

SEVEN YEAR WHOLE BIBLE STUDY COURSE

Year Six **Third Quarter**
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FOREWORD

Charles Spurgeon on Preaching

Charles Haddon Spurgeon said this in a talk to young preachers. “I have known what it is to use up all any ammunition, and then I have, as it were, rammed myself into the great gospel gun, and I have fired myself at my hearers, all my experience of God’s goodness; all my consciousness of sin; and all my sense of the power of the gospel. There are some people upon whom that kind of preaching tells when nothing else would have done, for they see that then you communicate to them not only the gospel, but yourself also. The kind of sermon that is likely to break the hearer’s heart is that which has first broken the preacher’s heart. The sermon which is likely to reach the heart of the hearer is the one which has come straight from the heart of the preacher; therefore, dear brethren, always seek to preach so that the people shall be impressed as v, ell as interested and instructed.”

“HOW TO GET RID OF THE PREACHER”

There are always some folk who would like a change in ministers. Here are five sure-fire ways of getting rid of him.

1. Sit up front, smile and say, “Amen” every time he says something good. He will preach himself to death.
2. Pat him on the back occasionally and tell him what a good work he is doing in the church and community. He will work himself to death.
3. Increase your offering to the church. He will die from shock.
4. Tell him you have decided to join the “Visitation Committee” and help win souls for the Lord, He will suffer a heart attack and be carried out feet first.
5. Get the whole church to band together and pray for him. He will get so efficient and become such a power for the Lord that some large church will hear about him and give him a call. That will take him off your hands.

– Selected –

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WHOLE BIBLE STUDY COURSE

Year VI

Third Quarter

Lesson 27

Page 1

Philippians 3

Memory Verses: Philippians 3:13,14

Memory Verses:

“Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 3:13, 14).

CHRIST THE OBJECT OF OUR FAITH AND HOPE

This is the great chapter of the AUTOBIOGRAPHY of Paul. First, he emphasized the story of his past in a remarkable way. Then referring to these things as “gains” (the word is plural), the Apostle to the Gentiles affirmed: “I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord” (Phil. 3:8). The vision of Christ immediately showed him the WORTHLESSNESS of everything in comparison!

Commendation and Condemnation

Paul’s praise of his friends is followed by a solemn rebuke of his foes. He has just commended Timothy (Phil. 2:19-24), and Epaphroditus (Phil. 2:25-30). The background picture of this chapter seems to have been the appearance in Philippi of Judaizers who wanted the Gentile Christians to RELIEVE and OBEY the gospel AND BE CIRCUMCISED (see Acts 15:1f for background understanding of the Judaizers). They had not made much headway; Paul was determined they would not be tolerated at Philippi!

I. The Warning Against False Teachers (Philippians 3:1-16)

A. The true Israelites (Philippians 3:1-3).

“Finally, my brethren...” (Phil. 3:1) “Finally” is not to be pressed too far. It may indicate that Paul intended to end his letter just here, but not necessarily so. The word may mean “henceforth,” or “for the rest,” or “further.” So again in Phil. 4:8. Paul is passing from COMMENDATION to severe CONDEMNATION.

“Rejoice in the Lord”: “Rejoice” is the keynote of this epistle. Let us strike the same note daily. It is a two-word command of God’s word, you know (I Thess. 5:16)! Here it introduces a severe rebuke, and when the solemn tones of warning have died away, the notes of “joy” and “rejoicing” will burst forth again in gladness (see Phil. 4:4, 10). Today let us “rejoice” in SPITE OF COMMUNISM, “creeping socialism in government,” growing drunkenness in America, ad infinitum, ad nauseam. Preachers, who “go to seed” and have only one string to play, OUGHT to follow the WHOLE BIBLE STUDY COURSE and go from Genesis through Revelation to keep from getting stagnant or lopsided!

“To write the same things to you... is safe”: Paul as a true teacher is not afraid of REPETITION! Admonitions are never old until the NEED FOR THEM HAS CEASED. Let us keep on teaching and living daily the truth (Matt. 28:20; Acts 20:31).

“Beware of dogs...” (Phil. 3:2) “Blepete” is used three times for urgency and with a different epithet for the Judaizers each time. The Jews called the Gentiles “dogs” as a symbol of what was mean and low. Paul now calls the Judaizers “DOGS,” because they wished to ADD TO THE GOSPEL THE LAW OF CIRCUMCISION (see Isa. 56:9-11; II Pet, 2:22). They were “evil workers” (see Matt. 23:15). (Were the Jewish “Christians” those who had “joined” the church because they could not “beat it”?)

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This mosaic from a house in Pompeii reads, “Beware of the dog.” In the East dogs are rarely individually owned. They roam in packs as unclean scavengers. The snarling, snapping Judaizers roamed all over the Roman Empire as “evil workers”. “Beware” of them, faithful Christian, wherever you are. They are “deceitful workers” (see II Cor. 11:13).

“Beware of the concision”: Applied to those who called themselves the circumcision. It means simply a “cutting,” the class who were “mutilated.” It is contemptuous.

“For we are the circumcision...” (Phil. 3:3): In contrast to the “false teachers” who made outward forms essential to salvation, Paul declares the “true circumcision is NOT IN THE FLESH, BUT OF THE HEART IN THE SPIRIT.” See Rom. 2:29; 4:12. Three proofs are given to support this fact:

1. True Israelites “worship God in the spirit!” Are who are filled with the Holy Spirit are true priests of God, and their simplest tasks may be part of the SACRED SERVICE they render to a needy world (Rom. 12:1-2; Matt. 10:42).

2. They “REJOICE (or GLORY) in Christ Jesus.” This is in contrast to those who glory in legal observances, or external ceremonies, as grounds of ACCEPTANCE with God, or as the true source of RIGHTEOUSNESS.

3. They “have no confidence in the flesh.” “Flesh” denotes all that man achieves aside from the Spirit of God. Paul’s legal observance of the Law of Moses, his Jewish descent, social standing, moral attainments gave Paul no righteousness before God! Paul sees the cross, then the risen Christ, and he REJOICES that the Saviour has given him righteousness, meets all his needs, and will never “forsake” him!

B. Paul’s Jewish privileges (Philippians 3:4-7).

“Though I might also have confidence in the flesh...” (Phil. 3:4): When Paul accepted Christ as Saviour, he gave up ALL JEWISH PRIVILEGES. He realized the seven advantages in the flesh which he possessed (verses 4-7).

The conversion of Saul of Tarsus and his sudden transformation into a Christian apostle is one of the most surprising facts in history! It forms one of the strongest arguments in support of BELIEF IN THE SUPREME MIRACLE – the RESURRECTION OF Jesus CHRIST. Unless on the way to Damascus Saul met this living Lord, it is IMPOSSIBLE TO GIVE A RATIONAL EXPLANATION OF SO SUDDEN A CHANGE IN ALL HIS VIEWS OF LIFE AND ITS VALUES. He experienced a mental and spiritual revolution.

“Circumcised the eighth day...” (Phil. 3:5) As the law commanded (Luke 1:59; Gen. 17:12). Paul was a genuine Jew. At his birth he had been “sealed” as such by this initial rite, which was administered in infancy only to such as were of pure blood, He was no proselyte to the faith, but a Jew by birth.

“Of the stock of Israel”: He was a direct descendent of the Patriarch Jacob through Rachel a legitimate wife, not a handmaid.

“Of the tribe of Benjamin.” Benjamin, “son of my right hand” (Gen. 35:17f), was the only one of the sons of Jacob born in the Promised Land. The first King, Saul (Paul’s own Hebrew name) was from this little tribe. The battle cry of Israel was “After thee, O Benjamin” (Judges 5:14).

“An Hebrew of the Hebrews.” Both his father and mother were Hebrews.

“As touching the law, a Pharisee.” A member of the strictest sect of the Jews (see Acts 23:6; II Cor. 11:22). He was brought up at the feet of famed Gamaliel (Acts 22:3).

“Concerning zeal, persecuting the church” (Phil. 3:6): He tried to exterminate Christianity, and voted to have Stephen stoned (I Tim. 1:13-16, Acts 7:58-8:4).

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“Touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless”: He kept the outward demands of the law of Moses strictly (Gal. 1:14). He knew and practiced all the rules of the rabbis. He had a marvelous record, scoring a hundred in Judaism! “Blameless” before man, but not JUSTIFIED BEFORE GOD!

“But what things were GAIN to me... loss for Christ” (Phil. 3:7): ALL SEVEN ADVANTAGES IN THE FLESH Paul GAVE UP for Christ the object of our faith, and our ONLY HOPE! Once he boasted of these things. Now they were worthless. False pride and all human “gains” Paul counted as “loss for Christ’s sake”! Paul rebukes the false pride of the Judaizers (see Luke 14:11; Prov. 16:18).

C. The knowledge of Christ (Philippians 3:8-11).

“Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss...” (Phil. 3:8): “I regard everything as waste in comparison to the superb value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.” All worldly things are but “dung,” refuse of any kind, compared to winning Christ. His own family doubtless regarded him a disgrace to Judaism, the Pharisees thought of him as a deserter, and Jews in general felt Paul was a renegade. Paul gave up every worldly advantage to “gain Christ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, based on the Law, but through faith in Christ, the righteousness that comes from God” (verse 9; see Rom. 8:1).

“That I may know him...” (Phil. 3:10): Paul’s major passion was to get more and more knowledge of Christ by experience.

“And the power of his resurrection”: The resurrection demonstrated Jesus to be the Son of God WITH POWER (Rom. 1:4). This mighty power will work in our resurrection from spiritual death to a NEW LIFE (Col. 2:13; Eph. 1:19-23) as a PRESENT POWER TODAY. It will RAISE us from the grave to ETERNAL LIFE (verse 11; I Thess. 4:13-18)!

D. Pressing toward the goal (Philippians 3:12-16).

“Not as though I had already attained... but I followed after...” (Phil. 3:12). Having looked at his PAST, and having DECLARED HIS ATTITUDE to human ADVANTAGES, Paul spoke of his SENSE OF LIMITATION. He declared there remained for him but “one thing” (verse 13), which was to “PUSH ON TO THE GOAL for the PRIZE of God’s heavenly call in Christ Jesus” (verse 14).

“Prize”: A crown was bestowed in an earthly race when the goal divas reached. This “prize” is the “resurrection from the dead” (verse 11) and an “eternal crown”!

“High calling of God in Christ Jesus”: The “upward calling”! “The Upward Call” in J. D. Jones “The Gospel of the Sovereignty” was a lever that my lovely Lord used during one dark night of awful doubt to keep me in the ministry (Eph. 1:18; Heb. 12:1; II Tim. 4:6-8).

“Let us therefore, as many as be perfect...” (Phil. 3:15): Here the term means relative perfection, not the absolute perfection so pointedly denied in verse 12, Paul includes himself in the group of spiritual adults (Heb. 5:13). Those not “minded” as he was in verses 7-14 he turns over to God! Having come thus far in the Christian life, “let us keep moving in the right direction” (verse 16), making the right use of all the light, ability and knowledge God has given us.

In this church, “If we are to make progress, we must live up to our BEST PRESENT KNOWLEDGE of the ideals and requirements of the Christian life.”

II. Warning Against Lawlessness (Philippians 3:17-21)

“Brethren, be followers together of me...” (Phil. 3:17): Paul is still a safe example for all of us to follow (see II Thess. 3:7-9; 4:11-13; 11:1). In contrast to those who confused liberty with License, Paul warns against them, He commended Timothy and Epaphroditus as examples of self-sacrifice to be imitated (Phil. 2:19-30).

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“For many walk... enemies of the cross of Christ” (Phil. 3:18): Paul repeats his warning to the Philippian. “Even weeping” shows deep emotion as he dictated the letter and recalled these recreant followers of Christ (see II Cor. 2:4). “Enemies” were the Judaizers who DENIED THE VALUE OF THE CROSS OF CHRIST (Gal. 5:11; 6:12, 14), and/or the Epicureans whose loose living gave the lie to the cross of Christ (I John 2:4).

“Whose end is destruction...” (Phil. 3:19); The issue of such conduct will be complete moral ruin. “Destruction” is the opposite of “salvation.” It does not mean annihilation, but the loss of all that makes for true life, both now and in the world to come. These men are “doomed to destruction” (II Tim. 2:1-5; II Pet. 2:11-22; Jude 4, 8, 12, 13; Rev. 22:15).

“Whose God is their belly”: “Whose God is their stomach.” They glory in shameful things, instead of “setting your affection on things above” (Col. 3:1). They follow their physical appetites alone. Their boasted liberty is BONDAGE TO LUST (Rom. 16:18).

“For our conversation is in heaven...” (Phil. 3:20): Our citizenship. We Christians are a “colony” or “commonwealth” of heaven on earth (Col. 3:3; Phil. 1:21; Gal. 2:20; Rom. 14:17; Gal. 4:26). We are looking for the coming of Christ our Deliverer who shall “change our vile body,” “our humiliated body so as to resemble His glorious body in the exercise of the power that enables Him to subject everything to Himself” (verse 21).

QUESTIONS: And Your Answers

1. Although Paul was in prison, how did he boldly counsel Christians (Phil. 3:1)? Why is it fitting that a Christian always rejoice” (Psa. 5:11)? What is a two-word Christian command (I Thess. 5:16)?
2. How did Paul refer to the Jews who would require circumcision for salvation (Phil. 3:2; Acts 15:1, 5; Gal. 1:7; 2:4; 5:1-4, 12)?
3. What three things characterize those who are spiritually circumcised (Phil. 3:3; Rom. 2:29; Col. 2:11)?
4. What seven advantages in the flesh did Paul possess (Phil. 3:4-6)?
5. What did Paul consider these seven possessions before his conversion (Phil. 3:7)?
6. What did he consider them after his conversion (Phil. 3:7, 8)?
7. For whom did Paul surrender these natural superiorities (Phil. 3:8)?
8. What two kinds of righteousness are presented in Phil. 3:9?
9. How is each kind of righteousness received (Phil. 3:9)?
10. What desires did Paul express (Phil. 3:9, 11)?
11. To what resurrection did Paul look forward (Phil. 3:11; John 5:28, 29; 1 Cor. 15:52; I Thess. 4:13-18)?
12. By whom was Paul “apprehended” for Christian service (Phil. 3:12-13)?
13. What “one thing” did Paul do (Phil. 3:14)?
14. Who reveals any inconsistency in our doctrine or walk (Phil. 3:15)? What is the rule for our walk (Phil. 3:16; James 4:17)?
15. What did Paul say of these false teachers (Phil. 3:17-19; II Cor. 2:4)?
16. How did Paul reveal his broken heart for the lost (Phil. 3:18)?
17. Where is the Christian’s citizenship (Phil. 3:20)?
18. Who is coming down some day from the home city (Phil. 3:20; John 14:1-6)?
19. What part of the believer will be affected at Christ’s coming (Phil. 3:21)?
20. How will the bodies of all believers be transformed (Phil. 3:21)?

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Year VI

Third Quarter

Lesson 28

Page 1

Philippians 4

Memory Verses: Philippians 4:13,19

Memory Verse:

“I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me. But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:13, 19).

CHRIST OUR STRENGTH AND SUPPLY

“For our commonwealth has its capitol in heaven (as the Philippians had the earthly capitol in Rome), from which also we expect the Lord Jesus as Deliverer; who will change the fashion of our humiliated body so as to resemble His glorious body in the exercise of the power than enables Him to subject everything to Himself” (Phil. 3:20, 21).

The vision of FUTURE GLORY gives an inspiring FORCE to help the Christian in his sober, practical everyday duties and responsibilities.

“Keep Looking Up” is not only a good song – It is Scriptural, too.

I. Friends of Paul in Philippi (Philippians 4:1-3)

“Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved...” (Phil. 4:1): Because the “commonwealth” to which we belong is in heaven, let us “stand fast in the Lord.” Standing firm is difficult when a panic starts, but faithful Christians do it (Heb. 11:1; Rev. 2:10c).

“My brethren”: The appeal is most affectionate. He addresses his readers as “my brethren.” Twice he repeats the word “beloved.”

“My joy and crown”: The Philippians were a “joy” to Paul now on account of their faith and affection, and a “crown” of honor to him in the de of accounts, as his converts. They are the BADGE and PROOF of his devoted service. See I Thess. 2:19, 20.

“I beseech Euodias... Syntyche” (Phil. 4:2): Paul learned that a disagreement has arisen between two women leaders of the church at Philippi. “Euodias” means “Prosperous Journey,” “Sweet Savor,” or “Fragrance.” “Syntyche”: “Good Fortune,” “Fortunate,” or “Affable.”

The cause of their dissension is unknown. “It may have been accidental friction between two energetic Christian women” (Kennedy). Paul’s loving appeal in verse 1 introduces this delicate subject of urging these two Christian women to settle their differences, “to agree together, as Christians.” Women were prominent in the founding of the Philippian church. Lydia, a “seller of purple” from Thyatira, was the first convert, and he

“And I entreat thee also, true yoke-fellow...” (Phil. 4:3): It is impossible to determine who is meant. The one addressed must have been a companion of toils and sufferings, a fellow-laborer of Paul. It matters little that we know who the “peacemaker” was (Matt. 5:7). He was to “Help those women which labored with me in the gospel”: “Lend those women a hand,” meaning Euodia and Syntyche whom he had just named. They had zealously aided Paul at Philippi.

“With Clement also...” There is no evidence that he was Clement of Rome as the name is common.

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“My fellow laborers”: Many converts had been made to Christ at Philippi. Paul does not name them, but simply says their “names are in the book of life.” Compare Daniel 12:1; Rev. 3:5; 13:8; 17:8; 20:12; 21:27. From that book the names may be “blotted out” (Rev. 3:5) NOW. Not to be “faithful” will keep one out of heaven forever (Matt. 10:22; Rev. 2:10c). “Is your name written there?” If so, you will not be “dead timber” on this church roll! There are three degrees in fruit bearing: “Fruit” (John 15:2), “more fruit” (verse 2), and “much fruit” (John 15:5, 8). As we bear “much fruit” the Father is “glorified.”

II Final Admonitions (Philippians 4:4-9)

A. General exhortation to joyfulness (Philippians 4:4-7).

“Rejoice in the Lord always... “ (Phil. 4:4): Joy is the predominant note of Philippians, “Rejoice” was written by a man in prison, who for thirty years had been mobbed, beaten, stoned, and cuffed about enough to intake the angels week! Yet, he overflowed with joy. “I’ve got the joy, joy, joy, joy, down in my heart.” “Again” is repeated for emphasis. “In the Lord” means that with Christ we can IN ALL CIRCUMSTANCES, “rejoice”!

“Let your moderation be known unto all men.” (Phil. 4:5): “Your gentleness,” “your sweet reasonableness” (Matthew Arnold). Do not become alarmed and bitter. Be calm. It will calm others.

“The Lord is at hand”: This expression was almost a watchword among the early Christians. Paul uses it in the Aramaic form, “Maranatha,” “O Lord, come!” (I Cor. 16:22). Lightfoot calls it “The Apostle’s watch-word.” The expectation of the early return of Christ was urged as an incentive to all the Christian virtues. In the glory of His return, human distinctions and differences would seem insignificant and trifling. This hope of the return of Christ, AS AN EVENT THAT MIGHT OCCUR IN ANY GENERATION, has dimmed in the passing centuries, Let us not join “in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, WHERE IS THE PROMISE OF HIS COMING” (II Pet. 3:3,4)!

“Be careful for nothing...” (Phil. 4:6): If “the Lord is at hand,” itchy should one worry? His speedy return should inspire gentleness and banish harassing care. “Throw all your anxiety onto Him, for His concern is about you” (I Pet. 5:7).

“But in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving...” Paul intimates that the CURE FOR ANXIETY IS TO BE FOUND IN BELIEVING PRAYER. “Prayer” here expressed the general act of devotion; “supplication” the cry of conscious needs; “requests,” the actual favors that are asked of God. All is to be done in a spirit of gratitude, “with thanksgiving.”

“And the peace of God...” (Phil. 4:7) If Christians are “anxious in nothing, prayerful in everything, thankful for anything,” A BLESSED RESULT IS SURE TO FOLLOW. The word “keep” or “guard” indicates that Paul is here employing a military figure, even to express the POWER of SPIRITUAL PEACE. There is a “peace” which God gives, which He alone can bestow, which He is ever ready to grant to those who take their anxieties to Him in prayer.

“Peace... passeth all understanding”: It is far beyond our fondest hopes and brightest dreams. This peace stands as a sentinel to guard those “in Christ Jesus.” See Acts 9:24 and II Cor. 11:32.

B. Final summons to Christian progress (Philippians 4:8,9).

“Finally, brethren...” (Phil. 4:8): The paragraph that enjoins trust in God is followed by an EXHORTATION to HIGH THINKING and NOBLE EFFORT. Paul introduces six adjectives picturing

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Christian ideals, old fashioned but NEW AS TOMORROW'S SUNRISE. They are sorely needed NOW EVERYWHERE. They sum up the Christian duties.

“Whatsoever things are true...” Truth in word, in action, and in thought must be cherished. “Thy word is TRUTH” (John 17:17). “Jesus saith unto him, I am... THE TRUTH” (John 14:6).

“Honest”: The Greek is “reverend”. Whatever is worthy of reverence. “Just”: Strict justice in all dealings. An upright life (I Sam. 12:3). “Pure”: In thoughts, words, and deeds.

“Lovely”: Suggests kindly graces of character. A Christian should not be morose, unkind, or faultfinding. We must strive to be winsome, and pleasing. “How to Win Friends and Influence People” ought to be read by us all at least once each year!

“Good report”: A life of which no evil thing can be truthfully said.

“If there be any virtue... praise, THINK ON THESE THINGS.” Lest he may have omitted some excellency Paul adds, “Whatever is lofty and whatever is praiseworthy, PUT YOUR MIND ON THESE. “We are responsible for our thoughts and can hold them to high and holy ideals. You have heard many sermons on “WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED?” Have you heard one on “WHAT MUST I THINK TO STAY SAVED?” Study this lesson and SPREAD IT EVERYWHERE!

We grow like our thoughts. “For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he!” (Prov, 23:7) Right thinking is invaluable. It must be followed by RESOLUTION. It must be followed by DETERMINED ACTION FOR CHRIST!

“And the God of peace shall be with you” (Phil. 4:9): Paul dares to point to his life in Philippi as an illustration to his high thinking. The preacher is the interpreter of the spiritual life, and should be an example of it. The exhortation is accompanied by an encouraging promise, “And the God of peace shall be with you” who “think” and “DO” such things! The former promise was that “the peace of God” (verse 7) would “guard” them. Here the assurance is that “the God of peace” will be WITH THEM!

III. Fulsome Thanks (Philippians 4:10-20)

“But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly...” (Phil. 4:10): I did rejoice, I do rejoice greatly. He was “uncommonly happy in the Lord because of late your thoughtfulness toward me came to life again, a matter in which you were interested, but you lacked opportunity.” The Philippians sent support to Paul by Epaphroditus. Paul’s parents were not poor and at times he seems to have had personal resources available. Usually he was forced to make a living by working with his hands. This became impossible in prison.

“Lacked opportunity”: The first purpose of Paul in writing this epistle is to express gratitude for the gifts sent him by the Philippians, His own physical comfort is of less concern to him than their spiritual welfare. He does not wound them by saying they had neglected him for so long. They lacked means of communicating with him. Money had to be sent by a messenger. Paul had learned in depression or prosperity to work on and trust God (verse 11) who can “initiate into the secret” of contentment (verse 12). He had experienced every variety of circumstances and concluded with some powerful statements.

“I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me” (Phil. 4:13): “I have strength for everything through Him who empowers me.” Paul has strength so long as Jesus KEEPS ON PUTTING POWER (‘dunamis’ - dynamite) into him!

“Notwithstanding ye have well done... communicate with my affliction” (Phil. 4.14): By their gift the Philippians became partners of Paul’s distress. “Communicate”: “Shared as companions with me in my trouble.”

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“Now ye Philippians... in the beginning of the gospel” (Phil. 4:15): Then they first received the gospel (Acts 16:12-40) was the “beginning” for them of the Christian life. When he “departed from Macedonia,” northern Greece,” “not a single church except yourselves went into partnership with me as to expenses and receipts” (see Acts 17:14).

“For even in Thessalonica...” (Phil, 4:16): The newly founded Philippian church sent contributions at least twice to help Paul in Thessalonica (Acts 17:1-10). They later aided him at Corinth (11 Cor. 11:9).

“Not because I desire a gift... desire fruit... to your account.” (Phil. 4:17) “Not that I am after the gift, but I am after the fruition that is multiplying to your credit.” Here and in verse 15 Paul employs mercantile terms. Their giving OPENS A CREDIT SHEET FOR THEM, and a DEBIT SHEET FOR HIM. What riches in Christ the prisoner Paul enjoyed! He has enough and to spare! Here Paul may be said to have written playfully a formal receipt: “PAID IN FULL; RECEIVED FROM EPAPHRODITUS.” Their gifts were sacred gifts of love,” a fragrant perfume, an accept-able offering that please God” (verse 18).

“But my God shall supply all your need...” (Phil. 4:19): God has abundant treasure and will repay the Philippians for their faithful sharing with Paul. They had met his “needs”; God will “supply all your needs according to His abundant wealth so glorious in Christ Jesus.”

“Now unto God and our Father...” (Phil. 4:20): The very mention of the riches of grace “in Christ Jesus,” and of the divine blessings in Him, leads Paul to break forth in an ascription of praise. All the glory is God’s. He is the Giver. God put their good purposes into their hearts. This “doxology flows out of the joy of the whole epistle” (Bengel).

IV. The Finale (Philippians 4:21-23)

“Salute every man in Christ Jesus” (Phil, 4:21): Where Paul knew so many he could not single out individuals for special greetings. He sends greetings to them all.

“The brethren which are with me greet you”: Such “brethren” as Timothy and other fellow-laborers, who were now in Rome.

“All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Caesar’s house-hold.” (Phil. 4:22) The Roman “saints” who sent special greeting to the Philippians were not members of the imperial family, but some Christians connected with “Caesar’s court.” The term can apply to slaves and freedmen and even to the highest functionaries. Christianity has begun to UNDERMINE THE THRONE OF THE CAESARS, Some day a Christian will sit on the throne. The gospel WORKS UPWARD FROM THE LOWER CLASSES. It was so at Corinth and in Rome. It is true today. It is doubtful if Nero had heard of Paul for his case may have been dismissed by lapse of time. Paul the obscure prisoner has won more eternal fame and power than all the Caesars combined. Nero will commit suicide shortly after Paul is executed. Nero’s star went down and Paul’s rose and rises still!

“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.” (Phil. 4:23) Paul always closes his letters with a benediction, “Grace” helped him to sing at Philippi (Acts 16:25). From a dark Roman prison “grace” enabled him to write a letter of sheer “joy!” This grace will do the same for them – and us.

QUESTIONS

1. In what sense did Paul call these Philippians his “joy and crown” (Phil. 4:1; I Thess. 2:19,20; Rev. 22:12)?
2. How can believers “stand fast in the Lord” (Phil. 4:1; Psa. 27:14; 125:1)?
3. What appears to have occurred between two women that distressed Paul (Phil. 4:2)? What did Paul think of them (Phil. 4:3)?
4. What did Paul say of the “book of life” (Phil. 4:3; see Dan. 12:1; Rev. 3:5; 13:8; 17:8; 20:12; 21:27)?
5. What keynote of the epistle is sounded again here (Phil. 4:4)? What prayer does many a Christian need to pray (Psa. 51:12)?
6. Can you name one certain mark of a God-controlled life (Phil. 4:5a)? Why (Phil. 4:5b)?
7. In how many matters should a Christian manifest a spirit of “anxious care” (Phil. 4:6)? What is the sure antidote for the spirit of anxiety (Psalm 55:22)?
8. What is the difference between the “Peace of God” (Phil. 4:7) and the “God of Peace” (Phil. 4:9)? How should the “Peace of God” affect us (Col. 3:15; John 14:27)?
9. In whom must the six virtues be rooted (Phil. 4:8, 4)?
10. What did Paul say about following his example (Phil. 4:9)? To what extent did he want others to be followers of him (I Cor. 11:1; I Thess. 1:6)? If others followed Paul’s example, what would they experience (Phil. 4:9)?
11. Why was Paul now “rejoicing” over the Philippians (Phil. 4:10)? Why had they not sent a gift earlier?
12. How was Paul able to find contentment in any circumstances (Phil. 4:11; Heb. 13:5), and what six experiences had Paul gone through during his ministry (Phil. 4:12)?
13. Can you list three great “shall’s” of this chapter (Phil. 4:7, 9, 19)?
14. What did Paul say about the other Macedonia churches (Phil. 4:15)?
15. Even though Paul appreciated the gift, what did he “desire” more than the gift” (Phil. 4:17)?
16. Who had been sent with the gift (Phil. 4:18)? How would God look upon this gift to Paul?
17. Since God does not supply our whims, what does He supply (Phil. 4:19)? Who is the best judge of our needs (Matt. 6:25-32)? What does God never “withhold” (Psa. 84:11)?
18. What keeps God from pouring out blessings upon some (Malachi 3:10)? What does the Father long to do for us all (II Cor. 9:8)?
19. How do we know Paul must have won some of the members of “Caesar’s household” (Phil. 4:22)?
20. What blessing does Paul pronounce upon them (Phil. 4:23)?

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WHOLE BIBLE STUDY COURSE

Year VI

Third Quarter

Lesson 29
Colossians 1

Page 1
Memory Verses: Colossians 1:18

Memory Verses:

“And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence” (Colossians 1:18).

CHRIST THE HEAD

The author of Colossians is “Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ” (Col. 1:1). “There is every mark of Paul’s style and power in the little Epistle and there is no evidence that any one else took Paul’s name to palm off this striking and vigorous polemic” (Robertson).

The Date

Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon (a resident of Colosse) were prepared about the same time by Paul in his Roman prison, 63 A. D., and sent by the same messengers to the Roman province of Asia. The Epistle to the Laodicean (Col. 4:16) may be a fourth epistle, but it has been thought by some to be identical with the Ephesian letter.

The ruins of these cities have been identified, and the close association of Colossae and Laodicea is evidenced by the fact that they were only a few miles apart on opposite sides of the valley of the Lycos, a short distance above where it enters into the larger river Meander. Colossae, an ancient city of Phrygia, was situated on the south bank of the Lycus River, 11 miles from Laodicea and 13 from Hierapolis. Colossae lies in a gap between hills. This view is taken from the site of Laodicea

Why Written?

Epaphras came from Colossae to Rome to see Paul about some “grievous wolves” of which Paul had warned those in Ephesus (Acts 20:29f). They had descended on the church and were leading many astray with false teaching. The “Colossian heresy” seems to have been an admixture of Greek, Jewish, and Oriental religions, a sort of “higher thought” cult, parading itself under the name of “philosophy” (Col. 2:8), and insisting upon the strict observance of certain Jewish requirements almost to the point of asceticism (Col. 2:16, 21). Such was all put forth in high-sounding phrases by self-styled superior teachers all in the name of the gospel! Many today glibly deny the REALITY OF SIN, DISEASE, AND DEATH IN SPIRE OF THE EVIDENCE TO THE CONTRARY and lead many untaught souls astray, just as the false teachers did a Colossae.

I. The Preface (Colossians 1:1-14)

A. The salutation (Colossians 1:1-14).

“Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ...” (Col. 1:1): Paul did not always remind his readers that he was divinely chosen “by the will of God” as an apostle. Where his authority was challenged, he was quick to assert it.

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The salutation opens the Epistle in the form familiar in letters of the day. As usual in such a salutation, it contains the name of the writer and of his readers, and an expression of his concern for their welfare.

“And Timotheus our brother”: Paul associates Timothy with himself – an act of courtesy. Timothy was his voluntary companion in jail. He is named seven times in the address of Paul’s letters to the churches; here, in II Cor. 1:10; Phil. 1:1; I Thess. 1:1; II Thess. 1:1; I Tim. 1:1; II Tim. 1:1 and Philemon 1.

“To the saints...” (Col. 1:2) A New Testament term applied to all Christians. They were separated from the world, and separated unto God (II Cor. 6:17, 18; Tit. 2:14). “Saints” is a name of dignity, honor, and of hope. They were “faithful brethren.” They were “faithful” in the sense of being trustworthy, but also of being trustful.

“At Colosse.” Situated in Phrygia, southeast of Ephesus, in the valley of the Lycos, Colosse became increasingly obscure. This single mention by Paul has made the city immortal in the memory of men.

“Grace be unto you, and peace...” Only the Christian had received the unmerited favor of God, and has made his “peace with God,” peace with men, and has PLACE FROM GOD (Phil. 4:7; II Cor. 5:18).

B. The thanksgiving (Colossians 1:3-8).

“We give thanks to God...” (Col. 1:3) Both Paul and Timothy. When praying for the Colossians, even as he prayed for all the churches under his care, Paul “had ground for thanks.” Paul commended the good, whenever possible, before he criticized. He lays stress on his unceasing praise. The occasion of thanksgiving is the good report brought to Paul concerning the Christians at Colossae.

“Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus...” (Col. 1:4) Paul had just heard through Epaphras, a member at Colosse (Col. 1:7; 4:12), who was at that time with him in Rome. Their faith was “in Christ.”

“Love which ye have to all the saints”: “Love” is felt and expressed “toward all the saints,” toward all Christian believers in Colossae, whatever their rank, station or sphere in life.

“For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven...” (Col. 1:5) “The hope” denotes the future heavenly blessedness which awaits all believers. It centers in Christ who is Himself “the hope of glory” (Col. 1:27).

“The truth of the gospel.” Paul had a NEW MESSAGE for them, the “truth of the gospel” which they had a first received.

“Which is come... in all the world” (Col. 1:6) The gospel was spreading all over the Roman Empire – in about thirty years after the resurrection of Jesus Christ! The world WAS EVANGELIZED in ONE GENERATION IT COULD BE DONE IN THIS GENERATION!

“As ye also learned of Epaphras... faithful minister.” (Gal. 1:7) Epaphras probably planted the church under Paul’s direction after he was converted at Ephesus (Acts 19:10), Epaphras is an abbreviation of Epaphroditus, but there is no reason to think he is the Epaphroditus of Philippians 2:25: 4:18. He taught them the gospel faithfully. Now he brings Paul F111 expression of their love for the apostle (Col. 1:8).

The prayer (Colossians 1:9-14).

“For this cause we also... do not cease to pray for you.” (Col. 1:9) What Paul heard from Epaphras in verses 3-8 caused him to “PRAY FOR” them and “to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.” THE BEST PROTECTION AGAINST FALSE TEACHING IS TO KNOW GOD’S WILL THROUGH HIS WORD. See Eph. 1:3, 8 and I Cor. 12:8.

“That ye might walk worthy...” (Col. 1:10): To KNOW and DO God’s will is PLEASING TO GOD (Eph. 4:1). “The END of all KNOWLEDGE is conduct” (Lightfoot). We Christians must BEAR FRUIT and INCREASE in “knowledge of God” to please Him (John 15:2, 5, 8; 14:23). DOCTRINE AND DEED GO TOGETHER!

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“Strengtheneth... with joyfulness” (Col. 1:11) Paul suffered much for Christ, and did not turn sour in so doing (II Cor. 4:17, Acts 16:22-25). Paul thanks God for the privilege of serving and suffering for Him. It is hard to endure wrong “with joyfulness,” but Paul did it, as did the early Christians (Acts 5:40-42).

“Giving thanks... made us meet to be partakers” (Col. 1:12): Paul thanks God “who made us fit or adequate for” the “inheritance of the saints in light”! Once they were unfit. God’s infinite love had called them to be children, heirs, and joint-heirs with Christ. What a POSITION of PRIVILEGE God has given to us all as “saints in light”!

“Who hath DELIVERED us... translated us.” (Col. 1:13): Satan held us CAPTIVE IN SIN. We were under the “power of darkness” in evil. God through the gospel “has rescued us from the control of the darkness, and has transferred us into the kingdom of the Son of His love!” God’s kingdom on earth is his church (Matt. 16:16; Acts 2:47; Heb. 12:28; Rev. 1:9).

“In whom we have redemption through his blood...” (Col. 1:14) Christ purchased us “with his own blood” (Acts 20:28, Eph. 1:7). There is “POWER IN THE BLOOD!” We are delivered from the GUILT and PENALTY of SIN. Our “redemption” shall be complete when our perfected spirit is clothed with an immortal body.

II. The Preeminence of Christ (Colossians 1:15-23)

A. His divine person (Colossians 1:15-18).

“Son... who is the image of the invisible God...” (Col. 1:15) Jesus said: “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father” (John 14:9). God is like Christ (II Cor. 4:6).

“Image” means “likeness,” as that of a head stamped upon a coin. Jesus Christ is the VERY STAMP OF GOD the Father as he was before the Incarnation (John 17:5), and is now (Phil. 2:5-11; Heb. 1:3). Here we have RESEMBLANCE, REPRESENTATION, and REVELATION!

“The invisible God”: Jesus was the VISIBLE representative of the “invisible God”. “Invisible” does not mean God is not visible to physical sight, but that God cannot be discovered by unaided reason. “All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him” (Matt. 11:27; study I John 3:2). In Christ is found a God who is near, who cares, who hears, who pities, and who saves “to the uttermost”!

“The firstborn of every creature.” In respect to all creation Jesus occupies first place. Jesus Christ EXISTED BEFORE CREATION BEGAN (John 1:1,2).

“For by him were all things created...” (Col. 1:16): Hence Jesus must have EXISTED BEFORE ANY CREATION. Christ was not created; He Himself was the Creator (compare John 1:1 and Heb. 1:2).

“Thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers...” There is no reason to say Paul believed in the existence and gradation of angelic beings, but that Christ is the CREATOR AND SOVEREIGN OF ALL RULERS, human or superhuman! He is superior to all spirits that are revered, IMAGINARY or REAL!

“And he is before all things...” (Col. 1:17): He was before them all in time, and through Him they came into existence.

“And by him all things consist”: Or “Hold together.” Christ is the controlling and unifying force in nature. The Gnostic philosophy that matter is evil and was created by a remote aeon is thus swept away. The Son of God’s love is the Creator and Sustainer of the universe that is not evil!

“And he is the head of the body, the church...” (Col. 1:18): In verses 15-17 Paul portrays Christ as the CENTER and SOURCE of the CREATION. In verses 18-20 the apostle shows that Christ is the HEAD

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of the VERY CREATION. In the church Christ is preeminent. The church is His spiritual body; He is the supreme Head. In Ephesians emphasis is laid upon the Church, as the Body of which Christ is the Head, while here the thought is centered upon Christ, who is the HEAD OF THE BODY!

“The beginning”: The new creation began from Him and in Him. He is first of all in time.

“The firstborn from the dead”: Christ was the first to die and rise from the dead NEVER TO DIE AGAIN (Rev, 1:18). “Firstborn” implies that others follow. “Because I live, ye shall live also” (John 14:19).

“That in all things he might have the preeminence”: He has FIRST PLACE “in all things!”

B. His reconciling word (Colossians 1:19-23).

“For.. in him should all fullness dwell.” (Col. 1:19) “Dwell” indicates not a temporary but a permanent residence. In Christ are embodied all the grace, the love, the wisdom, and the might of the eternal God.

“And... by him to reconcile all things unto himself...” (Col. 1:20): It is the purpose of God, through Christ, “to reconcile all things to Himself.” The means of reconciliation is “through the blood of his cross.” The Colossians before they heard, believed and obeyed the gospel were “estranged and of hostile attitude with your evil activities” (verse 21).

They were “now... reconciled” and AT PEACE with God. God does not need to change; man needs to change. Obedience to the gospel cleanses us from sin through His blood and makes us “holy... in his sight” (verse 22).

“If ye continue... be not moved” (Col. 1:23); The Colossians must “never shift from the hope” of the gospel! Nor shall we.

III. Paul’s Service (Colossians 1:24-29)

“Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you...” (Col. 1:24): Paul was a prisoner in chains in Rome for the gospel’s sake. Christ suffered on the cross to save us! Paul would suffer that “every creature” (Mark 16:15) might know the gospel. We must have a fellowship of his sufferings. “But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings... “ (I Pet. 4:13). Paul wants to “fill up that which is” lacking. Not that the sufferings of Christ is insufficient for our salvation, but the Church as a whole cannot arrive at perfection till it has gone through suffering.

“Whereof I was made a minister...” (Col. 1:25): Paul claims that to him had been committed the stewardship of the truth concerning the Church as the medium through which the glorious purpose of God would be accomplished. “Dispensation” is the stewardship responsibility of being the minister to the Gentiles (Acts 26:16-18).

“Mystery...” (Col. 1:27) Or secret. Had not God revealed to man that it was His purpose that ALL MEN SHOULD BE SAVED, we would never have known it (Eph. 1:6, 9). Now Gentile as well as Jew may be saved through the Gospel. “Christ in you the HOPE OF GLORY” now – and evermore (I Tim. 1:1; Rom. 8:18). Let us “WARN EVERY MAN” (verse 28), labor to the point of exhaustion for Him as Christ’s power “energizes” us (verse 29)!

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QUESTIONS

1. Who is the author of Colossians (Col. 1:1)?
2. Where was Paul when he wrote this epistle (Col. 4:3, 10, 18, Philemon 2:3)?
3. To whom was it addressed (Col. 1:2)? What do we know of Colossae? Why did Paul write the epistle?
4. For what did Paul offer thanks (Col. 1:3, 5)?
5. What had Paul heard about the believers at Colossae (Col. 1:4)? What was laid up for them (Col. 1:5)?
6. Who had brought him this information (Col. 1:7, 8)?
7. What was Paul's desire for them (Col. 1:9)?
8. To what practical end did Paul want these believers filled with the "knowledge" of God's will (Col. 1:10; Eph. 4:1; Phil. 1:27; I Thess. 2:12)?
9. How only could they "walk worthy of the Lord" (Col. 1:11)?
10. For what blessings did Paul thank God (Col. 1:12-14)?
11. Where do we have "redemption" (Col. 1:14; Eph. 1:7)? How do we get into Christ? (Gal 3:26-27)?
12. Who is the "image of the invisible God" (Col. 1:15)?
13. Who created "all things" (Col. 1:16-17)? Who "holds together" the universe?
14. Of what is Christ the "head" (Col. 1:18)?
15. How are we "reconciled" to God (Col. 1:20-22)?
16. How will believers appear in the presence of Christ (Col. 1:22; Eph. 5:27)?
17. In what must we "continue" to be saved (Col. 1:23)?
18. What was Paul "made" (Col. 1:23-25), and what did he want to "fill up" (verse 24)?
19. Is the gospel still a "mystery" (Col. 1:26)?
20. Who must be in every Christian (Col. 1:27)? Against what did Paul "warn" every man (Col. 1:28)? Who were the two laborers or workers who made Paul's ministry so effective (Col. 1:29)?

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WHOLE BIBLE STUDY COURSE

Year VI

Third Quarter

Lesson 30

Page 1

Colossians 2

Memory Verses: Colossians 2:10-12

Memory Verses:

“And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power. In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ, buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead” (Colossians 2:10-12)?

COMPLETENESS IN CHRIST

If you have in true Christian faith “been baptized into Christ” you have “PUT ON CHRIST.” (Gal. 3:27). “And ye are complete in him” (Col. 2:10).

“In Christ we find the satisfaction of every spiritual want” (Peake).

To play fast and loose with the revealed truth about Christ cannot be tolerated by the true Christian (Gal. 1:8, 9; Rev. 22:18, 19). Shall we “tolerate any teaching” just to keep outward unity? Let us examine

I. The Solicitude of Paul (Colossians 2:1-7)

“For I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you...” (Col. 2:1) Paul had many burdens. “The care of all the churches” he established daily pressed upon him, as did the care of the churches established by the efforts of his messengers and friends (II Cor. 11:28). Epaphras doubtless founded the Colossian church (Col. 1:6-8). Paul wanted the Colossian Christians to know “What a strain I have to carry in my care for you.” It was in the inner strain of anxiety, prayer, or yearning desire in their behalf (Col. 4:12). False and vicious teachers were working to UNDO THE WORK of Epaphras and Paul. Paul writes to keep them true to Christ.

“And for them at Laodicea”: Laodicea was about 11 miles from Colossae. A wealthy city in Asia Minor founded by Antiochus II (261-246 B. C.), Laodicea was head of the circuit of “the Seven Churches of Asia” (Rev. 3:13-19). Paul’s concern extended to Laodicea (Col. 4:16), and to Hierapolis (Col. 4:13). While Paul may never have personally visited these churches, he was concerned about the false teaching that was beginning to do harm.

“That their hearts might be comforted...” (Col. 2:2) Not consoled merely, but strengthened. “Not relief, but reinforcement.” The Colossians did not need comfort in sorrow, but rather CONFIRMATION IN FAITH. Paul wanted them to “be STRONG IN THE LORD, and in the power of his might” (Eph. 6:10).

“Being knit together in love...” Love is “the bond of perfectness” which unites and cements, us together (Col. 3:14). We must use all our mental powers and enjoy “all riches of the full assurance of the under-standing” of Christ, who is “the mystery of God,” NO LONGER HIDDEN, but now manifested or made known (Col. 1:26). God wants each of us to know Christ to the fullness of our capacity,

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“Mystery of God”: “Mystery” describes something once hidden but now disclosed. He is no longer a secret to be kept, but a Saviour to be shared with “every creature” (Mark 16:15, 16). “Mystery” may have been one of the “pet words” of the “philosophers” of Colossae. It is used a number of times (Col. 1:26, 27, 4:3).

“In whom... wisdom and knowledge” (Col. 2:3): Christ sums up ALL WISDOM and KNOWLEDGE, as every Christian knows by fresh, daily experience. “Knowledge” is information; “wisdom” is inspiration. IN CHRIST we grasp the truth and apply it to our lives. His “treasures” are sufficient (Phil. 4:19).

“And... beguile you with enticing words” (Col. 2:4): Had the Colossians had the “full... knowledge” (verse 2) of Christ, the false teachers could not have “misled you by specious arguments” (Goodspeed). Our best protection against the “wiles of error” is to know God’s word. “Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee” (Psa. 119:11).

A parent wrote in his son’s Bible: “The Bible will keep you from sin; sin will keep you from the Bible.”

“Beguile you with enticing words.” It is curious, and painful, to see clever tricksters of the modern faddists entrap the gullible “with enticing words.” “Prove all things; hold fast that which is good” (I Thess. 5:20).

“For though I be absent in the flesh, yet...” (Col. 2:5) Paul’s heart was with the Colossians, although he was absent from them in person, and probably had never seen them,

“Your order”: The “order” of the Colossian church, which gave Paul such joy, refers to the UNITY OF FAITH which bound the members together like an army in an “orderly array.” A few stragglers may have forsaken Christ in Colossae, but there had been no panic and wholesale forsaking of the truth in Christ (John 14:6). Genuine faith in Christ will give us VICTORY OVER THE WORLD every time (I John 5:4). Note how we get FAITH (Rom. 10:17; II Tim. 2:15).

“As ye have therefore received Christ... so walk in him” (Col. 2:6): “Continue to live in, obey and believe upon Christ as he was first preached to you.” “Stick to your first lessons in Christ.” Are you sticking to the TRUTH in Christ (John 14:6)? Can the world see Jesus in you (Matt. 5:16, Acts 4:13)?

“Rooted and built up in him...” (Col. 2:7) Paul changes the figure from a “walk” to a growing tree. In Christ we are “rooted to stay so,” He changes the metaphor again to “a building as continually going up.” A plant or sapling that are often pulled up will not take root or grow. A Christian who forsakes Christ as “THE TRUTH” for every latest fad will never produce Christian fruit.

“Abounding therein with thanksgiving”: This is the natural expression of a vital, living faith. Such “overflowing” faith has no time for disloyalty or doubt!

II. The Sufficiency of Christ (Colossians 2:8-15)

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“Beware lest any man spoil you...” (Col. 2:8) Paul introduced his framing to the Colossians by a generous expression of confidence (verse 5), and a kindly encouragement (verses 6-7), He did not merely discuss error in detail as some do in ANTI-COMMUNISM anti-U. C. M. S., anti-American Council of Churches, or anti – you name it! It was Paul’s METHOD to “receive Christ Jesus the Lord,” “walk... in him. Rooted and built up in him!” “Look out” lest ANY MAN anywhere “Spoil you.” This means to carry off as booty a captive, slave, maiden. Christ delivered the Colossians from DARKNESS into his “kingdom of his dear Son” (Col. 1:13-14).

“Philosophy”: The only use of the word in the New Testament. Paul does not condemn knowledge and wisdom (see verse 2), but only this false philosophy, “contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge (see I Tim. 6:20).

We shall continue to expose false philosophy as we choose “God’s wisdom” (I Cor. 1:21). Philosophy consists mainly of empty and vain speculation. Some one has said, “Philosophy is a blind man in a dark cellar trying to catch a black cat which was not there in the first place.”

“Tradition of men”: Read Mark 7:8f. This was the exact fault of the false leaders at Colossae, and of anybody today who would substitute anything for a “Thus saith the Lord.”

“Rudiments of the world”: Doubtless applies to Jewish ceremonials that the false teachers were trying to foist upon the Colossians (verse 16). Anything that leads away from Christ is to be shunned as the plague.

“For in him dwelleth all the fullness...” (Col. 2:9): In Christ alone is the “fullness” of the unbounded powers and attributes of God. They dwell in Him forever (John 1:1, 14; I John 4:1-3; I Cor. 1:30-31; Matt. 28:18).

“And ye are complete in him...” (Col. 2:10): Christ is our fullness of which we all partake (John 1:16; Eph. 1:23). Our goal is to be made full of God in Christ (Eph. 3:19).

“The head”: There is no other place for Christ. He is first in time and rank (Col. 1:18), “Worship God,” the Creator, not any of His creatures or creation (Rev. 19:10).

“In whom also ye are circumcised...” (Col. 1:11): Are there those who say that you ought to be circumcised? In CHRIST is the true circumcision, not done by hands, not the cutting off of a little flesh, BUT THE PUTTING OFF OF THE ENTIRE BODY OF THE SINS OF THE FLESH.

“Buried with him in baptism...” (Col. 2:12) We do not practice physical circumcision as a religious ordinance, but IN REPENTANCE. We “PUT OFF” or abandon the sins of the body through Christ. This is “the circumcision of Christ” (verse 11). New Testament baptism re-enacts the tragedy of the cross: It is submission to God’s will (Gal. 2:20; Rom. 6:3), burial in water (Rom. 6:4), rising with Christ (Rom. 6:5; Col. 3:1). Baptism without faith IS NOTHING. With faith, baptism is an actual “death” to sin, “burial” in water, and “resurrection” in Christ.

“And you, being dead in your sins...” (Col. 2:13) Spiritually dead in sins. Christ through the gospel gives us spiritual life and forgiveness (see Acts 2:38).

“Blotting out the handwriting...” (Col. 2:14) Christ “canceled our red ledger of regulations that was standing against us and took it out of the way, when He nailed it to the cross!” “When Christ was crucified, God nailed the law to His cross” (Peake). He overcame Satan (verse 15). Why fear the spiritual powers or

the angelic beings before which the false teachers bowed in worship? Why submit to Jewish rites and ceremonies? CHRIST ALONE IS THE SAVIOUR. He is supreme. In him is LIFE. He alone meets our every need!

III. A Striking Warning (Colossians 2:16-19)

A. Refuse enslaving rituals of the law (Colossians 2:16-17).

“Let no man therefore judge you in meat...” (Col. 2:16). The Old Testament law was “cancelled when He nailed it to the cross.” (Verse 14) Now no man can compel us to keep the OLD LAW NOW, nor eat what it prescribed. (Lev. 7:10-27; Rom. 14:17; I Cor. 8:8; Heb. 9:11; I Tim. 4:3) Nor must we keep the “holyday” as Passover, Pentecost, or the monthly new moon (Num. 28:11), OR the SABBATH DAY (the seventh day, or Saturday).

“Which are a shadow of things to come...” (Col. 2:17) The “things” of verse 16 were “a shadow.” Christ is “the body,” or substance, which casts the shadow. The old law with its many types, POINTED TO THE COMING OF CHRIST. The law was the “shadow” of the REALITIES that came through Him.

B. Hold on to Christ (Colossians 2:18-19).

“Let no man beguile you of your reward...” (Col. 2:18) “Let no one defraud you of salvation’s victory prize, no one who indulges in assumed humility and the cult of angel-worship”! The false teachers were characterized by:

1. Mock “humility”: It was “voluntary” and self-conscious and thus unreal. They taught that man was too sinful to approach Christ directly, and needed angels to intercede for him. “Worship God,” the angel said before whom John bowed (Rev. 19:10).

2. “Intruding into those things which he hath not seen.” They falsely claimed revelations. They lived in a world of hallucinations and self-deception.

3. They were “vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind.” Their boasted insight was “fleshly” and carnal, not spiritual.

4. “And not holding the Head...” (verse 19): The last fault of the heretic teacher is the worst. He actually was severed from Christ and His Body, the church. Only in Christ is there UNITY and SUSTENANCE.

IV. A Serious Exhortation (Colossians 2:20-23)

“Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ...” (Col. 2:20): This alludes to the picture of “baptism” in Col. 2:12. We “died with Christ,” “died” to the world and its “rudiments,” or fleshly ordinances. Having come out of the other side of the grave, RISEN WITH CHRIST, we are not to act as though we had not done so. LIVE THE RISEN LIFE. We are not under the law with its multitudes of details, we are to live by the LOVE-PRINCIPLE in Christ (Matt. 22:37-40).

“Touch not; taste not; handle not.” (Col. 2:21) This is a sample of the ascetic rules the false teachers tried to bind on the Christians at Colosse. You can’t bind on a Christian the law that he must wash his hands before he eats (Mark 7:14-19), or avoid oil, pork, or marriage. Refuse all the chaff of man-made rules, and get down to the real what of gospel living (Jer. 23:28; I Pet. 2:21f). Food and drink “perish with the using” (verse 23). “Which things...” (Col. 2:23): The man-made doctrines just condemned. “A show of wisdom”: “A suggestion of wisdom,” only a show. “In will worship.” Self-imposed hardships, whippings of the body, refusing it proper food, or rest, “are of no value in combating fleshly indulgence.” The Holy Spirit here condemns a man-made ascetic spirit.

QUESTIONS

1. What did Paul wish that the Christians at Colosse “knew” (Col. 2:1; 4:12; II Cor. 11:38)?
2. What did Paul desire for these believers (Col. 2:2)?
3. Where are all the “Treasures of wisdom and knowledge” hidden (Col. 2:3)?
4. How only can men “put on Christ” and enter into these things (I Cor. 2:9-16; Gal. 3:26, 27)?
5. How would men seek to “beguile” or “mislead” Christians (Col. 2:4)?
6. How was Paul “present” with them? What gave him great “joy” (Col. 2:5)?
7. What three things are said to be in Christ (Col. 2:5-7)?
8. Against what did Paul warn the people (Col. 2:8)?
9. What was wrong with the “philosophy” at Colosse (Phil. 2:8)? To what has “philosophy” been likened?
10. What was Paul’s answer to this “philosophy” (Phil. 2:9; see John 1:1, 14; I John 4:1-3; I Cor. 1:30-31; Matt. 28:18)?
11. If we are “complete in him,” Christ, is it possible for a believer to improve his standing before God (Col. 2:10; John 1:16; Eph. 1:23)?
12. To what is our baptism compared (Col. 2:11)? What is “put off” or “cut off” in our baptism?
13. How are we baptized (Col. 2:12; Gal. 2:20; Rom. 6:3-5; Col. 3:1)?
14. What was “blotted” or “cancelled out” when Jesus died on the cross (Col. 2:14)? What did Jesus “spoil” when he was crucified?
15. We Christians are no longer to be “judged” in what (Col. 2:16)?
16. What was the law (Col. 2:17; Heb. 8:5; 9:9; 10:1)?
17. How would false teachers seek to “beguile” or “defraud” Christians (Col. 1:18)? What four errors characterized them?
18. Who is the “Head” of the church (Col. 1:19)? What does Christ supply for us?
19. What is our relationship to the “rudiments of the world” (Col. 2:20)? What sample of ascetic rules did the false teachers try to bind on Christians then (Col. 2:21)? What should our attitude today be toward these things (Mark 7:14-19; Jer. 23:28; I Pet. 2:21f; Col. 2:23)?
20. Does persecuting the body gain favor with Christ (Col. 2:23)?

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WHOLE BIBLE STUDY COURSE

Year VI

Third Quarter

Lesson 31
Colossians 3

Page 1
Memory Verses: Colossians 3:9-11

Memory Verses:

“Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds and have put on the new men, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him. Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free, but Christ is all, and in all” (Colossians 3:9-11).

THE NEW MAN

The person to person relationship with Christ is the emphasis of Colossians: “CHRIST IN YOU, the HOPE OF GLORY” (Col. 1:27). We are to “WALK... IN HIM: rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving” (Col. 2:6,7).

“And ye are COMPLETE in him...” (Col. 2:10). Only in Christ can we “enjoy fullness of life”! Jesus Himself said; “I have come so” you “may have life and have it abundantly” (John 10:10),

“If ye be DEAD WITH CHRIST” (Col. 2:20) means that when we were BURIED WITH CHRIST IN BAPTISM OUR DEATH WITH CHRIST was signified and sealed (Col. 2:12). Christ DIED FOR OUR SINS on the cross (Col. 1:20-23). In repentance we must DIE TO THE, PRACTICE OF SIN IN OUR LIVES (Rom. 6:2-10). If we are truly converted, we will be a NEW MAN in Christ after our baptism “into Christ” (Gal. 3:27)!

I. Christ is the Believer’s Life and Object (Colossians 3:1-4)

“If ye then be risen with Christ...” (Col. 3:1). By faith we die with Christ to ascetic rites as a means of moral attainment (Col. 2:20-23). A definite act, not a state, is referred to. We put off the “old man of sin” in baptism” (Col. 2:12). We RISE FROM OUR BAPTISM to “walk in newness of life” (Rain. 6:4). To PROVE that we are truly “dead” to sin, and “RISEN WITH CHRIST,” we “SEEK THOSE THINGS WHICH ARE ABOVE.” We want to please Christ. We seek the “HIGH CALLING” (Phil. 3:14). Our “treasures” are in heaven (Matt. 6:20). This is our GOAL in place of mere, outer ascetic rules.

“Set your affections on things above...” (Col. 3:2): Direct the thoughts, desires and affections toward the things that are in heaven. “Fix your thoughts” on them as your goal. The Christian has his head in heaven, his feet on the earth. He must be heavenly-minded here on earth and so help to make earth like heaven.

“For ye are dead...” (Col. 3:3) We are dead with Christ to the world and sin. Our life is swallowed UP in the life of Jesus Christ (Gal. 2:20). This means the soul passes through a “death” in repentance to earthly things, to sin and its practice. Our hearts must be CLOSED against evil temptations as though we were NAILED DOWN IN OUR COFFIN. Our ears are DEAF TO SIN’S CALL, if we are truly converted. Christ LIVES IN and THROUGH our THOUGHTS and BODIES (Phil. 1:21). “And they took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus” (Acts 4:13).

“When Christ, who is our life, shall appear...” (Col. 3:4) Clearly this refers to the future, personal, visible coming of Christ. He Himself said: “I will come again” (John 14:3). Two angels from heaven

confirmed the promise of Jesus: "This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11). The tree in winter is not "dead," but the "life" is "hidden." When Spring comes, the "hidden" life shows itself. "We know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is" (I John 3:2).

II. Contrast of the Old Life and the New (Colossians 3:5-17)

A. "Put off the old man" (Colossians 3:5-11).

"Mortify therefore your members..." (Col. 3:5) "So treat as dead your physical nature, as far as immorality, impurity... are concerned" (Goodspeed). By faith we die to sinful practices. We are "raised" with Christ to a new and higher life. Paul exhorts believers to show that they are "risen" with Christ by LIVING WHAT THEY PROFESS. Doctrine and deed, creed and character, belief and conduct go hand in hand.

"Fornication" is illicit intercourse between the sexes, whether married or unmarried. Adultery is to be false to the marriage vow, unlawful sexual intercourse with another person, whether married or unmarried. Fornication sometimes signifies adultery (Matt. 19:9).

"Uncleanness." The words, look, or deed of the impure spirit. It includes self-abuse, bestiality, and sodomy.

"Inordinate affection, evil concupiscence." Passion and evil desire, the source of evil deeds (see Matt. 15:18-20). Evil desire if not killed in repentance results in evil deeds.

"Covetousness, which is idolatry." This is another form of self-gratification. Paul calls it "idolatry." To set your heart on what belongs to another, and get it regardless of the means, is idolatry. When a man seeks money above all things, it is idolatry. Such a one worships gold, not God. Anything put in the place of God as the supreme object of trust and devotion is an IDOL!

"For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh..." (Col. 3:6) Against all these sins Paul gives his solemn warning. They call down the judgment of heaven upon those who abandon themselves to them. Those

who habitually and continually live in defiance of God, and repudiate their divine origin and destiny, are called "sons of disobedience" -- upon them comes "God's indignation!"

God destroyed Sodom, Gomorrah and the inhabitants of Canaan for LOVING EVIL AND SIN. He will punish in hell forever those who do not repent of them (see I Cor. 6:9, 10; Eph. 5:5). The Colossians once lived in sin, but they repented or "died" to the practice of such evil things to which they once had been "addicted" (verse 7).

"But now... PUT OFF all these" (Col. 3:8): Paul reminds the Colossians they had joined a holy brotherhood in Christ. They should strip off all the garments that were the recognized uniform of their former service of sin. They were to "put away" all sins that follow, as well as those named above.

"Anger" is deep-seated feeling of ill will. "Wrath" is the fiery outburst of hot temper. "Malice" is settled, cruel intention to injure another. "Blasphemy" is the expression of a malicious spirit or reckless and bitter abuse.

"Filthy communication out of your mouth." Foul language against another. How should saints speak "one to another" (Eph. 4:32)?

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“Lie not one to another...” (Col. 3:9) To lie is to deceive. Christ is “the TRUTH” (John 14:6). They who are of Christ will be truth in word and deed. Falsehood is usually due to lack of love and is commonly an instrument of chalice and hatred. Lying would be proof that “the old man”, the old fleshly nature of sin had not been “put off” (Eph. 4:22, Rom. 6:6).

“And put on the new man... renewed in knowledge” (Col. 3:10) When one accepts Christ, he puts off his old sinful nature and practices. He is “born again” (John 3:5). He has become a “new creature” (II Cor. 5:17). He “puts on the new man,” a new nature, a new life “in Christ.” Daily the Christian is “renewed” by the study of God’s Word until we learn to think, feel, purpose, and act like Christ (Rom. 12:1, 2). All human distinctions disappear in Christ. National and social barriers cannot be where Christ is (verse 11).

“Barbarian.” To the Greeks all who were not Greeks were “barbarians.” “Scythian” represents the climax of barbarity. “Bond nor free”: The master and the slave were on a level in the church.

“But Christ is all, and in all.” It is God’s intention that “every creature” (Mark 16:16) be baptized into Christ and His kingdom, and belong to a new, holy nation (I Pet. 2:9). All the old barriers to brotherhood are removed. Christ is the “life” of all the new creation, and in all.

“Humanity is a word which you look for in vain in Plato and Aristotle; the idea of mankind as one family, as the children of one God, is an idea of Christian growth” (Max Muller). The stubborn problems of national, social, and racial divisions will disappear in the perfected Kingdom of God!

B. “Put on” the new man (Colossians 3:12-17).

“Put on... elect of God.” (Col. 3:12) Those at Colossae who had believed and been baptized “into Christ” are called “God’s elect,” “God’s chosen.” Our Christian faith is negative, and positive. It “puts off,” and “puts on” the graces and virtues which belong to the new life.

“Holy and beloved”: Those whom God has called should be with the virtues that become so lofty a destiny.

“Bowels of mercies”: A heart of compassion for the poor, the widow, and the blind.

“Kindness”: “Kindliness.” Meet the world with a smile and act generously toward others.

“Humbleness of mind.” Think, act, and relate to others with humility of mind and heart.

“Meekness”: Should not suggest anything of weakness. Christ described Himself as “meekly and lowly in heart” (Matt. 11:29), and said: “Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth” (Matt. 5:5).

“Longsuffering”: Denotes patience under provocation, self-restraint when tempted to act swiftly or severely.

“Forbearing one another...” (Col. 3:13) Mutual self-control when two persons are inclined to injure each other.

“Forgiving one another...” This takes out of the heart all resentment and ill will “in case one feels a grievance against another.” The reason for such forgiveness and the supreme example is found in Christ: “Even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.”

“And above all... put on charity” (Col. 3:14): “But cap it all with love” (Berkeley). Love is pictured as an outer garment, or belt, which not only completes the costume, but also perfects and unites all the garments into a harmonious whole.

“And let the peace of God rule in your hearts...” (Col. 3:15): “The peace of Christ” is the ruling principle which is to guide the life of believers. The “peace” which Christ imparts is the deep tranquility of

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soul which he gives to his followers (John 14:27). “Peace” is to act as UMPIRE when questions, problems and courses in life are to be determined by the individual or by the church as “one body”!

“And be ye thankful”: “Do not fail to be grateful.” This virtue must be cultivated with effort.

“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly...” (Col. 3:16). This second exhortation is addressed to believers as individuals and as members of the church. The “word spoken by Christ,” the teachings of Christ, or that whole body of truth concerning the work and person of Christ. This must “DWELL” in believers. It should “have ample room in your lives as you instruct and admonish one another in a wealth of wisdom with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, that are sung with a lovely feeling toward God in your hearts,”

“And whomsoever ye do in word or deed...” (Col. 3:17) The climax of Paul’s general exhortations ennobles ALL OF LIFE. Every word spoken and every act performed must be “in the name of the Lord Jesus,” by His authority and in prayer to him. Are you in DOUBT about as to whether you should do or say something? “See if you can ON YOUR KNEES ASK CHRIST to go with you and bless you in what you are about to undertake”!

III. The Christian Household (Colossians 3:18-4:1)

A. Husbands and Wives (Colossians 3:18, 19).

“Wives, submit yourselves... husbands... in the Lord” (Col. 3:18): The Christian wife will submit herself to her husband, except to the point of disobeying God (see I Pet. 3:1, 2; Eph. 5:22). In this submission there is nothing degrading, but recognition of God’s divine order for the home. Wives have rights and privileges, but recognition of the husband’s leadership is essential to a well-ordered home. The assumption is that the husband has a head and a wise one!

“Husbands, love your wives...” (Col. 3:19): To be a Christian husband is a sacred responsibility (Gen. 2:24; Eph. 5:28-33; I Pet. 3:7). Love makes it impossible for one to be “bitter,” or harsh and unfeeling, as a habit, toward one’s wife.

B. Parents and children (Colossians 3:20-21).

“Children, obey your parents in all things...” (Col. 3:20): Children are continually to obey their parents. Fathers are not to “provoke” or nag continually or excite their children or they will give up in despair (verse 21; see Luke 2:52; Eph. 6:1). Have you read Jane Eyre or Oliver Twist?

C. Masters and Servants (Colossians 3:22-4:1).

“Servants, obey... your masters” (Col. 3:22) “Servants” were not employees, but slaves. They were not wage earners, but the actual property of their masters. “Servants” are to obey; “masters” are “to be just and equal” (Col. 4:1). Paul does not condemn or attack the system of slavery. He did not create a revolt or insurrection. He advocates the principles of brotherhood, justice and Christian sympathy (verses 22b-25). Another letter to Philemon accompanied this one to the Colossian church. Philemon was a Colossian slave owner to whom Paul is sending back a runaway slave, Onesimus. “Welcome him as you would me;” Onesimus is a “beloved brother” and “no longer a servant,” Paul writes to Philemon.

This principle of justice and fairness will solve all labor troubles when employer and employee honestly apply them.

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QUESTIONS

1. Where is Christ? (Col. 3:1)
2. What is the main emphasis of Colossians (Col. 1:27)?
3. What were Christians to “seek?” (Col. 3:1)
4. When are Christians “risen with Christ” (Col. 3:1; 2:20, 12; Rom. (6:2-12)?
5. Where should the believer’s “affections” be set (Col. 3:2, I John 2: 15-17)?
6. What is the meaning of “ye are dead” (Col. 3:3, Gal. 2:20)?
7. Who is “our life,” and what has he promised (Col. 3:4; John 14:3)?
8. What are believers told to “mortify,” or “put to death” (Col. 3:5)?
9. What did Paul call the unsaved” (Col. 3:6)? Of what were the Colossian Christians reminded (Gal. 3:7)?
10. What were the believers commanded to “put off” (Col. 3:8)? Whom had they “put off” (Col. 3:9)?
11. Whom had these believers “put on” (Col. 3:10)?
12. Should human distinction be recognized in the Christian life (Col. 3:11)?
13. Can you name eight things with which the Christians were to “put on” (Col. 3:12-14)?
14. What must “rule” in the heart of every Christian (Col. 3:16, Psa. 119:11)?
15. What must “dwell... richly” in the heart of us all (Col. 3:16)?
16. What should characterize all we say or do (Col. 3:17)?
17. What are wives commanded to do (Col. 3:18)? Why?
18. What are husbands commanded to do (Col. 3:19)?
19. What are children and fathers commanded to do (Col. 3:20-21)?
20. What are “servants” and “masters” commanded to do (Col. 3:22-4:1)?

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WHOLE BIBLE STUDY COURSE

Year VI

Third Quarter

Lesson 32

Page 1

Colossians 4

Memory Verse: Colossians 4:6

Memory Verse:

“Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man” (Colossians 4:6).

CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

Churches met in houses in Paul’s day. Several are mentioned. “Extend our greetings to the brothers in Laodicea; also to Nympha and the church that meets at her home” (Berkeley – Col. 4:15). Philemon in Colossae (Philemon 2), Gaius in Corinth (Rom. 16:23), Aquila and Priscilla in Ephesus (I Cor. 16:19) and later in Rome (Rom. 16:5) – all had a “church” meeting in their homes.

Early Christians had to meet where they could. In the third century church buildings came into general use. The church without a church building grew from “three thousand” men (Acts 2:41), to “about five thousand men” (Acts 4:4), and “believers were the more added to the Lord, multi-tudes both of men and women” (Acts 5:14)? Why? Because they were “All the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:26). “And they continued steadfastly in the... fellowship” (Acts 2:42).

Would it not be better to have ten to twenty churches of 300-500 members in a city than to have two or three large churches? I think so.

I. Continual Prayer and Discretion Urged (Colossians 4:1-6)

“Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal... “ (Col. 4:1): “Servants” in Paul’s day were literally slaves. The “masters” were those who owned them. If the instruction was applicable to slaves, how much more does it apply to those who have the privilege of “selling” their services and of ending their job at will?

Employee and employer have “just and equal” obligations to each other. It is dishonest not to give an honest day’s work for an honest day’s wage! Both are to act in good conscience before God. This Christian, or Golden Rule would end all slavery and labor troubles if practiced by all (Matt. 7:12).

“Continue in prayer...” (Col. 4:2) Paul brings to a climax his practical precepts by exhortations to earnestness in prayer, and to wisdom in action and in speech. “And they continued steadfastly in...prayer” (Acts 2:42). They are to “Keep up strongly in prayer; attend to it diligently with the offering of thanks” (Berkeley).

Prayer is the “Christian’s vital breath.” Try to live without breathing! Try to be a Christian without praying. Jesus said we “MUST ALWAYS PRAY, and not give up” (Luke 18:1, Goodspeed).

“Watch!” We must arouse ourselves, so that prayer is a reality and not an empty form.

“Withal praying also for us...” (Col. 4:3) Paul was not ashamed to ask people to pray for him, not that he might have “ease, comfort, or even safety, but ONLY that he may be given FULL OPPORTUNITY TO PREACH Christ.” He wants to be free to preach the gospel (I Cor. 16:9, II Cor. 2:12).

“The mystery of Christ.” This is the gospel of Christ. It was a “mystery,” that is, a hidden truth until it was revealed (see I Cor. 4:1; Eph. 6:19; Col. 1:26; 2:2). His preaching to the Gentiles was the real cause that

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led to his imprisonment. He was an “ambassador in chains” (Eph. 6:19, 20; Philemon 9, 10). Paul did not feel God had forsaken him, or that he was set aside as useless. His prison epistles have come down to us. He wanted to be at his best in preaching the gospel (verse 4).

“Walk in wisdom toward them that are without...” (Col. 4:5): The world watches our walk, our life, more than our talk. It measures our talk by our walk. “Ye are our epistle... known and read of all men” (II Cor. 3:2, 3).

“Redeeming the time.” We are to seize and use every opportunity at all times to do good and promote the gospel. We all have the same time. Paul goes into the open market and buys it up by using it rightly.

“Let your speech be always with grace...” (Col. 4:6): Be winsome, pleasing and courteous in one’s words. “Always” is difficult, but to speak with sweetness and gentleness when opposed or misrepresented is a severe test of character; such is a winning witness for Christ to the unsaved.

“Seasoned with salt.” See Mark 9:50; Luke 14:34. Not too much salt, nor too little. Speech is to be wholesome, not corruptive. Salt gives flavor and prevents corruption. The speech of a Christian should be so “seasoned” with true wisdom that it will be attractive and pointed as well as discreet and pure.

II. The Companions of Paul (Colossians 4:7-17)

A. His messengers commended (Colossians 4:7-9).

“All my state shall Tychicus declare unto you...” (Col. 4:7) Tychicus, “Fortuitous,” was one in whom Paul had full confidence. He is named in Acts 20:4; Titus 3:12; II Tim. 4:12. He was possibly a native of Ephesus.

“A beloved brother, and a faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord.” What a rare combination. Lovable men are often so loving they let the truth go unspoken for fear of offending. Tychicus did not make this mistake. He would tell the Colossians all about Paul, his imprisonment and suffering for Christ. He would “comfort” or strengthen them through plain, pointed preaching (verse 8). They needed strength to stand against all false teachers and teachings then by fully and fearlessly proclaiming the truth in Christ.

Messengers carried all Paul’s epistles. There were no postal arrangements for carrying private letters such as exist in our times.

“With Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother...” (Col. 4:9) He was a slave of Colossae who had robbed his owner Philemon and run away to Rome. He met Paul, heard and obeyed the gospel. Paul sent him as co-bearer of Colossians with Tychicus and praised him on a par with him, runaway slave though he is. “Who is one of you” is said not as a reproach to Colossae for having such a man, but as a privilege to the church in Colossae to give a proper welcome to this returning converted slave and treat him as a brother! Paul sends Onesimus back to Philemon, not as a “slave,” but as “a brother beloved” in Christ (Philemon 10-16). “We are all God’s Onesimuses,” said Luther. Christ paid our debt that we might be accepted in Him before God.

However, Onesimus is not the equal of Tychicus in Christian service and so is not designated as a “minister” or “fellow-servant.” Yet he possessed information regarding Paul and the Christian work in Rome which could supplement the message of Tychicus. Paul adds, “They shall make known unto you all things which are done here” (verse 9b).

B. Greetings from friends (Colossians 4:10-14).

“Aristarchus my fellow prisoner saluteth you...” (Col. 4:10) A Macedonian from Thessalonica (Acts 19:29; 20:4; 27:2), he was a constant companion of Paul, I believe was with Paul on the trip from Jerusalem to

Rome. He is named in Philemon 24. Probably because of his devoted service to the apostle in his confinement Paul designates him as his “fellow prisoner.”

“Marcus, sister’s son to Barnabas...” Once rejected by Paul because he “departed from them... and went not with them to the work” (Acts 15:36-39), John Mark is now cordially commended because he has MADE GOOD IN THE MINISTRY! He once was a quitter; he had redeemed himself. “If he comes to see you, make him welcome” (Goodspeed). Mark wrote the gospel of Mark.

“Sister’s son to Barnabas.” It is now conceded that that should be “Cousin to Barnabas.” This kinship explains the interest of Barnabas in Mark. “Marcus” means “a large hammer,” and is his Roman name. “John” means “Jehovah is gracious” and is his Jewish name. He is mentioned in the New Testament ten times (Acts 12:12, 25; 13:5, 13; 15:37, 39; Philemon 24; II Tim 4:11; I Pet. 5:13).

“And Jesus, which is called Justus...” (Col. 4:1 1) A Jewish Christian. This is another illustration of the frequency of the name Jesus (Joshua). To us there is only one Jesus. “Justus” shows his reputation among his fellow citizens. He was upright. He was highly commended to Paul.

Of all the Jewish converts in the Imperial City, these three alone were loyal to Paul in his loneliness and his imprisonment. They alone comforted and encouraged him in his efforts to extend throughout the city the good news, concerning Christ.

“Epaphras, who is one of you...” (Col. 4:12) See Col. 1:7 for previous mention of this brother who had brought Paul news from Colossae. He probably founded the church in that city. As the delegate and representative of the apostle, he also had established Christianity in the neighboring cities of Hierapolis and Laodicea, probably during the three years of Paul at Ephesus,

“A servant of Christ”: Literally a “slave” of Christ. It denotes absolute devotion to Christ as Master and Lord.

“Always laboring fervently for you in prayers”: “He is always wrestling for you in his prayers, that you may stand firm, mature, and thoroughly convinced in all that concerns the will of God” (Berkeley).

“For... he hath a great zeal for you, and them... in Laodicea, and... Hierapolis.” (Col. 4:13) Laodicea was the Sister City near at hand across the valley of the Lycus. Hierapolis was another city close at hand, in which Epaphras planted a church.

“Luke, the beloved physician...” (Col. 4:14) Mentioned also in Philemon 24 and II Tim. 4:11, he is the author of the Gospel and the Acts. From secular and sacred history we learn that he was born at Antioch in Syria, a Gentile since he is not among those “who are of the circumcision” (Col. 4:11). We do not know when he was converted. He joined Paul at Troas (Acts 16:10). Note use of “we”. He remained with Paul on the voyage to Rome, and shared his imprisonment.

“Demas...” Named here and in Philemon 24, he deserted Paul during his last imprisonment in Rome (II Tim, 4:10, 11). He chose what seemed an easier path – and forever lost the “peace of God” which comes only to those who are “faithful unto death” (Rev. 2:10c).

C. Personal messages (Colossians 4:15-17)

“Salute... Nymphas... and the church that is in his house.” (Col. 4:15) Nymphas was an inhabitant of Laodicea. It was not till the third century that separate buildings were used for church worship. See Rom. 16:5; I Cor. 16:19; Philemon 2.

“And... read the epistle from Laodicea.” (Col. 4:16) The most likely meaning is that the so-called Epistle to the Ephesians was a circular letter to various churches in the promise of Asia, one copy going to Laodicea and to be passed on to Colossae as the Colossian letter was to be sent on to Laodicea. This was done usually by copying and keeping the original.

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“And say to Archippus, Take heed...” (Col. 1:17): He is named in Philemon 2. He is not addressed here. The message is to reach him through friends in Colossae. Possibly he was an “evangelist.” He was to “keep an eye on” his ministry. He was to DO FAITHFULLY what the Lord had sent him to do. See Rev. 2:10c, II Tim. 4:6-8.

III. The Conclusion (Colossians 4:18)

“The salutation by the hand of me Paul...” (Col. 4:18) Paul dictated his epistles. He signed this letter, which appears to have been his usual practice (II Thess. 3:17). The chain clanked afresh as Paul took the pen to sign the salutation, and reminded of his wearisome confinement he adds, “Remember my bonds.” What a powerful reminder to them to be true to Christ regardless of the cost!

“Grace be with you. Amen”: In all his letters Paul is the apostle of grace and closes with “grace,” his customary benediction.

We began with “grace,” we are kept by “grace,” and it is “grace” that will bring us home in heaven at last!

QUESTIONS

1. Where did the churches meet in Paul’s day (Col. 4:15; Philemon 2; Rom. 16:23; I Cor. 16:19; Rom. 16:5)?
2. How many members did the Jerusalem church have WITHOUT A CHURCH building (Acts 2:41; 4:4, 5:14)? In which must all Christians “continue steadfastly” (Acts 2:42)?
3. How must “masters” treat their servants (Col. 4:1)? Would this principle solve all labor problems if literally followed today (Matt. 7:12)?
4. What kind of prayer did Paul recommend (Col. 4:2)?
5. What had been the cause of Paul’s imprisonment (Col. 4:3-4, Eph. 6:19, 20)?
6. Before whom are believers told to “walk in wisdom” (Col. 4:5; I Cor. 5:12, 13; Eph. 2:12; Rev. 22:15)?
With what is “speech” to be “seasoned”?
7. Can you make a list of Paul’s TEN FRIENDS listed in Co. 4:7-18?
8. What young preacher did Paul say would tell the Colossians about him (Col. 4:7-8)?
9. What did Paul say about Onesimus (Col. 4:9, Philemon 1-25)?
10. How did Aristarchus suffer with Paul (Col. 4:10; Acts 19:29; 20:4; 27:2; Philemon 24)?
11. What was Paul’s first experience with Mark (Col. 4:10; Acts 13:5, 13; 15:36-40)?
12. In what way does Mark’s history reveal the power of God’s grace (II Tim. 4:11)?
13. What are we told about Justus (Col. 4:11)?
14. Can you describe the ministry of Epaphras (Col. 4:12, 13; 1:7; Philemon 23)?
15. How, and for what, did Epaphras pray (Col. 4:12)?
16. What is the difference between Luke and Demas friends of Paul (Col. 4:14; II Tim. 4: 10, 11)?
17. What does Col. 4:15 tell us about the “home” of Nymphas (Acts 21:8; I Cor. 16:19; Rom. 16:5)?
18. What did Paul tell Archippus to do (Col. 4:17)?
19. What did Paul ask the Colossians to “remember” (Col. 4:18)?
20. What do the following passages tell us about the ministry of Paul (Col. 1:3, 24, 25, 28, 29; 2:1, 5; 4:3, 4, 8)?

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Year VI

Third Quarter

Lesson 33

Page 1

I Thessalonians 1

Memory Verse: I Thessalonians 1: 8

Memory Verse:

“For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing” (I Thessalonians 1: 8).

THE MODEL CHURCH

Paul founded the church in Thessalonica about 51 A. D. after he left Philippi on his second missionary journey (Acts 17:1-9). Salonika is the modern name for Thessalonica. It is situated at the head of the Thermaic Gulf that deeply indents the Macedonian shore of the Aegean Sea.

Paul’s Second Missionary Journey

In Paul’s day it was a free city of Rome. Seven “politarchs” elected by the citizens governed the city. It was on the great Egnatian way, the Roman road which led through Greece to Macedonia (northern Greece), the military highway of Rome to the East. See FOREWORD, page 2, in the WHOLE BIBLE STUDY COURSE, YEAR V, First Quarter, for the discussion of Luke’s double reference to “politarchs” (Acts 17:6, 8).

When Written?

I Thessalonians was written a short time after the church was established, at the close of 52 A. D., or the beginning of 53 A. D. Timothy and Silas had just arrived from Thessalonica (I Thess. 3:6; Acts 18:5). They had brought supplies from the Macedonia churches to supply Paul’s need (II Cor. 11:9), as the church in Philippi did once and again while Paul was in Thessalonica (Phil. 4:15f). Before Timothy and Silas came to Corinth, Paul had to work steadily at his trade as tent-maker with Aquila and Priscilla (Acts 18:3) and could only preach in the synagogue on Sabbaths, but the rich stores from Macedonia released his hands and” Paul devoted himself to the work.” He gave himself wholly to preaching now.

Timothy and Silas brought news of serious trouble in the church in Thessalonica. Some of the disciples there had misunderstood Paul’s preaching about the Second Coming of Christ and had quit work and were making a decided disturbance on the subject. Some asserted that Paul said Jesus was going to COME RIGHT AWAY and DREW their own inferences for idleness and fanaticism as some do today. Is it not strange that some scholars today say that Paul did believe and say that Jesus was going to come back right away? Have they not read II Thessalonians 2:1f where Paul denies having ever said it?

Undoubtedly Paul hoped for the early return of Jesus as most of the early Christians did, but this is a very different thing from setting a time for his coming!

Paul had twice attempted to visit the church he had just established, but was prevented from doing so (I Thess. 2:7, 8). He sent Timothy back to encourage and further teach the young church (I Thess. 1:7, 8, 3:1-5). Timothy brought Paul a glowing account of the church. However, some conditions at Thessalonica needed to be corrected. Hence, this letter.

I. The Salutation (I Thessalonians 1:1)

“Paul...” (I Thess. 1:1) The name is arresting. It stands at the head of the epistle, and gives significance to the entire letter. This letter by Paul is the FIRST one of the New Testament. In at least three places he reveals himself as the actual composer of the epistle (I Thess. 2:18; 3:5; 5:27).

He does not here call himself “an apostle,” as is usual in his letters. Paul’s authority was not specially questioned in Thessalonica. This letter is too personal and informal to make such a claim necessary. It is possible that he wishes to place his two companions on the same footing with himself.

“And Silvanus...” Silvanus is the same as the Silas of Acts 15:22, 27; 16:19-29; 17:4; 18:5; II Cor. 1:19. Paul and Silas were both Jews who possessed Roman citizenship and bore Roman surnames.

“And Timotheus...” Or Timothy, son of a Jewish mother and a Greek father, one of Paul’s converts at Lystra on the first tour (Acts 16:1f; I Tim. 1:2; II Tim. 1:2; Phil. 2:19-22; I Cor. 4:17).

Both Silas and Timothy had been with Paul at Thessalonica, though Luke in does not mention Timothy being in Macedonia until the mission party is in Berea (Acts 17:14f). Timothy had joined Paul in Athens (I Thess. 3:1f), and had been sent back to Thessalonica, and with Silas had rejoiced Paul in Corinth (I Thess. 3:5; Acts 18:5; II Cor. 1:19). Silas is the elder, and is mentioned first.

“Unto the church of the Thessalonians...” “Church” originally meant “any public assembly of citizens summoned by a herald.” Paul plainly says this is a spiritual assembly of Thessalonica.

“In God... and in the Lord Jesus Christ”: Note the church’s SAFE POSITION “IN God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ,” This is intimate relationship with God as Father, and Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour (see Gal. 3:27; Matt. 18:20; Luke 6:46; John 15:14). Paul took Jesus as “LORD” when he surrendered to Jesus on the Damascus Road (Acts 22:10)! The Risen Christ became at once for Paul the Lord of his life!

“Grace be unto you, and peace.” Grace is used by Paul twice as often as by all other New Testament writers. Grace is “the watchword of Paul.” It means the sum of all the blessings which come through Christ upon sinful men (Rom. 5:8).

“Peace” is the result of receiving God’s “grace.” “Grace” points to God as the Source of all good. “Peace” points to man as the recipient of that “grace.”

II. The Thanksgiving (I Thessalonians 1:2-10)

“We give thanks to God always for you all...” (I Thess. 1:2) “We” means that whenever Silas and Timothy join Paul in prayer they remember their friends in Thessalonica, and as they remember them their first feeling is that of gratitude to God. The warmth of this gratitude is shown by its constant and inclusive “Always for you all.”

The thanksgiving is in reality one long and irregular sentence comprising the rest of the chapter. It is not merely conventional and complimentary. It is sincerely affectionate and aims not only to express gratitude, but to awaken in the readers new trust in God and to stimulate them to wider efforts for Christ. Why were Paul and his helpers grateful as they remembered the Thessalonians? They were

A. A converted church (I Thessalonians 1:1),

“The church ... which is in God ... and in the Lord Jesus Christ”: When we hear, believe and obey the gospel, we are “baptized into Christ” (Gal. 3:27). You are not “IN” Christ until you have been “baptized INTO HIM!” “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved” (Mark 16:16). After we are baptized into

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Christ, God “adds” us to the church (Acts 2:27). Our names are written in the “book of life” (Phil. 4:3; Rev. 3:5, 2:5), where they will stay unless we turn from Christ in willful disobedience and lust.

Do you think that many people get their names on the church roll on earth who are not converted? Is it not true that if we don’t PRODUCE the “FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT”, we are not Christians (Gal. 5:22, 23; Rom. 8:9; Matt. 7:21)? Are YOU truly converted to Christ?

B. A working church (I Thessalonians 1:3-5).

“Remembering... your work of faith” (I Thess. 1:3): Paul states his reasons for thankfulness. “Faith” comes by hearing God’s word (Rom. 10:17). As used here, “faith” refers to the entire EFFECT of “faith” upon the life and character of each believer. “Faith” led the Thessalonians ever under the fire of persecution to serve Christ faithfully. They were “new creatures” in Christ (II Cor. 5:17). They cheerfully served Christ under great trial (see John 16:33). “Labor of love...” Toil for others caused by love for them and for Christ. Love to God must be expressed in obedience (John 14:15, 21, 23; Phil. 2:4).

“And patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ...” “Patience” is not passive endurance. It is heroic and manly faithfulness. “Hope” denotes a confident expectation of future good. Our hope is in Christ. He will reward us when He comes, IF we have been faithful. This “hope” is “in the presence of our God and Father.” He sees and knows of our faithfulness (I Pet. 3:12).

“Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God.” (Thess. 1:4) All who believe and obey the gospel are the “elect” of God. As Christians, we are the “elect” of God. (I Pet. 1:2; 2:9, 10). All men, Jews or Gentiles, know that when they obey the gospel God accepts them’ through Christ. “He hath made us accepted in the beloved” (Eph. 1:6). It is another way of saying they had become Christians.

“For our gospel came... in word... power, and in the Holy Ghost.” (I Thess. 1:5) Paul calls it “our gospel.” He and his helpers preached it. They did not ORIGINATE it, but they delivered the good news to the Thessalonians with deep confidence and conviction through the POWER of the Holy Ghost. The preaching and practice of the preachers agreed, as they all know.

A old preacher was asked how many members he had in the church he served. “About twenty,” he said, to the surprise of his questioner. “Well, we have about 200 on the roll, but ABOUT TWENTY DO ALL THE WORK!” God has called us ALL to work, not shirk (I Cor. 3:9; Matt. 10:22; Rom. 2:10c).

C. A suffering church (I Thessalonians 1:6-7).

“And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord...” (I Thess. 1:6) By following Paul they became “followers” or “imitators of us and of the Lord.” See I Cor. 11:1. “You welcomed the message under great affliction,” Paul reminds them (see Acts 17:2-8).

“So that ye were ensamples to all that believe...” (I Thess. 1:7) Their earnestness was such that they were worthy of imitation by all who had become Christians “in Macedonia,” the great Roman province, of which Thessalonica was the capital, lying north of the Aegean Sea.

“Achaia”: The Roman province of which Corinth was the capital. It included the Peloponnesus and northern Greece south of Illyricum, Epirus and Thessaly.

“You became a pattern” (Moffatt). Their example inspired Christians everywhere to imitate them.

D. A missionary church (I Thessalonians 1:8-9).

“For from you sounded out the word of the Lord...” (I Thess. 1:8) The members of the church at Thessalonica in their daily lives “SOUNDED OUT” clear as a trumpet tone the gospel of Christ. The effect of the gospel in Thessalonica was so striking that the report of it went through all “Macedonia and Greece. It awakened inquiry, so that a knowledge of the gospel was thus spread abroad wherever Paul went he found that the news of the church in Thessalonica had preceded him so that he did not need to tell it!

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“For... ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God.” (1 Thess. 1:9): People “every place” (verse 8) testified to the nature and success of the apostle’s work in Thessalonica. Most of them had been pagan. Men naturally worship “idols,” mere “phantoms without substance,” false, lifeless gods. Those who heed the gospel call forsake such deities to SERVE the one “LIVING and TRUE GOD” – “true” not only in contrast with “false,” but as fulfilling the whole conception and ideal of deity. To such a God believers TURN with the devotion of LOVING SERVANTS, dedicated to do His will. “Keep yourselves from idols” (I John 5:21).

E. A waiting church (I Thessalonians 1:10).

“And to wait for his Son from heaven...” (1 Thess. 1:10): True converts turn their faces upward in confident hope. They “wait for his Son from heaven.” This expectation of a RETURNING LORD was an essential element in Paul’s first preaching at Thessalonica.

Jesus said, “I will COME AGAIN” (John 14:3). Heaven CONFIRMED His declaration (Acts 1:9-11). No matter what we suffer, the hope of seeing Christ again will help us BE TRUE TO HIM and EACH OTHER until He shall come to receive us (Rev. 22:20; I John 3:3; I Pet. 1:3). Let us “watch and pray” as we WORK and WAIT for Him to come. What a day of deliverance from the “wrath to come!” It was Paul’s allusion to the day of judgment with Jesus as Judge whom God raised from the dead that made the Athenians “mock” and leave him (Acts 17:31f). But Paul did not change his belief or his preaching because of the conduct of the Athenians. This “day” was coming then, and it is coming NOW!

QUESTIONS

1. Who wrote this epistle (I Thess. 1:1)? When was it written?
2. Where was Thessalonica located? What is its modern name?
3. Why did Paul mention Silas (Silvanus) and Timothy (Timotheus) to the Thessalonians (I Thess. 1:1; Acts 15:40; 16:1, 19, 25; 17:4, 5)?
4. How long did Paul preach in Thessalonica (Acts 17:2)? Why did Paul leave that city (Acts 17:5-10)?
5. What did Paul state regarding the church of the Thessalonians (I Thess. 1:1)?
6. Can you name some of the existing early churches to whom Paul did not address epistles directly (Acts 9:19, 31-35; 11:22, 26; 14:20-23; 20:6, 7; 21:3, 4, 7; 28:13, 14; Rom. 16:1; I Cor. 16:19; Titus 1:5; I Pet. 5:13)?
7. What did Paul say he “always” did (I Thess. 1:2)?
8. What did Paul say he “remembered” (I Thess. 1:3; compare I Cor. 13:13; (Col. 1:4, 5; I Thess. 5:8)?
9. What is the “work of faith” (I Thess. 1:3; John 6:29; Acts 16:31f; Rom. 1:16, 17)?
10. What is the “labor of love” (I Thess. 1:3; John 15:13; I John 3:16; II John 6)?
11. What is the “patience of hope” (I Thess. 1:3; Titus 2:13; James 5:7-8)?
12. What does it mean to be a part of the “elect” (I Thess. 1:4)?
13. Who guided Paul in his preaching and writing (I Thess. 1:5)? What do we mean when we say that the Bible is the word of the Holy Spirit?
14. How did the Thessalonians “receive” the Word (I Thess. 1:6, compare Acts 17:5-9)?
15. Who produced their “joy” (I Thess. 1:6)?
16. What had the Thessalonians become (I Thess. 1:7)?
17. What did they preach (I Thess. 1:8; II Tim. 4:20)?
18. How far had their testimony reached (I Thess. 1:8)?
19. In what two respects did these Thessalonians turn (I Thess. 1:9)?
20. Did these saints know about Christ’s Second Coming before Paul wrote this epistle (I Thess. 1:10)?

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Year VI

Third Quarter

Lesson 34

Page 1

I Thessalonians 2

Memory Verses: I Thessalonians 2:19, 20

Memory Verses:

“For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For ye are our glory and joy” (I Thessalonians 2:19, 20).

THE MODEL SERVANT AND HIS REWARD

Paul went to Thessalonica to preach the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. This chapter is mainly devoted to Paul’s defense of his conduct in Thessalonica. It is evident that some of the Jews in that free city had been discounting the apostle in his absence. The passage contains an admirable message for the guidance of ministers and missionaries and Christian workers in modern times. You might conceive of it as “A MANUAL FOR MINISTERS”!

As Paul lays bare his very heart, one feels that the impulses and purposes are those which should motivate not only public servants but also EVERY FOLLOWER OF CHRIST!

I. Paul Reminds Them of His Ministry among Them (I Thessalonians 2:1-12)

A. His boldness (I Thessalonians 2:1-12).

“For yourselves, brethren, know our entrance in unto you...” (I Thess. 2:1) The Thessalonian Christians did not need others to tell them of Paul’s life and character. They KNEW by personal experience about his – life among them. The enemies who were bitterly persecuting the Thessalonians were actively engaged in an aggressive campaign to blacken Paul’s character. Paul appeals to them to remember that his mission among them was “not in vain.” Success had attended his work. His courage showed he – was God’s man. The EXISTENCE OF THE FLOURISHING CHURCH, where none had before existed, was proof of God’s stamp of approval of Paul.

“But... we had suffered... shamefully entreated... at Philippi.” (I Thess. 2:2) Paul and Silas came to Thessalonica from Philippi where they had been “through ill-treatment and insults” (Goodspeed). Read Acts 16:19-24. After such treatment Paul was “bold... to speak unto you the gospel of God with much contention.” The insult to His Roman citizenship did not close Paul’s mouth, but had precisely the opposite effect “in our God.” It was not wild fanaticism but determined courage and confidence in God that spurred Paul to still greater boldness in Thessalonica.

B. Pure motives (I Thessalonians 2:3-6, 8-9).

“For our exhortation was not of deceit...” (I Thess. 2:3) Paul’s appeal to turn to God was not rooted in false beliefs. It is not “of uncleanness,” or connected with licentious practices, as many false cults taught (II Pet. 2:18, 19). His motive was not “of guile,” “there is no fraud about it,” no intention to deceive the hearers.

“But as we were... put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak.” (I Thess. 2:4) Jesus chose Paul to be His messenger and entrusted to him the gospel (Acts 26:16-20). Paul faithfully lived and preached the gospel, NOT TO PLEASE MEN or to make himself popular with man. His first task was to please God. Of course, all who likewise try to please God will be pleased with such men. Peter and John felt this way, too, about preaching the gospel (Acts 4:19, 20).

“For neither at any time used we flattering words...” (I Thess. 2:5) Paul did not flatter his hearers, or seek popularity at the expense of the truth (Jan 5:44).

“Nor a cloak of covetousness.” He did not make his message a cloak to make money. “Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel” (I Cor. 9:14), but the motive of the true minister is not just to make money. A Christian worker cannot go into a heathen country and demand money of them before he teaches them the gospel. Rather his support must come from those who have been won to Christ, or the messenger must work as Paul did when necessary. Paul received no money from the Thessalonians, although he had a RIGHT TO THEIR SUPPORT after they became Christians (verses 6). He worked “night and day” (verse 9) to support himself and preach the truth to them, knowing that “the laborer is worthy of his hire” (Luke 10:7).

C. Paul’s tenderness (I Thessalonians 2:7, 11).

“But we were gentle among you...” (I Thess. 2:7) Paul instead of standing on his dignity as an apostle and DEMANDING SUPPORT OF THEM AFTER THEY BECAME CHRISTIANS, nourished and cared for them as tenderly as “a mother nursing her children” (Goodspeed).

“As ye know how we exhorted... as a father.” (I Thess. 2:11) “As tenderly and earnestly” as a father would “urge, encourage and implore” his children individually to believe and obey the truth, so Paul had tenderly ministered to them! Teachers, we must teach and lead “every-one” of our pupils aright. Such a spirit will do everything humanly possible with God’s help to keep “everyone” faithful in coming to Church, in living the Christian life, and giving (Rev. 2:10c).

D. True conduct (I Thessalonians 2:10, 12).

“Ye are witnesses... how... we behaved ourselves.” (I Thess. 2:10) The Thessalonians knew that Paul’s life was “pure” among them. “Holy”; Pious disposition and conduct toward God. “Justly”: His conduct toward his fellow men was Just and fair. “Unblameably.” He gave no basis for anyone to charge him with anything evil.

“That ye would walk worthy of God...” (I Thess. 2:12) What an appeal to be separated from all evil, and be separated unto God. If we refuse to “walk worthy”, God will refuse to be our Father (II Cor. 6:17, 18). In building His Christ, God “keeps on calling” us “into His own kingdom and glory.”

II. Paul’s Reception by the Thessalonians (I Thessalonians 2:13-16)

A. They received the word (I Thessalonians 2:13).

“For this cause also thank we God without ceasing...” (I Thess. 2:13) We as well as YOU are grateful for the way the gospel was received in Thessalonica. “Ye received the word of God which ye heard of us... as... the word of God.” The gospel is of no human invention. It is God’s Word (Heb. 4:12, 13). This word is

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“living and active”; by it the “spirit life” begins (I Pet. 1:23). It “saves our souls” (James 1:21), “sanctifies” us (I Tim. 4:5), and “grows” when it has the chance (see Acts 19:20; Mark 4:27f). “Is not my word like as a fire and like a hammer that breaker the rock in pieces?” (Jer. 23:29; see Psa. 119:105; Eph. 6:17).

B. They suffered for Christ (I Thessalonians 2:14-16).

“For ye, brethren... suffered” (I Thess. 2:14): The unbelieving Jews and “certain lewd fellows of the baser sort” (Acts 17:5) continued to persecute Jason and the Christians at Thessalonica. Paul comforts them by reminding them the church at Jerusalem had been persecuted. So had Christ, and Paul (see II Cor. 11:23-33, Acts 7:27-8:4).

“The Jews... killed the Lord Jesus...” (I Thess. 2:15) They slew their own Saviour, and killed their own prophets (Matt. 23:31). The Jewish nation tried to prohibit the preaching of the gospel to the Gentiles (verse 16), and passed word to all synagogues and Jews everywhere to stop Paul by fair means or foul! God’s patience was exhausted. His judgment came upon them. Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 A.D., and the nation ruined (II Pet. 3:9; Rom. 2:4; Matt. 23:32). There is a limit beyond which nations and individuals dare not go unless they wish to be destroyed (Prov. 29:1).

III. Paul’s Efforts to See Them (I Thessalonians 2:17-20)

A. He explains why he could not come (I Thessalonians 2:17, 18).

“But we... endeavored... to see your face” (I Thess. 2:17): Christian friendships are priceless. Paul pours out his very heart in expressing his love for the Thessalonians. He explains that his devotion to them made him willing to be left alone in Athens and to send to them his beloved associate, Timothy, that he might learn of their condition and might strengthen their faith.

His enemies charged that Paul was not interested in his converts. Did they insinuate his failure to return was DUE TO A LACK OF INTEREST IN HIS CONVERTS? The first charge he met by reviewing his work, and by describing the reception it had received (verses 1-16). This was Paul’s defense of his conduct. He now explains his absence (I Thess. 2:17-3:5). He had been compelled to flee by night from Thessalonica (Acts 17:10). Forced from then, his heart remained with them.

“Wherefore we would have come... Satan hindered.” (I Thess. 2:18) Twice Paul tried to visit Thessalonica, but Satan stopped him, possibly through some adversity, imprisonment or through wicked men, tools of the devil.

B. His converts were his crown (I Thessalonians 2:19, 20).

“For what is our hope... or crown of rejoicing?” (I Thess. 2:19): As the victor in the games could point to his crown as the proof of his powers, so Paul could point to the Gentile churches as the proof of his ministry. “For who except you is our hope or happiness or prided crown in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming? For you are our glory and joy” (verses 19-20, Berkeley).

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QUESTIONS

1. With what is this chapter mainly devoted?
2. Will Christian workers always see, as Paul did, immediate evidence that their labor has not been “in vain” (I Thess. 2:1; compare Phil. 2:16; I Cor. 15:58)?
3. Where was Paul “shamefully treated” (I Thess. 2:2)?
4. Can you describe the experiences of Paul and Silas at Philippi (Acts 16:12-40)?
5. Following this persecution at Philippi, how had they preached (I Thess. 2:2)?
6. Whose gospel had they preached (I Thess. 2:2, 8, 9)?
7. What was not connected with Paul’s exhortations (I Thess. 2:3)?
8. What trust was committed to the apostles (I Thess. 2:4)?
9. Who chose Paul to be His messenger and gave him the gospel (Acts 26: 16-20)?
10. What did Paul not use (I Thess. 2:5)?
11. Can you name at least five virtues of the Christian worker (I Thess. 2:2-9)?
12. What did Paul not seek (I Thess. 2:6)?
13. What was the difference between Paul’s ministry as a “nurse” (verse 7) and that as a “father” (verse 11)?
14. How was Paul supported when he preached at Thessalonica (I Thess. 2:8, 9)?
15. What was Paul willing to give to the Thessalonians (I Thess. 2:8)?
16. How did Paul charge them to “walk” (I Thess. 2:12; see Col. 1:10; Eph. 4:1)?
17. What was the cause of Paul’s thanksgiving (I Thess. 2:13)?
18. What were the six charges made against the Jews (I Thess. 2:15, 16)?
19. Who had prevented Paul’s visit to Thessalonica (I Thess. 2:17, 18)?
20. What is promised as a reward for soul winning (Thess. 2:19, 20)?

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Lesson 35

Page 1

I Thessalonians 3

Memory Verse: I Thessalonians 3:8

Memory Verse:

“For now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord” (I Thessalonians 3:8).

THE MODEL BROTHER AND STEADFASTNESS

When the Berean brethren “sent Paul off to the coast, while Silas and Timothy stayed behind,” the apostle came to Athens (Acts 17:14, 15). “While Paul was awaiting them in Athens, his soul was deeply vexed at the sight of the idol-filled city.” (Acts 17:16).

Paul’s heart was deeply anxious about the newborn Thessalonian Church. When Timothy arrived, Paul at once SENT HIM BACK ON A MISSION TO THESSALONICA to ENCOURAGE the church to be steadfast under their bitter persecution (Acts 18:1, 5).

I. The Mission of Timothy (I Thessalonians 3:1-5)

“Wherefore we would have come unto you...” (I Thess. 2:18): I Thess. 2:17-20 belongs to this section of chapter 3. Paul’s enemies had maligned him to the church at Thessalonica. They insinuated that his FAILURE TO RETURN TO THE CHURCH was DUE TO A LACK OF INTEREST IN HIS CONVERTS. Paul reminds them that “ONCE and AGAIN” he wanted to visit them, “but Satan hindered” or defeated his purpose. Instead of being disinterested in them, Paul considered the Thessalonian Christians as his “hope or prided crown in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming. For you are our glory and joy” (I Thess. 2:19, 20).

“Wherefore when we could no longer forbear...” (I Thess. 3:1) When Timothy finally caught up with Paul at Athens, so great was Paul’s anxiety for the persecuted Christians at Thessalonica that he sent Timothy back to Thessalonica to ENCOURAGE THEM to be STEADFAST TO CHRIST. As much as he needed Timothy to assist him, he preferred to “be left behind at Athens ALONE.” This was a sacrifice of love on Paul’s part.

“And sent Timotheus...” (I Thess. 3:2): Paul describes Timothy as “our brother, and minister of God,” titles of commendation which show the apostle’s esteem for Timothy, and to show the Thessalonians how much he loved them to part with such a valuable worker.

“To establish you... comfort you concerning your faith.” Paul feared that their faith might fail under the persecution to which to Thessalonians were exposed. Timothy would show them that the troubles in which they were involved were no proof that their faith was vain. He would encourage them to be steadfast in the faith (Acts 2:42; Matt. 10:22; Rev. 2:10c). At times we all need “comfort” concerning the faith.

“That no man should be moved by these afflictions...” (I Thess. 3:3) Paul had warned the Christians at Thessalonica that “afflictions” would come. Jason and “the others” had been put “under bonds before they let them go” (Acts 17:8, Goodspeed). The magistrates “required BAIL from Jason and the REST, and LET THEM GO” (Berkeley). Jesus warned: “In the world you are under pressure; but be confident! I have overcome the world” (John 16:33, Berkeley). “For you know yourselves,” Paul reminds them, “that for this we were appointed.”

“Moved” indicates troubled, or disheartened.

“For verily, we told you... we should suffer tribulation.” (I Thess. 3:4) It is one thing to know tribulation by being told about it, and quite another to know it as the Thessalonians now did BY

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EXPERIENCE. “We told you in advance, ‘We are going to have trouble,’ exactly as you know it happened” (verse 4, Berkeley).

A blacksmith became a Christian. An intelligent unbeliever approached him after a few years and said, “Why is it that you have so much trouble? I have been watching you. Since you became a Christian and began to ‘WALK SQUARE’ and love everybody, you have TWICE as many trials and accidents as you had before. I thought that when a man gave himself to God his troubles were all over. Isn’t that what the preacher tells us.” With thoughtful but glowing face, the blacksmith replied: “Do you see this place of steel? It is for the springs of a wagon, but it needs to be ‘tempered’. In order to do this I heat it red hot, and then cool it with water. If I find that it will take ‘temper,’ I heat it again; then hammer it and bend it and shape it so that it will be suitable for the wagon. Often I find the steel too brittle and it CAN NOT BE USED. IF this is so, I THROW IT ON THE SCRAP HEAP. Those scraps are worth very little, but this wagon spring is valuable.”

He paused a moment; his listener nodded. The blacksmith continued: “God saves us for something more than to have a good time. We have the good time, all right, for the smile of God means heaven. BUT He wants us for service, just as I want this piece of steel. And He puts the ‘temper’ of Christ in us by the testing and trials that come our way. He also supplies the strength to meet these testings!” “I have strength for everything through Him who empowers me” (Phil. 4:13, Berkeley).

“Since I have learned this, I have been saying to Him, ‘TEST me in any way you choose, Lord, only don’t THROW ME ON THE SCRAP HEAP.’ “

“For this cause... I sent to know your faith.” (I Thess. 3:5) Expecting such continued and increasing persecution of the Thessalonian Christians, Paul, as well as Silas – but Paul, as the one most keenly alive to the PERIL OF HIS CONVERTS – had sent to learn whether their faith was STEADFAST, or, “I sent to make SURE ABOUT YOUR FAITH.”

“Lest by some means the tempter have tempted you...” The sufferings are attributed to Satan as their source. He might have taken advantage of their distress to “beguile” these believers from their faith. If so, the missionary efforts of Paul and his companions in Thessalonica would have been rendered fruitless: “Our labor should be in vain.” Our final success as workers of Christ depends upon the steadfastness of those who obey the gospel (Phil. 2:12-16).

II. The Marvelous Tidings (I Thessalonians 3:6-10)

“But now when Timotheus came... and brought us good tidings of your faith.” (I Thess. 3:6) Paul’s fears had been real. Men are mortal. It would not have been surprising if under torture and outrage some of the Thessalonians had renounced their faith in Christ. How marvelous were the good tidings Timothy brought back to Paul that his converts had stood steadfast in the “faith and charity”, or love (Acts 18:5). They had cherished Paul’s work. They were Eager for a REUNION, as was Paul.

“Therefore, brethren, we were comforted over you in all our affliction and distress by your faith.” (I Thess. 3:7) Such good news took away Paul’s fears for the Thessalonians, and gave the apostle courage to face his own persecutions and sufferings. Just then Paul needed such courage in his “Corinthian crisis” (Acts 18:5-11). Sympathetic brethren encouraged and cheered Paul on his trip to Rome (Acts 28:15).

“For now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord” (I Thess. 3:8): When Timothy came from Thessalonica he found Paul in such need of comforting words, that by implication he speaks of his distress as unto death.

Now we live,” now you deliver me from death by this marvelous news. Paul was a man of high and ardent nature, sensitive to a high degree. His soul was bound up with the churches he had founded (I Thess. 2:8). They were his “spiritual children” (I Cor. 4:14, 15, Phil. 4:1). He lives for nothing else than those whom he led to Christ! Faithfulness on their part gave him “new life,” and abounding joy. His alarm and depression

over them made this rebound of joy of the good news the more vivid. Only those who suffer much know joy in its full capacity (verse 9). “How can we ever repay God with enough thanksgiving for you in view of all the happiness we are enjoying because of you in the presence of our God!” (Berkeley, verse 9).

“Night and day praying... we might see your face.” (I Thess. 3:10) His rejoicing causes Paul to pray the more earnestly that God enable him to revisit the church at Thessalonica. God answered this prayer (Acts 20:3). Paul does not say the Thessalonians were perfect. He indicates that their defects are not serious. Their FAITH and WORKS were wonderful (I Thess. 1:3, 8; 2:13, II Thess. 1:3), but they needed FURTHER instruction concerning their conduct, their hope and their mutual relationship in the church.

III. The Minister’s Prayer (I Thessalonians 3:11-13)

“Now God himself... direct our way unto you.” (I Thess. 3:11) It was the custom of Paul as a faithful minister and missionary, to open his epistles with a salutation, a thanksgiving and a prayer. Now he prays that God will enable him to revisit them. Satan had “hindered” or kept him from doing so before (I Thess. 2:18), but he prays God “to prepare our way to you!” God answered his prayer about FIVE YEARS LATER (Acts 20:1-3).

“And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love...” (I Thess. 3:12) Paul loved them so he could not rest until he had fully made known God’s will to them. He wants them to increase in “love one to another, and toward all men.” The Christian is to seek the welfare of all men, Christian and non-Christian alike (Gal. 6:10).

“So the end he may establish your hearts...” (I Thess. 3:13) “Love shed abroad in their hearts would have this effect, and fit them for EVERY DUTY and TRIAL” (See Rom. 14:8; 13:10). Thus we will be ready to meet our Lord when He comes!

QUESTIONS

1. Who stayed behind at Berea when Paul was “sent off to the coast” and came to Athens (Acts 17:14, 15)?
2. Where was Paul left “alone” (I Thess. 3:1)?
3. With what was Athens filled (Acts 17:16)?
4. In what way had Paul’s enemies maligned him (I Thess. 2:17)?
5. Who “hindered” Paul in his “great desire” to see the Thessalonians (I Thess. 2:18)?
6. Whom did Paul send to Thessalonica (I Thess. 3:2)?
7. Why did Paul send Timothy to Thessalonica (I Thess. 3:2)?
8. Into what are Christians “appointed” (I Thess. 3:3)?
9. What had Paul told the Thessalonians while there (I Thess. 3:4)?
10. Are you willing to pray, “Test me in any way you choose, Lord, only don’t throw me on the scrap heap?”
11. Was Paul’s chief concern in chapter 3 for the Thessalonians’ “FAITH,” their “LOVE,” or their “HOPE” (I Thess. 3:2; 5-7, 10).
12. Who opposes “faith” (I Thess. 3:5)?
13. What good news did Timothy bring to Paul (I Thess. 3:6)?
14. Did Paul need encouragement in his “Corinthian crisis” (I Thess. 3:7; Acts 18:5-11)?
15. Can you interpret “NOW WE LIVE” (I Thess. 3:8)?
16. How often did Paul pray to “see” the Thessalonians (I Thess. 3:10)?
17. Whom did Paul ask to “direct our way unto you” (I Thess. 3:11)?
18. Did God answer this prayer (Acts 20:1-3)? When?
19. To whom did Paul pray that the Thessalonians would “abound in Love” (I Thess. 3:12, Gal. 6:10)?
20. Does I Thess. 3:13 represent Christ’s coming FOR His saints, or WITH His saints?

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I Thessalonians 4

Memory Verse: I Thessalonians 4:14

Memory Verse:

“For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him” (I Thessalonians 4:14).

THE MODEL WALK AND THE BELIEVER’S HOPE

Christianity is a practical religion. There is an inseparable connection between the CREED (what you BELIEVE), and CHARACTER (what you ARE), between doctrine and deed, between faith and life. To say: “It doesn’t matter WHAT you BELIEVE, just so you live right,” is as sensible as to say: “It doesn’t matter whether you have a SPINE, just so you WALK!” Well, if you don’t have a spine, you WON’T WALK! And, if you don’t BELIEVE the RIGHT THINGS, you WON’T WALK the RIGHT WAY!

After praying that “God himself... direct our way unto you.” (I Thess. 3:11) Paul asks that God help them increase in “love one to another, and toward all men... establish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God... at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints” (I Thess. 3:12, 13). Then the apostle gives his message.

I. Warnings against Impurity (I Thessalonians 4:1-8)

“Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren...” (I Thess. 4:1) The letter is not drawing to a close; it marks a transition in the subject matter. Paul had prayed for their growth in holiness, now he exhorts them to the same end. The only way to be holy is to obey God’s word.

“How ye ought to walk.” “Walk” refers to one’s conduct. They had learned to walk “to please God,” and “and you are behaving – to keep on doing still better” (Berkeley). Paul wanted them to make progress in their Christian living. See II Pet. 3:18; Eph. 3:17; 5:2; Titus 2:2. Walking implies progress. Standing still in the Christian walk of life is dangerous (Phil. 3:13, 14).

“For ye know what commandments we gave you...” (I Thess. 4:2) Our Lord Himself directed Paul in WHAT to command them. We must obey Him. Jesus said, “IF ye love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15, 21-24).

“For this is the will of God, even your sanctification...” (I Thess. 4:3) All who have been “baptized into Christ” (Gal. 3:27) are sanctified in Christ. As here used, “sanctification” is holiness of life; sexual purity. Christians are to “abstain from fornication.” “Pagan religion did not demand sexual purity of its devotees, the gods and goddesses being grossly immoral. Priestesses were in the temples for the service of the men who came” (A. T. Robertson). Venus was the patron goddess in Corinth from which Paul wrote this letter. Paul often warns against impurity. Christians are to “flee fornication” (I Cor. 6:18).

“That every one of you... possess his vessel.” (I Thess. 4:4) To guard against sexual impurity then prevalent, Christians were to enter into the marriage relation and preserve it from base passion. Each one was to learn how and so know how to live the life of purity.

“Vessel.” It can only mean his OWN BODY, or his OWN WIFE. Perhaps Paul means that the man shall acquire his own wife “in sanctification and honour” words that elevate the wife and make it plain that

Paul demands sexual purity on the part of men (married as well as unmarried). There is no **DOUBLE STANDARD** here. The husband should come to the marriage bed as a chaste man to a chaste wife.

Socrates, a great heathen moralist, instructed a harlot how she should conduct her shameful business. The heathen moralists condemned unchastity only in the case of a childbearing wife, as it would wrong her husband not to know the paternity of her children.

“Not in the lust of concupiscence...” (I Thess. 4:5) “Not in shameful passion like the Gentiles who have no knowledge of God.” The Gentiles “which know not God,” gratified every evil passion. Pagan gods were evil; their followers were evil. See Rom. 1:24-27.

“That no man go beyond and defraud his brother...” (I Thess. 4:6) A man is not to “defraud his brother”, or invade the rights of another’s home. This is the sin of adultery. In our age, to assail the purity of wife or daughter is counted as a fearful crime against the family.

“The lord is the avenger of all such...” Modern men and women need to remember that God is the “avenger” for sexual wrongs both in this life and the next.

“For God hath... called us... unto holiness.” (I Thess. 4:7) God has “called” us all for a decent sex life consistent with God’s aims and purposes. It was necessary for Paul to place this lofty ideal before the Christians of Thessalonica living in a pagan world. It is equally relevant now. “Let marriage be held in honor by all and the marriage bed unpolluted” (Heb. 13:4). To “despise,” or reject such teaching is to **REJECT GOD** (verse 8; see I Cor. 6:19, 20).

II. The Way to Love and Industry (I Thessalonians 4:9-12)

“But as touching brotherly love...” (I Thess. 4:9) They were actively practicing such love (I Thess. 3:6). As apart of the **FAMILY OF GOD**, they felt toward each other a great love. In the spirit of home life they shared their possessions. They showed their love by deeds of kindness and helpfulness. Wherever the gospel goes, two characteristics prevail: **PERSONAL PURITY** and **LOVE FOR EACH OTHER** (see Matt. 22:36-38; John 13:34, 35; I John 3:14).

“And indeed ye do it toward all the brethren... in all Macedonia.” (I Thess. 4:10) The well to do of Thessalonica were generous in using their position and influence for the good of the brethren around them, as Timothy informed Paul (Acts 17:4; I Thess. 3:6). Paul exhorts their to “increase more and more” in this regard (I Thess. 4:12). What a text for **INCREASING YOUR LOVE OFFERINGS OVER and ABOVE YOUR TITHE**. You can’t out give God, you know (Luke 6:38; II For. 8:3-5, 7f, 24). To give liberally is to show “**PROOF OF YOUR LOVE**” for God, Christ, the church, and the gospel! Does God love you? He does, if you are a “**CHEERFUL GIVER**” (II Cor. 9:7).

“And that ye study to be quiet...” (I Thess. 4:11) Or calm, including silence (Acts 11:8). “Make an earnest endeavor” to “mind your own business”! The restless are commanded not to be meddlesome busybodies (I Tim. 2:1, 2). They were not to be idlers, hut were to be honest toilers (verse 12). Christians will be punctual, prompt, and energetic. Such living drains men to Christ (Col. 4:5; Eph. 5:15, 16; I Pet. 3:1, 2, 7), Christians must not work at callings that are evil (Eph. 4:28; II Pet, 2:2). True “love of the brethren” will incline one to **SEEK PEACE**, to attend to his **OWN TASK** and to maintain **HONEST INDEPENDENCE**.

III. The Wonderful Hope Concerning the Dead (I Thessalonians 4:13-18)

“But I would not have you to be ignorant... “ I Thess. 4:13): This is the main topic of the epistle. Paul must have given the Lord’s Second Coming great emphasis in his preaching at Thessalonica as it is mentioned in every chapter.

Though it is commonly spoken of as the Lord’s “COMING,” or “Appearing,” it is specifically called “SECOND” COMING in Heb. 9:28. Jesus’ word, “AGAIN” (John 14:3) means A SECOND TIME. So it is perfectly proper and Scriptural to speak of it as the “Second Coming.”

The Thessalonians had a FALSE NOTION about the dead in relation to the Second Coming. They counted it a great loss that their dear ones who died had not lived to meet Jesus. Paul will correct their thinking.

“Concerning them which are asleep.” What we call death is only falling asleep in the arms of our Lord. Jesus said of Jairus’ daughter, “Weep not; she is not dead, but sleepeth” (Luke 8:52; John 11:11; Acts 8:1). “Sleep” indicates the restful effects of death to the child of God. The SOUL does NOT SLEEP. The apostle is talking about the BODY OF THE BELIEVER. Christians are not grieved at the condition of the blessed dead. We are in sorrow because we are separated FROM THEM. Grief for the loss of friends or loved ones is right. Jesus wept in sympathy at the grave of Lazarus (John 11:33-35, Phil. 2:27). The heathen have “no hope” like ours (Eph. 2:12).

“For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again...” (I Thess. 4:14). This is the FOUNDATION TRUTH of the gospel (I Cor. 15:1-4). It was Jesus who died anti the SAME Jesus who ROSE AGAIN (Acts 1:11; 2:32, 36: 9:5; I Tim. 2:5; II Tim. 2:8).

Physical death will come to us all as the result of Adam’s sin (Gen. 3:19; 5:5; Heb. 9:27). “Death” will come to all who do not ACCEPT CHRIST and His sacrifice on the cross. This means eternal separation from God (Rom. 8:6; John 5:24-27; Eph. 2:12). Christ submitted to physical death on the cross FOR OUR SINS (Rom, 5:12; I Pet. 2:24; BUT HE SUFFERED MORE – He was “forsaken” of God as He bore my sins (Matt. 27:45, 46).

And after three days, “Hallelujah, He arose!” The same gospel which assures us He arose, assures us that when Christ COMES AGAIN, all in Christ shall come forth from the grave (John 14:1-3)! Death has lost its terror for Christians.

“For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord...” (I Thess. 4:15): If there is any priority at all it will be in favor of the “sleeping saints”; they will be raised from the grave before anything is done for the living saints on the earth.

“Prevent.” Precede or come before. The spirit of the “dead” Christian is “at home with the Lord” (II Cor. 5:8, Phil. 1:23), while the body is left behind on the earth.

“For the Lord himself shall descend... “ (I Thess. 4:15): Note the great SOUNDS, “Shout” – the victory shout of Christ to His OWN PEOPLE as He leaves the Father’s right Hand to come for us (Acts 7:55; Heb. 1:3). “I will COME AGAIN” (John 14:3; Acts 1:11) – there is NO DOUBT ABOUT THAT. At His command ALL the dead in Christ will rise (John 11:43, 5:28, 29).

“Voice of the archangel.” The only archangel (chief or ruler of the angels) mentioned in the New Testament is Michael in Jude 9.

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“Trump of God.” God’s trumpet because employed in his service (I Cor. 15:52). It is “Last” because it sounds its awful peal in connection with the “end.”

“Dead in Christ shall rise first”: They shall meet the Saviour first; THEN the LIVING shall be “transformed” (I Cor. 15:51, 52) and “CAUGHT UP along with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air” (verse 17). “And so we shall forever be with the Lord.” Read Rev, 1:18; John 14:2, 3; 17:24.

“Wherefore comfort one another...” (I Thess. 4:18) Such a hope “comforted” the Thessalonians. It comforts us, too! As Enoch and Elijah were translated, the whole church will rise in joyful welcome to the RETURNING SAVIOUR, to be with Him forevermore. Does this not thrill you through and through to think of it?

QUESTIONS

1. Why is Christianity a practical religion?
2. How were Christians to “walk” (I Thess. 4:1)?
3. Who “gave you” the “commandments” (I Thess. 4:2)?
4. What was the “will of God” for these believers (I Thess. 4:3)?
5. What is the meaning of “possess his vessel in sanctification” (I Thess. 4:4)?
6. What should be the attitude of Christians toward the homes – the wives and daughters – of other people (I Thess. 4:6)?
7. God has “called” us to what (I Thess. 4:7)?
8. What is the “temple” of the Holy Spirit (I Thess. 4:8; I Cor. 6:19, 20)?
9. What does God teach Christians to do (I Thess. 4:9)?
10. Christians must “study” to be what (I Thess. 4:11)? Is it a sin to meddle in the business of other people?
11. What did Paul teach regarding idleness (I Thess. 4:11, 12)?
12. What word does Paul use for the believers death (I Thess. 4:13)? Does God desire that we should be “ignorant” of the departed believers?
13. What two kinds of sorrow are suggested (I Thess. 4:13)?
14. What does the resurrection of Christ guarantee (I Thess. 4:14; Acts 17:31)?
15. Whose “word” is this explanation of Christ’s return (I Thess. 4:15)?
16. What are the three chief events which are to take place at our Lord’s return (I Thess. 4:16, 17)?
17. Which company will be caught up FIRST, those living or those who sleep with Christ (I Thess. 4:16, 17; compare I Cor. 15:51-53)?
18. How will Christ’s coming FOR His saints (I Thess. 4:15-17) differ from His coming WITH His saints (I Thess. 3:13)?
19. In whose company will believers spend eternity (I Thess. 4:17)?
20. With what are Christians to “comfort” on another (I Thess. 4:18)?

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Lesson 37

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I Thessalonians 5

Memory Verse: I Thessalonians 5:2

Memory Verse:

“For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night” (I Thessalonians 5:2).

THE MODEL WALK AND THE DAY OF THE LORD

That Jesus Christ is COMING AGAIN is CERTAIN. He DECLARED He was coming again (John 14:1-3). Heaven CONFIRMED it (Acts 1:11). Scripture REVEALS it (Rev. 1:7).

The TIME of His coming is UNCERTAIN. Jesus said, “It is not for you to know the TIMES or the SEASONS, which the Father hath put in His own power” (Acts 1:7).

Two Attitudes

There are two wrong attitudes toward the Second Coming. That of “Feverish expectation.” This often results in fanaticism. Second, the is “Cold indifference.” This may encourage a life of sensual indulgence. Both extremes are to be shunned. In that light, Paul’s inspired teaching follows.

I. Encouragement to Watchfulness (I Thessalonians 5:1-11)

A. The “day of the Lord” is Christ’s return (I Thessalonians 5:1-2).

“But of the times and the seasons...” (I Thess. 5:1) The time of Christ’s RETURN is UNKNOWN to everyone EXCEPT God (Matt. 24:36). Paul while in Thessalonica had instructed them on the coming again of Christ, and hence they “had no need that I write unto you.” The TIME HAD NEVER BEEN REVEALED!

“Times”: A definite space of time.

“Seasons”: Particular times. They wanted to know what “times” or periods would elapse before the Lord comes. And as to “seasons,” what events would happen meantime.

“For yourselves know... the day of the Lord so cometh as...” (Thess. 5:2): “The day of the Lord” means the “day of Christ’s return.” Paul had taught them that Christ’s return “WITH” His saints would be as unexpected and surprising as the entrance into a home of a “thief in the night.” The coming will not be a surprise for Christians, of course! Notice

B. The false security of unbelievers (I Thessalonians 5:3).

“For when they shall say, Peace and safety...” (I Thess. 5:3) The unbeliever does not EXPECT or DESIRE Christ to return (Matt. 24:36-44; 25:13; Luke 12:39, 40; II Pet. 3:10). As men of the world they feel everything is SECURE and quiet. “Then destruction unforeseen is on them like the birthpangs of a pregnant woman, and there will be no escape.” It is an awful thing to refuse Christ and the Gospel. They shall not escape eternal banishment from God. See Prov. 29:1, Heb. 3:15.

C. The duty of the Christian (I Thessalonians 5:4-11).

“But ye, brethren, are not in darkness...” (I Thess. 5:4) The Christian is a child of LIGHT (John 8:12; Matt. 5:14-16), and is ALWAYS READY for Christ’s coming. Since we are AWAKE and on the WATCH, the Christian will not be surprised no matter when Christ comes! It is too late to prepare when He comes. Come now into the ARK OF SAFETY, the church, and be ready as

“Ye are all the children of light...” (I Thess. 5:5) We are of the “light,” because we have believed in and been “baptized into Christ” (Gal. 3:27). Those who are “of the night” are unbelievers by WILLFUL CHOICE, and DO NOT WANT THE LIGHT (John 3:17f; II Cor. 4:4-6),

“Therefore let us not sleep... but... watch... be sober.” (I Thess. 5:6) “Sleep” denotes careless indifference to Christ and His will. We as Christians are to “watch” and “be sober”: sober as opposed to being drunk (Luke 21:34; Rom. 13:12, 13). How horrible to be in this state when Christ returns. Drunkards shall not “inherit the kingdom of God” (I Cor. 6:9, 10).

“For they that sleep... and... be drunken.” (I Thess. 5:7) Men of the world spend the night in two ways, neither appropriate to the “day”. They are “asleep,” utterly indifferent to the coming judgment, or they indulge in DRUNKEN REVELRY, absorbed in the base and unworthy.

“In most countries drunks are ashamed to be seen intoxicated, and hence choose the night. In the East it is so. Peter thought the fact that it was DAY, and only 9:00 A.M., was PROOF that the scenes of Pentecost are not due to wine” (Acts 2:15). Drunkenness is the prelude to all base conduct. It is not by accident that we link “Wine, women and song” in the evil, suggestive sense!

“But let us, who are the day, be sober...” (I Thess. 5:8) This means the Christian will not indulge in alcoholic drinks that will mean his final ruin (Eph. 5:18). Total abstinence is the ONLY SAFE RULE OF CONDUCT as to alcoholic beverage and all harmful things. As those whose lives are of “the day” in Christ, we are to put on “the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation.” See Eph. 6:14, Rom. 13:12. “Breastplate” is for the defense of the body, “Faith and love” will protect us from evil thought, and keep us from carelessness and despair. This gives us victory in time of conflict as a “helmet” protects the head in the day of battle. God’s purpose in sending Christ the first time was to SAVE US (John 3:16-19). Christ has obtained SALVATION for ALL WHO WILL BELIEVE and OBEY THE GOSPEL (Rom. 3:23-26). Whether we LIVE or DIE before He comes, we should live a life which honors Christ (verses 9-10: Phil. 1:23).

“Wherefore comfort yourselves together...” (I Thess. 5:11) As Christians, we are to seek the welfare of each other at all times. We must encourage or “build up” each other in Christ (Col. 3:2; Rom. 12:5). Our hope in Christ is surely ground for comfort in all of life’s experiences, especially in bringing “comfort” to mourners (I Thess. 4:13-18).

II. Exhortations to ALL Right Living (I Thessalonians 5:12-22)

A. Honor the leaders (I Thessalonians 5:12-13).

“And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labor among you...” (I Thess. 5:12) Recognize and appreciate them. “Labor.” Toil on even if weary. Refers to ministers and elders, those who stand in front of the people as leaders. Get acquainted with them and FOLLOW THEM as they lead you aright; they are “over you in the Lord.”

“Admonish you” describes the leaders as performing the task of brotherly warning and kindly counsel. Speaking to one about his conduct, reminding him of what he seems to have forgotten; let him know what is rightly EXPECTED OF HIM AS A CHRISTIAN (see I Cor. 10:11; II Tim. 2:19).

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“And to esteem them very highly in love...” (I Thess. 5:13) A faithful leader and minister in service deserves such affection on the part of those to whom he ministers – in a class, or church (Heb. 13:17; Phil. 1:22). Peace will prevail among all who are truly Christian in a church! A factious spirit has no place anywhere among the family of God in this church!

B. Our duty to the disorderly and fainthearted (I Thessalonians 5: 14-15).

“Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly... “ (I Thess. 5:14): The duties named in this section are those of the elders especially, but in a lesser sense the DUTY OF EACH CHRISTIAN. “Warn the disorderly.” Christians must help one another live a faithful, holy life. “Unruly” ones break the ranks, do things inconsistent and not fitting to a Christian. If we see a Christian doing that which is wrong, let us bravely and lovingly GO TO HIM and “admonish” him to DO HIS DUTY! We must not be afraid of giving offense. We should be afraid of seeing one we LOVE GO ON IN SIN TO HIS RUIN!

“Comfort the feebleminded.” “Cheer up the fainthearted” (Berkeley). Encourage those who are easily disheartened and discouraged.

“Support the weak.” Not those lacking in physical strength, or those in need of material, but those who are morally and spiritually weak; those who cannot endure the testing of persecution and reproach.

“Be patient toward all men.” “Exercise patience toward everyone.” Disorderly elements try the patience of leaders. Hold out with erring, the despondent, and the weak. Study I Cor. 13:4-8. Paul holds up a real ideal for church leaders!

“See that none render evil for evil unto any man...” (I Thess. 5:15) The Christian cannot harbor a spirit of revenge (Rom. 12:21, I Pet. 2:21-23).

C. General character of the Christian life (I Thessalonians 5:16-22).

“Rejoice evermore!” (I Thess. 5:16) Verses 16-18 have often been called the “standing orders of the Christian Church.” These commands are in force at all times, circumstances and places. One who has the gospel hope ought to rejoice and be glad, “Always be cheerful.”

“Pray without ceasing” (I Thess. 5:17): Unceasingly, and perseveringly (read Luke 18:1-18; 11:5-8).

“In every thing give thanks...” (I Thess, 5:18) “Thank God whatever happens” (Goodspeed). “Under all circumstances” (Berkeley). Paul “gave thanks to God” for food in a terrible storm in the Mediterranean (Acts 27:35; read also II Cor. 1:11; Acts 28:15; Eph. 5:20).

“Quench not the Spirit” (I Thess. 5:19): “Do not extinguish the Spirit’s fire” (Berkeley). We “quench” the Spirit when we refuse to OBEY HIM (Acts 5:32), REPRESS His impulses, NEGLECT to use the gifts or GRACES He has given us (Gal. 5:22, 23). Don’t stifle your conscience.

“Despise not prophesying.” (I Thess. 5:20) “Inspired teachings.” Inspired men in the early church were needed, because the New Testament was not yet written to guide the leaders and the church. These spiritual gifts were temporary and miraculous in character. They were “done away” (1 Cor. 13:10) when the gospel was fully given.

“Prove all things...” (I Thess. 5:21) Put to the test all such men who speak. There were those who could “discern spirits” (I Cor. 12:10). Rules for testing were plain (I John 4:1-8).

“Abstain from all appearance of evil” (I Thess. 5:22): “Keep away from evil in every form” (Berkeley). See Rom. 14:16.

III. End of the Epistle (I Thessalonians 5:23-28)

A. A prayer for them (I Thessalonians 5:23-24).

“And the very God of peace sanctify you...” (I Thess. 5:23) Paul prays “the God of peace Himself make you holy through and through.” Let the whole man be preserved blameless “unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ!” “Spirit and soul” are used interchangeably. Trust God who can keep you faithful (verse 24; I Tim. 6:15; I John 1:9).

B. “Pray for us” (I Thessalonians 5:25-27).

“Pray for us” (I Thess. 5:25): Paul asked for their prayers.

“Greet all the brethren with an holy kiss” (I Thess. 5:26): Common salutation in the East, like our handshaking, Paul “solemnly charged” them to read the epistle “unto all the holy brethren” (verse 27).

C. The benediction (I Thessalonians 5:28),

“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen” (I Thess. 5:28): The usual farewell benediction is an invocation of grace.

QUESTIONS

1. What did Paul say the Thessalonians already knew (I Thess. 5:1)?
2. How would “the day of the Lord” come (I Thess. 5:2)?
3. What two wrong attitudes are held toward the Second Coming of Christ?
4. What should be our attitude toward those who are continually predicting that Christ is ABOUT to come (Matt. 24:36)?
5. Whose attitude is described in I Thessalonians 5:3 -- believer’s or unbelievers?
6. Will the “day of the lord” overtake believers (I Thess. 5:4, 5)? Why?
7. What should be the attitude of “children of light” (I Thess. 5:6-7)?
8. Christians are to “PUT ON” what (I Thess. 5:8)?
9. What has God appointed us to “obtain” (I Thess. 5:9)?
10. For whom, and to what end, did Christ die (I Thess. 5:10)?
11. What should we do for one another (I Thess. 5:11)?
12. Why are preachers and elders to be highly “esteemed” (I Thess. 5: 12-13)?
13. What condition should characterize a Christian assembly (I Thess. 5:13; I Cor. 13:11)?
14. What must be done with the “unruly,” the “fainthearted,” “the weak,” and “all men” (I Thess, 5:14)?
15. What must we remember to do to all men (I Thess. 5:15)?
16. What are the “standing orders of the Christian Church” (I Thess. 5: 16-18)?
17. What is the believers’ responsibility to the Holy Spirit and to the Scriptures (I Thess, 5:19-21)?
18. From what are we to “abstain” (I Thess. 5:22)? Who will “preserve” us (I Thess, 5:23-24)?
19. Did Paul ask Christians to pray for him (I Thess. 5:25)? What was the customary greeting in Paul’s day (I Thess. 5:26)?
20. What did Paul want done with this letter (I Thess. 5:27)? How did he close the epistle (I Thess. 5:28)?

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Lesson 38

Page 1

II Thessalonians 1

Memory Verse: I Thessalonians 1:3

Memory Verse:

“We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth” (II Thessalonians 1:3).

WORDS OF COMFORT TO SUFFERERS

The church in Thessalonica was founded about 51 A.D. by Paul on his second missionary journey after he left Philippi (Acts 17:1-9). Terrific persecution struck the infant church. Paul wrote I Thessalonians to “perfect that which is LACKING in your faith” regarding the Second Coming of Christ, work, and personal purity (I Thess. 3:10).

A Second Book

It is plain that I Thessalonians did not settle all the difficulties in Thessalonica. This letter was intended primarily to correct certain mistakes which the Thessalonians were making concerning the Second Coming. They were failing to distinguish between the two phases, “the Day of the Lord” and the coming of the Lord.

The book was written late in 52 A.D., or early 53 A.D., only a few weeks or months after the first epistle.

In First Thessalonians Paul had spoken of the Lord’s coming as being sudden and unexpected (I Thess. 5:2, 3). In this letter he explains that it will not be till after the apostasy. Note his

I. Salutation (I Thessalonians 1:1, 2)

“Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus...” (II Thess. 1:1) Paul is the author of the epistle, the second one of the New Testament to be written. He unites his name with that of Silvanus, or Silas, and Timotheus, or Timothy, to show that they endorse the teaching. Conditions at Thessalonica had not improved. Misunderstanding as to the TIME of the Second Coming had become more serious. Believing that Christ would COME. SOON, large numbers of the Christians STOPPED WORK. They became disorderly. “An idle mind (or hand) is the devil’s workshop (or tool).” So, Paul sends words of comfort to those who were undergoing persecution, and stern rebuke for those who needed it “to the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” This “assembly” or body of men was “called out” of darkness of the world into the light of the gospel.

“Grace unto you, and peace...” (II Thess. 1:2) “Grace” is the sum total of all the unmerited blessings “From God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ” which those who believe and obey the gospel receive. The result is “PEACE” in the believer’s heart: PEACE WITH GOD, PEACE FROM GOD, and PEACE WITH ALL GOD’S PEOPLE. The Christian’s life will provoke ill will and hatred from those who are not living the gospel (I Pet. 4:3-5). Be not discouraged when the devil’s followers, and disgruntled church members, speak “falsely” of you! Jesus had something to say about this (Matt. 5:11, 12).

This salutation was usual for letters of that day. It introduces the writer and the readers, and a greeting in the form of a wish or prayer. It is in the exact form of the salutation with which the First Epistle is begun, the only changes being that “God the Father” is altered to “God our Father,” while “grace” and “peace” are traced to their origin in “God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

II. Steadfastness under Persecution (II Thessalonians 1:3-10)

A. Paul’s thanksgiving for their Faithfulness (II Thessalonians 1:3).

“We are bound to thank God always for you...” (II Thess. 1:3) In I Thess. 3:9-12 Paul affirms that he prayed “night and day” for them. Here he points out how His prayers were answered. Timothy had returned to Paul, at Corinth, and told him many things concerning the church that filled the apostle with thankfulness. Such a spirit was “meet,” right or fitting, since “your faith groweth exceedingly.” Paul had felt before this some anxiety concerning their FAITH (I Thess. 3:10,2, 12, 13). Paul had planted the gospel seed that the Thessalonians had gladly received. Persecution had not been able to keep them from growing in FAITH and FAITHFULNESS to God. Paul’s prayer that they “INCREASE AND ABOUND IN LOVE one toward another, and toward all men” (I Thess. 3:12) had been answered. “The charity (love) of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth,” “is increasing” (Goodspeed). “Our willingness and anxiety to DO GOOD to others is the measure of our REAL FAITH IN GOD. If our love to man is NOT ACTIVE and self-sacrificing, our faith in God is WEAK and LIFELESS.

Accent the GOOD in Christians. Paul did. He was not, of course, BLIND to their faults, and later he plainly pointed them out. He did it in a spirit of love.

B. His pride in their growth (II Thessalonians 1:4).

“So that we ourselves glory in you...” (II Thess. 1:4) Paul was proud, rightly so, of the steadfastness of the Thessalonian Christians. He does not congratulate his readers; he gives THANKS TO GOD. Paul boasted of their spiritual growth “in the churches of God” where he visited. In Romans 16:16 reference is made to “the churches of Christ.” Individual members are called “Christians” (Acts 11:26).

“Your patience...” Steadfast endurance.

“Persecutions”: Hostile attacks of their enemies.

“Tribulations”: “Afflictions.” Points to any or consequent sufferings.

“Faith” is the source of the “patience” they exhibited. So their “faith” in afflictions is the substance of the apostle’s boast to the churches of Achaia, southern Greece. Here he is boasting of Thessalonica in Macedonia (northern Greece) to the Corinthians (in Achaia, southern Greece). He later boasted to the Corinthians about the collection (II Cor. 8:1-15) after having FIRST BOASTED to the Macedonians about the Corinthians (II Cor. 9:1-5).

C. God’s token in us – faith (II Thessalonians 1:5).

“Which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God...” (II Thess.) Their heroic faith that stands the test of persecution, Paul declares, indicates a DIVINE SOURCE. Patient, persevering faith in time of trouble and persecution is a PROOF of God’s PRESENCE and POWER (Acts 17:5-9; I Thess. 2:14-16). These early Christians had enemies who were hostile to them. Don’t get excited when you meet folk who say, “I don’t like that preacher, or member”! Usually this is a splendid recommendation of the one attacked. “Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you” (Luke 6:26). They are SURE TO BE DELIVERED, and their enemies will be punished, as their present PATIENCE is a “TOKEN” or “PROOF!”

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“Counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer”: Such testings are disciplinary, as well as a **PROOF THAT GOD APPROVES US**. Such suffering will fit the saint for the kingdom. God will vindicate and reward his “worthy” ones.

Are you suffering to take the gospel to any sinners, or to admonish faltering saints? Does it really cost you to come to Church? It does, **IF YOU ARE FAITHFUL**. Are you honestly “worthy” if you **SLIP IN** and **SLIP OUT** to about **ONE-THIRD** of the services of this New Testament Church? Would you like to have Christ **FIND** you at His **COMING** visiting in some member’s house playing cards on Sunday night instead of helping us broadcast the Glad Gospel Hour at 7:30 P.M.? Are you really suffering to come to prayer meeting on Wednesday nights, or sacrificing to call on the lost or the indifferent? God is pleased with such “suffering!”

D. Christ is coming (II Thessalonians 1:6-10).

1. To reward our faith (II Thess. 1:5b, 7a, 10).

“The kingdom of God, for which ye also **SUFFER**.” (II Thess. 1:5b) If we are steadfast under suffering, for Christ’s sake, God will count us “worthy of the kingdom of God!” The issue of faith, by which earthly sufferings are endured, is not only the development of **SPIRITUAL VIRTUES**, but also the **INHERITANCE OF HEAVENLY BLESSINGS**. Such a belief and hope has been the proper stay and comfort of sufferers through all the Christian centuries.

“And to you who are troubled rest with us...” (II Thess. 1:7a) God will punish those who trouble or fight against His children. God will allow wicked men and women to test the faith of His children, and then God will **PUNISH THOSE WICKED ONES FOR THEIR WILLFUL EVIL CHOICE**. Paul was not exempt from suffering, nor was Christ our Master (I Thess. 3:3, 4, 7, 8, 12, 13). “In fact, all who want to live devotedly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted” (II Tim. 3:12. Berkeley).

The persecutor is certain of punishment; the innocent sufferer is assured of vindication, of “rest,” of relief.

“When he shall come to be glorified in his saints...” (II Thess. 1:10) “Saints” means all Christians. Christ will receive honor and glory from all His “saints.” When we see Jesus coming in the clouds with glory all His holy angels, our admiration of Him will increase. What promises are ours!

2. To punish the wicked (II Thessalonians 1:6, 7b, 8, 9).

“Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense...” (II Thess. 1:6) The rearward of the righteous is one aspect of divine judgment. **THE WICKED ARE TO BE PUNISHED**. “God considers it just to repay with distress those who distress you.” In time and eternity it is true, physically and spiritually, that, “Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap” (Gal. 6:7). The persecutor is certain of punishment from God. The innocent sufferer is assured of victory through Christ (I Cor. 15:57), “when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in a blaze of fire.” See Matt. 24:31; 25:31.

“In flaming fire taking vengeance on them...” (II Thess. 1:8) This is not “taking revenge,” but a solemn infliction of justice. Divine retribution is absolutely inevitable on those who are willfully ignorant of God and stubbornly refuse the gospel of His Son (see Rom. 1:28).

“Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction...” (II Thess. 1:9) These words must be read with sadness, even with trembling! It is futile to **EVADE THEIR MEANING**, or weaken their force. The **DURATION** of punishment is “**EVERLASTING!**” Its nature is not annihilation, but banishment from the presence of God! What an incentive to seek the Lost today! (Luke 19:10; Acts 8:4; John 14:15, 21-24).

III. A Solemn Prayer (II Thessalonians 1:11, 12)

“Wherefore also we pray always for you...” (II Thess. 1:11) Paul is concerned for the suffering Christians at Thessalonica. He continually prays for them that “God would count you worthy of this calling” as Christians. He prays that God by His power may “fulfill every desire you may have for goodness, end every effort of your faith.”

“That the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified...” (II Thess. 1:12) This is the ultimatum of the prayer. The “name” of Christ has been revealed to be, as divine Saviour, and as loving Lord.

QUESTIONS

1. Who joined with Paul in writing this letter (II Thess. 1:1)?
2. Why was it necessary for Paul to write II Thessalonians?
3. Why did Paul say that he was “bound” to thank God (II Thess. 1:3)?
4. What are the churches called in II Thess. 1:4 (Acts 11:26)?
5. What did God send to these persecuted believers (II Thess. 1:3)?
6. In what did Paul “glory” (II Thess. 1:4)?
7. What is “a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God” (II Thess. 1:5)?
8. What “righteous thing” does God do (II Thess. 1:5)?
9. What is also “a righteous thing with God” (II Thess. 1:6)?
10. What event will mark the end of persecution and trouble for Christians (II Thess. 1:7)?
11. Who will accompany Christ (II Thess. 1:7)?
12. How will Christ come (II Thess. 1:8)?
13. What does it mean to “know not God” (II Thess. 1:8)?
14. What will happen to those who “obey not the gospel” (II Th. 1:8)? What is the “gospel” (I Cor. 15:1-5)?
15. What is the punishment of wicked people (II Thess. 1:9)?
16. Why will Christians “admire” Christ when He comes (II Thess. 1:10)?
17. Who will be gathered before the Lord at the Judgment (Matt. 25:31-46)? How long will wicked people be in hell (II Thess. 1:9)? How long will “righteous” people be in heaven?
18. For what did Paul “Pray always” (II Thess. 1:11)?
19. Does God MAKE us “worthy”, or COUNT us “worthy” of our calling (II Thess. 1:11)?
20. Whom did Paul want “glorified” (II Thess. 1:12)? According to what will these be glorified?

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Lesson 39

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II Thessalonians 2

Memory Verse: I Thessalonians 2:1-2

Memory Verse:

“Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him. That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand” (II Thessalonians 2:1, 2).

THE COMING OF CHRIST

Christ’s coming is CERTAIN. He said, “I will COME AGAIN” (John 14:6). Messengers from heaven CONFIRMED this DECLARATION of Christ. “This SAME JESUS, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall SO COME in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven” (Acts 1:10-11).

The Holy Spirit in 318 verses of the books of the New Testament makes it crystal clear that our Lord will RETURN with “power and great glory” (Matt. 24:30). “Behold He COMETH with clouds; and every eye SHALL SEE HIM, and they also which pierced Him” (Rev. 1:7). “He which testifieth these things saith, SURELY I COME quickly. Amen, Even so, COME, Lord Jesus” (Rev. 22:20).

Why Written?

Paul wrote II Thessalonians 2 to clear up “misapprehension” on the subject of the Lord’s coming. It shows that it must not be expected until certain events have taken place. These events follow:

1. A falling away, or apostasy;
2. The removal of some power which hindered the “manifestation” of the “man of sin”;
3. The “manifestation” of the “man of sin,” and FOLLOWING THIS, the COMING OF THE LORD.

Paul had “told you these things” when he “was yet with you” (II Thess. 2:3), but now writes more fully. He does not seek to show all, but some of, the events which will precede Christ’s coming.

I. The Coming of Christ and the Man of Sin (II Thessalonians 2:1-12)

A. His coming is the purifying hope of the church (II Thessalonians 2: 1-2).

“Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ...” (II Thess. 2:1) Concerning the coming in II Thessalonians 1:7-10, Paul presented the COMING OF THE LORD to REWARD THE SAINTS (verses 5, 7a, 10), and to PUNISH THE WICKED (verses 6, 7b, 8, 9). He had taught them in I Thess. 5:2 that the “day of the Lord so cometh as a THIEF IN THE NIGHT” – when they were NOT EXPECTING HIM. Some of the Christians had become so excited over the COMING OF CHRIST they had become unfit for the everyday duties of Christians.

“What would YOU DO, if you knew Christ would come again today at 6:00 P.M.?” a Christian was once asked. “I would faithfully perform all the duties I normally do during the day,” was the sensible answer!

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“Coming...” This word translates the Greek term for “PRESENCE”, never is used by Paul to designate the present, unseen, spiritual presence of the Lord, but ALWAYS INDICATES HIS VISIBLE RETURN (see I Thess. 4: 16-17).

“Our gathering together with him”: Paul is referring to the “rapture” mentioned in I Thess. 4:15-17, and the BEING FOREVER WITH THE LORD THEREAFTER.

“That ye be not soon shaken in mind...” (II Thess. 2:2): They were not to let their “minds be too easily unsettled or wrought up” (Good-speed) over Christ’s coming. The Christian is NOT DISTRESSED BE-CAUSE CHRIST IS COMING! Rather, he is DELIGHTED, because it assures ultimate victory with Christ. Instead of STOPPING ONE’S WORK, one ought to WORK WITH GREATER ZEAL THAN EVER BEFORE (Rom. 14:12).

“Neither by spirit.” By ecstatic utterance of someone who says he has a revelation of the Spirit. “PROVE all things” (I Thess. 5:21) to AVOID ERROR. “Hold fast that which is good” shows good sense especially in regard to His coming. Read Gal. 1:8 again!

“Nor by word.” Paul flatly denies that by conversation or by letter he had stated that the Second Coming was immediately at hand. God ALONE KNOWS “that day and hour” of Christ’s RETURN (Matt. 23:36)!

B. The apostasy to precede Christ’s coming (II Thessalonians 2:3-12).

“Let no man deceive you by any means...” (II Thess. 2:3): Paul warns them not be gullible to “tricks” which any new deceiver may pro-duce in religion. The “Second Coming” will NOT TAKE PLACE BEFORE CERTAIN IMPORTANT THINGS TAKE PLACE.

“Falling away first.” Means apostasy, or DEFECTION from the Christian faith on the part of Christians, and was to arise WITHIN THE CHURCH. “The foundation principle of the ‘falling away’ is the ASSUMPTION OF the RIGHT TO CHANGE OR MODIFY THE LAWS AND COMMANDMENTS OF GOD.”

The gradual declension, corruption and departure from the ancient faith, which was fully developed a few hundred years later, has always been spoken of by Protestant Church historians as The Apostasy.

“That man of sin be revealed.” In connection with the Apostasy, “The son of perdition” is “one who is lost and ruined and destined to destruction.” It is applied here, and to Judas (John 17:12). This lawless one is not Satan, but some one definite person or principle who is doing Satan’s work (I John 2:18). Most Protestants say the Roman Catholic Church is the “man of sin”. I doubt if any organization is the “man of sin.” A principle was then and is now at work that would SET ASIDE GOD’S order and establish one of its own instead. It leads to ruin and perdition – and is called the “son of perdition.”

“Who... exalteth himself above... God.” (II Thess. 2:4) This is not Satan, but an agent of Satan. Caius Caligula, Roman Emperor from 34-41 A.D. claimed to be God, and made a desperate attempt to have his statue set up for worship in the temple at Jerusalem! There is one power that shows all the marks given by Paul:

1. The “man of sin” exalts himself “above... God.”
2. He “sitteth in the temple of God,” that is, in the church. He is a CHURCH POWER.
3. He claims powers that only belong to divinity.
4. He shows off signs and “lying wonders” (verse 9), or lays claim to miraculous powers.

Every one of these marks applies to the papacy:

1. Its development was simultaneous with the apostasy.

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2. Its development was “let” or “hindered” until the pagan Roman empire fell, but was rapid after it was taken out of the way (verse 7).

3. The papacy has set aside diving laws and HAS MADE OTHER SPIRITUAL LAWS TO BIND MEN, and has claimed divine prerogatives. A newly elected Pope is adored and styled “Lord God, the Pope.”

4. It is in the temple of God, that is, it arose in the church, and still claims to be the “Holy Catholic Church.”

5. The claim of Infallibility is “sitting as God in the temple.”

6. The papacy has always claimed miraculous powers, and it is a fact well known that it was often worked of “Lying wonders” (verse 9). No fact is better established than that the hierarchy of the church has often deceived by false miracles. Indeed, these have often been detected and explained.

“And now ye know what withholdeth...” (II Thess. 2:6) They knew. We do not know the “key” Paul gave to them when He preached to them (verse 5). He told them this development could not take place until pagan Rome fell. Rome did withhold, or prevent it.

“For the mystery of iniquity...” (II Thess. 2:7) A “mystery” is something once concealed from man but subsequently revealed by the power or permission of God. So the principles of lawlessness, already at work in secret, or without its full and final manifestation, is being restrained or held back. When the restraint is removed, the “man of sin” will appear. A persecuted church could not be a haughty church, but when Roman political power fell, the papal power seized the old Roman scepter.

“And then shall that Wicked be revealed...” (II Thess, 2:8) After the hindering power is removed, the WICKED or LAWLESS one shall run RAMPANT and carry the great body of Christians and churches into apostasy. “The spirit of his mouth” means HIS WORD. The mere appearance of Christ destroys the adversary. The spirit of “lawlessness” in Paul’s day developed into the Roman hierarchy, and “it is not inaccurate to call it an Apostate Church, of which the Papacy thus far has been the worst manifestation. What the final culmination is to be is yet to be seen.” BUT WHENEVER OR WHEREVER men in the church ADDED TO, TOOK FROM, or CHANGED GOD’S WAY AND WORD, THERE THE “MAN OF SIN” IS AT WORK (Rev. 22:18-19).

“Even him... the working of Satan” (II Thess. 5:9): Those who will not receive and obey the truth are given over to the evil which they willfully choose (Rom. 1:24-26, 28; Matt. 24:24). Those who reject Christian truth are punished by becoming “dupes of destructive delusion!” They delight in evil (verses 11-12; Isa. 66:3, 4; Mark 16:15, 16).

II. Thanksgiving, Exhortation, and Prayer (II Thessalonians 2:13-17)

A. Thanksgiving (II Thessalonians 2:13-14).

“But we are bound to give thanks...” (II Thess. 2:13) Paul feels an obligation to God the faith and the salvation of his Thessalonian friends. He addresses them as “beloved of the Lord.”

Paul declares his gratitude “because from the beginning God chose you for salvation by the Spirit’s sanctifying work and by faith in the truth.” The eternal choice of God is accompanied by the FREE CHOICE of man as he accepts the truth revealed in the gospel and submits his will to the Lordship of Christ.

B. Exhortation (II Thessalonians 2:15).

“Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions...” (II Thess. 2:15) “Traditions” were handed down from one to another, or taught “orally or by letter,” as Paul did under the Holy Spirit’s direction. The word is used in a bad and a good sense in the Scriptures. Jesus warned the people against the “traditions” of

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the elders of the Jews which MADE VOID God's commandments (Mark 7:7, Matt. 15:9). Man-made "traditions" are to be rejected.

C. The prayer (II Thessalonians 2:16-17).

"Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God... hath beloved us." (II Thess. 2:16) Paul realizes that his appeal can be obeyed and fulfilled only by divine power. It is for this reason that he offers this petition to Christ the Son and to God the Father.

The union and order of the names are almost startling, for to Son and Father equal honor is ascribed, and indeed the Son is MENTIONED FIRST. Both are ONE in their love to the Church and one in their saving work. This divine love was manifested in the suffering and death of Christ, as also in all his mission. Issuing from this love are the divine gifts of "eternal comfort and good hope." It is "comfort" which gives strength to endure all the trials of life, to defy death itself, and to rest assured that nothing can prevent the objects of the divine love from sharing the future glory of Christ (verse 17).

QUESTIONS

1. Did Jesus clearly say He would "come again" (John 14:6)?
2. Who "confirmed" the "declaration" of Jesus (Acts 1:10-11)?
3. Is the New Testament clear in revealing our Lord's coming (Matt. 24:30; Rev. 1:7; 22:20)?
4. To what event does Paul refer as "our gathering together unto Him" (II Thess. 2:1, I Thess. 4:17)?
5. Can you name three things Paul said would happen before Christ would come "again" (II Thess. 2)?
6. Had Paul taught "these things" when he "was yet with them" (II Thess. 2:5)?
7. What would you do if you knew He would come today at 6:00 P.M.? Why (II Tim. 4:6-8)?
8. What false teaching concerning the "day of the Lord" was troubling these believers (II Thess. 2:2)?
9. What do the Scriptures say must precede Christ's coming to judge his enemies (II Thess. 2:3)?
10. Who is the leader in this great "falling away" or apostasy (II Thess. 2:3)?
11. Can you list several reasons why the papacy is thought to be the "man of sin" to whom Paul refers?
12. What was already working in Paul's day (II Thess. 2:7)?
13. Who is the one who "letteth," or restraineth, the "working of iniquity" today (II Thess. 2:6, 7)? How long will he "restrain"?
14. How does God send a "strong delusion" to wicked people (II Thess. 2:8-11)?
15. What will happen to those who "believe a lie" (II Th. 2:12)? Why will such people be "damned" or lost?
16. Why do we "give thanks alway to God" (II Thess, 2:13)? How did God choose us "to salvation"?
17. How are we "called" to become Christians (II Thess. 2:14)?
18. What are Christians to do (II Thess. 2:15)?
19. What is God to DO for us (II Thess. 2:16-17)?
20. What is the divine side of our salvation? The human side? What must we "DO to be saved" (Acts 16:30-34; 2:37-42; 22:16)?