

# **In Roman Custody**

## **Year 4, Quarter 3**

**The next period of Paul's work includes four years of custody by Roman authorities. Luke devotes one-quarter of the book of Acts to these events (21:26 – 28:31) which will be studied first as a historical backdrop. While confined Paul writes four "prison epistles" which we will survey in the following order: Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon and Philippians.**

### **Outline**

#### **Week 1: From Arrest to Felix**

- ◆ Paul's Rescue from the Jewish Mob
- ◆ Paul's Address to the Crowd
- ◆ Lysias' Investigation
- ◆ The Plot to Kill Paul
- ◆ Passage to Caesarea

#### **Week 2: Before Felix, Festus and Agrippa**

- ◆ Felix Hears Paul's Case
- ◆ Felix's Injustice to Paul
- ◆ Festus' Injustice to Paul
- ◆ Paul's Defense Before Agrippa
- ◆ Paul's Appeal to Agrippa

#### **Week 3: The Long-Awaited Trip to Rome**

- ◆ The Voyage Begins
- ◆ Perils in the Sea
- ◆ Shipwreck
- ◆ Sojourn on Malta
- ◆ Paul in Rome

#### **Week 4: Ephesians**

- ◆ The Prison Epistles
- ◆ Spiritual Blessings in Christ (Eph 1:1-14)
- ◆ The Exalted, Resurrected Christ (Eph 1:15-23)

- ◆ Life to the Dead (Eph 2:1-10)
- ◆ One Household of God (Eph 2:11-22)

### **Week 5: Ephesians**

- ◆ The Church: God's Eternal Purpose (Eph 3:1-13)
- ◆ Glory in the Church (Eph 3:14-21)
- ◆ Organic Unity (Eph 4:1-16)
- ◆ Putting on the New Man (Eph 4:17-24)
- ◆ The Proper Treatment of Others (Eph 4:25-32)

### **Week 6: Ephesians**

- ◆ The Christian's Walk (Eph 5:1-21)
- ◆ Husbands and Wives (Eph 5:22-33)
- ◆ A Note on Child-Rearing (Eph 6:1-4)
- ◆ Servants and Masters (Eph 6:5-9)
- ◆ The Soldier's Armor (Eph 6:10-24)

### **Week 7: Colossians**

- ◆ Introduction
- ◆ The Faithful Colossians (Col 1:1-8)
- ◆ The Exalted Christ (Col 1:9-18)
- ◆ Reconciled to God (Col 1:19-23)
- ◆ Presenting Every Man Perfect in Christ (Col 1:24-29)

### **Week 8: Colossians**

- ◆ Jesus: The Fullness of the Godhead (Col 2:1-10)
- ◆ "Let No One Defraud You" (Col 2:11-23)
- ◆ Seek Those Things Above (Col 3:1-17)
- ◆ A Thumbnail on Domestic Relationships (Col 3:18-4:1)
- ◆ Closing Notes (Col 4:2-18)

### **Week 9: Philemon**

- ◆ Introduction (Phle 1-3)
- ◆ Commendation of Philemon (Phle 4-7)
- ◆ Paul's Appeal for Onesimus (Phle 8-11)
- ◆ "More Than a Slave" (Phle 12-16)
- ◆ A Matter of Debt (Phle 17-25)

**Week 10: Philippians**

- ◆ Introduction/Salutation (Ph 1:1-3)
- ◆ Expressions of Love (Ph 1:3-11)
- ◆ The Furtherance of the Gospel (Ph 1:12-18)
- ◆ Heavenward Thoughts (Ph 1:19-26)
- ◆ The Philippians' Suffering (Ph 1:27-30)

**Week 11: Philippians**

- ◆ One Accord, One Mind (Ph 2:1-4)
- ◆ The Humility and Exaltation of Christ (Ph 2:5-11)
- ◆ Lights in the World (Ph 2:12-18)
- ◆ Timothy's Plans to Visit (Ph 2:19-24)
- ◆ Epaphroditus' Return (Ph 2:25-30)

**Week 12: Philippians**

- ◆ Paul's Jewish Roots (Ph 3:1-6)
- ◆ All Forfeited for Christ (Ph 3:7-11)
- ◆ The Upward Call of God (Ph 3:12-16)
- ◆ Enemies of the Cross (Ph 3:17-19)
- ◆ Heavenly Citizenship (Ph 3:20-4:1)

**Week 13: Philippians**

- ◆ Two Sisters At Odds (Ph 4:2-3)
- ◆ The Power of Prayer (Ph 4:4-7)
- ◆ Following the Pattern (Ph 4:8-9)
- ◆ Feast or Famine (Ph 4:10-18)
- ◆ Closing Greetings (Ph 4:19-23)

## MEMORY VERSES: YEAR 4, QUARTER 3

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**Week 1:** And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.

☞ Acts 22:16

**Week 2:** I have hope in God, which they themselves also accept, that there will be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust. This being so, I myself always strive to have a conscience without offense toward God and men.

☞ Acts 24:15-16

**Week 3:** Then Paul dwelt two whole years in his own rented house, and received all who came to him, preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no one forbidding him.

☞ Acts 28:30-31

**Week 4:** Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love.

☞ Ephesians 1:3-4

**Week 5:** Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end.

☞ Ephesians 3:20-21

**Week 6:** Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

☞ Ephesians 6:10-11

**Week 7:** He has delivered us from the power of darkness and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.

☞ Colossians 1:13-14

**Week 8:** If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.

☞ Colossians 3:1-2

**Week 9:** For perhaps he departed for a while for this purpose, that you might receive him forever, no longer as a slave but more than a slave, as a beloved brother, especially to me but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord.  
✎ Philemon 15-16

**Week 10:** Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel.  
✎ Philippians 1:27

**Week 11:** Do all things without murmuring and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world.  
✎ Philippians 2:14-15

**Week 12:** Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.  
✎ Philippians 3:13-14

**Week 13:** Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.  
✎ Philippians 4:6-7

**Day 1: Paul's Rescue from the Jewish Mob**

Paul's attempt to conciliate Jewish brethren by participating in purification rites backfires when Jews from the province of Asia start a riot over his presence in the temple (Ac 21: 26-36). Paul is violently dragged from the temple and the mob sets upon him to kill him. The Romans kept close watch upon activities in the temple complex, especially during the feasts, from the Fortress of Antonia, adjacent to and overlooking the northwestern corner of the temple wall. When the tumult was observed, Claudius Lysias and his soldiers swarmed into the precinct and took Paul into protective custody.

1. What false accusation is made against Paul by the Asian Jews?
2. How did the mob react when they saw the Roman soldiers? What did they do when Paul was being carried away by the soldiers?

**Day 2: Paul's Address to the Crowd**

Though battered and bruised, Paul pleads with Lysias for an opportunity to address his vicious, bloodthirsty brethren (Ac 21:37-22:23). Paul briefly reviews his orthodox Jewish upbringing and his own former opposition to "this Way" (22:3-5). He then tells of his encounter with the Lord and his conversion, including the miraculous elements of the bright light, the heavenly voice, his blindness and subsequent healing (22:6-16). The hushed crowd yet does not protest what they are hearing. But when Paul recounts the mission statement of the Lord, "*Depart, for I will send you far from here to the Gentiles,*" they can contain themselves no longer (22:17-23). Undoubtedly Paul had much more to say but he does not get the chance. The inflamed crowd forces Lysias to terminate the speech and bring Paul into the barracks for further investigation.

3. What was Lysias' misconception of Paul's identity?
4. Paul grabbed the attention of the Jewish crowd by speaking in what language?

**Day 3: Lysias' Investigation**

Perhaps with a degree of impatience, Lysias commands that Paul be examined under scourging (Ac 22:24-29). This was a brutal, crippling and even death-inducing beating with leather thongs tipped in metal and bone, the kind of torture inflicted upon Jesus before His crucifixion. Paul protests upon the basis of his Roman citizenship which elicits the same kind of reaction in Lysias as it did in the Philippian magistrates (Ac 16:37-39). Paul's citizenship forces Lysias to change his tactics; he thus convenes the Sanhedrin to arraign Paul before his former peers (Ac 22:30-23:10). The meeting is a disaster. Paul's first statement provokes the wrath of the high priest who commands Paul to be

stricken. Paul replies angrily to the injustice but corrects himself when the identity of the high priest is revealed. Paul apparently realizes that fairness and impartiality will not be forthcoming from the council and he short-circuits the proceedings by making an inflammatory statement concerning resurrection. This creates dissension among the assembly and leads to the hearing's termination. Paul seems more willing to pursue his case among the Roman hierarchy.

5. How did Paul obtain Roman citizenship?

6. What is a "whitewashed wall"? How did this apply to the high priest?

7. Which Jewish party defended Paul? Why?

#### **Day 4: The Plot to Kill Paul**

In the eye of the storm of persecution raging around him, Paul is reassured by the Lord that He yet has purpose for the great apostle upon the earth (Ac 23:11). Luke then recounts an assassination plot against Paul that is thwarted by the providence of God (Ac 23:12-22). Forty Jews bind themselves under an oath of fasting to kill Paul and they enlist the Sanhedrin to assist them in their ambush. By some unexplained means Paul's nephew learns of the plot and reveals it first to Paul and then to Lysias. No human scheme will be successful if it conflicts with the will of God. It is not necessary for God to *miraculously* intervene in the affairs of men to accomplish His will. *How* God's providential provisions work is less important than trusting that they *do* work, and this is abundantly substantiated throughout the Scriptures. Those must have been some mighty hungry and thirsty Jews after Paul was spirited out of Jerusalem.

8. Where must Paul yet bear witness?

#### **Day 5: Passage to Caesarea**

After Lysias learns of the assassination plot he sends Paul to Caesarea by night under heavy guard (Ac 23:23-35). Lysias outlines Paul's case to the governor, Felix, and concludes that "*he was accused concerning questions of their law, but had nothing charged against him worthy of death or chains.*" Again, as in the case of Jesus, we see Roman rulers failing to administer justice due to the intimidation of implacable, obstinate Jews. Felix, who governed Judea from ca. AD 52-60, is close to exhausting his rule. He was cruel and unscrupulous and the Jews filed complaint against him before Nero, who recalled him to Rome. Narrowly escaping execution for malfeasance, Felix and his wife Drusilla were banished to Gaul. According to this chronology, Paul's first imprisonment lasted from ca. AD 58-62.

9. What part of Lysias' letter to Felix was untrue?

10. Why did Felix not wish to hear Paul's case immediately?

### **Day 1: Felix Hears Paul's Case**

The Jewish rulers arrive in Caesarea with their high-powered, silver-tongued attorney, Tertullus, to present their case against Paul (Ac 24:1-9). The charges are half-baked lies and prejudicial misrepresentations. Tertullus falsely accuses Paul of trying to profane the temple. He also complains that Lysias had interrupted due process, saying that the Jews tried to seize Paul and judge him according to the law – another lie. People try to bluff their way through untruths (24:8-9), but there's more to truth than brazen audacity. Paul simply denies the charges confident that no substantial evidence can be presented to sustain them (24:10-13). He ties his convictions to the God of his fathers, the Law and the Prophets, thereby neutralizing any claim that Christianity is a new, and therefore unlicensed, religion (24:14-16). Paul further accuses the Jewish delegation of denying *him* due process as his accusers are not even present (24:17-19). For the second time Paul mentions the resurrection (24:15, 20-21). Paul is determined to wage his war on the proper battleground: a question of belief in God's promises.

1. Why does Paul mention it had been but twelve days since he went to Jerusalem?
2. What did the Jews consider "the Way," or Christianity, to be?

### **Day 2: Felix's Injustice to Paul**

No charges could be proven against Paul, but Felix was motivated not by justice but greed and political expediency. Felix leaves Paul imprisoned for the last two years of his governorship (Ac 24:22-27). But Felix was strangely curious about the gospel and wished to hear more about it from Paul. In the spirit of the faithful prophets before him who were brought before kings and rulers, Paul does not withhold the painful truth from the one who controls his destiny. He "*reasoned about righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come*" with this adulterous, brutal tyrant. And it frightened Felix, but sadly not unto repentance.

3. What false promise does Felix make to Paul about the disposition of his case?
4. If you have a Bible dictionary, research Drusilla and tell something about her.

### **Day 3: Festus' Injustice to Paul**

Festus was Felix's successor, and the importance of Paul's case to the Jews is seen in their immediate petition to Festus upon his first trip to Jerusalem (Ac 25:1-3). Festus derails their planned ambush by summoning them to Caesarea to *yet again* present their case against Paul (25:4-6). Surely the great apostle was weary of this charade by now! When it becomes clear to Paul that he will get no more justice from Festus than he got from



Felix, he exercises his right to appeal for judgment directly to Caesar (25:7-12). Remember, Paul had hoped to go to Rome over two years previously. Perhaps he now understands more clearly God's plan to send him there. He will go as a prisoner rather than a free citizen.

5. What prompted Festus' suggestion to take Paul to Jerusalem for trial?
6. Using a reference work, determine the Caesar to whom Paul appealed.

### **Day 4: Paul's Defense Before Agrippa**

The downside of Paul's imprisonment is that his travel is curtailed and his ability to start new churches is hindered. The upside of his imprisonment is the opportunity to preach repeatedly before both Roman and Jewish leaders. Their own injustice would make it impossible to plead ignorance in the day of judgment. Paul now is able to present his case to King Herod Agrippa II. This hearing is to assist Festus in formulating charges appropriate to an appeal to Caesar (Ac 25:13-27).

Paul again recounts his early life of Judaism including persecution of those who followed Jesus (Ac 26:1-11). He then describes his conversion and commission by Jesus (26:12-18) followed by His affirmation of compliance with the "heavenly vision" (26:19-23). As Paul speaks of resurrection, a heavenly light and a voice and receiving help from God, the secular Festus can take it no longer: "*Paul, you are beside yourself! Much learning is driving you mad!*" (26:24-25). This is the world's perception of Christianity: it is pure nonsense, foolishness, fantasies of naïve simpletons. But Paul calmly defends himself and the nature of the gospel: "*I am not mad, most noble Festus, but speak the words of truth and reason.*"

7. Contrast the assessments of Paul by the Jews and Festus (Acts 25:24-25).
8. T/F Agrippa was knowledgeable of Jewish matters.
9. How was Paul persecuting Jesus?

### **Day 5: Paul's Appeal to Agrippa**

Paul's attention in his defense is centered upon Agrippa, and when Festus interrupts his presentation Paul directs his comments directly to Agrippa (Ac 26:26-32). Unintimidated by Agrippa's political standing, Paul challenges his belief in the prophets. Whatever the tone of Agrippa's famous reply, "*You almost persuade me to become a Christian,*" Paul seizes upon it and encourages Agrippa and all those present to become like him "*except for these chains.*" Paul yet again fulfills the words of Jesus: "*You will be brought before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles*" (Mt 10:18).

10. From Paul's comments to Agrippa, how would you characterize this king?

## **Day 1: The Voyage Begins**

The story of Paul's voyage to Rome is interesting not only for the vivid travel details but also for Paul's character traits magnified by the life-threatening events. Though a prisoner, Paul gains the respect of his captors and fellow-travelers through his knowledge, sound judgment, optimism and faith. Paul's voyage begins at Caesarea and includes stops at Sidon, Myra and Fair Havens on the island of Crete (Acts 27:1-8; consult the map provided on p. 12). It is now late in the year and soon the dangerous Mediterranean will be closed to all winter shipping (November 11 to about March 10). The weather has already been contrary and Paul advises staying put (27:9-12). However, he is outvoted and the voyage continues in search of a suitable winter harbor.

1. Who is mentioned as Paul's traveling companions?
2. Who did Paul see at Sidon?
3. Describe Paul's concerns about continuing the voyage. Whose advice is followed?

## **Day 2: Perils in the Sea**

Paul's fears are realized as the ship is suddenly seized by a violent storm and blown away from Crete (Ac 27:13-38). For two weeks the ship is battered; the passengers are unable to eat; and desperate measures are taken to stay afloat. The conditions are so bleak that *"all hope that we would be saved was finally given up"* (27:20). At this point Paul rises to the occasion with words of encouragement saying that God has revealed to him that they will suffer shipwreck but all will survive. As there are 276 people aboard this is a most absurd prediction – unless it came from the One who had the events under His control. Finally the ship nears an island and the sailors drop anchor and pray for daylight.

4. What did the angel remind Paul that he must yet do?
5. What did the sailors plan to do with the skiff? How did Paul prevent this?

## **Day 3: Shipwreck**

In an attempt to beach the ship the vessel becomes stuck on a reef and begins to break up (Ac 27:39-44). With the shoreline in sight, it appears that Paul's prophecy will finally fail as the soldiers plan to kill all the prisoners to prevent their escape. Paul's influence, however, saves the day as Julius, the centurion, intervenes to spare his prisoner. It would not assume too much to say that Paul's integrity and demeanor had secured the respect of this Roman soldier who was now willing to risk punishment to save Paul.

6. In what ways was Paul an asset to the voyagers? Acts 27:11, 24-25, 31, 33-35, 43.

## **Day 4: Sojourn in Malta**

Paul's temporary stay on Malta was a blessing to these superstitious people as opportunity is given to the apostle to heal them (Ac 28:1-10). The favor is returned as provisions are given by the islanders to Paul and the others upon their departure three months later.

**7.** Describe the fickleness of the Maltese people in their view of Paul.

**8.** How did Paul help Publius' father?

## **Day 5: Paul in Rome**

Paul, according to the prophecy of Jesus some 2½ years earlier, finally arrives in Rome (Ac 28:11-16). But his case is not resolved immediately, for he dwells under guard for two years in his own rented house (28:17-31). As he has done so many times before, Paul first makes his appeal to the Jewish leaders of the city (28:17-29). He spends an entire day arguing for "the hope of Israel," explaining that Jesus is the fulfillment of OT prophecy. The Bible study breaks down when dissension arises among the Jews and they, as so many times before, sink into bitter dispute. Paul dismisses them with the same rebuke as Jesus had extended earlier, a quote from Isaiah 6:9-10.

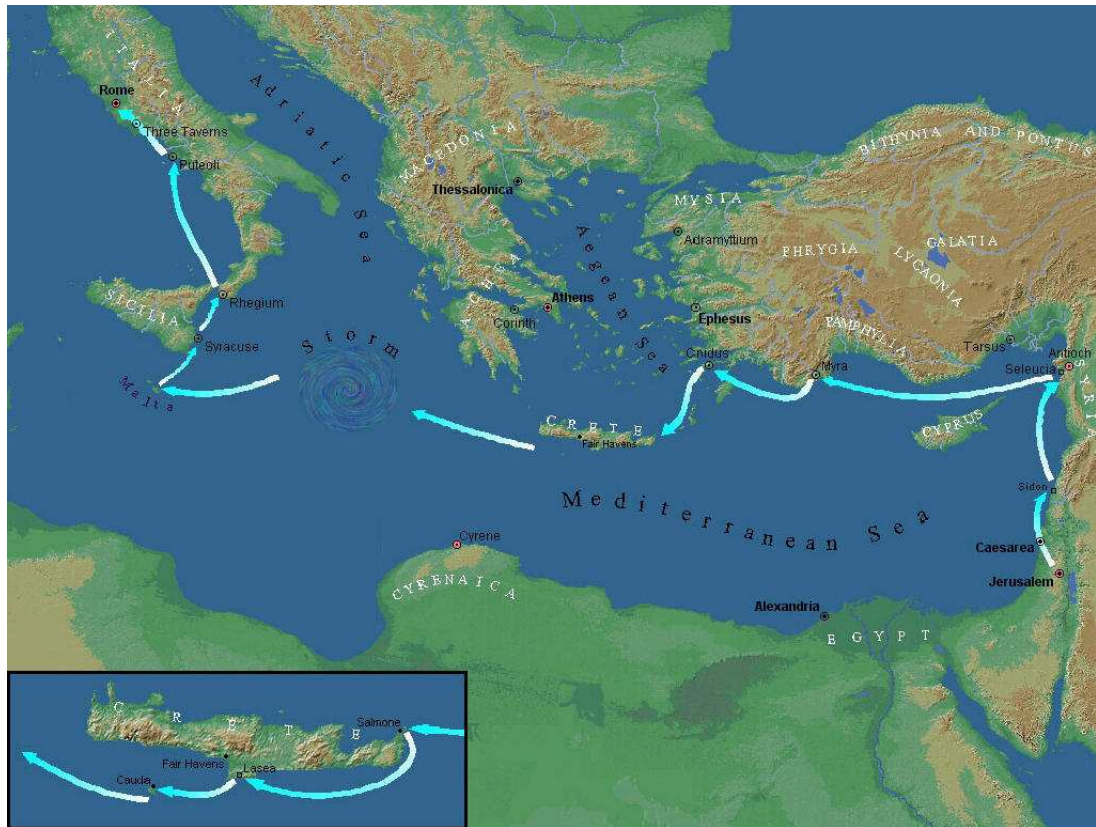
While imprisoned and awaiting trial, Paul writes the "prison epistles" of Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon and Philippians. Other details of his incarceration are revealed in those books. Both scriptural and traditional evidence suggest that Paul was eventually released from this imprisonment. He mentions further travels in his epistles to Timothy and Titus and a second imprisonment which apparently concludes with his execution.

Shortly after Paul's release, Rome's hostility toward Christianity erupts due to the great fire of AD 64 which Nero blamed upon Christians to avert suspicion from himself. The second generation church will soon be tried by sporadic harassment which will eventually give way to organized, systematic persecution. But for the most part, Paul has fulfilled his apostolic commission. He has crossed the great Roman Empire from east to west with the gospel of Christ, teaching the Jew first but also the Gentiles. One can only wonder at the reflections of the great apostle as he considers the past thirty years of his life. May we be encouraged by what one man can do with the help of God!

**9.** How did Paul react when he saw brethren from Rome coming to greet him?

**10.** What was the universal Jewish attitude toward Christianity?

**11.** What was Paul able to do during his two years of house arrest?



**Day 1: The Prison Epistles**

Similar features closely link the books of Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon and Philippians and it appears that they were written under the same circumstances; viz., Paul's first Roman imprisonment. First, Paul refers to imprisonment in all (Eph 3:1; 4:1; 6:20; Col 4:10, 18; Phile 1, 10, 13, 23; Ph 1:12-14, 16). Secondly, certain persons are common to the epistles: Tychicus delivered Ephesians (6:21-22) and Colossians (4:7). He was accompanied by Onesimus (Col 4:9) who was the former slave of Philemon (v. 10-12). Further, Paul sends greetings from Epaphras to Philemon and the Colossians (Phile 23; Col 4:12), and indicates that Epaphras was the one who taught the Colossians (Col 1:7). This, plus reference to Archippus in Col 4:17 and Phile 2, suggests that Philemon was a resident of Colosse and the Colossian church (or a separate congregation in Colosse) met in Philemon's house. Finally, Paul mentions converts from the palace guard and saints "*who are of Caesar's household*" (Phil 1:13; 4:22).

1. What other names are common to Colossians 4:10, 14 and Philemon 24?
2. What do Archippus and Epaphras have in common?

**Day 2: Spiritual Blessings in Christ (Eph 1:1-14)**

The book of Ephesians focuses upon the relationship between Christ and His church, those people for whom God has made spiritual provisions and who have accepted the terms of those provisions. The key phrase in these opening verses is "*in Christ*," and by it Paul stresses that the key to spiritual fellowship with God is *exclusively* through Jesus. This scheme of reconciliation, which we have surveyed from Abraham to the present, was in God's purpose before creation (Eph 1:4). The reconciliation is characterized as "adoption as sons" (1:5), loving children who are "holy and without blame" (1:4). Such holiness is attainable only by the blood of Christ (1:7) and is universally available now that the "fullness of the times" has come and God's scheme has been implemented by Christ (1:10).

3. God works out all things according to what?
4. What did the Ephesians do after hearing the word of truth?

**Day 3: The Exalted, Resurrected Christ (Eph 1:15-23)**

Paul had issued dire warnings to the Ephesian elders some three years earlier while en route to Jerusalem and is particularly relieved to hear "*of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints*" (Eph 1:15), especially with the rising tide of heresy throughout the province of Asia. Thus Paul prays that God may give the Ephesians "*the spirit of*

*wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of [Christ]*” (1:17). It is vitally important for the Ephesians – and us – to keep the exalted position of Christ foremost in our thinking. He is at God’s “*right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named ..*” (1:20-21). His authority over the church is likened to head and body, the body being subject to the controlling influence of the head (brain) and (ideally) subordinate to its impulses. The body acts in rebellion to the head to the harm of the organism (Parkinson’s, paralysis, Tourette’s syndrome, etc.).

5. What is directed toward those who believe?

#### **Day 4: Life to the Dead (Eph 2:1-10)**

Paul elaborates on the transformation from sinner to son. The sinner is alien to God: he is dead, walking according to Satan, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and a child of wrath. But his condition is countered by God’s character: His love, kindness, grace and mercy would not allow Him to cast His rebellious and wicked creation aside. Instead, God made it possible for those of faith to be saved, raised from spiritual death to sit and reign with Christ. In Christ their purpose of walking in good works is restored.

6. Who are the “you” and “we” of Ephesians 2:2-3? (Compare 2:11)

7. What is the “gift of God” that nullifies man’s boasting?

#### **Day 5: One Household of God (Eph 2:11-22)**

Paul next elaborates on the universality of redemption. Writing from his Jewish heritage to a predominantly Gentile congregation, Paul reminds the Ephesians that the “*middle wall of division*” has been broken down “*that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross*” (Eph 2:15). Racial prejudices can be aroused by many factors, but “*the law of commandments*” – Mosaic Law – was corrupted into an instrument of hatred and persecution. This has now been removed and one new family of all colors and complexions has been created “*on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone*” (2:20). Paul does not here refer to **redemption** (for there is only **one** foundation of redemption – Christ) but **revelation**, given both by Christ personally and instrumentally through His apostles and prophets. It is within this holy community that the Spirit of God dwells, not in some temple made with hands, not in some culture founded upon either a defunct law of God or a new philosophy of man. While our human families may be disappointing, the Christian can always take great comfort in the heavenly family into which he has been adopted.

8. Describe the peace spoken of in Ephesians 2:14-17.

9. In what verse is the trinity found?

10. What three illustrations have been used of the church (Eph 1:23; 2:19, 21)?

**Day 1: The Church: God's Eternal Purpose (Eph 3:1-13)**

In spite of his tribulations, Paul considers himself to be living in a glorious time fulfilling a grand purpose: he is a chosen revealer of the “mystery” of redemption. God’s ultimate scheme, “*which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden ... not made known to the sons of men ... has now been revealed*” (Eph 3:9, 5). Paul is on the “cutting edge” of uniting Jew and Gentile together in one redeemed body of believers (3:6, 8). The existence of that one body, the church, reflects the brilliance of divine wisdom “*to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places*” (3:10). It is this truth that enabled this Jewish apostle to overcome his own bias and embrace the Gentiles, and it is this same truth that should inspire all Christians to abandon racial prejudice.

1. How does Paul see himself as compared to other saints?
2. How does Paul fear his tribulations will affect the Ephesians?

**Day 2: Glory in the Church (Eph 3:14-21)**

The “for this reason” in Eph 3:14 returns to the thought Paul started in 3:1. Contemplation of the “*eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus*” (3:10) overwhelms Paul and he breaks forth in an intercessory prayer for the Ephesians (3:14-19). He desires that Christ would reside within them by faith and that they would be “*filled with all the fullness of God*” (3:17, 19). But Paul knows that the key to such intimate fellowship has been provided by “*Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think*” (3:20). After all, God planned and executed his eternal purpose in the shadow of man’s ignorance; the “mystery” was only made known after the fact. What do we lack that God is unaware of or is unable to supply? The greatest need of all has been supplied in Christ; thus, “*to Him be glory in the church ... throughout all ages*” (3:21). Medieval cathedrals with their vaulted ceilings, stained glass and pipe organs are silent on the wisdom and glory of God. But *redeemed souls* illuminate the heavens with the glory and majesty of our Redeemer.

3. What kind of strength does Paul ask for the Ephesians?
4. What “passes knowledge”? What does this mean?

**Day 3: Organic Unity (Eph 4:1-16)**

In the second half of the epistle Paul makes sweeping applications of the sublime truths he has presented. Unity among God’s family is not automatic; it must be nurtured by aligning our character with the character and will of God (Eph 4:1-3). The natural differences among believers – culture, economics, intelligence, etc. – must be bridged by

the recognition of the “oneness” which relates us to each other (4:4-6). To foster this unity Christ “*gave gifts to men,*” revealers (apostles and prophets) and teachers (evangelists and pastors), who promote service and edification among the body (4:7-12). Unity and knowledge bring spiritual maturity, and spiritual maturity anchors the body against the doctrinal tempests which are beginning to whirl throughout the province of Asia (4:13-18).

5. What is the objective of our spiritual maturity (Eph 4:13)?

6. What is crucial to the overall health and maturity of the body (Eph 4:16)?

#### **Day 4: Putting on the New Man (Eph 4:17-24)**

This section amplifies Paul’s observations in Eph 2:2-3. He speaks of the spiritual destitution of those who are “*alienated from the life of God*” (Eph 4:17-19): futility of mind, darkened understanding, ignorant, hard hearted, past feeling. The world operates on a different value system than God. It should not surprise us (but isn’t it always a breathtaking consternation?!) that worldly people do the things they do. Basic moral principles that we take for granted are hidden to the heathen. Common sense is rejected in favor of senseless stupidity. The right answers, solutions and remedies are often discounted in favor of half-baked, harebrained schemes that only make matters worse. Immorality is praised even as its defenders stand knee-deep in the sewage of illegitimate children, child abuse, disease, abortion and other natural consequences of ungodliness. “*But you have not so learned Christ*” Paul reminds the Ephesians (Eph 4:20-24). Redemption in Christ brings renewal and reorientation to “*righteousness and true holiness.*” It is a chance to start afresh and get it right.

7. To what principles have many unsaved people given themselves over?

8. The new man is created according to what (or whom)?

#### **Day 5: The Proper Treatment of Others (Eph 4:25-32)**

Paul does not issue vague admonitions; he gets very specific in what is acceptable and unacceptable behavior: lying, lingering anger, stealing, corrupt speech, bitterness and all such soul-rotting, unity-destroying behavior is characteristic of the old man and must be put off (Eph 4:22, 25-32). Self-mastery is the great challenge of Christianity. True faith is not some pipe dream but a battle for control of the tongue, the emotions and the will. It is productivity (4:28). It is a life that truly honors others, self and God.

9. What are the **positive** admonitions of this passage?

10. How might our actions grieve the Holy Spirit?

11. What should motivate us to forgive even the most hurtful things done against us?



**Day 1: The Christian's Walk (Eph 5:1-21)**

Three aspects of our journey through life are enumerated by Paul: walk in love (Eph 5:2), light (5:8) and wisdom (5:15). Christians do not engage in fornication or other forms of unbridled passion. But beyond that they do not give themselves to filthy speech which glorifies perversity (Eph 5:1-7). Further, there is to be a clear delineation between the Christian and the world: *"have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness"* (5:11). Instead, Christians are to expose the ugliness and malignity of evil. Finally, the Christian is to maintain a sobriety of life recognizing that time is short and the days are evil (5:15-21). A vital aspect of family harmony is *"speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs."* Musical expression is innately human, and God has included musical teaching and praise in worship. Comparative NT references indicate that this music is vocal and spiritual rather than mechanical and performance-oriented. The issue is not what excites the flesh but what enriches the spirit, and while many are disposed to argue with God, He has clearly spoken on the matter.

1. What must the Ephesians – and we – be careful to avoid (Eph 5:6)?
2. In worship, upon what instrument is melody to be made to the Lord?

**Day 2: Husbands and Wives (Eph 5:22-33)**

"Submission" is a vital lubricant of every relationship (see Eph 5:21-22, 24; 6:1, 5). The person who cannot submit to those in authority and will not voluntarily submit to his peers creates frustration for himself and others. Wives must be subject to their husbands *"just as the church is subject to Christ"* (5:24). Surely this requirement merits careful, serious thought as a woman ponders whom she will marry. Such submission is not *carte blanche* for husbands, for they are to love their wives with the sacrificing, purifying love that Christ had for the church (5:25-27). Unfortunately, this model is caricatured by feminist sympathizers as denigrating, depersonalizing servitude. Complete marital equality is the ideal sought by many, and the quest often results in unstable *union* rather than solid *unity*. It is not surprising that divorce inevitably follows. Marriage built upon mutual love, respect and the rightful exercise of authority by the husband *will work*.

3. What qualification helps a wife freely submit to her husband (Eph 5:22)?
4. How does the Lord treat His body, the church (Eph 5:29-30)?

**Day 3: A Note on Child-Rearing (Eph 6:1-4)**

Isn't Paul, and the entire Bible for that matter, woefully brief on the subject of raising children? In regard to specific tactics, yes. But the secret to being a good parent is first

following God “*as dear children*” (Eph 5:1). That is, by adopting the character of God as our own we equip ourselves with the necessary tools to handle our children properly. The admonition to children is short and sweet: honor and obey your parents. The admonition to fathers is equally terse but infinitely broad in application: “*do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.*” It follows that fathers must **know** the Lord before they can adequately train and admonish their children. Is this not the root cause of all parental failure?

5. What results from children giving honor and obedience to their parents?

### **Day 4: Servants and Masters (Eph 6:5-9)**

The social structure of first century Rome presented a challenge to Christians: what if a Christian, liberated in Christ, is owned by another human being? Ownership of a man, often accompanied by mistreatment, is a sure-fire way to breed resentment and squelch incentive and productivity. But here is where the principles of Christianity permeate every nook and cranny of life and make all honorable endeavors meaningful. As the wife is to submit to her husband “*as to the Lord,*” so the slave is to serve his master “*as to Christ*” (Eph 6:5-7). The value systems of man fluctuate, but service to God is constant and without respect to person. The slave and master are on equal footing before their Creator, and each will be rewarded according to how they satisfy His will (Eph 5:8-9).

6. How might a person act “with eyeservice” on his or her job?

7. What must a master/employer remember in his dealings with subordinates?

### **Day 5: The Soldier’s Armor (Eph 6:10-24)**

Paul has made reference to the “heavenly places” (lit. “the heavenlies”) several times in Ephesians (1:3, 20; 2:6; 3:10). Paul had a clear sense of the reality of the unseen world and its effect upon temporal life. He concludes this epistle by warning the Ephesians about the war being waged “*against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places*” (6:12). Three times Paul urges the Ephesians to take a firm stand “*against the wiles of the devil*” (6:11, 13-14). The power to withstand the onslaught of Satan does not come from within ourselves; we must “*be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might*” (6:10). This involves using the armor and weaponry that He has provided (6:14-17). The Christian must be ever vigilant, wary and watchful and keep in close contact with “headquarters”; i.e., he must be constantly prayerful (Eph 6:18). Paul hopes that the news Tychicus brings of his imprisonment will be a comfort to the Ephesians.

8. What is the Christian’s primary **offensive** weapon?

9. From what does the shield of faith protect the Christian?

10. For what does Paul ask the Ephesians to pray on his behalf?

**Day 1: Introduction**

Lying 100 miles east of the metropolis of Ephesus was the town of Colosse. By the mid-first century A.D., Colosse had been eclipsed in wealth and importance by its sister cities in the Lycus Valley, Laodicea and Hierapolis. While Paul likely passed through Colosse en route to Ephesus on his third journey, it is evident that he didn't start the congregation and didn't know the members on sight (Col 2:1). Tychicus, it appears, has first delivered the Ephesian epistle (Eph 6:21-22), then an unpreserved one to Laodicea (which was on his way to Colosse – Col 4:16), and now one to Colosse.

1. Where has the name “Tychicus” been identified as a companion of Paul before?
2. What were the Colossians to do with Paul's letter after it was read?

**Day 2: The Faithful Colossians (Col 1:1-8)**

Paul always rejoices to hear of faith among men wherever they are. Epaphras, a preacher who apparently was primarily responsible for the conversion of the Colossians (perhaps during Paul's three-year labor in Ephesus), has related their faith to Paul (Col 1:7-8). But it seems that Epaphras has related more than this to the apostle, for Colossians addresses certain heresies which are beginning to permeate the region. By reading between the lines, we can gather some of the basic tenets of the heresy. Hendriksen offers this warning: “Here we must tread very carefully. We are perhaps safe in stating that the Colossian Heresy was a syncretism, that is, a weird mixture of Jewish and pagan elements. Gnosticism, with its stress on ‘knowledge,’ seems to have had something to do with it, for it is evident ... that the false teachers placed undue emphasis on ... ‘knowledge,’ ‘wisdom,’ ‘philosophy,’ ‘mystery’ and ‘mystic insight,’” yet he acknowledges that “we do not as yet have a reasonably *complete* description of gnosticism in the *first* century A.D.” (***Commentary on Colossians***, p. 18-19).

3. Who is included in Paul's salutation to the Colossians?

**Day 3: The Exalted Christ (Col 1:9-18)**

Broadly speaking, the Ephesian epistle stresses the church as the culmination of God's eternal purpose while Colossians emphasizes Jesus Christ as the head of the church. Part of the Colossian heresy seems to denigrate Jesus and suggest that He was something less than full-fledged deity. More fully developed Gnostic doctrine of the second century held that Jesus was an aeon, a lesser being than God, Himself, but still retaining enough divine power to create the world. This notion arose to explain how something as wicked as the earth came from someone as pure and holy as God. Whatever the specific origin of the heresy, Paul begins the doctrinal portion of the epistle by exalting Christ to a posi-

tion of equality with the heavenly Father. He is the “*image of the invisible God*” (Col 1:15); “*all things were created through Him and for Him*” (1:16). “*He is before all things, and in Him all things consist*” (1:17). His resurrection insured “*that in all things He may have the preeminence*” (1:18). This exalted position qualifies Jesus to be King over His kingdom and head of the church (1:13, 18).

4. From what have saints been delivered? Into what have they entered?

#### **Day 4: Reconciled to God (Col 1:19-23)**

By whom (or what?) was complete reconciliation of sinful man to God achieved? By God? By man? By someone lesser than God but more than man? Paul says, “*in Him (Christ, j) all the fullness should dwell*” (Col 1:19). A.T. Robertson observes on fullness (*pleroma*): “A recognized technical term in theology, denoting the totality of the Divine powers and attributes’ (Lightfoot) ... The Gnostics distributed the divine powers among various aeons. Paul gathers them all up in Christ, a full and flat statement of the deity of Christ” (**Word Pictures**, Vol. 4, p. 480). Paul says God determined “*by Him to reconcile all things to Himself*” (1:20). This parallels Jesus’ declaration in Jn 14:6. No one else but Christ is needed to be reconciled to God, a truth not only needed by the Colossians but by many today who blindly follow men. Note at this point in Paul’s life the extent of the gospel’s influence: “*which was preached to every creature under heaven*” (1:23; see also v. 6). In about thirty years Jesus’ prophecy of the gospel’s spread has been realized.

5. What condition is placed upon our being presented holy and blameless before God?

6. Describe the basis of redemption and reconciliation in Col 1:14, 20, 22.

#### **Day 5: Presenting Every Man Perfect in Christ (Col 1:24-29)**

Paul’s reflection upon the marvelous redemption in Christ renews his enthusiasm for the role he has played in revealing the mystery: “*I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church*” (Col 1:24). No self-pity, no despondency here. Paul is dedicated whether imprisoned or free to work for the spiritual growth of all men (1:28).

7. By what process are men brought to spiritual maturity (Col 1:28, 9-11; 4:12)?

8. What is the “hope of glory” for all men?

**Day 1: Jesus: The Fullness of the Godhead (Col 2:1-10)**

As Paul continues his sketch of the nature of Christ he gets more detailed in his warning to the Colossians. He writes *“lest anyone should deceive you with persuasive words ... lest anyone should cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit”* (Col 2:4, 8). For the third time Paul mentions the “mystery” of redemption (1:26-27; 2:2), and he states in every case that it is now revealed and can be understood. **“All the treasures of wisdom and knowledge”** are in Christ (2:3) and the Colossians can grow to completeness, or spiritual maturity, in Him (2:6-7, 10). Throughout these admonitions flows an undercurrent of human philosophy and tradition which says that Christ is not enough. Someone is claiming advanced knowledge beyond what has been clearly revealed and enticing unwary Christians away from the truth with the promise of deeper understanding.

1. In what way is Paul with the Colossians?
2. What dwells within Christ?

**Day 2: “Let No One Defraud You” (Col 2:11-23)**

More clues are given about the Colossian heresy in this passage and it does seem to be a conglomeration of ideas. Note three particular elements: 1) The Jewish element – Col 2:11-17. Mention of circumcision (2:11-13), Mosaic Law (2:14) and dietary regulations along with the observance of certain days (2:16) certainly seems to strike a blow at Judaistic teaching. 2) The Mystical element – Col 2:18-19. Fanciful theories spawned by the overactive imaginations of men, including angel worship, were also a potential influence upon the Colossians. The arrogant man, *“vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind,”* is not content with the simple, humble revelation of God. It is not “sophisticated” enough for him, so he intrudes *“into those things which he has not seen”* and speculates himself into error. 3) The Ascetic element – Col 2:20-23. Because of the power of temptation and the weakness of the flesh, some promote holiness by deprivation of worldly stimuli: *“Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle.”* The attractiveness of ascetic doctrines is that they *“have an appearance of wisdom”* but ultimately *“are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh.”* We must be careful that in our pursuit of holiness we don’t go “overboard” and buy into concepts that seem profitable but have no basis in the Scriptures.

3. What is the circumcision “not made with hands”?
4. What should a Christian not allow others to impose upon him (Col 2:16, 21)?

**Day 3: Seek Those Things Above (Col 3:1-17)**

In contrast to the *“basic principles of the world”* and the *“things which perish with the us-*

ing” (Col 2:20, 22), Paul urges the Colossians to “*seek those things which are above, where Christ is ...*” (Col 3:1). In so doing certain things will be put to death (3:5), put off (3:8) and put on (3:12, 14). But note especially the Christian’s all-encompassing spiritual gyroscope, the point of reference for all he is and does: “*And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus ...*” (3:17). Jesus is sufficient and authoritative; we can never go wrong if we diligently seek Jesus’ approval and blessing in all we do.

5. Where should our minds be set?
6. What blessing will Christians receive when Christ appears?
7. What is the “bond of perfection”?

#### **Day 4: A Thumbnail on Domestic Relationships (Col 3:18-4:1)**

Colossians 3 is an overview of Ephesians 4:17-6:9. Family relationships (including first-century slave labor) cover a broad area of the human experience. If these relationships are mishandled and thus become dysfunctional, then much of our lives will be unhappily spent. Sadly, many suffer this precise fate yet remain unwilling to incorporate these simple precepts to improve their domestic bliss.

8. List the admonitions in this passage which directly involve Christ (i.e., servants should act “as to the Lord and not to men,” v. 23).

#### **Day 5: Closing Notes (Col 4:2-18)**

Paul closes his letter to the Colossians with various exhortations and greetings. One exhortation particularly worthy of our consideration is how we present ourselves to unbelievers (Col 4:5-6). Christians must give due consideration to their influence upon the lost. Our conduct should be with wisdom, understanding where they are coming from and what we project toward those who do **not** do all in the name of the Lord. We must study to respond appropriately to criticism, skepticism or questions and eliminate all unseemly attitudes from our answers.

Paul mentions certain brethren who are with him, indicating that his imprisonment was not isolated confinement but free association with his companions and comrades. Of note is Mark, a past deserter who has been restored both to spiritual activity and Paul’s confidence (4:10-11); Luke, the historian of Paul’s travels (4:14); and Demas, the future deserter who will forsake Paul out of love for the present world (2 Tim 4:10). Paul had great concern for this church in a small, relatively insignificant town 1000 miles away from his Roman prison. We are blessed by this epistle of his concern.

9. What would Tychicus and Onesimus do upon their arrival in Colosse?
10. Who is Nymphas and what is noted about her?

**Day 1: Introduction (Phle 1-3)**

Though Philemon is the main recipient of this short letter (most of the pronouns are second person singular – “you”), also acknowledged are “*the beloved Apphia*” and “*Archippus our fellow soldier*” (Phle 2). Perhaps these were Philemon’s family members, but it is impossible to be certain. “*The church in your house*” is likely the Colossian saints who have already been addressed in a corporate epistle. The city of Colosse was overshadowed by its two more robust neighbors in the Lycus Valley, Hierapolis and Laodicea: “Long before AD 60 Colosse had already lost the race. If one was looking for health, pleasure, or relaxation, he would go to Hierapolis; if he was interested in trade or politics, he would direct his steps to Laodicea” (Hendriksen, **Commentary on Colossians and Philemon**, p. 13). Though probably small in number, the Colossian church was important to Paul. The worth of a congregation cannot be measured by numbers.

1. How is Philemon described by Paul?
2. Find two other references in the NT of a church in someone’s house.

**Day 2: Commendation of Philemon (Phle 4-7)**

Paul here sets a positive tone for the request which follows. Philemon is praised for his faithful service to the Lord and His people (cf. Mt 25:34-40). Paul has faced so much opposition and conflict that he deeply rejoices in a true ally, one who fosters rather than frustrates the work of the Lord.

3. How have saints benefited from Philemon’s faith?

**Day 3: Paul’s Appeal for Onesimus (Phle 8-11)**

Paul now gets to the heart of the matter. His appeal on behalf of Onesimus is a masterpiece of kind intercession and gentle persuasion. It is a model of diplomacy, a textbook for the Christian spirit in action. People often set out to forge their own will with a hammer and anvil while forgetting that flowing water can carve canyons. Paul quickly removes the focus from the wrong done to Philemon by Onesimus’ escape to the profit Paul gained by Onesimus’ conversion. If Paul “*the aged*” has been well-served by this penitent fugitive slave, what would be accomplished by Philemon’s prosecution upon his return?

4. What does Paul do rather than issue an apostolic command to Philemon?
5. By whom was Onesimus converted? Under what circumstances?

## Day 4: “More Than a Slave” (Phle 12-16)

Paul makes his appeal for Philemon to do what is right by doing what is right himself; viz., sending Onesimus back. It would have been tempting for Paul to retain Onesimus by rationalizing that Philemon would approve if he knew of the situation. But we have no right to take advantage of others by such assumptions: “*But without your consent I wanted to do nothing*” (Phle 14). Onesimus was Philemon’s rightful property (for so was a slave in the first century); Paul was merely returning what belonged to another. But he offers this suggestion: in view of his conversion, perhaps Onesimus’ escape was providential (Phle 15). Paul further points out that while Philemon lost a slave Paul gained a brother in Christ. But now Philemon gains **both** (Phle 16); his slave returns **as** a brother.

6. How must good deeds be rendered (Phle 14)? Compare 2 Cor 9:7.

7. What does “receive him forever” mean?

8. What does Paul call Onesimus in Philemon 12?

## Day 5: A Matter of Debt (Phle 17-25)

Paul yet ties more yellow ribbons around Onesimus as he sends him back to Philemon. Since Onesimus is counted a worthy and faithful servant by Paul, Paul urges Philemon to “*receive him as you would me*” (Phle 17). But what of the practical matter of debt? What is to be done about Philemon’s financial loss due to Onesimus’ escape? Paul says, “*Put that on my account*” (Phle 18). And then the coup de grace: “*not to mention to you that you owe me even your own self besides*” (Phle 19). Paul refers to his own conversion of Philemon (wherever and whenever that occurred) and not-so-subtly suggests that Philemon’s spiritual indebtedness to Paul should compel his compliance with the apostle’s request. Paul’s final appeal is a vote of confidence that Philemon will not only do what is right but will far surpass Paul’s request in fairness and equity. Thus with the gentle abrasiveness of running water Paul carves out a place for Onesimus in Philemon’s heart. One mark of a mature, wise Christian is the ability to help brethren at odds find common ground.

9. What would Philemon’s acceptance of Onesimus do for Paul (Phle 20)?

10. What is Paul hoping for in the near future (Phle 22)?



**Day 1: Introduction/Salutation (Ph 1:1-2)**

Though written toward the end of several years of imprisonment and hardship, the epistle to the Philippians is full of joy and optimism. The mutual, deep love between Paul and the Philippians is evident throughout. These brethren had supported Paul in many of his endeavors, and they have even sent one of their brethren, Epaphroditus, to serve Paul during his Roman imprisonment. The return of Epaphroditus to Philippi is the occasion of this letter (Ph 2:28-29). Timothy is included in the salutation (Ph 1:1) as he was in the epistles to Colosse and Philemon.

1. What indicates that the church in Philippi has matured over the years?

**Day 2: Expressions of Love (Ph 1:3-11)**

Paul's affection for the Philippians overflows in his opening remarks. Their "*fellowship in the gospel*" and their participation with Paul in the common cause of grace places them firmly within the great apostle's heart (Ph 1:6-7). Prolonged custody has excited a great longing to see them (1:8), but since that has not been possible he has served them diligently in prayer (1:3-4, 9-11).

2. What three things does Paul pray for the Philippians (Phil 1:9-10)?
3. How did God directly commence the work in Philippi through Paul (Ph 1:6)?

**Day 3: The Furtherance of the Gospel (Ph 1:12-18)**

How easy it would be for Paul to murmur and complain: he has been unjustly accused and imprisoned for over four years, and his enemies are now using his predicament to "*add affliction to my chains*" (Ph 1:16). Perhaps these preachers see Paul's incarceration as an opportunity to advance their own reputation or personal agenda. It is clear that they are still "preaching Christ"; that is, they are not preaching a perverted or corrupt gospel else Paul could not have endorsed their doctrine. Rather, they "*preach Christ even from envy and strife ... from selfish ambition, not sincerely*" (1:15-16). Yet Paul is not embittered or disconsolate, for even this personal betrayal sparks more vigorous preaching and for this Paul is thankful (1:18). Such humility is scarce, but it is fostered by Paul's complete surrender to the operative will of Christ. Paul is confident that whatever Christ wants done with his life shall be realized, Roman imprisonment or unscrupulous brethren notwithstanding.

4. What two advantages have come from Paul's chains (Ph 1:13-14)?
5. What truth about Paul's life did his allies appreciate (Ph 1:17, NKJ)?

## **Day 4: Heavenward Thoughts (Ph 1:19-26)**

Paul's optimism rests upon another unshakeable pillar: death is not something to be feared but, to the child of God, is the portal homeward. Paul's earthly life is inseparably interwoven with Christ: "*Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or death ... to live is Christ, and to die is gain*" (Ph 1:20-21). Paul's only attachment to this world is to serve Christ, and he is content to remain upon the earth if need be. But his deepest longing is to "*depart and be with Christ, which is far better*" (1:23). The strongest challenge to a man's courage and sense of purpose is the prospect of death. Paul has lived under this cloud not only during his Roman imprisonment but throughout his prior evangelistic endeavors. He has come to terms with his mortality, and his hope and confidence are centered squarely upon his relationship with Christ. Paul is torn between his selfish desire of being in the presence of the Lord and his sense of obligation – to bear fruit unto Christ through his earthly labors (Ph 1:22, 24-25). Such a view of death represents a degree of spiritual maturity to which all Christians should seek to attain.

6. What verdict does Paul expect from his trial?
7. What is Paul's earnest expectation and hope (Ph 1:20)?

## **Day 5: The Philippians' Suffering (Ph 1:27-30)**

Paul now turns his attention to the Philippians, though he will jump back and forth in the epistle between his affairs and their welfare. Having born his suffering so admirably, Paul now exhorts the Philippians to do likewise. Care must be taken that outward adversaries are not allowed to generate inward strife. They must "*stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel, and not in any way terrified by your adversaries*" (Ph 1:27b-28a). Whatever the past climate has been in Philippi, storm clouds of persecution are now gathering against the church, "*for to you it has been granted ... to suffer for His sake*" (1:29). Those who have been so troubled and concerned over the things which have befallen Paul will now have to endure the same.

8. Of what must our conduct be worthy? What does mean?
9. What bearing should Paul's presence or absence have upon the Philippian brethren?
10. What should our reaction not be toward our adversaries?

**Day 1: One Accord, One Mind (Ph 2:1-4)**

The four “ifs” in Ph 2:1 are called conditions of the first class; they assert items assumed as true. Paul might have said, “Given that there is consolation ... comfort ... fellowship ... affection and mercy ... fulfill my joy ...”. Paul’s concern is for the Philippians to be unified to the greatest degree possible, and he reminds them that Christians have the most important things in common. He has already urged them to be of “one spirit” and “one mind” (Ph 1:27), and he now adds *“likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind”* (2:2). Such unity is not achieved merely by doctrinal uniformity; it requires the proper attitude, namely *humility*. Most of us face a constant challenge to keep our ego in check and elevate our esteem of others. Self-esteem and true happiness are like the north ends of two magnets; they repel each other. Love, acceptance, harmony and kindness are all fostered by genuine interest in and humble service to others.

1. What hinders us from esteeming others above ourselves?
2. Discuss everyday applications of Philippians 2:4.

**Day 2: The Humility and Exaltation of Christ (Ph 2:5-11)**

It is difficult to trust humility. Many fear that putting self-interest aside will result in one’s needs going unmet. But Paul holds Jesus up as an object lesson of success via submissive service. Does it seem logical that Christ could accomplish all of God’s purposes by becoming human and *“taking the form of a servant”*? Human reasoning would suggest that Jesus could best achieve His goals by retaining all His divine prerogatives and privileges. However, Paul argues that submission to the will of God in becoming human (though not *only* human) resulted in Christ’s triumph and exaltation. Likewise, if we submit and serve in all humility we, too, will achieve victory.

3. To what extreme degree was Christ obedient to the Father?
4. What response should the name of Jesus evoke from every tongue?

**Day 3: Lights in the World (Ph 2:12-18)**

Paul presents an interesting contrast in Ph 2:12-13: *“work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.”* A.T. Robertson, a committed Calvinist, makes a puzzling and inconsistent observation about this: “Paul has no sympathy with a cold and dead orthodoxy or formalism that knows nothing of struggle and growth. He exhorts as if he were an Arminian (an advocate of man’s free will in salvation, jj) in addressing men. He prays as if he were a Calvinist (one who denies the role of man’s free will in salvation, jj) in addressing

God and feels no inconsistency in the two attitudes. Paul makes no attempt to reconcile divine sovereignty and human free agency, but boldly proclaims both” (**Word Pictures**, Vol. 4, p. 446). One wonders in view of these comments why Mr. Robertson is so militantly opposed to baptism or any other human response to divine conditions regarding salvation. God is unquestionably at work in His people. Paul said the Corinthians were **“God’s field ... God’s building”** (1 Cor 3:9). God produces motivations such as desire, love, gratitude, etc. by revealing powerful incentives: rewards, blessings, future judgment. But men must be pliable, responsive. They must be receptive to the will of God and conform their lives to His standards. The church of Christ is the result of cooperative efforts between a loving, saving God and His obedient, faithful children who are become *“without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you (and we) shine as lights in the world”* (Ph 2:15).

5. What will cause Paul joy in the day of Christ?
6. What will douse the light of Christian influence?
7. How do Ph 1:25-26 and 2:17, 24 harmonize?

#### **Day 4: Timothy’s Plans to Visit (Ph 2:19-24)**

Now expecting a resolution of his case, Paul hopes to send Timothy to Philippi shortly. Paul’s confidence in Timothy is unparalleled: *“I have no one likeminded ... you know his proven character, that as a son with his father he served with me in the gospel”* (Ph 2:20, 22). We may have many friends in life, but there’s often only one “Timothy.”

8. How does Paul feel about most of his other associates in Rome?
9. What were these men interested in? Cf. Ph 1:15-16; 2:3.

#### **Day 5: Epaphroditus’ Return (Ph 2:25-30)**

Epaphroditus had made the long and arduous journey to Rome in order to bring an offering from the Philippians (Ph 4:18; 2:25, 30). While in Rome Epaphroditus fell deathly ill but eventually recovered. Epaphroditus is now concerned for his loved ones who had been anxious over his well-being. Thus Paul gladly sends him back to Philippi to ease everyone’s concerns (2:25, 28). We must admire Paul’s respect for others. He does not belittle the genuine feelings of others or dismiss them with some detached platitude. We could take a lesson from this: it is easy to ridicule and criticize others when they make choices which we deem unsuitable. Paul needs Epaphroditus, but he understands that Epaphroditus needs to go home.

10. How does Paul describe Epaphroditus’ recovery in Philippians 2:27?
11. How should the brethren receive Epaphroditus? Compare with Ph 2:9-11.

**Day 1: Paul's Jewish Roots (Ph 3:1-6)**

Paul begins chapter three with a more militant tone, then digresses to his personal experience and outlook, and at the end returns to sober warning. In this first section he reflects upon his Jewish roots as an example of one who “*might have confidence in the flesh*” (Ph 3:4). What sparks these thoughts is his warning against the Judaizers (3:2). While they overestimate their Jewish ancestry, Paul asserts that “*we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh*” (3:3). Both John and Jesus had to correct the erroneous notion that mere genetic relation to Abraham made one a Jew through and through (cf. Mt 3:9; Jn 8:33, 37-44). Paul especially bestows upon the possessors of faith in Christ the name Israel and the designation “circumcision” (Rom 2:28-29; Gal 6:16; cf. Rom 9:6). Thus the true descendants of Abraham are those who believe and obey like Abraham (Rom 4:11-12, 16).

1. What does Paul call the Judaizers in Philippians 3:2?
2. Of what Jewish tribe was Paul? What religious party? What was a mark of his zeal?

**Day 2: All Forfeited for Christ (Ph 3:7-11)**

Paul, himself, was once a Jewish zealot. But when he met his Messiah, he gladly forfeited everything to gain Christ and all associated with Him: “*the righteousness which is from God by faith*” (Ph 3:9). Men and women of faith are able to truly assess and prioritize what is valuable. Paul considered genetic posturing and adherence to defunct law “rubbish” and traded them for the fellowship of Christ’s sufferings (3:10). This was similar to Moses who chose “*rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin*” (Heb 11:25). Paul is determined that absolutely nothing will come between him and “*the resurrection from the dead*” (3:11).

3. Upon what basis does personal righteousness rest?
4. What things does Paul hope to gain by his faith in Christ?

**Day 3: The Upward Call of God (Ph 3:12-16)**

While Paul is confident of his spiritual standing before God, he takes nothing for granted and remains in vigilant pursuit of eternal fellowship. “*Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected*” (Ph 3:12). Imagine that! Paul does not consider himself as spiritually mature and complete as he ought to be. He concentrates on future issues: “*I press on ... forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal ...*” (3:12-14). Some people will be lost in the manner of Lot’s wife – by looking backward. Perhaps they long for the world which they reluc-

tantly left; maybe their conscience has never been set free from past sins; or perhaps former successes leave them chronically disappointed with the present. Whatever the case, Christians must resolve the past and focus upon the dangers and opportunities which lie ahead: “*Sufficient for the day is its own trouble*” (Mt 6:34). Note again the co-operation between man and God in Ph 3:12 (cf. Ph 2:12-13).

5. What mind will a spiritually mature person have (Philippians 3:15)?

6. What practical advice would you give someone based on Philippians 3:16?

#### **Day 4: Enemies of the Cross (Ph 3:17-19)**

There is urgency in Paul’s words here as he contemplates the possibility of his beloved Philippian brethren being victimized by unscrupulous men. Even at this early stage of Christianity there are many who are “enemies of the cross.” They see Christianity as an opportunity for gain by pretence, intimidation and mimicry. Paul unhesitatingly sets himself up as worthy of emulation (Ph 3:17; 4:9). No, he is not perfect, but he has confidence in his character and doctrine and feels that his example is consistent with the faith. Now there’s a revealing test! Is our spiritual life worthy of emulation?

7. Has Paul ever mentioned these enemies before?

8. Describe the motivations of the false brethren mentioned by Paul.

#### **Day 5: Heavenly Citizenship (Ph 3:20 – 4:1)**

These religious imposters are slaves to their own bodies, yet the calling of Christians is so much higher. Our bodies are destined for transformation: they will be “*conformed to His glorious body*” (Ph 3:21). Lusts and desires are to be tempered and controlled, and the body is to serve the eternal interests of the spirit. If this is not the case, our citizenship is not in heaven but on earth, and the earth is destined for destruction in God’s scheme of things.

9. What is the assurance that our fleshly bodies will be transformed?

10. Describe Paul’s affections for the Philippians from Ph 4:1.

**Day 1: Two Sisters At Odds (Ph 4:2-3)**

Paul is not satisfied to leave his previous pleas for unity general (Ph 1:27; 2:1-4); he has the audacity to *call names* and make it part of the eternal record. Euodia and Syntyche are two faithful, spiritually active women between whom sparks fly. Whatever may be conjectured about the situation, it is apparent that the women are of sufficient influence that continuing friction may become detrimental to the church. Christians are admonished in various passages to resolve such differences before they do permanent damage to the cause of Christ. Paul's "true companion," an associate of unknown identity, is urged to be a buffer between these prominent but prickly sisters.

1. Where are the names of faithful Christians to be found?

**Day 2: The Power of Prayer (Ph 4:4-7)**

In the remainder of the chapter Paul makes several references to God's watchful care and divine assistance. He has been acutely aware of God's hand in his life especially during the past few years of imprisonment. Only a man of intimate communion with God could urge prayer so confidently upon others: "Rejoice in the Lord ... the Lord is at hand ... let your requests be made known to God ...". Christians are warned not to let the crises of life open a chasm between them and God. Constant prayer guards the Christian with a peace "*which surpasses all understanding.*"

2. What does "the Lord is at hand" mean?
3. What should accompany prayer even in the midst of distressing circumstances?

**Day 3: Following the Pattern (Ph 4:8-9)**

Paul continues to emphasize the condition of the mind over the external circumstances in which one may find himself. This is a key to constant faith. We will never live in an ideal world, totally insulated from the influences of evil. But we must focus our concentration upon things that promote godliness. "*Whatsoever things are ...*"

**True** (NKJ) [*alethes*] – That which conforms to reality; not falsehood, fables, vain reasoning or errant human philosophy.

**Noble** (NKJ); **honorable** (NAS) [*semnos*] – Vine and others seem to grapple with a clear definition of this word, but the overall sense suggests reverence, gravity and dignity befitting a relationship with our eternal creator (see Vine on "Grave," Vol. 2, p. 173).

**Just** (NKJ); **right** (NAS) [*dikaaios*] – Words and actions which conform to God's rules.

**Pure** (NKJ) [*hagnos*] – Free from contaminant; undefiled; morally clean.

**Lovely** (NKJ) [*prospiles*] – Things that please and accentuate love and affection.

**Good report** (NKJ) [*euphemos*] – Words which have good appeal to all, that which encourages, enlightens, ennobles or promotes what is beneficial and helpful.

**Virtue; Praiseworthy** (NKJ) [*arete; epainos*] – Summarizing qualities which further stress what is commendable, godly, edifying.

Paul challenges Christians to “*meditate on these things*,” thus occupying the mind with wholesome thoughts and giving evil no foothold. We might be shocked if we apply these characteristics to the things we consider to be entertaining and recreational. How we rationalize exposing ourselves to the filth of the world! Is it any wonder that we continue to struggle with lust, anger, greed and other plagues of the flesh?! Underestimating the power of wickedness is a fatal mistake.

4. What are the Philippians further urged to do to enjoy God’s favor (Ph 4:9)?

#### **Day 4: Feast or Famine (Ph 4:10-18)**

Paul now illustrates a healthy mental attitude by reference to his own view of material things. While grateful to the Philippians for their contributions through the years, he affirms that he has “*learned in whatever state I am, to be content: I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound ...*” (Ph 4:11-12). Paul is not an ascetic; he does not consider material goods as inherently evil and thus to be avoided. Both poverty and abundance present peculiar temptations to those with wayward attitudes. A proper view of material things does not come naturally with most people; it is cultivated. Thus Paul says “*I have learned ...*”. Material things are not constant, but the one dependable and trustworthy resource is, “*I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me*” (4:13).

5. Why had the Philippians not sent Paul support in a while?

6. What did Paul ultimately consider their financial support to be (Ph 4:17-18)?

#### **Day 5: Closing Greetings (Ph 4:19-23)**

Paul concludes this warm, affectionate letter with greetings from the brethren and saints in Rome “*but especially those who are of Caesar’s household*” (4:22). Even those in Nero’s own palace had seen through the petty, insane tyrant and embraced their true Lord, Jesus Christ. Surely this reminded Paul that, in spite of his chains, the unfettered gospel was sweeping through the Empire. He ever remained thankful to be part of such a powerful and eternal scheme.

7. What does Paul pray for the Philippians (4:19)?