek English Lexicon: "literally, until a mind and life in complete harmony with the mind and life of Christ shall have been formed in you."

B. 2nd Corinthians 11:28, "besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches."

C. That God's people would be "knit together in love." This is the "tie that binds"; not denomination, race, social status, etc.—our love for God and each other.

D. That we would understand the "mystery."—Colossians 1:27 NLT, "For God wanted them to know that the riches and glory of Christ are for you Gentiles, too. And this is the secret: Christ lives in you. This gives you assurance of sharing his glory."

II. Colossians 2:7, "rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving."

As stated above, the Colossians were moving into trust and relevance in intellect and "new" things. Paul instructed them of the necessity of being "rooted and built up in the faith."

III. Colossians 2:8-10, "Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ. 9 For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; 10 and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power."

A. So many, many voices in the world today; many trying to espouse a new philosophy or doctrine.

B. Let us find our lives, all parts or our lives, trusting in Jesus alone.

IV. Colossians 2:11-15, "In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, 12 buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. 13 And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, 14 having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. 15 Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it."

A. Verse 11 coincides with 2nd Corinthians 5:17 Mirror Bible, "Now, in the light of your co-inclusion in his death and resurrection, whoever you thought you ere before, in Christ you are brand new person! The old ways of seeing yourself and everyone else are over. Acquaint yourself with the new!"

B. Verse 12 is in agreement with Romans 6:5-11, "For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, 6 knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. 7 For he who has died has been freed from sin. 8 Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, 9 knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him. 10 For the death that He died, He died to sin

Lesson Twelve

Colossians 3 and 4

I. Colossians 3:1-4, "If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. 2 Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. 3 For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory."

A. Focus on heavenly things (not just heaven but heavenly things).

B. Philippians 3:20, "For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ,"

C. Hebrews 12:23, "You have come to the assembly of God's firstborn children, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God himself, who is the judge over all things. You have come to the spirits of the righteous ones in heaven who have now been made perfect."

D. This world is not my home, I'm just a-passing through,
My treasures are laid up somewhere beyond the blue;
The angels beckon me from heaven's open door,
And I can't feel at home in this world anymore.

Saints, we have our citizenship in heaven. However, we are still in this earth. Let us live in this world by focusing on what the Father "says, does, and goes."

E. Matthew 6:9&10, "'In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. 10 Your kingdom come. Your will be done On earth as it is in heaven."

II. PUT OFF THE OLD MAN—Colossians 3:5-9, "Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. 6 Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, 7 in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them. 8 But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. 9 Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds,"

Paul was not creating a list of "do's and don'ts" but he was saying that since we are new creations, put off the old man.

III. PUT ON THE NEW MAN—Colossians 3:10&11, "and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him, 11 where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all."

IV. The lesson here is "Flesh out the New Man."—Colossians 3:12-25, "Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; 13 bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. 14 But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. 15 And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful. 16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

17 And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him. 18 Wives, submit to your own husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. 19 Husbands, love your wives and do not be bitter toward them. 20 Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing to the Lord. 21 Fathers do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged. 22 Bondservants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but in sincerity of heart, fearing God. 23 And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, 24 knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ. 25 But he who does wrong will be repaid for what he has done, and there is no partiality.”

V. Colossians 3:22-4:1, “Bondservants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but in sincerity of heart, fearing God. 23 And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, 24 knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ. 25 But he who does wrong will be repaid for what he has done, and there is no partiality. 4:1 Masters, give your bondservants what is just and fair, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven.”

A. Paul is in no way endorsing slavery. Slavery is one of the most abominable and atrocious things imaginable. It goes against all that Jesus is.

B. Paul is giving a higher way of living and teaching; to live from the Life of God. To draw our joy from our Life with Jesus.

VI. Colossians 4:2-4, “Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving; 3 meanwhile praying also for us, that God would open to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in chains, 4 that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak.”

A. In verse 2 Paul is telling us the highest and most productive ministry: PRAYER.

B. In verses 3&4 Paul is telling them how to pray for him. This is a prayer to pray for all ministers.

VII. In closing, Paul names off his helpers.

A. What value is all of the named and un-named servants of God.

B. We are working together—on the same team—but with different functions.

Notes

Lesson Thirteen

Philemon

Introduction (From the Message Bible):

Every movement we make in response to God has a ripple effect, touching family, neighbors, friends, community. Belief in God alters our language. Love of God affects daily relationships. Hope in God enters into our work. Also their opposites—unbelief, indifference, and despair. None of these movements and responses, beliefs and prayers, gestures and searches, can be confined to the soul. They spill out and make history. If they don't, they are under suspicion of being fantasies at best, hypocrisies at worst.

Christians have always insisted on the historicity of Jesus—an actual birth, a datable time, a witnessed resurrection, locatable towns. There is a parallel historicity in the followers of Jesus. As they take in everything Jesus said and did—all of it a personal revelation of God in time and place—it all gets worked into local history, eventually into world history.

Philemon and Onesimus, the slave owner and slave who figure prominently in this letter from Paul, had no idea that believing in Jesus would involve them in radical social change. But as the two of them were brought together by this letter, it did. And it still does.

From "Jensen's Survey of the New Testament":

This letter is a masterpiece of graceful, tactful, and delicate pleading for a forgiving spirit. This very personal correspondence of Paul has been described as "a model letter written by a master of letter writing."

The name Philemon means "useful" or "profitable."

Onesimus has evidently stolen money or goods from his master Philemon (verse 18) and fled to Rome like so many other runaway slaves. Paul's immediate concern was for Onesimus's restoration and reconciliation with Philemon. Hence the apostle's tender and moving intercessory letter to his close friend Philemon on behalf of Onesimus.

The bearers of this letter were Onesimus and Tychicus, who also delivered Paul's letters to the Ephesians and Colossians (Colossians 4:7-9).

I. Philemon 3-7, "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. 4 I thank my God, making mention of you always in my prayers, hearing of your love and faith which you have toward the Lord Jesus and toward all the saints, 6 that the sharing of your faith may become effective by the acknowledgment of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus. 7 For we have great joy and consolation in your love, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed by you, brother."

Paul is not trying to "butter up" Philemon, he is simply reminding him of who he is in Jesus.

II. Philemon 11, "who once was unprofitable to you, but now is profitable to you and to me."

Oh, what power there is in the New Life in Jesus. We really are "new creations."

III. Philemon 13&14, “whom I wished to keep with me, that on your behalf he might minister to me in my chains for the gospel. 14 But without your consent I wanted to do nothing, that your good deed might not be by compulsion, as it were, but voluntary.”

Paul could have exercised his authority as Philemon’s pastor (verse 8), but he wanted to “do the right thing.”

IV. Philemon 15, “For perhaps he departed for a while for this purpose, that you might receive him forever,”

A. A great lesson for all believers; God will divinely work things out—Romans 8:28, “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.”

B. Habakkuk 2:3, “For the vision is yet for an appointed time; But at the end it will speak, and it will not lie. Though it tarries, wait for it; Because it will surely come, It will not tarry.”

V. Philemon 17-21, “If then you count me as a partner, receive him as you would me. 18 But if he has wronged you or owes anything, put that on my account. 19 I, Paul, am writing with my own hand. I will repay—not to mention to you that you owe me even your own self besides. 20 Yes, brother, let me have joy from you in the Lord; refresh my heart in the Lord. 21 Having confidence in your obedience, I write to you, knowing that you will do even more than I say.”

Parallels of these verses with the substitutionary work of Jesus:

“accept him as you would me”—verse 17.

“charge that to my account”—verse 18.

“I will repay it.”—verse 19.

“you owe to me”—verse 19.

VI. Final comment from “Jensen’s Survey of the New Testament”: “Much has been written about the subject of slavery, including what the New Testament says about it. It has been observed, for example, that in his letter to Philemon Paul does not make a frontal attack upon the institution of slavery, which was very widespread throughout the Roman Empire. Rather, he sets forth principles and patterns of Christian conduct and relationships that inevitably must bring about the destruction of the institution, when consistently applied.”

Notes
