

Colossians and Philemon



**Judaism
Hellenism
Paganism**

by Bob Martin



COLOSSIANS & PHILEMON



INTRODUCTORY NEW TESTAMENT STUDIES

**Taught by
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**Arranged for study by
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DISCLAIMER

The textbook used with this course was selected because we consider it to be one of the best commentaries available written by a conservative writer. **Anthony L. Ash** is a noted author, a member of the conservative Christian Church, highly regarded for his study and scholarship. The *Commentary on Colossians and Philemon* will reinforce the teaching you will receive from viewing the taped lessons by Bob Martin. As with all books there may be some things with which you and I would not agree. The principle, “use what is good and discard what is not good” applies to all textbooks used with our courses. Please be wise enough to discard any and all teaching that is not biblical.

Instructions and Requirements for Level II Students (non-Transferrable)

Each lesson is built around the instruction on either the VHS tape, DVD, CD, or audio cassette tape. Listen to the lecture on the tape as you follow along in the course Study Guide book.

Reading: The Bible books of *Colossians* and *Philemon* are to be read through three (3) times during this study.

Tests: There will be only ***two tests*** to complete for this course. One test is to be done at the end of lesson six (6), and the other one at the end of lesson twelve (12).

Memory Work: Memory work will be done on the honor system. Verses for this course: Each student will write out his/her memory verses in class and then grade them with different colored pen and turn it in to the test administrator or quoted to the test administrator. **(This will be worth 5% of your total grade).**

Due with the Mid-Term: (6 verses)

Colossians 1:3-4, 12-14, 28;

Due with the Final Exam: (5 verses)

Colossians 3:1-4; 4:12

Assignments:

- * The self exams for each lesson is to be read previous to listening or viewing the material on the tapes.
- * All Self-Exams are to be completed at the end of each lesson. **(This will be worth 5% of your total grade).**
- * Level II must obtain a 70% or better on each test to pass the course. **(This will be worth 90% of your grade).**
- * All assignments must be completed to pass the course.

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Instructions and Requirements for Level III Students (Transferrable)

Each lesson is built around the instruction on either the VHS tape, DVD, CD or audio cassette tape. Listen to the lecture on the tape as you follow along in the course Study Guide book.

Textbooks Required: One book will be required, “*Philippians Colossians & Philemon*” by: Anthony L Ash. The “**Colossians**” part of the book must be read by the Mid-Term Test and the “**Philemon**” section of the book must be read by the end of the course. A one page evaluation of these two sections of the book must be sent in with the final exam. **You are to read the book of Colossians eight (8) times and Philemon four (4) times during this course.** Colossians is to be read prior to each of the first 8 lessons and Philemon prior to the last 4 lessons. **(Your reading assignments and evaluation paper will be 10% of your total grade).**

Memory Work: You will have only twenty-eight (28) Bible verses to memorize. Memory work will be done on the honor system. You are asked to write your verses from memory on your test in the presence of the administrator **after** you have completed and turned in your test. Correct the verses with a different colored pen before sending in. Or you may quote them to the administrator during the course. He will keep track of the verses completed and report them to us. Please be diligent in doing your memory work. All memory work must be completed to pass this course. **(This will be 5% of your grade)**

Due with the Mid-term Test: (16 verses)

Colossians 1:3-4, 12-14, 16-17, 28; 2:8-15

Due with the Final Test: (12 verses)

Colossians 3:15-17; 3:1-4; 4:12 & Philemon vs. 4-7)

Assignments:

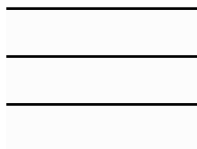
- Write a 3 or 4 point outline of each chapter of both Colossians and Philemon and turn them in with your final test. **(These will be worth 5% of your total grade)**
- You must complete all the “Self Exam” questions in your Course Guide. (These will be worth 5% of your total grade).
- You must complete the two tests in this course with the grade for each being 70% or better. (These test will be worth 75% of your total grade).
- Begin and complete a notebook of material gained in this study. Include in the notebook:
 - a. Notes taken as you view/listen to the taped lectures.
 - b. Your returned tests papers, including your memory verses.
 - c. Any other material you may find important for later use in teaching.

NOTE: Show this notebook to your administrator at the end of the course.

All Assignments must Be Completed and Turned in to Pass the Course.

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LESSON ONE

BACKGROUND AND HISTORY

INTRODUCTION:

This study will be of the books of Colossians and Philemon. These epistles are tied together because of the people who are involved. In the book of **Colossians** we find Philemon to be an important and influential member of the congregation at Colossae. The epistle of Philemon is a short, personal correspondence to Philemon from the apostle Paul. This letter to Philemon will address an attitude that is essential to all Christians and at the same time extends, to all who read it, an exceptional insight into the providential working of God in the affairs of mankind and especially towards those who are His elect.

When the precepts of these two books are combined you receive an extraordinary view of how the Christian is justified; how the Christian should live. And it will reveal some of the ways God moves providentially to *“work all things together for good to those who love Him and are called according to His purpose”* (Romans 8:28).

LESSON AIM: To present the background and geographical setting in which the books of Colossians and Philemon were written.

LESSON PREVIEW: You will . . .

1. Learn about the author and his relationship to Epaphras and Philemon.
 2. Learn how the church in Colossae began.
 3. Understand the pagan background of the first century.
-

PAUL THE AUTHOR

A. The Book of Colossians

1. It is a letter, written by the apostle Paul to the congregation of Christians who lived in the city of Colossae.
2. Paul had a dual citizenship.
 - a. Paul writes to Gentiles about a problem that was both Jewish and pagan.
 - b. Written between 62-64 A.D. when the congregation was plagued with a pagan, gnostic and a Judaizing influence.

B. Christianity Began in the Cradle of Judaism

1. But Christianity was a world religion.

- a. Judaism was confined to a tiny country called Palestine.
 - 1) Borders were 150 miles long and 50 miles wide.
 - 2) Population was four and a half million at most.

C. The Jews Were Hated and Despised the World Over

- 1. Cicero referred to Judaism as, “A barbarous superstition.”
- 2. Tacitus called the Jews “The vilest of people.” That was their reputation.
- 3. In their exclusive attitude they were certain that they alone were God’s choice people and all others were nothing more than fuel for the fires of hell.

D. Paul’s Qualifications

- 1. Paul was a Jew. In 2 Corinthians 11:22; Philippians 3:5 Paul is revealed as being proud of his heritage.
 - a. From the tribe of Benjamin from which the first kings had come.
 - b. He spoke the Hebrew language in a time when almost no Jews, outside Judea, did.
 - c. He was a Pharisee which means he was of the strictest and most zealous of the Jewish sects.
 - d. He advanced in his own religion above those his own age.
 - e. He was schooled at the feet of Gamaliel, the most noted religious teacher of the day.
- 2. Paul was born in the free city of Tarsus of Asia Minor.
 - a. The most famous university in the world was in the city of Tarsus.
 - b. Paul was well trained in Grecian philosophy.
 - c. He was a Roman citizen by birth, because Tarsus was a free city.
 - d. Paul used that citizenship whenever it helped him.
 - e. He used his Jewish background when necessary.
- 3. Paul is exceptionally qualified. He could deal with any Jewish/Gentile problem that would arise in any congregation.

NOTE:

One of the most important questions one can ask about any book in the Bible is, “Why was it written?” When we understand why Paul wrote the book we will begin to hear what God is saying to us in these epistles. When we know the circumstances of the letters we can begin to feel as Paul felt when he wrote to the brethren at Colossae and when he wrote to his friend and brother Philemon. We need to feel the beating of Paul’s heart and see the light he had inside and how and why the Holy Spirit stirred up the desire to share it. Also, we need to know the city and the kind of people the Colossians were and what we may expect of and from them. Knowing how the people thought is very important.

GEOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

A. Consult the Map of Asia Minor in Your Bible

B. Colossae Was Part the Tri-city Area

1. That whole entire area – Bithynia, Galatia, Pamphylia, Pisidia and Cilicia, is today what we call Turkey. In the Bible it is known as Asia Minor.
2. Colossae was a large commercial center before Paul's time.
3. Colossae was located on a tributary of the Meander River – the Lycus River. And in the Lycus River Valley lies this tri-city area.
 - a. The first city was Laodicea. Mentioned in Revelation 3:14-22 and Colossians 4:13.
 - 1) From 190 B.C. it was the center of industry. It was famous for its textile industry.
 - 2) The trade routes from north/south and east/west passed through Laodicea. That made it a center for trade, medicine, banking and industry. It was the place of the very rich.
 - 3) The Roman government was concentrated here.
 - b. The second city was Hierapolis.
 - 1) Famous for its health spas and healing mineral baths made possible by the volcanic activity in the area.
 - 2) It became a resort and pleasure center for the rich and famous.
 - c. The third city was Colossae.
 - 1) Not very large, but it was very scenic.
 - 2) Where the rich and powerful built their homes.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

A. The People of Colossae

1. The Phrygians.
Known for habitually dabbling in and inventing new kinds of religions.
2. The Jews.
 - a. Josephus tells us that Antiochus III (223-187 B.C.) transported 2,000 Jews from Babylon to Colossae.
 - b. By 67 A.D. the district census numbered 11,000 Jewish males.
 - c. They became like the Phrygians among whom they lived and they forgot God.

B. Paul in the City of Ephesus

1. Twenty-five years after the resurrection of Jesus.
 - a. From Antioch he began, what we call his third missionary journey.
 - b. He walked through the streets of Laodicea, Hierapolis and Colossae without spending much if any, time at all, and journeyed on to the city of Ephesus where he remained for almost two and a half years.
2. Paul in the city of Ephesus.
 - a. Paul supported himself as a tent maker.
 - b. He also, taught in the school of Tyrannus (Acts 19).
 - c. Paul performed many mighty and unusual miracles as he openly preached the gospel of Christ Jesus.

- d. Those miracles were enough to get everyone's attention for hundreds of miles around. In fact, Acts 19:10, says, ". . . *all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.*" That would include Laodicea, Hiarapolis and Colossae.

C. Epaphras and Philemon

1. Paul teaches in Ephesus.
While proclaiming the gospel in the school of Tyrannus (Acts 19:9-10) at least two men from Colossae came to Ephesus and heard Paul preach the gospel, Epaphras and Philemon.
 - a. Philemon is a very rich man with a large home. Philemon is not only wealthy but, he is generous as well.
 - b. Philemon, his wife Apphia and their son Archippus open up their home and it becomes the meeting place for the church in Colossae.
 - c. Epaphras became the evangelist and Philemon's home became the place to meet and hear the gospel proclaimed in Colossae.
2. The living seed is planted.
 - a. The faith of those in Colossae was strong and vibrant.
 - b. That faith bound them together in love for one another.
 - c. That kind of secure belief was unusual in that part of the world.

D. Warning of Apostasy (Acts 20:17-32)

1. Paul's third missionary journey.
 - a. Holy Spirit informs Paul that he must go to Rome in chains.
 - b. He calls for the church leaders at Ephesus to meet him at Miletus.
 - c. Paul tells these bishops from Ephesus that a terrible apostasy, a radical departure from New Testament Christianity, will occur.
 - d. It will come from an unexpected source. It will come not only from wolves outside the flock, but also, from the shepherds of the flock, the bishops themselves. "*I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also, from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples. . .*" (Acts 20:28-29).
2. Spiritual deception (Revelation 13:1-10). "*He deceives those who dwell on the earth. . .*" (v. 14).

E. Colossae's Problem

1. The heresy has already begun.
2. The heresy explained. The church was influenced by:
 - a. Heathen temples.
 - b. Pagan gods with temples erected to their worship.
 - c. Rampant immorality connected to the pagan worship.
 - d. People deeply immersed in immorality and the ways of darkness.
3. Old habits die hard.
 - a. These Colossians are new Christians.
 - b. They do not have many teachers.
 - c. Even Epaphras, their teacher, is a young Christian himself.
4. It seemed harmless and innocent. False teachers and their teaching never

- appear to be what they really are.
5. Their Phrygian nature.
 - a. True to their Phrygian nature they have it all mixed up as usual.
 - b. There is a little bit of Christianity, a bit of Paganism and some Judaism.
 - c. Like the Pharisees, binding certain rules and the keeping of certain rituals.
 6. Special Revelations.
 - a. They introduced special messages and revelations from angels, new doctrines never taught by Jesus and His apostles.
 - b. They sought to impose special knowledge about the basic elements of the universe in relation to achieving salvation.

SUMMARY:

This was the problem that faced Epaphras and addressed by Paul in this very important epistle. Epaphras decides to go to Rome to ask Paul what to do about all this mess. Rome is 1300 miles away. The only way you get to Rome from Colossae is by a combination of walking, riding a donkey or booking passage on a sailing ship. And while all that was going on Philemon comes in tearing out his hair and says, “What next? In the middle of all this trouble one of my slaves has run off.” The slave that had run away was Onesimus. He is the subject of the other epistle we will study in this series. This is the background and setting for these two books.

OUTLINE OF COLOSSIANS: (From Warren Wiersbe’s commentary on Colossians)

Key Theme: Jesus Christ is preeminent

Key Verse: Colossians 1:18

I. CHRIST’S PREEMINENCE DECLARED (chapter 1)

- A. In the gospel message (1:1-12)
- B. In redemption (1:13-14)
- C. In creation (1:15-17)
- D. In the Church (1:18-23)
- E. In Paul’s ministry (1:24-29)

II. CHRIST’S PREEMINENCE DEFENDED (chapter 2)

- A. Beware of empty philosophies (2:1-10)
- B. Beware of religious legalism (2:11-17)
- C. Beware of man-made disciplines (2:18-23)

III. CHRIST’S PREEMINENCE DEMONSTRATED (chapters 3-4)

- A. In person purity (3:1-11)
- B. In Christian fellowship (3:12-17)
- C. In the home (3:18-21)
- D. In daily work (3:22-4:1)
- E. In Christian witness (4:2-6)
- F. In Christian service (4:7-18)

Be able to reproduce this outline on your Mid-term test.

SELF EXAM FOR LESSON ONE:

1. List Paul's qualifications as a Jew.
 - 1) _____
 - 2) _____
 - 3) _____
 - 4) _____
 - 5) _____
2. Name the major cities in the Lycus River Valley.
 - 1) _____
 - 2) _____
 - 3) _____
3. What nationality of people lived in Colossae and what was their nature?

4. How did Paul, Epaphras and Philemon meet? Give Scripture references:

5. What was the significance of Paul's preaching in Ephesus? Where is the Scripture reference found?

6. What was Paul's warning about apostasy and where is that warning found?

7. List four things explaining the heresy in Colossae.
 - 1) _____
 - 2) _____
 - 3) _____
 - 4) _____
8. Give the author and the date of writing the book of Colossians.
Author: _____ Date: _____
9. Start to memorize the outline of Colossians on page 5 of this Study Guide. You will be required to reproduce it on your mid-term test.

LESSON TWO

HERESY AT COLOSSAE

INTRODUCTION:



Other than Philemon's family and Epaphras, Paul had met no one else associated with the congregation at Colossae until Onesimus walked into his house at Rome. Yet, Paul has deep feelings for every Christian in that city. In 2:1, Paul says, *"I want you to know how strenuously I am exerting myself for you and for those at Laodecia, for all who have not met me personally."* Having heard from Epaphras personally about the problems at Colossae Paul is very distraught and his mind begins to race and be flooded with words of praise, warning and condemnation. You can almost see Paul pacing from side to side as he dictates the letter to Tychicus. The letter is filled with deep emotion and fire. Some of the sentences go on and on. Here is a man who is burning inside as he opens his heart to these troubled brothers. Paul had been beaten, stoned, lashed, imprisoned and left for dead, all for the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He had literally poured out his life's blood for the brethren to bring them New Testament Christianity and to keep them committed and doctrinally pure. And in the face of this frightening heresy he stokes the boiler of his mind and fans the flames of his emotions into a raging inferno.

Internal evidence would suggest that Paul wrote the books of Ephesians, Colossians and Philemon within weeks or possibly days of each other. Colossians and Ephesians are almost parallel—thought for thought and chapter for chapter. In the center reference columns of my Bible there are, in the book of Colossians, 103 references to the book of Ephesians. That's a lot, all the other references combined only total 182.

LESSON AIM: To identify the heresy plaguing Colossae.

LESSON PREVIEW: You will . . .

1. Understand the nature of Paul's rebuke of the false teachers.
 2. To study the ten point nature of the heresy.
 3. Understand Paul's introduction of the Supremacy of Jesus Christ.
-

The book of Colossians is a very sharp, terse, impassioned apologetic witness to a church facing heresy. It seems to be written as if it were a frenzied, last minute attempt to save a drowning man. The book of Ephesians is a very thought-out, logical, deep treatment of the same subject. But, done with more thought and time. Both Ephesians and Philemon were triggered by the news brought from Colossae by Epaphras. Paul rapidly and fervently writes the letter to the Colossians. Knowing that

Ephesus was only 100 miles away he thoughtfully writes to encourage the brethren there also. Since these letters must go to Asia by the hand of Tychicus, Paul decides that now is the time to write Philemon and return his run-away slave.

THE NATURE OF THE HERESY

Paul writes to refute a heresy that has a ten-fold nature, or ten characteristics..

A. It Was a Beguiling Seduction (2:4)

“Let no one deceive you by fine-sounding arguments.”

1. The word in the Greek is *PITHANOLOGIA*.
2. Thayer defines it as “Specious discourse leading others into error.”

B. It Was Philosophy Rather than Religion (2:8). *“See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy. . .”*

1. PHILOSOPHY come from two words, *PHILEO* which means TO LOVE, and *SOPHIA* which means WISDOM.
2. A Philosopher is a lover of wisdom.

C. It Was Based on Human Traditions (2:8). *“. . .which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ.”* Jesus had already taught about the heresy of human traditions added to religion in Matthew 15:3, 6, *“And why do you break the command of God for the sake of your tradition. . .you nullify the word of God for the sake of your tradition.”*

D. It Turned Religion into Rule Keeping (2:20). *“If you died with Christ to the basic principles of this world, why, as though you still belonged to it, do you submit to its rules.”*

E. It Issued in Rules and Regulations Governing Food and Drink (2:16, 20-21). *“Therefore, do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink. . .do not submit to its rules: Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!”*

F. It Issued in the Observance of Special Days in Regard to Religion (2:16-17). *“Do not let anyone judge you . . . with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things to come.”*

1. Religious observances.
 - a. A religious feast is a yearly observance.
 - b. A New Moon is a monthly observance and a Sabbath day is a weekly observance.
 - c. Don’t let anyone bind on you, in a religious way, a yearly observance, a monthly observance or a weekly observance of days.
2. Christian Sabbath.
 - a. Some today want us to bind Sunday as a Christian Sabbath day, a Christian rest-day.
 - b. We do not observe a day, we keep a feast.

G. It Issued in Rigid Asceticism

1. Worldly wisdom.
Colossians 2:23, *“Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence.”*
2. Asceticism. Harsh treatment and physical abuse of the body for a religious purpose trying to kill the desires of the flesh.

H. It Issued in Circumcision (2:11). *“In Him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of your sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ.”*

1. Characteristics number five and six can have reference both to Jewish and pagan practices.
2. This characteristic of the heresy is particularly Jewish.
3. And it has reference to the covenant sign that was given to Abraham. Christians have no such practice as fleshly circumcision.

I. It Issued in the Worship of Angels (2:18). *“Do not let anyone who delights in false humility and the worship of angels disqualify you . . . Such a person goes into great detail about what he has seen, and his unspiritual mind puffs him up with idle notions.”* Paul says two things here:

1. Those who worship angels are unspiritual.
2. Appeals to angelic messages are not subject to verification.
 - a. Gnostic and demonic influences. The problem at Colossae may have been an incipient hybrid with Judaism. A mixture of Gnostic philosophy and Hebrew tradition.
 - b. The deceitfulness of Satan. This may allude to an appeal, on the part of some in Colossae, to the demon world or darker realm. *“. . . Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light”* (2 Corinthians 11:4).
 - c. God's word comes by God's Holy Spirit. The work assigned exclusively to the Holy Spirit was the work of convicting the world of sin by the preaching of the gospel. The Holy Spirit Himself came into the world to enable men to preach the saving message of God to other men.

J. It Involved Worldly Rudiments (2:8, 20). *“See that no one takes you captive through. . .the basic principles of the world rather than on Christ. . .You died with Christ to the basic principles of this world. . .”*

1. Learn and understand God's will.
This destructive power of that kind of doctrine totally denies Christ's claim of having, *“All Authority”* in Matthew 28:18. It rejects the Uniqueness ascribed to Jesus in John 1:1-14; 3:16; Philippians 2:5-9, and renounces His exclusiveness proclaimed in John 14:6; Acts 4:12.
2. Worldly wisdom is the same today.
 - a. The first step in dividing Christianity is to reject the authority of Jesus Christ and His Word.
 - b. When men reject the authority of Scripture they permit themselves the

privilege of establishing their own authority.

3. The problem exposed. This is basically the same heresy that is dealt with in the epistle to the Galatians. Judaizing teachers had invaded the congregations at Galatia. They argued that in addition to Jesus and grace you must keep the Law of Moses. They denied the all-sufficiency of Christ. Paul's appeal to the authority of Christ and the Word of Christ is clear. *"But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned . . . You who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace."* Galatians 1:8; 5:4. To the Galatians Paul says, "Christ is sufficient – you need nothing but Christ and His righteousness given at calvary and if you add anything to that you fall from grace. Any one who tells you any different will be eternally condemned."

CHRIST'S SUPREMACY

This is the message Paul loudly proclaims in this letter to the Colossians. "Jesus Christ is all-sufficient. Jesus Christ is all you need. You don't need anything else. If you're united to Christ you don't need these teachers and their additional doctrines, rules and regulations." In one almost endless sentence, as if he were firing word bullets from a gatling-gun, Paul proclaims the supremacy of Jesus Christ.

A. The Supremacy of Christ (1:15-22)

1. **The image of the invisible God** (v.15).
2. **The firstborn over all creation** (v. 15).
3. **All things were created by Him and for Him** (v. 16).
4. **He is before all things and in Him all things hold together** (v. 17).
5. **He is the head of the body (The Church)** (vs. 18).
6. **He is the firstborn among the dead** (v. 18).
7. **All of God's fullness dwells in Him** (v. 19).
8. **Through Christ God reconciles all things to Himself** (v. 20).
9. **He presents you holy, without blemish and free from accusation** (v. 22).
 - a. Solutions to the problem.
1:27, *"To the Saints God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of the mystery, which is Christ IN YOU, the hope of glory."* This is the whole thing. This is the end of God's purpose. This is His will from the beginning.
 - b. All you need is in Christ.
If you have Jesus Christ you have all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, because it is in Jesus and not in these false teachers. All the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form in Jesus. In Him you have been made complete. Jesus is the head over all rule and authority.

B. Paul's Answer to the Heresy

Paul's answer to this heresy is two-fold.

1. The all inclusiveness of the gospel.
The gospel is for all men (1:28). *"We proclaim him, teaching everyone with ALL wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ."*

2. You need nothing but Christ.
He is all-sufficient. You cannot improve on what Jesus has done by adding any of these heresies. Jesus is all you need.

CONCLUSION:

Every man can know God for himself. That's the essence of the New Covenant. *"Every man shall know me, from the least to the greatest, says the Lord"* (Jeremiah 31:34). No one is more important than another. *"Every man shall know me,"* says the Lord. From the least – if you came to Christ this morning, you're the least one. And God says, "You're one of the every man, from the least to the greatest" – If you've been a Christian for the last 50 years there's one thing you and the new Christian have in common – you both know the Lord in a saved way. Christ in you, both of you, is your hope of glory.

SELF EXAM FOR LESSON TWO:

1. List the ten-fold nature of the heresy at Colossae.

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____
- 4) _____
- 5) _____
- 6) _____
- 7) _____
- 8) _____
- 9) _____
- 10) _____

2. List the nine points of Christ's supremacy with Scriptures.

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____
- 4) _____
- 5) _____
- 6) _____
- 7) _____
- 8) _____
- 9) _____

LESSON THREE

GOD'S WISDOM VERSUS WORLDLY WISDOM

INTRODUCTION:

The apostle Paul in writing to the church at Colossae wants them to understand two very important truths. Both of these truths have already been stated in Paul's epistle to the Corinthians. They are #1, *"For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe"* (1 Corinthians 1:21). That says that no man can know God by worldly wisdom. And #2. *"My speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God"* (1 Corinthians 2:4-5). This is really relevant to what is happening in Colossae. Paul told the Corinthians, "I could with my ability to manipulate you with smooth talk, and human wisdom, convince you to accept what I say about the gospel. And I could do it as easy as some slick Madison Avenue advertising agent. And like some unsuspecting fish, you would swallow it hook line and sinker." But that's not what Paul wants. Paul wants the Holy Spirit to convict them of their sin and lead them to Christ. This smooth speech is the tool of those who are causing the problem at Colossae.

LESSON TEXT: Colossians 1:1-8

LESSON AIM: To contrast the truth as revealed by God with supposed truth proclaimed by man.

LESSON PREVIEW: You will . . .

1. Understand the simple truth proclaimed by God through the Holy Spirit.
 2. Discover that our eternal destiny depends on being able to distinguish that which comes from God with that which comes from man.
 3. Learn that we are saved by faith that comes by hearing God's Word and not by some secret or mystical knowledge that comes from man.
 4. Understand that all knowledge that leads to salvation comes from Jesus Christ.
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GREETINGS AND INTRODUCTION

A. The Messenger and His Message (1:1-2). *“Paul an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God. . .”*

1. Statement is not made to defend Paul’s apostleship.
2. Paul does not go into an apologetic defense of his apostleship as he did in the book of Galatians.
 - a. His apostleship is not under attack in Colossae.
 - b. The proof of his apostleship occurred years before in the city of Ephesus when the signs of an apostle were wrought in such magnitude that all of Asia heard the gospel.
3. The contrast here is one of truth against falsehood. One who is a messenger of God and those who are not.

B. God’s Faithful Messenger

1. An inspired apostle through whom God speaks. What Paul speaks, unless he states otherwise, is the command of God (See 1 Corinthians 14:37).
2. Apostolic authority. He begins: *“Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God. . .”* This is Paul’s statement of his right to send this letter.
 - a. An apostle by God’s will.
 - b. Not a self-made or self-appointed apostle.
 - c. Called when he was in the womb (Acts 9:15; Galatians 1:15).
3. Paul’s message came by revelation from God (Galatians 1:11-12, 15-16).
4. God’s message through Paul produced Christians at Colossae.

C. The Recipients of the Letter

1. God’s message to Christians. *“To the holy and faithful brothers in Christ at Colossae. . .”*
2. A description of the saints.
The word Holy in the original language of the New Testament is the word *HAGIOS*.
 - a. It means SEPARATED FROM SIN, that’s the first part of the definition.
 - b. And DEDICATED TO THE SERVICE OF GOD.
 - c. It is a word that describes Christians.
3. Holy and sanctified. Paul uses this word in I Corinthians 6:9-11. He contrasts evil living with Christian living. In verse 11, he says, *“And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were SANCTIFIED, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.”* That word sanctified that is some times shortened to “saint” is the word *HAGIAZO*. One who is set apart, made holy. And here Paul equates that sanctification and justification with baptism. That time of washing away our sin.
4. Baptism and sanctification.
The same baptism that washes a man also sanctifies and justifies him. It sets

him apart to serve God. The Christian is set apart to belong to God. All Christians are saints. Set apart and dedicated to God for a purpose.

5. Separated from sin – dedicated to God. We have been separated from sin and the world to be, as Paul says here, “FAITHFUL.” The word is *PISTOS*. It means trustworthy.
6. Perfection and faithfulness.
 - a. There is a difference between being faithful and being perfect.
 - b. The problem with many who profess Christianity is that they equate perfection with faithfulness.
7. Not perfect but forgiven.
 - a. Holy in Christ. They were holy and faithful brothers, “*IN CHRIST*.” Paul uses this phrase “*In Christ*” or “*In Christ Jesus*” 63 times in his epistles.
 - b. Salvation is in Christ. It is a positional state of being. It is where the Holy Spirit has placed you in your union with Christ. Galatians 3:27, “*As many of you as were baptized into Christ are clothed with Christ.*”
 - c. Grace and peace from God. “*Grace and peace to you from God our Father.*” Everything Paul writes in the New Testament is written between the parenthesis of grace. “*Grace and peace to you from God our Father.*” It means a right relationship with God. That relationship brings us assurance. Assurance is the greatest source of peace in the world. Peace comes when you can be secure in your relationship with God. God will give you that assurance.

PRAISE AND COMMITMENT

In Verse 3-6, Paul talks about the double commitment made by the Colossians. “*We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all the saints – the faith and love that springs from the hope stored up for you in heaven, and which you have already heard about in the word of truth, the gospel that has come to you.*”

A. Their Commitment of Faith (vs. 3-4a)

1. The character of their faith. Faith is more than head knowledge.
2. Faith is the foundation of character and the beginning of virtue.
3. Commitment and faith. They had made a commitment to trust in and rely upon Christ Jesus for their salvation.
 - a. The word FAITH is *PISTIS*. It means to so believe and trust one so as to commit your all to him.
 - b. In the noun form it means A TRUST, A RELIANCE, A COMMITMENT.
 - c. In the verb form it means TO TRUST, TO RELY, TO BE COMMITTED.

B. Their Commitment to Love. “. . . *We have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all the saints. . .*” (v. 4).

1. Double commitment.

That double commitment is their faith and their love for the brethren. The brethren and the church are one and the same thing. If you don't love your brethren (the church) you don't have the love of God (1 John 3:10-15). Paul doesn't start out criticizing them. Why? Because he loves them. Yes, there is something wrong going on. But there is also a lot that is right with these brethren. Love requires that Paul, and anyone else, build on what is right and good. That's how you solve the problems of a congregation.

2. Faith and love.

Their faith and love comes as a result of the gospel and the hope of salvation that gospel brought to them. That's what verses 5-6 say. Both their faith and love is based on the hope that is laid up for them in heaven. Hope is what gives faith and love their power. Why do men purify themselves as Jesus is pure? Because of the hope that they have to one day be like Christ (1 John 3:1-3).

C. The Power of the Gospel

Now here is the power of the gospel. It creates faith that brings grace and salvation. “*All over the world this gospel is producing fruit and growing, just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and understood God's grace in all its truth*” (1:23). They had received and understood God's message of grace in its fullness?

1. This gospel is a **message of assurance**.

1 John 5:13, says, “We can know we have salvation.” That word translated as KNOW is in the original language the word *OIDA* and not the word *GNOSKO*. *Gnosko* means that you are in the process of learning. *OIDA* means that all of the evidence is in and here is the conclusion. What is the conclusion? I have assurance, I can know beyond a doubt, that God is true and His every promise will be fulfilled.

2. The gospel is **universal** – it is for the whole world.

“*All over the world this gospel is producing fruit and growing just as it has been doing among you . . .*” (v. 6). And they didn't have a single teacher with a special knowledge or message like those among you. What the gospel did for them it did for you. So don't let anyone tell you otherwise.

3. The gospel **grows mature Christians**.

a. By the faithful, daily preaching of the Gospel by Epaphras. That's verses 7-8. “*You learned it from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on our behalf, and who also told us of your love in the Spirit.*”

b. God's full grace and complete salvation had come to Colossae through the preaching of Epaphras.

Notice the contrast that Paul makes here between Epaphras, his

message and the result of his message and what the false teachers were telling them.

4. The gospel is **God's power to salvation.**
 - a. Epaphras had preached the gospel.
What Epaphras has already preached to them resulted in their receiving ALL truth that brought them ASSURED salvation and the FULL grace of God. And as a result of what Epaphras preached, not what the false teachers said, they had grown spiritually and produced fruit pleasing unto God.
 - b. Preaching the truth in love.
Because of the gospel taught by Epaphras they have the love of God in the Spirit.

SELF EXAM QUESTIONS FOR LESSON THREE

1. How did God choose to save people? Give Scripture reference. _____

2. List three Scriptures that prove Paul's apostleship.
 - 1) _____
 - 2) _____
 - 3) _____
3. What is the two-fold definition of the word "Holy?"
 - 1) _____
 - 2) _____
4. Where does the Bible say salvation is found? What Scriptures say so.

5. How are the recipients of the letter described? _____

6. What was the two-fold commitment made by the Colossians?
 - 1) _____
 - 2) _____
7. Give four statements which describe the character and nature of the gospel.
 - 1) _____
 - 2) _____
 - 3) _____
 - 4) _____
8. Define the following words:
HAGIOS: _____
FAITHFUL: _____
SANCTIFIED: _____
OIDA: _____
GNOSKO: _____

LESSON FOUR

USING WHAT YOU HAVE

INTRODUCTION:

If you remember from the last lesson, in 1:3-8, Paul reminded the Colossians how, when and where they had received their salvation by the preaching of the gospel. Now, by way of his prayers, Paul continues to remind them that they already have all they need to grow spiritually and to be in fellowship with God. They had heard the gospel preached by Epaphras and that gospel had brought them salvation and had made them fruitful and acceptable.

Now in verses 9-14, he says, *“For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you; and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of His will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding. And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please Him in every way; bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to His glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light. For He has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son He loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.”*

LESSON TEXT: Colossians 1:9-14

LESSON AIM: Teaching God’s people to use the gifts they already have.

LESSON PREVIEW: You will . . .

1. Learn about the importance of prayer.
 2. Discern the importance of understanding God’s will.
 3. Comprehend the importance of learning from our past.
 4. Learn how to walk the Christian walk.
-

THE POWER OF A TRUE LIFE IN PRAYER

A. Remember the Power of Prayer

In prayer we ask for two things.

1. An understanding of God’s Will.
 - a. Discerning God’s will.

“We have not stopped praying for you and asking God to FILL YOU with the knowledge of His will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding.”
 - b. Quest for real understanding.

Paul doesn't want these brethren to just know what God had said. He wants them to be filled with the knowledge of His will.

2. The power to perform His will.
 - a. He wanted them to have the power to put it into practice in their lives.
 - b. So they can walk worthily.

B. Remember Who You Are

They once had a clear vision of who Jesus is and what He has done for them. "Remember your spiritual roots."

1. Remember you are already saved.
2. Remember the implanted seed of God. *"For this reason,"* Paul says, "I have not stopped praying for you. Because you grew in faith, hope and love, I'm praying for you." Now, for what does Paul pray? That God will give them further growth in faith, hope and love. Verses 9-12, *"That God would fill them with All spiritual wisdom and understanding. . .that they will walk worthy of the Lord . . .bearing fruit in every good work . . .being strengthened to have great endurance, patience, joy and much gratitude to God."*

C. Remember the Source of Wisdom

1. Not through the wisdom of the false teachers.
2. True wisdom is from God (James 1:5).
 - a. Wisdom, knowledge and understanding in Him.
 - b. False appearance of wisdom (Colossians 2:23). *"These things certainly have the appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion. . .but are of no value against the indulgences of the flesh."*
3. True wisdom and knowledge comes from God and His Word (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

NOTE: He prays first of all for three things. That they be filled with the knowledge of God's will. And that they also be filled with spiritual wisdom and understanding of that will. That will enable them to solve their problem with the false teachers.

D. Remember to Live Worthy Lives (vs. 10-12)

1. The Christian walk.
 - a. Romans 6:4: – *"In newness of life."*
 - b. Romans 13:13: – *"Honestly."*
 - c. 2 Corinthians 3:7: – *"By faith."*
 - d. Galatians 5:25: – *"In the Spirit."*
 - e. Philippians 3:16: – *"By the same rule."*
 - f. Colossians 1:10: – *"Worthy of the Lord."*
 - g. Ephesians 4:1: – *"Worthy of our calling."*
 - h. Ephesians 4:17: *"Not as the Gentiles."*
 - i. Ephesians 5:2: – *"In Love."*
 - j. Ephesians 5:8: – *"As children of light."*
 - k. 1 John 1:7: – *"In the light."*
2. The worthy life described.

The word is *AXIOS* and it means FIT. It is used in Revelation 3:4, “*You have a few names even in Sardis who have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white, for they are **worthy**.*” It describes those who, by God’s grace, have become fit, worthy to be partakers of the inheritance.

- a. **Bear fruit** (v. 10). “*Bearing fruit in every good work.*” The idea is consistently or perennially bearing fruit.
 - b. **Grow in the knowledge of the Lord** (v. 10). Being fruitful has been required of Christians from the beginning. In John 15:1-5, Jesus said, “*God cuts off every branch, in the vine, that does not bear fruit. . . Every branch that does bear fruit is pruned so that it can be more fruitful . . . If one remains in Christ he will bear much fruit.*” In Galatians 5:22-23, Paul talks about the fruit of the Spirit that grows in the Christian’s life. “*The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.*”
 - c. **Being strengthened with power** (v. 11). “*Being strengthened with all power according to His glorious might.*”
 - d. **Always giving thanks unto God** (v. 12). “*Giving thanks to the Father.*” Now under that third present participle in verse 11, “*Being strengthened with all power. . .*”
3. Three points of power.
- a. The word “endurance” is *MAKROTHUMEO*. It describes a long-tempered person. It is long suffering without retaliation.
 - b. “Patience” is the word *HUPOMONE*. It is the active, steadfast ability to wait for God and His will to be done in all circumstances of life.
 - 1) How I am to react toward life and my brethren.
 - 2) I am to endure or forbear with my brothers.
 - c. The word joy means I am to do that with a radiant, sunny-hearted attitude.

NOTE: I want to make a point here. I think it’s a key point, and one of the primary spiritual concepts that Paul is driving at.

1. **Use what you have.**
Notice, Paul does not pray that anything be added to what they already have. Paul does not pray for them to have more love, and the things that accompany love. Yet, isn’t that what we usually pray for? We cry out, “God give me more love so I’ll be kinder, less envious, less proud, less selfish and more attuned to the needs of others.”
2. **Use all the fullness of God.**
It doesn’t make sense to pray for more love. How can you pray for more love when you haven’t loved with the love you already have? Romans 5:5 says, “*God has poured out (to overflowing) his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.*”
3. **Use your Giftedness.**
They had what they needed in Christ Jesus for them to know God and be God’s dynamic people. It was there all the time. But somehow they got too busy or just too spiritually lax to discover and use it and let it grow them into what they should be. Then these false teachers came along and

convinced them they needed a gimmick.

- a. Possessing the fullness of God.
When you have all the fullness of God you have it all.
- b. Possessing the wisdom of God.
Wisdom—A clear understanding of life.

E. Pleasing God in Every Way

In verse 10, Paul prays, “*That they may please him in every way.*” God’s one purpose in life for every Christian is clear. You are to become a continuation, an extension of Christ’s life in this world.

- 1. Praying for all things.
- 2. The purpose of Jesus in you.
- 3. Rescued and delivered (vs. 13-14). “*For He has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son He loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.*” Other versions say He has “delivered” us.
 - a. The Greek word is *RHUOMAI* and it means to RESCUE or SAVE FROM DANGER. He has literally snatched us from the jaws of death. “*The wages of sin is death*” (Romans 6:23).
 - b. God rescued us from that death penalty by paying the ransom price for our sin.
 - c. He has made us to stand, not in darkness, but in the kingdom His Son, Jesus Christ.
 - 1) Fallen and raised up again.
Romans 8:1, “*Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death.*”
 - 2). Forgiven and sanctified.

NOTE: What a tremendous message, not just for the Colossians, but for all Christians in every generation.

SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIAL:

CROWN HIM LORD OF ALL!

A. Christ Is the Saviour (Colossians 1:13-14).

- 1. He delivered us (v. 13a).
- 2. He translated us (v. 13b).
- 3. He redeemed us (v. 14a).
- 4. He has forgiven us (v. 14b).

B. Christ Is the Creator (Colossians 1:15-17).

- 1. He existed before creation (v. 15).
- 2. He created all things (v. 16a).
- 3. All things exist for Him (v. 16b).
- 4. He holds all things together (v. 17).

C. Christ Is the Head of the Church (Colossians 1:18).

D. Christ Is the Beloved of the Father (Colossians 1:19-20).

SELF EXAM QUESTIONS FOR LESSON FOUR:

1. What two things do we ask for in our praying?

1) _____

2) _____

2. List eight ways a Christian is to walk.

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

4) _____

5) _____

6) _____

7) _____

8) _____

3. Paul wanted the Colossian brethren to remember what four things?

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

4) _____

4. The worthy life is described by what four statements/admonitions?

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

4) _____

LESSON FIVE

THE SUPREMACY OF JESUS

INTRODUCTION:

In our last lesson Paul set forth the fact that Jesus Christ is the Savior of mankind. It is at this point that Paul sets forth ten points of supremacy of Jesus. Here is the main thrust of this lesson—ten reasons or truths that make Christ supreme in all the universe. This preeminence of Christ is discussed in Colossians 1:14-2:5.

“In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins. He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. And He is the head of the body, the church; He is the beginning and the firstborn among the dead, so that in everything He might have the supremacy. For God was pleased to have all His fullness dwell in Him, and through Him to reconcile to Himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through His blood, shed on the cross. Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. But now He has reconciled you by Christ’s physical body through death to present you holy in His sight, without blemish and free from accusation—if you continue in your faith, established and firm, not moved from the hope held out in the gospel. This is the gospel that you heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a servant. Now I rejoice in what was suffered for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ’s afflictions, for the sake of His body, which is the church. I have become its servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness—the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the saints. To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery. Which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. We proclaim Him, counseling and teaching every one with all wisdom so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ. To this end I labor, struggling with all the energy He so powerfully works in me. I want you to know how strenuously I am exerting myself for you and for those at Laodecia, and for all who have not met me personally. My purpose is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, in whom is hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. I tell you this so that no one may deceive you by fine-sounding arguments. For though I am absent from you in body, I am present with you in spirit and delight to see how orderly you are and how firm your faith in Christ is.”

LESSON TEXT: Colossians 1:14 – 2:5

LESSON AIM: To teach that all you need in your life is Jesus Christ. He has all the answers.

LESSON PREVIEW: You will . . .

1. Learn that Jesus is the Creator and Sustainer of the universe and all therein.
 2. Learn to trust in the word of God to teach all things from God.
 3. Come to believe that Jesus in us is our glorious hope—Our only hope.
-

THE SUPREMACY OF JESUS

Here are ten very important points about the supremacy of Jesus. Each one of these affirmations, of Paul, hits directly at the heart of what these false teachers have been saying about Jesus. Paul gives us a view of the total sufficiency of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is Paul's statement about the absolute sufficiency of Jesus Christ for every need and for all things. Look at them in order of time.

A. Christ Is Preeminent in His Relationship to the Universe (v. 17)

1. In order of time Christ was before creation. *"He is before all things. . ."*
 - a. John 1:1, *"In the beginning was the Word, and Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning."*
 - b. Philippians 2:5-8, *"Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross!"*
 - c. John 1:14: *"And the Word became flesh and lived for a while among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth."*
 - d. In John 8:58, Jesus said to the Pharisees, *"Before Abraham was born, I am!"* Here He states the fact of His preexistence to Abraham. And in that claim He calls Himself by the covenant name of Jehovah God, which means the eternal one. See also John 17:5; John 1:30, 34.

B. Christ Is the Preeminent One in His Relationship to God (v. 15). *" . . . the firstborn over all creation . . ."* He is the "preeminent One" over all creation!

1. The place of the firstborn is the place of preeminence.
2. Its the word *PROTOTOKOS*.
It means He is preeminent, He is number one by reason of His deity and eternal existence.

C. Christ Is the Image of God (v. 15). In His relation to God:

1. He is the visible representation of the invisible God.
2. He manifested God in both existence and power.
 - a. The word “image” = ICON.
 - b. Illustrated in Hebrews 10:1: *“For the law, having a SHADOW of the good things to come, and not the very IMAGE of the things, can never with these same sacrifices. . .make those who approach perfect.”* The word IMAGE is contrasted with the word SHADOW. A shadowy thing, or a photographic likeness, or a mere representation like a statue is a copy or likeness of something. Jesus is the IMAGE.
3. He is not merely God-like; He is God.
 - a. Hebrews 1:3, says that Jesus is “. . .*the express image of His person.*”
 - b. John 1:18, *“No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, he has declared him.”*
 - c. John 14:9, “. . .*If you have seen me you have seen the Father. . .*” Jesus is the exact image of God.

D. In Christ Is All the Fullness of God (v. 19). *“For it pleased the Father that in him all the fullness should dwell.”*

1. All the fullness of God dwells in Jesus (Colossians 2:9). *“For in him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.”*
2. He is God in bodily form.
 - a. Jesus needs no supplement. In Him are *all* the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.
 - b. Jesus tolerates no rival. In Jesus Christ we see the whole of God in relation to men; and that revelation is given to us in no one else, for Jesus is unique.
 - c. This complete revelation is made in incarnation. He is the fullness of deity *bodily*.

E. He Is the Creator of All Things (v. 16). *“For by him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. . .”*

1. He is preeminent by reason of creation. See also John 1:3; Hebrews 1:2.
2. He is preeminent by reason of ownership.

F. He Is the Sustainer of All Things (v. 17b). *“. . . in him all things consist”* (Genesis 1:1ff; John 1:3; Hebrews 1:2; 11:3).

G. He Is the Goal of All Creation (v. 16). *“all things were created FOR him.”*

1. His is the power that maintains the universe.
2. The helm of the universe is held by the hands which were pierced for us.
3. Creation was established and man put into it so that man might come to love God and give Him honor and glory.

NOTE: Here are some of the greatest statements in the New Testament concerning the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. It makes one grand statement. We are totally dependant on Jesus Christ for every need.

H. He Is the Redeemer/Savior (v. 14)

“ . . . in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins.”

1. He is all-sufficient for salvation. Acts 4:12, *“Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”*
 - a. In regard to sin, we are the transgressors.
 - b. In regard to sin, Jesus is the redeemer and the forgiver.
2. Man needs no new knowledge, he needs no secret knowledge for his salvation to be accomplished. Salvation is in Jesus and no other.

I. He is the Head of the Body (v. 18b)

“And he is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning. . .”

1. He is preeminent in His relationship to the church. He is the head of the church.
 - a. *“HE IS THE BEGINNING.”*
 - b. In the original, *ARCHE*. *“To be first”* and is used to denote a RULER who originated that over which HE rules.
2. The church is the body of the saved. It is made up of those whom Jesus has saved. He is the ruler of that in which the saved are safe. It is His church because He originated it, He built it and He is the one who rules over it.

J. He is the Firstborn From the Dead (v. 18a). “ . . .the firstborn from the dead, that in all things he may have the preeminence.”

His power was declared, manifested, proven by His resurrection from the dead. Romans 1:3-4, *“ . . .He was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.”*

1. Christ has all authority (Matthew 28:18), following His resurrection from the dead.
2. Before His resurrection (John 5:30). *“I can of myself do nothing. As I hear, I judge; and my judgment is righteous because I do not seek my own will but the will of the Father who sent me.”*
3. John 6:38, *“I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me.”*
4. John 12:48-50, *“He who rejects me, and does not receive my words, has that which judges him—the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day. For I have not spoken on my own authority; but the Father who sent me gave me a command, what I should say and what I should speak.”*
Also read John 7:16; 8:26; 14:24; 15:10.
5. In these Scriptures, which were spoken before the resurrection, Jesus

claimed to be under the total subjection of the Father. He did nothing without the Father's authority.

6. After His resurrection, Hebrews 2:7-9, says, God “. . .*crowned him with glory and honor and set him over the works of his hands and put all things in subjection under his feet . . . because he suffered death, crowned with glory and honor. . .*”

PAUL'S TESTIMONY CONCERNING HIS CONVERSION

A. The Damascus Road

Acts 22:6-10, Paul says, “*About noon as I came near Damascus, suddenly a bright light from heaven flashed around me. I fell to the ground and heard a voice say to me, Saul! Saul! Why do you persecute me? Who are you, Lords? I asked. I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting, he replied. . .What shall I do Lord? I asked. Get up, the Lord said, and go into Damascus. There you will be told all that you have been assigned to do.*”

1. Paul's reaction.
2. Paul fulfills his calling.
 - a. Paul proclaims to all, Jesus as Lord of all.
 - b. This is the One Paul proclaims to the Colossians. He is all you need to know about God. He is God in the flesh. He is deity incarnate. He is the first born of all creation. He is first in time and order of all things. He is first in priority by virtue of His deity. He is first in priority, not only because He created it, but because He created it for Himself. It belongs to Him. He is the goal of all the universe. He is the very reason for its existence. He created it. He gave it birth and life. And when it rebelled and died He came to bring in new birth, new life and recreation. He forgave our sin and rebellion by His death, burial, resurrection, ascension and coronation. He gave us the Holy Spirit to be our companion, comforter, seal and guide. He lives His life in us by that Holy Spirit and that is the whole purpose of life on earth.

NOTE: Solomon said it perfectly in Ecclesiastes 12:13, “*The conclusion of the matter is this, the WHOLE DUTY of man is to reverence God and keep his commandments*”. Reverence means to give Him the Preeminence. And one more thing. He is the object toward which all creation is moving. “*For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen.*” (Romans 11:36). Who is that? It's Jesus Christ and no one else!

SELF EXAM FOR LESSON FIVE:

1. List ten points of Christ's supremacy.

- 1) _____

- 2) _____

- 3) _____

- 4) _____

- 5) _____

- 6) _____

- 7) _____

- 8) _____

- 9) _____

- 10) _____

2. List two Scriptures that explain that Christ has all authority.

- 1) _____
- 2) _____

LESSON SIX

COMBATING HERESY

INTRODUCTION:

In this lesson we are going to be dealing with additions to the Christian faith. Paul has already discussed, in great detail, the supremacy, the all sufficiency of Christ. Now he will begin to discuss what the Colossian heresy attempted to add to the adequacy of Christ and the Christian doctrine of faith.

In our last lesson, Paul ended his message about the supremacy of Christ by saying, “. . . *Do not let anyone deceive you with persuasive words. . . I rejoice to see the steadfastness of your faith in Christ. As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him.*” That simply says, “All you need is Christ and the faith you received in Him. Don’t let anyone trick you into believing otherwise.” Now in Colossians 2:8-17, he speaks straight to that point. Read with me verses 8-10, “*Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ. For in him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, and you are complete in him, who is the head of all principality and power.*”

LESSON TEXT: Colossians 2:8-17

LESSON AIM: To teach us to be on guard against apostasy and false doctrines.

LESSON PREVIEW: You will . . .

1. Discover the importance of exposing and rebuking false teachers.
 2. Learn that you do not need to be highly educated to understand the Bible and defend the faith.
 3. Examine the fact that by rightly dividing and defending the faith we cannot be cheated out of our inheritance.
-

THE DANGER OF RATIONALISM

A. False and Subversive Doctrines (2:8)

Man-made philosophy, human wisdom and rationalization have no part in Christian faith and doctrine. Four ways men can be corrupted doctrinally:

1. **By replacing the revelation of God with human intellect.**
 - a. An attempt to control people and organizations.
 - b. The clergy-laity concept. If you’re not clergy, you’re laity. And if

you're laity, you're not smart enough, or schooled enough, or qualified enough to know what's right or wrong.

2. **By replacing the revelation of God with Philosophy.** *"Let no one cheat you."*
 - a. That word cheat meant to "plunder like a pirate."
 - b. Philosophy – from two words. *PHILEO* which means "to love" and the word *SOPHE*, which means "wisdom." It means the "love of wisdom."
 - c. The New Testament tells us that if we want wisdom we are to ask God and He will give it to us (James 1:5).
3. **By replacing the revelation of God with the traditions of men.** *"... according to the traditions of men."*
 - a. Has its root in man made traditions.
 - b. There is good tradition and good philosophy. There is also wrong tradition and wrong philosophy.
 - c. The apostle Paul told the Thessalonian Christians, in 2 Thessalonians 2:15, *"... keep the traditions which you received from us, whether by our word or our epistle."* God had handed His teaching down to Paul and Paul had handed that same teaching, without revision, down to the Christians at Thessalonica.
4. **By replacing the revelation of God with childish worldly doctrines.** *"... according to the basic principles of the world. . ."* One version says, *"after the rudiments of the world."*
5. It is not rooted in Christ.
 - a. At Colossae false teachers were trying to explain Jesus, salvation and the Christian life in terms of empty, elementary, childish, Christ-less, human reason.
 - b. The chief fault of all philosophies is that they are "not after Christ."
 - c. The faith that brings salvation in Christ comes from God's word and not from philosophy or human wisdom (Romans 10:17).

B. False Teaching Concerning the Means of Achieving Righteousness

1. Achieving my own righteousness.
I can be like Jesus by striving harder and doing certain things.
2. By works of merit.
Whether from the Mosaic Law or from pagan practice, It says, *"I can earn, merit, achieve righteousness on my own."* That's one concept. At the other end is the concept that says, "We have special teachers and leaders." Now they cannot get me to heaven. Getting to heaven is my job, I must get there myself.
3. By rule keeping.
 - a. Not by keeping a list of things that can't be done.
 - b. Not by keeping a list of things that must be done.

THE PERIL OF CEREMONIALISM

Ways men try to be right with God.

A. Through Observing Religious Rituals (2:16-17).

The gnostic peril which threatened the Colossians had a Judaistic complexion. Paul repels efforts being made to bring Christians under the dominion of Jewish ceremonies and the Mosaic calendar.

1. An effort was being made to put Christians under the bondage of a ceremonial legalism.
2. A warning against becoming involved in a system of ceremonies as a means of completing the work of Christ.
 - a. Christians have been liberated from all and any systems of rite and ceremony.
 - b. No one has any scriptural right to judge or indict us for not observing the ritualistic institutions of the Mosaic law.
3. Specific items mentioned here.
 - a. Meat or drink. Restriction in diet as prescribed in the Mosaic Law or meat offered to idols.
 - b. Feast day, New Moon or Sabbath day.

NOTE: God's primary concern is, "What is the source from which you do what you do or don't do." God is concerned with the why of what you're doing. That's the statement of David in Psalms 51:16-17, "*For you do not desire sacrifice, or else I would give it; You do not delight in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart—these, O God, you will not despise.*" What is your motive and reason for doing what you do.

B. Through the Means of Mysticism (vs. 18-19)

1. Warning against and intrusion and inquiry into the unseen world.
 - a. Against angelic idolatry, spiritism and occultism.
 - b. Against anything that displaces Jesus Christ as the supreme and sufficient Head.
2. The Colossians were in danger of being defrauded of their true rights as Christians by allowing these false teachers to lead them away from their position and privileges in Christ.

C. Through the Enslavement of Asceticism (vs. 20-23)

1. Various forms of asceticism and self-abasement were urged upon the Colossian Christians as means of controlling and conquering the flesh.
2. When we died with Christ His atoning sacrifice met every spiritual necessity we had.
 - a. His power becomes our strength.
 - b. His righteousness becomes our salvation.
 - c. His grace becomes our life.
3. Jesus is the answer.

- a. The whole of Christianity is Jesus Himself.
- b. If Jesus rules you don't need the rules because Jesus in your life will live your life correctly. That is Paul's statement in Colossians 1:27, "*...Christ in you, the hope of glory.*"
 - 1) Making right choices.
God is concerned whether you are a fig tree or a thorn bush. If you are a thorn bush all the rule keeping and commandment keeping in the world is not going to enable you to bear figs (good fruit).
 - 2) What you are is what you live (Jeremiah 31:31-34).
 - 3) Who controls your life? When you are indwelt by God's Spirit and God's Son is sovereign in your life you live for Him and not yourself. See Luke 17:10.

D. Through Obeying Moses' Law (vs. 10-17). Now Paul addresses what seems to be another false doctrine being introduced to the church at Colossae, the keeping of Mosaic ritual as a test of Christian fellowship.

The former heresy, the adding of human philosophy would be a Grecian influence. Here the heresy is from the Jewish influence.

- 1. Not by fleshly circumcision. This circumcision is not made with hands. It is spiritual and not physical.
- 2. By spiritual circumcision. Philippians 3:3, "*For it is we who are the circumcision, we who worship by the Spirit of God, who glory in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh—*"
- 3. Circumcision is the work of God (vs. 11-12). "*... buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God.*"
 - a. Baptism is not circumcision.
 - b. It is in baptism that the circumcision takes place. He says, "*You were circumcised having been buried in baptism.*"
- 4. Cutting away of sin. Spiritual circumcision occurs when you are baptized. Now that sin is removed you are not to go back to living in sin again. That's Paul's argument in Romans 6:1-9. When we are baptized we are spiritually circumcised (our sins are cut away) because of our faith. "*We are buried with him through baptism into death, so just as Christ was raised from the dead...even so we also should walk in newness of life.*" (Romans 6:4). That reasoning is carried one step further in 2 Corinthians 14-15, 17, 21, by saying that what God did to Christ in His death, burial and resurrection He does to us. What God did to one man (Jesus) He does to all who come to Him by faith. But when does that take place? It takes place in baptism.

That makes baptism necessary to the cutting away of sin and to obtain fellowship with God. That's why Jesus said in Matthew 28:18-20, "All

authority is given to me in heaven and on earth. Go, therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you. . .” That is a direct command from Jesus Himself. If Jesus is dwelling in me I will tell everyone to be baptized. Why? To be spiritually circumcised. To be placed in fellowship with God. To obey the commandment of Jesus Christ. If His presence and power resides in me I will do everything He asks. My life will be His will done, not my will be done. And if I refuse?

That’s the difference between the fruit tree and the thorn bush. And it all begins when you die to self and make Jesus Christ the Lord and Master of your life. It’s all summed up in the words that tell us how Paul lived the successful Christian life without human philosophy or man made rules. *“I have been crucified with Christ, it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me”* (Galatians 2:20).

SUMMARY:

Christianity does not consist of what you are not, or do not, or wear not, or say not, but rather in what you are and what you do. Indeed there is a place for the negative, for Christianity is not so indefinite that it countenances anything and everything. But the beginning of Christian character and conduct is always positive. When this is true the negative aspects of Christian conduct will take care of themselves.

There are things which *accompany* salvation and there are things to be *absent* because of it. Hebrews 6:9 says *“We are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation.”* There are also things which are to be absent because of salvation such as are found in Galatians 5:19-23, *“The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like.”*

“See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ.”

SELF EXAM FOR LESSON SIX

1. List four ways we can be corrupted doctrinally.

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____
- 4) _____

2. List four ways men try to be right with God.

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____
- 4) _____

3. Explain the importance of making right choices. _____

4. List two ways we are not saved.

- 1) _____
- 2) _____

LESSON SEVEN

WALKING IN JESUS

INTRODUCTION:



Welcome to lesson number seven in our study of the book of Colossians. In our previous lessons the apostle Paul has discussed the preeminence and supremacy of Jesus Christ. He has refuted those false teachers who were saying that Jesus was not enough. What Jesus did on the cross to provide our salvation was sufficient. Therefore you do not need special knowledge, visions, rituals, rules or regulations. He sums up all that we have been studying in Colossians 2:6, “*As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him.*” You came to Jesus unable to affect anything toward your salvation. By faith you rested totally in Him and what He did for you in His birth, life, death, burial, resurrection, ascension and coronation. What He did was perfect and complete. You cannot add anything to make it better. If you take anything from it you diminish it. You came by faith, responding to God’s gift of grace. Now don’t lose it by adding rules, regulations and legalistic laws dreamed up by human philosophy, man made tradition and Jewish law. When you try to add these things to what Jesus did you are, in effect, saying that what He did was imperfect, incomplete and not sufficient. You are saying that the salvation He says He purchased with His blood was lacking.

LESSON TEXT: Colossians 3:1-4:1

LESSON AIM: To learn the nature of the Christian and his character.

LESSON PREVIEW: You will . . .

1. Discover the necessity of walking by faith in God and His Word.
 2. Learn that all truth is taught in God’s Word and we do not need anything outside of God’s Word.
 3. See that we are not to remain worldly and carnal. We are to grow up in the likeness of Jesus.
-

REVIEW: Seven points of Christian identification:

1. Understanding that salvation is by faith.
As you received Christ, by grace through faith, without these man made additions, so you must continue to walk in Him by grace through faith.
2. Not relying on rule keeping and special knowledge.
“*For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His*

workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared before hand that we should walk in them.”

3. Obedience of baptism and spiritual circumcision.
The cutting away of sin that takes place, when by faith, we are baptized into Christ.
4. Being united with Christ (Romans 6:3-4).
5. Walking in new life (3:1-11).
To walk in newness of life—To a new lifestyle.
6. Having become like Christ (3:12-17).
 - a. Saved to become something. Why is a light bulb created? To be light.
 - b. Christians are to be light, salt, love, compassion, patience, goodness, loving-kindness.
 - c. “. . . *partakers of the divine nature*. . .” (2 Peter 1:4).
7. Seeking the things that are above.
“*If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God*” (Colossians 3:1).
 - a. We bring to God, in our lives, our sacrifice of praise.
 - b. Romans 12:1, we offer God our “. . . *bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable. . . which is our reasonable service or worship.*”
 - c. That offering must be holy and acceptable. It cannot be tainted and marred by sin.
 - d. “. . . *you, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. . . You are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, so you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light*” (1 Peter 2:5, 9).

THE CHRISTIAN AND HIS CHARACTER

A. The New Wardrobe of Grace (3:1-14)

1. The Christian’s position (vs. 1-4).
 - a. **Risen with Christ** (v. 1a). The **sphere** of our position.
 - b. **Seated with Christ** (vs. 1b-2). The **completeness** of our position.
 - c. **Dead with Christ** (v. 3a). The **justification** of our position.
 - d. **Hid with Christ** (v. 3b). The **security** and **safety** of our position.
 - e. **To appear with Christ** (v. 4). The **future** of our position.
2. What the Christian Is.
 - a. **The temple**, the sanctuary of God.
 - b. **A priest** of God.
 - c. **The sacrifice** that is made to God in His temple by His priest.
 - 1) “*Our citizenship is in heaven,*” (Philippians 3:20).
 - 2) “*We are strangers and sojourners*” (1 Peter 2:11,).
 - 3) “. . . *God will supply your every need . . . and you can do all things through Christ who strengthens you,*” (Philippians 4:13, 19).

B. The Christian's Condition (vs. 5-14). How the Christian Lives:

1. **Five things to put to death** (vs. 5-7). In our position we are dead with Christ. In our **condition** we are to mortify our members which are upon the earth.
 - a. **Fornication** (illicit, forbidden sexual relationships). This is a broad term bringing into its confines the whole area of immorality such as the look, the thought and the deed.
 - b. **Uncleanness** (both moral and mental uncleanness).
 - c. **Wrong passion** (evil lust). It is what lives within the mind and heart.
 - d. **Evil desire** (desire to do wrong). The inward yearning and craving for those carnalities of the flesh that militate against a godly character.
 - e. **Covetousness which is idolatry**, (uncontrollable desire to possess things). This is the idolatry of the mind and heart, the idolatry of desire and greed. It is indulged in under the guise of respectability of civilization and culture

NOTE: Make Jesus your treasure. Where your treasure is (where your desire is) there will be your heart also.

2. **Six things to put off** (vs. 8-11). Six unworthy garments are listed for disrobing.
 Verses 8-9, “. . . *Put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth and do not lie to one another. . .*”
 - a. **Anger** (*ORGE*). It describes the wrath of man that leads him to act or speak rashly. It is that hot, uncontrollable pride that swells up when one is offended.
 - b. **Wrath** (*THUMOS*). When anger is allowed to stew and fume until it boils up with a view toward revenge.
 - c. **Malice** (*KAKIA*). Viciousness of character. Malice is that hateful attitude that will go beyond getting even and does great harm.
 - 1) The mental brew that remains after the episodes of anger and exploding wrath.
 - 2) It is poisonous thought that pours its septic solution into mind and heart.
 - d. **Blasphemy or slander** (*BLASPHEMEO*). It is to rail against, to speak evil of, to speak words with the intent of harm. To speak so as to destroy another's character.
 - e. **Filthy language out of your mouth** (*AISCHROLOGIA*). Any kind of base utterance. Used of an uncontrolled tongue. It describes language that is intended to abuse and degrade another. Also associated with foul or filthy language.
 - f. **Lying to one another**. A lie is an untruth that is told to another. How can untruths be reconciled with a life founded on the One who is Himself the truth?

- 1) A half-truth or a full truth told with the intent to deceive is still a lie.
- 2) The degree or mildness of the lie does not lessen the fact that a lie will condemn your soul.

NOTE: Unchecked anger can lead to full blown wrath. Soon wrath develops into malice and we begin to speak against another. If continued, that develops into abusive language and we begin to tell lies about them. Like a runaway train one leads to the other. When you were baptized into Christ the old man was put to death and buried. His clothes of anger, wrath, malice blasphemy, filthy language and lying were supposed to be buried with him.

3. **Eight things to put on** (vs. 12-17).

These attitudes must be possessed if the new man is to be renewed day by day.

- a. **Tender mercy.** This is feeling with another in their sorrow or joy.
- b. **Kindness.** The attitude of benevolence. Not only vocal but also vocational. It is vocal when it comes out of the mouth but when it is vocational it comes out of the hands. Words need to be clothed with deeds.
- c. **Humility.** That attitude that considers others before one's self. Humbleness of mind means lowliness in contrast to self-sufficient arrogance.
- d. **Meekness.** The attitude that causes me to submit my will to God.
- e. **Longsuffering.** The attitude that enables me to suffer long with the weaknesses of others. This is patience for the long pull.
- f. **Forbearance.** The ability to help another bear his burdens. In forbearing we *hold everything back* while in forgiving we *hold nothing against*.
- g. **Forgiveness.** The attitude of not counting the wrongs committed against me and then forgetting those wrongs.
- h. **Love.** That which I am to have above all else. This is the final garment from the wardrobe of grace. It is not only the last but also the perfecting, and finishing quality of character.

4. Reciprocal relationships in the Christian walk.

- a. Christ and the Christian relationship (vs. 15-17).
 - 1) **The peace of Christ – Ruling** (v. 15).
 - 2) **The word of Christ – Dwelling** (v. 16).
 - 3) **The name of Christ – Doing** (v. 17).
- b. Husband and wife relationship (vs. 18-19).
 - 1) **Wives are to submit.**
 - 2) **The Husband is to love his wife and be patient with her.**
Ephesians 5:25, defines that husband's love as a love that would

cause him to lay down his life for her. Love that holds up and exalts and builds up and sacrifices for her.

- c. Parents and children relationship (vs. 20-21).
 - 1) **Children are to obey their parents.**
 - 2) **Parents are to be patient, kind, loving and understanding with their children.**
- d. Employer – employee (3:22 – 4:1).
 - 1) **Employee – faithfulness and efficiency.** Servants (employees) do their work as if they were doing it for the Lord Himself.
 - 2) **Master/employer – justice and equity.** Employers treat those who are doing their work with love and consideration just as they want the Lord, who is their master, to treat them.

NOTE: The Bible's law of compensation is introduced in verse 25, "*Anyone who does wrong will be repaid for his wrong, and there is no favoritism.*" It is just as true that the one who does right will receive for the right which he has done.

SELF EXAM FOR LESSON SEVEN

1. List three things a Christian is.
 - 1) _____
 - 2) _____
 - 3) _____

2. List five statements which show the Christian's position.
 - 1) _____
 - 2) _____
 - 3) _____
 - 4) _____
 - 5) _____

3. List five things the Christian is to put to death.
 - 1) _____
 - 2) _____
 - 3) _____
 - 4) _____
 - 5) _____

4. List six things of a sinful nature the Christians is to put off.
 - 1) _____
 - 2) _____
 - 3) _____
 - 4) _____
 - 5) _____
 - 6) _____

5. List eight things the Christian puts on.
 - 1) _____
 - 2) _____
 - 3) _____
 - 4) _____
 - 5) _____
 - 6) _____
 - 7) _____
 - 8) _____

6. List four areas in the Christian walk where reciprocal relationships are necessary.
 - 1) _____
 - 2) _____
 - 3) _____
 - 4) _____

LESSON EIGHT

THE CHRISTIAN'S RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD AND MAN

INTRODUCTION:

We have come to the last chapter of our study in the book of Colossians. In chapter three we learned that we established a new relationship with God through Christ. Also, in that study we were told how to maintain our relationships with our brethren. Now, before Paul begins his greeting to the brethren at Colossae, he tells them two things. 1) How to maintain their relationship to God and, 2) their relationship to those who are outside of Christ.

The secret to staying close to God is communication with God. It is the power of prayer. The way to maintain good relations with those in the world is to treat them kindly and with respect. Colossians 4:2-6, *“Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving; meanwhile praying also for us, that God would open to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in chains. That I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak. Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time. Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.”*

LESSON TEXT: Colossians 4:2-18

LESSON AIM: Learn the importance of establishing our relationship with God and living among non-believers in a way that will draw them to God.

LESSON PREVIEW: You will . . .

1. Learn that we establish our relationship with God through obedience to the teachings of Jesus.
 2. See that that relationship is kept strong not only by obedience but also by prayer.
 3. Learn that we are to be careful about the way we talk to God, other Christians and to those outside of Christ.
 4. Consider that we are to take on the “Divine Nature” inwardly which will reveal itself in us outwardly.
-

Read in Colossians 4:7-17, Paul's closing remarks. They will be relevant to the next four lessons, because they speak of some of the people who are involved in our study of the book of Philemon. *"Tychicus, a beloved, brother, faithful minister, and fellow servant in the Lord, will tell you all the news about me. I am sending him to you for this very purpose, that he may know your circumstances and comfort your hearts, with Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother who is now of you. They will make known to you all things which are happening here. Aristarchus my fellow prisoner greets you, with Mark the cousin of Barnabas (about whom you received instructions: if he comes to you, welcome him). and Jesus who is called Justus. These are my fellow workers for the kingdom of God who are of the circumcision; they have proved to be a comfort to me. Epaphras, who is one of you, a bondservant of Christ, greets you, always laboring fervently for you in prayers, that you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God. For I bear him witness that he has a great zeal for you, and those who are in Laodicea, and those in Hierapolis. Luke the beloved physician and Demas greet you. Greet the brethren who are in Laodicea and Nyumphas and the church that is in his house. Now when this epistle is read among you, see that it is read also in the church of the Laodicdians, and that you likewise read the epistle from Laodicea. And say to Archippus, 'Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it.' This salutation by my own hand—Paul. Remember my chains. Grace be with you. Amen."*

THE CHRISTIAN'S COMMUNICATION

Praying is to be of a double nature.

A. Praying for Ourselves (4:2)

1. Based on our relationship to God.
 - a. We are raised with Christ.
 - b. Our old self crucified and put to death.
 - c. We have a new mind-set.
2. Communication with God – prayer. *“Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving.”*
3. The character and content of prayer (Philippians 4:4-7).
 - a. Requests made known to God.
 - b. A means of offering praise, honor and gratitude to God.
 - c. An avenue of worship and of thankfulness.
 - d. Thankful for both good times and adversity (Romans 8:28).

NOTE: A good rule of life to remember is this: the way to get on in life is with your chin up and your knees down.

B. Praying for Others (4:3-4)

1. For our brothers. “*Meanwhile pray also for us that God would open to us a door for the word.*” (Evangelism)

2. For those outside of Christ (vs. 5-6). “. . . *that I may make it manifest as I ought to speak. Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, so you will know how you should answer every one.*”
 - a. The word “answer” (*APOKRINOMAI*) means to give an answer to an honest question about Christianity. You need to give the right answer to their questions about Christianity.
 - b. The Christian life, whether by deeds and actions or by verbal expression, is a statement of one’s belief.
 - c. Grace means you answer them with kindness and benevolence. “Grace” (*KARIS*) means a benevolent gift given out of love.
 - d. Our answers are to be “seasoned with salt.” They are to be chosen with care.

THE CHRISTIAN’S COURSE

A. The Walk Must Match the Talk (vs. 2-5)

1. Walk with discretion (v. 5). “*Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time.*”
2. Walk with a purpose – “*redeeming the time.*”

B. Walk Must be For the Right Purpose (v. 6). Live for God, not for self. 1 Peter 4:3, “*For you have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do—*”

THE CHRISTIAN’S COMPANIONS (vs. 7-18)

A. Brief Biography of Paul’s Co-workers

B. The Place of Personality and God’s Use of Men

1. Tychicus (vs. 7-8). “Beloved” and “faithful.” He speaks to us of the greatness of small service rendered for Christ.
2. Onesimus (v. 9). “. . . *a faithful and beloved brother.*”
 - a. The slave of whom we read in the book of Philemon.
 - b. He became Paul’s partner in service.
3. Aristarchus-Marcus-Justus (vs. 10-11). Three Jewish Christian converts who became companions in sympathy and service to the apostle.
 - a. These three were more than religious spectators and philosophic speculators. They were builders and workers.
 - b. Aristarchus was a fellow-prisoner of Paul’s. He knew the feel of iron chains and the damp chill of cold prison stones.
4. Epaphras (vs. 12-13).
 - a. The founder of the Colossian church.
 - b. A laborer of prayer in behalf of the Colossian Christians (v. 12). “*He*

is always wrestling in prayer for you, that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured."

5. Luke and Demas (v. 14). The "beloved physician" and the "faithless friend."

NOTE: A contrast in faithfulness:

Demas had the same advantages as Dr. Luke. They were both companions of Paul. They were both under the same influences. They both had the same training and example. In spite of all these, see how different the result. One followed, the other forsook. One is faithful, and the other faithless. It is often this way in life. Two children brought up in the same home environment with the same parental instruction and hearing the same prayers grow up into opposite lives. One glorifies the noblest traditions of godliness and the other disgraces the family name. Somewhere in the process of life one yielded to the influences of his training, the other rebelled. Each must decide for himself.

6. Nymphas (v. 15). This man had a church meeting in his house.
7. Archippus (vs. 16-17). Although the ministry of Archippus is unknown, the lesson of his life is directed to everyone.

SUMMARY:

NOW LETS PULL it all together as we bring the book of Colossians to a close. Paul's message is simple.

1. **Things you do not need:**
 - a. You do not need human philosophy!
 - b. You do not need Jewish rituals!
 - c. You do not need man made traditions!
 - d. You do not need special knowledge or special visions!
2. **Things you do need:**
 - a. To be in Christ and to keep what you received from Him. Jesus alone is sufficient. Anything else is false. It will entangle you, enslave you and lead you away from Christ.
 - b. And the logic of Paul's message is simple.
 - 1) In Christ you have been born again.
 - 2) You received the new birth when you were born of water and the Spirit.
 - 3) You were baptized into Christ and received your spiritual circumcision.
3. **Things you need to know:**
 - a. *"If then you were raised with Christ. . ." (3:1).*
 - b. How it affects you life. *" . . . seek those things which are above where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God."*
4. **Things you need to seek:**

You now set your mind in a new direction, on things that are above.

 - a. Romans 12:2 and Colossians 3:1, *" . . . do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. . . Set your mind on things above where Christ is. . ."*
 - b. John 15:1-8, *"If you're in the vine you will bear much fruit. And God is glorified by your bearing much fruit."*

- c. Before you can bear fruit you must be renewed in your mind by setting your mind on things that are above.
- 5. **Do not add outward forms as a means of being spiritual.**
- 6. **Become what you are in Christ.**
 - a. Your actions reveal the real you.
 - b. You live what you are.

SELF EXAM FOR LESSON EIGHT:

1. List the relationship Christians have to:

God: _____

Fellow Christians: _____

Those who are outside of Christ: _____

2. What four things do Christians not need?

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

4) _____

3. Explain the statement: "You live what you are." Use Scripture references where applicable.

LESSON NINE:

BACKGROUND AND HISTORY

INTRODUCTION:



andwiched between the books of Titus and Hebrews you will find this short epistle to a Christian named Philemon. It is a small but dynamic epistle that sets forth some of the Bible's greatest teaching about the providential working of God in the affairs of mankind to bring about His rule in the hearts of men and women every where. In Romans 8:28, the apostle Paul was inspired by the Holy Spirit to give all Christians a message filled with so much hope and encouragement that it has literally become, for many, the anthem of faith. It simply says, "*And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose.*" The book of Philemon serves as a shining example of how God does just that. And sometimes He does it without those individuals who are involved really being aware of His presence and activity in their lives.

The books of Colossians and Philemon are inseparably tied together. The book of Colossians teaches us that Christians are to trust totally on God through Christ Jesus. To be a Christian, under God's grace, having your sins washed away in the blood of Jesus, possessing total and complete salvation you need nothing but God's word and Jesus Christ. God, through Jesus, will provide for all your spiritual and physical needs. He often does without your being aware of it happening. He often does without your understanding how He does it.

Now the book of Philemon illustrates this truth in the life of a runaway slave named Onesimus. The book is a true life narrative that teaches how God can move providentially in the life of one man. Not just a faithful Christian man. But in the life of a man who is running away from God and the only Christian influence in his life. It is the true story of a man named Onesimus who flees a Christian master. And in the process of fleeing runs smack into God in the person of God's great servant, the apostle Paul.

PREVIEW:

Along with the Epistle to the Colossians, this letter probably was carried to Colossae by Tychicus and Onesimus (Colossians 4:7-9). In it, we see Paul in three important roles as he tried to help Philemon solve his problems. At the same time, we see a beautiful picture of what the Father has done for us in Jesus Christ. Martin Luther said, "All of us are Onesimuses!" and he was right.



LESSON TEXT: Philemon 1-25

LESSON AIM: To recognize the spiritual message of the book, to recognize that true freedom is spiritual freedom and that only God sees the big picture from beginning to end, therefore only God can bring all things to a satisfactory conclusion.

LESSON PREVIEW: You will . . .

1. See the importance of treating others with dignity.
 2. Learn that searching for dignity apart from God can bring only sin, rebellion and further indignity.
-

PHILEMON AND ONESIMUS

A. Introductory Material on the Roman Society

The background of this epistle begins years before in the city of Colossae. Colossae was part of a tri-city area in the Lycus River Valley. The city of Colossae was about 100 miles inland from Ephesus. All of those are prominent cities in New Testament history. Paul wrote his letter to the Ephesians. He mentions Laodemia and Hieropolis in his letter to the Colossians. Also, Laodemia is one of the cities to whom the apostle John writes in the book of Revelation.

1. The city of Colossae – a residential town. Many of the wealthy who did business in Laodemia and Hieropolis commuted from Colossae.
 - a. Along with that lifestyle went the practice of slavery. These rich people owned slaves.
 - b. You cannot understand this book with a 20th century mind-set.
2. The people of Colossae. You must get into the minds of the people of this time.
 - a. Slavery was the way Roman society worked.
 - 1) One-third of the Roman Empire were slaves.
 - 2) About 70 million slaves in the Roman empire.
 - b. Most slaves had a pretty good life, depending on their master.
 - 1) But the Roman citizen did not look upon his slaves as human beings. They were “living tools or breathing machines.”
 - 2) The least important of his possessions – easy to replace.
 - a) No sense of responsibility toward a slave.
 - b) No personal relationship with a machine – not even a living machine.
 - 3) The slave mind-set.
 - a) Low self-esteem.
 - b) A non-person, a nobody.
 - c) Meaningless existence. No purpose in life.
 - c. One of those slave owners was a man named Philemon.

- 1) He had a wife named Apphia and they have a son called Archippus.
- 2) One of their slaves was named Onesimus.
- 3) The name Onesimus means “Useful.”

B. God’s Providence at Work (Acts 19)

1. God’s providence in the **life of Paul**. His second missionary journey A.D. 54-56.
 - a. Antioch, Tarsus, Lystra, Iconium and Ephesus.
 - b. Taught in the School of Tyrannus – many miracles performed.
 - 1) The word of God spread to all who were in Asia (Acts 19:10).
 - 2) Paul’s preaching was very successful.
 - a) Magic books were burned (Acts 19:19).
 - b) Totaled fifty thousand pieces of silver.
 - c) \$175,000 at today’s market price.
2. God’s providence in the **life of Philemon**.
 - a. Philemon heard Paul preach Christ’s message of salvation.
 - b. Philemon was converted and went home to Colossae.
 - c. Paul makes reference to this in Philemon verse 19.
3. God’s providence in the **life of Epaphras**.
 - a. Epaphras also heard Paul preach the gospel and was converted.
 - b. Epaphras also returns home to Colossae.
 - c. God brings Philemon and Epaphras together in Colossae.
 - 1) Philemon is wealthy and has a large home.
 - 2) Epaphras is on fire to preach the gospel.
 - a) Philemon’s home becomes the meeting place of the church.
 - b) Epaphras becomes the local evangelist (Philemon 2; Colossians 1:6-7).
 - c) Together they establish a strong congregation in Colossae.
 - (1) Archippus, probably Philemon’s son, is converted also.
 - (2) Archippus becomes the evangelist at Laodicea (Colossians 4:16-17).
 4. The providence of God in **the life of Onesimus**.
 - a. Philemon was a Christian slave owner. Slavery was not condemned by the gospel (Ephesians 6:5-9; Colossians 3:22 – 4:1).
 - b. Onesimus is exposed to the gospel in Philemon’s house.
 - 1) He is unable to see beyond his own personal condition.
 - 2) He fails to appreciate the kindness of a Christian master.
 - a) Example of how one can hear with the ear and not hear.
 - b) Rejects the only real answer to life.

C. Onesimus – His Mind-set and Circumstances

1. His desire for freedom motivates his running away.
 - a. There is more than one kind of freedom.
 - 1) Not a desire for physical freedom.

- 2) Who am I? – The search for spiritual freedom.
 - a) Do I have dignity and worth?
 - b) God given worth and dignity.
- b. His yearning for personhood.
 - 1) As a slave he is a “non-person” – a nobody.
 - 2) He has inborn the God-given awareness that “I am somebody.”
 - a) All the answers could have been found in Philemon’s house.
 - b) His slave mentality has blinded him to that possibility.
- 2. He runs away to find out there somewhere, in a changed circumstance, who he really is.
 - a. Not running away to just gain his physical freedom.
 - 1) It would be dangerous to become a runaway slave.
 - a) One-third of the Roman population were slaves.
 - b) Roman citizens lived in fear of rebellion and retaliation.
 - (1) Run away slaves were public enemies number one. A familiar proverb was “So many slaves, just so many enemies!”
 - (2) The most feared enemy of the Roman Empire.
 - (3) If unpunished it would encourage other slaves.
 - 2) If caught – branded on the forehead.
 - a) Flogged by his master (if the master was a cruel master) until almost dead.
 - b) The reason crucifixion was invented.
 - (1) Slow, agonizing, inhumane type of death.
 - (2) Other slaves made to watch as a deterrent.

NOTE: Physical freedom would end in physical death. Onesimus needs a deeper, more noble motivation to run away.

- b. Steals Philemon’s money to buy necessities and passage to Rome. (See vs. 18-19)
 - 1) Thinks he will find inner freedom in a far away place.
 - a) Outward change cannot change who you are on the inside.
 - b) Freedom or bondage never exists on the outside. That’s the common message of Colossians and Philemon. Freedom is not obtained by keeping rules, rituals and man-made traditions. Freedom comes through an inner change made possible by Jesus.
 - 2) No person, place or position can give you dignity and worth.
 - a) Only Jesus can give you real worth.
 - b) He demonstrated your worth by dying on the cross for you.
- 3. Onesimus arrives at Rome.
 - a. A notable accomplishment.
 - 1) How do you get to Ephesus without being recognized.
 - 2) Receive no help from others.
 - b. It was a crime to aid or abet a runaway slave.
 - 1) Heavy fine by Roman authorities.
 - 2) Financially liable to the slave’s owner.

- a) Be the loneliest person in the world.
- b) Be broke, tired, afraid, alone and in need.

D. God Brings it All Together (Acts 21-28)

1. Paul's troubles in Jerusalem – Jews try to kill Paul.
 - a. Announces Roman citizenship and appeals to Caesar.
 - b. Nero has a two year backlog of court cases.
 - 1) Paul released on bond – house arrest.
 - 2) Free to see all who come to his rented home.
 - 3) Paul's companions.
 - a) John Mark, Aristarchus, Demas and some others (Acts 27:2; 2 Timothy 4:10).
 - b) Paul converts many (Philippians 1:12-14; 4:21).
2. God brings Onesimus to Rome.
 - a. God is pursuing Onesimus (cf. Psalms 139:7).
 - 1) Psalm 23:2 – “He **leads** me beside. . .” – *NAHAL*, “To lead.”
 - 2) Psalm 23:3 – “He **leads** me in paths. . .” – *NACHAH*, “To drive.”
 - 3) Psalm 23:6 – “Mercy will **follow**. . .” – *RADAPH*, “To pursue.”
 - a) God actively pursues us – proof of our worth.
 - b) God is, “. . .not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9).
 - b. God Himself, in the totality of His attributes fills all creation.
 - 1) It is impossible to escape the omnipresent God.
 - a) Acts 17:15-28.
 - b) God is in Rome waiting for Onesimus.
 - 2) Onesimus realized his freedom still eludes him in Rome.
 - a) He is now ready to hear the gospel he could have never heard in Colossae.
Now he can learn the greatest truth of all. “I am made in the image of God.” “I am a being of tremendous worth.” “I am worth more than all the universe combined” (Luke 15:1-32).
 - b) Imagine the effect that has on the slave mind-set. I’m loved, I’ve been died for. That’s the ultimate dignity – the meaning of life. You cannot enslave a man who understands that.
But slavery is the way of life in the Roman Empire. Does this automatically eliminate all slavery? What does the New Testament teach about slavery? How does Paul solve this problem?

SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIAL:

OUTLINE OF PHILEMON: (Commit this outline to memory)

- A. Paul, The Beloved Friend (Philemon 1-7).
- B. Paul, The Beseeching Intercessor (Philemon 8-16).
- C. Paul, The Burdened Partner (Philemon 17-25).

SELF EXAM FOR LESSON NINE

1. In the Roman Empire what was a slave-owner's mind-set toward his slave?

2. What was the slave's mind-set toward himself? _____

3. List, in sequence, the events that eventually brought Paul and Onesimus together.

4. Explain the slave mind-set and how Christianity affected it. _____

5. Explain, with Scripture references, why you cannot escape from God. _____

6. Explain who the following people are.
 Epaphras: _____
 Philemon: _____
 Apphia: _____
 Onesimus: _____
 Archippus: _____
7. Write from memory the three-point outline of Philemon.
 A. _____
 B. _____
 C. _____

LESSON TEN

IN CHRIST JESUS YOU ARE SOMEBODY

INTRODUCTION:

In our last lesson we examined the background in which this epistle was written. We saw the accepted practice of slavery in the Roman Empire. Philemon and Epaphras are important and influential members of the congregation at Colossae. Onesimus, one of Philemon's slaves, in his frantic search for self-esteem robs Philemon's safe and runs away to Rome.

LESSON TEXT: Philemon 1-25; Ephesians 6:5-9

LESSON AIM: We will learn that no matter what our station in life in this world is we are "somebody" in Christ. We will learn this in the life of Onesimus, the slave of Philemon.

LESSON PREVIEW: You will . . .

1. Learn that life's choices do not always turn out as we expect.
 2. Learn how to accept God's answers to life's circumstances.
 3. Understand that everyone sees, and seeks to solve, life's problems from their own point of view.
 4. Learn to seek God's point of view and not our own.
 5. Discover that we are all God's slaves. We belong to Him and not to ourselves.
 6. Learn that we must seek to please our master, (employer) not ourselves.
 7. Know that God will provide our every need.
 8. See this problem through the eyes of God, Paul, Philemon, Onesimus and the congregation at Colossae.
-

OVERVIEW:

As Paul interceded for Onesimus, he presented five strong appeals.

1. Appeal One: Philemon's reputation as **a man who brought blessing to others**. The word *wherefore* in Philemon 8 carries the meaning of "accordingly." Since Philemon was a "refreshing" believer, Paul wanted to give him an opportunity to refresh the apostle's heart! Philemon had been a great blessing to many saints,

and now he could be a blessing to one of his own slaves who had just been saved!

2. Appeal Two: He **appealed in Christian love** (Philemon 9), not on his apostolic authority. See how tactfully Paul reminded Philemon of his own personal situation: “*Paul the aged, and now also a prisoner of Jesus Christ*” (Philemon 9). Who could turn down the request of a suffering saint like Paul! He was perhaps sixty years old at this time, but that was a good age for men in that day.
3. Appeal Three: **The conversion of Onesimus** (Philemon 10), along with Philemon’s gracious character and Christian love. Onesimus was no longer “just a slave”; he was now Paul’s son in the faith and Philemon’s Christian brother! In Jesus Christ, there is “*neither bond nor free*” (Galatians 3:28). This does not mean that his conversion altered Onesimus’ legal position as a slave, or that it canceled his debt to the law or to his master. However, it did mean that Onesimus had a new standing **before God** and **before God’s people**, and Philemon had to take that into consideration.
4. Appeal four: That **Onesimus was valuable to Paul in his ministry in Rome** (Philemon 11-14). The name *Onesimus* means “profitable,” so there is a play on words in Philemon 11. (The name *Philemon* means “affectionate” or “one who is kind.” **If the slave was expected to live up to his name, then what about the master?**) Paul loved Onesimus and would have kept him in Rome as a fellow worker, but he did not want to tell Philemon what to do. Voluntary sacrifice and service, motivated by love, is what the Lord wants from His children.
5. Appeal five: He appeals based on **the providence of God** (Philemon 15-16). Paul was not dogmatic (“Perhaps”) as he made this telling point: as Christians, we must believe that God is in control of even the most difficult experiences of life. God permitted Onesimus to go to Rome that he might meet Paul and become a believer. Onesimus departed so he could come back. He was gone a short time that he and his master might be together forever. He left for Rome a slave, but he would return to Colossae a brother. How gracious God was to rule and overrule in these affairs!

INTRODUCTION AND OBSERVATIONS

A. God’s Providence at Work

1. **Onesimus** is in Rome.
 - a. Paul and Onesimus are brought together.
 - b. Onesimus becomes a valuable member of Paul’s ministry in Rome.
2. **Epaphras** comes to Rome from Colossae.

- a. Seeking answers perhaps to the false teachers addressed in the epistle to the Colossians.
- b. Epaphras will recognize Onesimus.
- c. Onesimus will be exposed as both a runaway slave and a thief.

B. Paul's Dilemma in Regard to Slavery

1. What about slavery?
 - a. Paul's difficulty is between Roman law and his friend and brother Philemon.
 - b. The gospel does not abolish slavery!
 - 1) Paul will not incite slaves to break the law and run away.
 - 2) Does Paul send Onesimus back to Philemon? Will Philemon demand that justice be observed?
 - 3) If Onesimus is sent back will Philemon observe Roman Law and punish Onesimus?
 - c. Paul must do what is right in God's sight.
 - 1) Paul will ask Onesimus and Philemon to do what is right.
 - 2) Onesimus must go back and ask his master's forgiveness. Epaphras must live according to the law. Celebrate spiritual freedom in every circumstance.
 - 3) Philemon must receive this runaway slave as a brother. Paul will address the master/slave relationship (Ephesians 6:5-9).
2. You are Christ's slave.
 - a. Onesimus is to render service to the Lord and not to men.
 - b. Serve God no matter what circumstance you live in.
3. Your freedom is in Christ.
 - a. You are no longer a non-person, a living machine.
 - b. You are free in Christ Jesus – no man can enslave you.
 - c. In Christ you are a person of great value and worth.
 - d. Whatever you do in life you do it as unto the Lord.
 - 1) Paul will write three epistles.
 - 2) All three will deal with this problem in an unexpected way.
 - a) Onesimus will go back in the company of Tychicus.
 - b) Letters to Ephesus, Colossae and Philemon.

C. Paul's Letter to Philemon

1. They arrive in Colossae and Philemon begins to read the letter.
2. Philemon 1-25.

D. The Testimony of Secular History

1. Tradition and Onesimus.
 - a. Upon receiving freedom Onesimus became a gospel preacher at Ephesus.

- b. Early church fathers – 2nd through 4th century.
- 2. Ignatius – About 50 years after the book of Philemon.
 - a. Refers to one of the Bishops at Ephesus.
 - b. Writes: *“You know of he who was useless and is now useful.”*
 - 1) Bishop Onesimus collected all of Paul’s letters.
 - 2) Beginning of the canon we call the New Testament. This would explain why we have the epistle of Philemon in the New Testament. It is the only personal letter of Paul to one person who was not an evangelist.

E. Your Value to God

- 1. As His holy people.
 - a. This letter was the beginning of the end of slavery.
 - b. Not just the physical slavery of others.
 - 1) Freedom from the inner slavery of self righteousness, legalism.
 - 2) Freedom from the bondage of low self esteem.
 - 3) Freedom to know and live your place in Christ (Matthew 6:25-33).
- 2. He provides every need.
 - a. We are more valuable than the other creation.
 - b. God purchased us with the blood of His Son (1 Peter 2:9).
 - 1) We are royalty, chosen, holy.
 - 2) We are God’s most treasured possessions.
 - 3) He will provide, sustain and enable us (Philippians 4:13, 19).

F. A Book of Many Messages

- 1. Through Philemon’s eyes.
 - a. The lesson is one of forgiveness.
 - 1) Onesimus the slave who stole and ran away is now back. Difficult decision for Paul to send Onesimus back. Very difficult for Onesimus to return.
 - 2) The most difficult decision in Philemon’s life. Being asked to forgive a run away slave. That did not happen in the first century Roman Empire.
 - b. To not punish Onesimus would be contrary to all Roman values.
 - 1) Civil law demanded that Onesimus be severely flogged.
 - 2) How will other slaves react? Think they can rebel and not be punished. Christian slave owners are an easy touch – no punishment.
- 2. Through the congregation’s eyes.
 - a. Every member of the congregation who owns a slave will be affected.
 - 1) Be leaning on Philemon to not act hastily.
 - 2) Putting every Christian slave owner up against the wall. What about the other slave owners? How will non-Christians react?

- 3) Love and forgiveness was not a part of their morality. Viewed Christians as having a character defect. What will they think if we love our slaves? How will we get them to study if you alienate them?
- b. Philemon is on the horns of a dilemma.
 - 1) Risk the wrath of the congregation and the citizenry.
 - 2) What will he do?

SELF EXAM FOR LESSON TEN:

1. What is Paul's Dilemma? _____

2. Does Christianity abolish slavery? If so how? _____

3. How do we have freedom in Christ? _____

4. What does Ingatius tell us about Onesimus? _____

5. Of what value are you to God? _____

6. List the five appeals Paul made to Philemon.
 - 1) _____
 - 2) _____
 - 3) _____
 - 4) _____
 - 5) _____

LESSON ELEVEN

USING GOD'S GIFTS

INTRODUCTION:

As we saw in our last lesson Philemon was faced with some awesome decisions. Here is one of the Bible's most graphic lessons on how brothers and sisters should always forgive one another. Paul is asking Philemon to completely forgive and restore Onesimus without any retribution whatsoever. This request will be difficult for Philemon for a number of reasons. Reasons that are made valid only by the standards of human reason and wisdom.

Paul tenderly convinced his friend Philemon that he should receive his disobedient slave and forgive him. But it would not be easy for Philemon to do this. If he was too easy on Onesimus, it might influence other slaves to "become Christians" and want to influence their masters. However, if he was too hard on the man, it might affect Philemon's testimony and ministry in Colossae.

At this point, Paul offered the perfect solution. It was a costly solution as far as the apostle was concerned, but he was willing to pay the price.

LESSON TEXT: Philemon 4-21; Romans 5:5; 1 Thessalonians 3:12.

LESSON AIM: To encourage Christians to take on the loving and forgiving nature of God.

LESSON PREVIEW: You will . . .

1. Examine Paul's logical and emotional appeal to Philemon for love and mercy.
 2. Learn the basis on which Paul makes this appeal.
 3. Study the example that God, Himself, has given to us.
-

PAUL, THE BURDENED PARTNER

A. Life's Difficult Choices

1. Roman law and God's grace.
 - a. The civil statute of Rome demanded Onesimus be branded and flogged.
 - 1) Set a precedent with many possible repercussions.
 - 2) Imprisoned by the Roman authorities.
 - b. Be set upon by his neighbors.

- 1) Encourage rebellion among slaves and disrupt the empire.
- 2) Bring irreparable reproach on the church.
2. Legalism or grace – a personal decision.
 - a. Paul neither tells Philemon what to do nor what not to do.
 - b. That would have solved Philemon's problem.
 - 1) I have no say in the matter. Paul said to do this.
 - 2) What can I do? My church says I have no other alternative.
3. Spiritual infancy or spiritual maturity.
 - a. Those are the rules and regulations – I must obey or be lost.
 - 1) What is the point of that? Legalism keeps you a spiritual infant forever. It leaves you with no choices to make, only rules to obey.
 - 2) That is the very battle Paul fought in the Book of Colossians. Same problem Paul faced in the congregation at Corinth (1 Corinthians 3:1-3).

B. How to Grow a Christian

1. Overcoming old habits.
 - a. Paul shows us how God grows Christians.
 - b. Legalism will keep you in spiritual infancy.
 - 1) God's grace sets you free to make your decisions in Christ.
 - 2) Philemon 1:21 NRSV, "*Confident of your obedience, I am writing to you, knowing that you will do even more than I say.*"
2. Making the impossible possible.
 - a. Philemon will have to make a momentous decision.
 - 1) He must take full responsibility for the decision.
 - 2) The cross makes difficult demands.
 - b. Luke 9:23; 1 Corinthians 15:31; John 15:5; Philippians 4:13.
3. Growing more in love.
 - a. I can go from "no" things to "all" things.
 - 1) It is Christ who makes the difference. The only way I can get the love of Christ that enables me to be what God wants me to be (Romans 5:5).
 - 2) I can do nothing without the all powerful love of Jesus in me. The love of God compels, impels and motivates beyond our natural ability (1 Thessalonians 3:12).
 - b. This is the kind of love Paul is calling forth from Philemon.
 - 1) Acts 2:38 calls to the seeking, knocking believer in Christ.
 - 2) When immersed something marvelous begins to happen.
 - a) It is stated in Romans 5:5.
 - b) Indwelling Holy Spirits fills us with God's love.
 - c) That love is already there — from the beginning.
4. Use what you already have.
 - a. Paul's assumption.
 - 1) The love is already there.
 - 2) We are using it to the fullest of our ability.
 - a) Increase comes with use.

- b) Use your God-given talents and God will increase them.
 - c) Matthew 25:14-29.
- b. Paul prays for an INCREASE (1 Thessalonians 3:12).
 - 1) The word in the Greek is *PLEONAZO* – “to increase, add to, to accumulate, to multiply.”
 - a) A term used by bankers to describe the interest that was paid on money.
 - b) The other word he uses is *OVERFLOW*. In the King James it is the word *ABOUND*.
 - (1) The Greek word *PERISSEUO*.
 - (2) “to exceed a fixed measure”.
 - (3) Paul wants their love to be *PERISSEUO* – to go beyond all fixed limits.
 - 2) Feeding of the 5,000 (John 6:1-13).
 - 3) Verse 13, the phrase, *LEFT OVER* is *PERISSEUO* – 12 baskets too much.
 - a) Prodigal son (Luke 15:11-17).
 - b) Verse 17, the phrase, *TO SPARE* is *PERISSEUO* – food to spare.
 - c) Describes God’s generous provision – plenty to spare.
 - 4) Curtis Harrison.
 - a) Missionary to New Guinea for 13 years.
 - b) Pigeon-English.
 - (1) “Bigpel tumas”–“Plenty too much.”
 - (2) God’s generosity is always “plenty to much.”
- c. Love and forgiveness (Matthew 18:15-22).
 - 1) How long and how much?
 - 2) Do I have a limit to how long and how much I reflect God’s love and forgiveness in my life?
 - a) 70 times 7 – as long as it is needed.
 - b) You go on forgiving.

C. A Habitual Way of Life

- 1. Going the extra mile.
 - a. Love and forgiveness becomes a habit of life – it is a way of life.
 - b. Love and forgiveness become second nature – divine nature in you.
- 2. Love’s demands.
 - a. You are to love like God loves.
 - b. You are to forgive like God forgives.
 - 1) Christ’s example (Matthew 23:34).
 - 2) Stephen’s example (Acts 7:54-60).
 - a) He did more than just pray.
 - b) He aggressively prayed through the crushing stones and terrible pain that they would be forgiven.

NOTE: That's love that goes beyond any definition you'll find in any human dictionary. That's the infinite agape love of God found in the finite container of a man. You can go the second mile and turn the other cheek. You can overflow, you can spill over the sides far beyond what anyone could ever ask, think or even believe.

- c. Paul expects that kind of demand on Philemon and the congregation.
 - 1) They all stand at the fork in the strait and narrow road.
 - a) They must choose one or the other.
 - b) A decision that was beyond what all others in society called normal.
 - 2) That's why Paul wrote what he did in Ephesians 4:30-32.
 - a) They are to love just as God in Christ has loved them. Without prejudice, without discrimination. God loved them when they didn't deserve it or merit it. They were loved freely with the agape love of God.
 - b) The same must apply to those at Colossae (Colossians 3:12-14).
Colossians 4:9. This act of love and forgiveness must be a united effort on the part of the entire congregation. You must act in the love of Jesus Christ.

D. Bruised Reeds and Smoking Flax

- 1. Isaiah's description of Messiah (Isaiah 42:3).
 - a. People bruised by life, He will not throw them away.
 - b. One who is a stench in the nostrils of the others, He does not throw away.
- 2. Onesimus is that bruised reed; that smoking flax.
 - a. Philemon must become to him, Christ in you.
 - b. To have been forgiven makes you a forgiver (Matthew 6:9-15).

E. God's Love Demonstrated

- 1. God is loving and forgiving (Luke 15:11-24).
 - a. That is how God is – that is His nature.
 - b. His love and forgiveness is "plenty too much."
- 2. Why Onesimus should not be branded, flogged or crucified.
 - a. Jesus paid the price.
 - b. All that justice ever demanded has been fulfilled in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

SELF EXAM FOR LESSON ELEVEN:

1. What did Roman Law require Philemon to do with Onesimus?

2. What is one way God grows Christian to maturity?

3. What is the most important attribute for Christian growth?

4. Explain God's generosity and how it applies to the Christian.

5. List two demands that love makes on the Christian.

1) _____

2) _____

LESSON TWELVE

GOD IS SOVEREIGN

INTRODUCTION:

This is our last lesson in Philemon and the concluding lesson of our entire study of the companion books of Colossians and Philemon. Let's begin in verse 15, here Paul continues to counsel Philemon as to how God's grace is providentially bestowed. Helping him understand that "God does indeed, work all things together for our good" (Romans 8:28). And in this way Paul leads Philemon into the heart of the Gospel and the very essence of God's being expressed in each Christian's life. God is love and love seeks the very best for the one who is loved. God loved Philemon and forgave Philemon's sin when he deserved neither God's love nor forgiveness. If he was to receive from God He also must love and forgive others. Read with me verses 15-16, *"For perhaps he was, for this reason, parted from you for a little while, that you might receive him back forever, no longer as a slave but more than a slave—a beloved brother, especially to me but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord."*

LESSON TEXT: Philemon 15-18; Psalm 23:2,5; 56:8

LESSON AIM: To discover and accept the sovereignty of God.

LESSON OBJECTIVES: You will . . .

1. Learn that God is sovereign. He rules, as He wills, in the world and lives of mankind.
 2. Become aware that God knows those who are His people and those who are becoming His people. He works all circumstances, good or bad, together for good for those who are called according to His purpose.
 3. See that God often answers prayers in unexpected ways.
 4. Hear Paul appealing to the agape love God has put into Philemon's heart.
 5. Learn God's unexpected answer to the hopes and prayers of Christians seeking God's blessing in their lives and the lives of others.
 6. Know that all freedom, physical, psychological and spiritual is found only in fellowship with God through Christ Jesus.
-

THE OVERRULING PROVIDENCE OF GOD

A. God Working in Man's Life

1. **God is sovereign.**
 - a. God works all things together to establish His rule in man's heart.

- 1) God works providentially to **draw men to Him**.
- 2) God works providentially to **grow those who come to Him**.
 - a) I accept, cheerfully and patiently, all circumstances.
 - b) Onesimus stole and ran away. Philemon must look to and trust God for a solution. God will turn this wrong into much good.
- b. Romans 8:28; James 1:13-14; I Corinthians 10:13.
2. **God shepherds His people.**
 - a. With God we are always safe.
 - b. He safely shepherds His sheep (Psalm 23:1-6).
 - c. He searches for and brings back those who go astray.
3. **God's redemptive process takes time.**
 - a. While fleeing King Saul, David ends up in a dungeon at Gath.
 - b. Psalm 56:8.
 - 1) The word BOTTLE in Hebrew is NOD.
 - 2) Late grapes of summer are the sweetest.
 - a) God turns our bitter tears into sweet wine.
 - b) God's redemptive process often takes time. God makes no wine before it's time. God sweetens no tears before their time.

B. The Reality of Life's Lessons

1. **A strange answer to a prayer.**
 - a. One of Philemon's slave has run away and the safe is empty.
 - 1) What you are, inwardly, determines how you react to the realities of life.
 - 2) Sometimes the realities of life are harsh.
 - a) How do you act when it hits you in the pocket book?
 - b) Philemon had treated Onesimus well. Prayed for and attempted to teach and convert him. Onesimus will never have another chance. "Why me, God? All is lost."
 - b. But God knew what was going to happen before Onesimus ran away.
 - 1) God was already intervening in answer to Philemon's prayers.
 - a) Onesimus' absence and the empty safe was part of the answer.
 - b) It's a mess – it appears as if the devil has won. But God will make it into a victory celebration. Prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32). Every pig snout was God nudging him closer to home.
2. **Hard lessons lead to salvation.**
 - a. Only God knows the human heart and its breaking point.
 - 1) Onesimus will never obey the gospel until he hits the bottom and only then will he reach the breaking point.
 - 2) For this reason, Paul says, "*He was parted from you for a little while.*"

NOTE: He left for Rome a slave, but he would return to Colossae a brother. How gracious God was to rule and overrule in these affairs!

Onesimus must learn the primary lesson of Christian life. We must be rid of our self-

sufficiency. “. . . *Without me you can do nothing. . .*” (John 15:5). There is a lighter side to the story (Philippians 4:13). That is the secret to victory in every endeavor of life.

God must strip us of our self-sufficiency. This is what must happen to Onesimus. Freedom is not found by stealing and running away. Freedom comes by emptying yourself of self and giving yourself to be the slave of God. Philemon looks at the empty safe with anger. But he was looking at the beginning of a world changing event.

- b. Freedom as Christ’s slave (Philemon 1). Paul is not a slave, a prisoner of Rome, he is a **prisoner in Rome** because he is the **slave of Christ**.
 - 1) Rome couldn’t hold Paul captive without permission from God.
 - 2) Authority is not in the hands of Rome.
 - 3) Paul had a God given opportunity to teach many people – including Onesimus.
- c. God’s partnership with man.
 - 1) God does nothing without humans being involved.
 - a) We work and God provides the proper result.
 - b) “*I will deliver my people.*”—but He sent Moses.
 - 2) “*I have come that you may have salvation.*” – But He sent the church – and God is still doing that today.
 - a) Romans 8:28.
 - b) This does not mean we’re in the bleachers watching God do good.

C. We Are God’s Messengers of Love

- 1. When I go, people don’t see old worldly Bob Martin, they don’t see what I used to be. They see what Jesus has made of me.
 - a. In me they see Him and respond to His offer of salvation.
 - b. That is what Paul has become to Onesimus.
- 2. Onesimus must now go back and make some mature decisions.
 - a. He is not alone. When he goes, he goes in God’s love, with a letter from Paul (Philemon 18).

NOTE: Paul volunteered to become a “business partner” with Philemon and help him solve the problem with Onesimus. He made two suggestions: “*Receive him as myself,*” and “*Put whatever he stole from you on my account.*”

This is an illustration of what Jesus Christ has done for us as believers. God’s people are so identified with Jesus Christ that God receives them as He receives His Son!

The word *receive* in verse 17 means “to receive into one’s family circle.” Imagine a slave entering his master’s family. But imagine a guilty sinner entering *God’s* family!

- b. Paul accepted responsibility for his new son in the faith. Roman law made a father responsible for a son’s debts. How will Philemon receive

Onesimus and Paul's letter? True test of love taken to the utmost degree. Test of Christian love, compassion and forgiveness.

3. Paul closed the letter with his usual personal requests and greetings (Philemon 22). He fully expected to be released and to visit Philemon and Apphia in Colossae. Even this fact would encourage Philemon to follow Paul's instructions, for he certainly would not want to be ashamed when he met the apostle face-to-face.
 - a. That is Paul carrying out his responsibility and love to the fullest degree.
 - b. I will make full restitution, according to Roman law, if you so wish. That's what you call putting it on the line.
 - c. What's the point of it all? Each of us has an Onesimus in our own life.
 - 1) You may be your own Onesimus. You will not find your freedom by fleeing to Rome.
 - 2) Maybe your Onesimus is the one you have to forgive. Right now he may be waiting on your door step. Placed in your life so you might be the extension of God to lead him to salvation.
 - 3) You will probably have an Onesimus in your life more than once.

SELF EXAM FOR LESSON TWELVE:

1. List three ways that God rules in people's lives.

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

2. Does God answer prayers the way we want them answered?

Explain _____

3. How does God work in the world to save people? _____

4. In what ways can you have an Onesimus in your life? _____

Study Guide

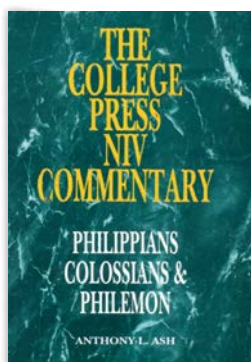
Bob Martin



Bob Martin graduated from the Sunset School of Preaching in January, 1969. He received a double major Bachelor of Science degree in Bible and in Video Production from Eastern New Mexico University. He has preached full time for congregations in Missouri, Montana, New Mexico, and Texas. He has taught special seminars on “The Blood Covenant” and “The Book of Joel.”

In 1989 Bob built and began operating the video department at Sunset International Bible Institute. Bob’s wife Bess assisted in operating the studio cameras and in other areas of the studio operations. Bob taught Bible classes for the Sunset congregation as well as the Sunset International Bible Institute Video Series course on “Colossians and Philemon.” He is now the preacher for one of the churches of Christ in Spur, Texas.

In 1955 Bob married his high school sweetheart Bessie Hill of Portales, New Mexico. She was responsible for him becoming a Christian in 1962. They have three sons, two daughters, and numerous grandchildren and great-grandchildren.



➡ The College Press *NIV Commentary on Philipians, Colossians, and Philemon* is a companion book to this study.

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