

# Journey Through the Bible: A Year of Our Lord

## Session 47: The Pauline Church Epistles

Remember Acts 17:11

### The New Testament:

Historical Accounts	(5)
<u>Interpretive Letters</u>	<u>(21)</u>
<u>Pauline Epistles</u>	<u>14*</u>
Hebrew Christian Epistles	7
Prophecy (Apocalypse)	1

### The Goal of the Letters (2 Tim. 3:16-17):

Doctrine: Teaching “How shall we believe?”  
Reproof: Admonition “How shall we behave?”  
Correction: Apologetics “How shall we respond?”

### The Pauline (Church) Epistles:

Romans	Doctrine	Soteriology (Salvation)
1 <sup>st</sup> & 2 <sup>nd</sup> Corinthians	Reproof	
Galatians	Correction	
Ephesians*	Doctrine	Ecclesiology (Church)
Philippians*	Reproof	
Colossians*	Correction	
1 <sup>st</sup> & 2 <sup>nd</sup> Thessalonians	Doctrine	Eschatology (End)

(\*Prison Epistles, also includes Philemon)

### Letters to the Corinthians:

- Paul Finds the Congregation in Corinth (Ref. Acts 18)
- Paul Wrote a Letter No Longer in Circulation
- The Family of Chloe Bring Him News of Divisions
  - o Church Wrote a Letter to Paul Asking for Help (1Cor. 7:1)
  - o Paul Responds with an Instructional Letter (Canonized as I Corinthians)
- Paul Visits Corinth & Defends His Ministry (“Painful Visit”)
  - o Writes the “Severe Letter” In Response (Lost)
  - o Per Titus: Had a Great Impact
  - o Paul Follows with II Corinthians (May Include Quotations from 3<sup>rd</sup> Letter)



Themes of the Corinthian Letters (Cont.):

- Definition of the Gospel (15:1-4)
  - o Death, Burial, & Resurrection of Christ
- A Description of the Resurrection (15:51-53)
- Paul's Account of His Ministry (1-5)
  - o Underlying Motives (1-2)
  - o Foundational Message (3-5)
- Instructions for Maturing Believers
  - o Instruction on Spiritual Matters
  - o Instruction on Material Circumstances
- Paul Responds to Detractors
  - o Addresses Critics and their Assertions
  - o Declaration of Apostolic Credentials

Letter to the Galatian Churches:

- Open Letter to the Churches of Galatia (Region of Asia Minor: Ref. Acts 13-14)
- Written as a Refutation of the Judaizes in These Predominately Gentile Churches
- Christ Through Faith vs. Christ Through Torah
- Thesis Statement (3:3)
- Comparisons:
  - o Romans: Be Grounded in Doctrine
  - o Corinthians: Be Guided in Living Together
  - o Galatians: Be Guarded Against False Teaching "Another gospel..." (1:6-9)

Outline:

Restatement & Clarification of the Gospel	Chs. 1-2
The Multi-Ethnic Church	3-4
The Transforming Power of the Holy Spirit	5-6

Themes of Galatians:

Human Based Corruptions & Compromises

- Faith vs. Works
- Grace vs. Law
- Spirit vs. Flesh
- Church vs. State
- Christianity vs. Paganism
- Christ vs. Antichrist

The Letter to the Ephesians:

- First of the Prison Epistles
- Visited by Paul in Acts 19
- Roman Capitol for Asia Minor (Influential Port City)
  - o Important Hellenistic Worship Center (Diana)

Outline:

The Climax of History is Christ                      Chs. 1-3  
Christ Living Through Us                                      4-6

Themes in Ephesians:

The Church is a Multi-Ethnic People Chosen to Become Holy

- Adopted as Coheirs with & in Christ
- Redeemed (Ransomed) from Sin & Death
- By Grace Moved from Spiritual Death to Life
- Sealed with the Spirit as a Foretaste (Down Payment)

**THEREFORE**

- You are One Body in One Spirit... (United)
  - o Unity is Not the Same as Uniformity
- Different People/Different Ministries/Different Gifts
- Remove the Trappings of the Old Life (4:17-6:9)

<b>Old</b>	<b>New</b>
Lies	Truth
Anger	Peace
Theft	Generosity
Gossip	Encouragement
Vengeance	Forgiveness
Promiscuous	Self-Controlled
Drunkenness	Spirit-Filled
Self-Centered	Christ-Centered
Power-Focused	Mutual-Submission

- Protect Your (Church's) Testimony (6:10-24)
  - o Spiritual Warfare is Real
    - "Put on the full armor of God..."
    - Gospel, Truth, Word of God, Righteousness, Salvation, Faith

Letter to the Philippians:

- Philippi: Known for Patriotism (Acts 16)
  - o Church Under Roman Persecution
- Prison Epistle (Conversation with Epaphroditus)
  - o Response to Philippi's Gift of Relief for Paul
  - o Book Written as an Acrostic Testimony
  - o Series of Meditations Based on a Psalm (Ch. 2)

Outline:

Greeting & Prayer of Thanksgiving	1:1-11
Paul's Prison Testimony	1:12-26
Allowing Christ to Live Through Us	1:27-2:18
<b>Messianic Psalm of Praise</b>	2:5-11
Present Examples of Faithfulness	2:19-30
Paul's Reflections as a Converted Pharisee	3:1-4:1
Paul's Charge to Resist Fear & Remain Faithful	4:2-9
Gratitude & Closing Reflections	4:10-23

Themes from Philippians:

Kenosis: "To empty or be emptied."

- Thesis (2:5-8)
- Examples: Paul, Timothy, & Epaphras
- Denial of Self to Become Mature in Christ
  - o Paul's Personal Experiences of Becoming the "Least" so that He May Become as the "Desired One"

Letter to Colossians:

- Prison Epistle
- Church started by Epaphras (1:7-8)
  - o Reports of this Congregation Facing Extreme Social Pressures to Return to Paganism
- Response to the Encroaching Philosophies of Gnosticism (Knowledge - The Hidden Truth) & the Judaizes
  - o Denial of the Material in Favor of the Spiritual
  - o Egyptian & Greek Philosophical Outlook
  - o Esoteric Teachings & Ceremonies
    - Truth by Sequential Initiation

Outline:

Greeting & Praise to Christ	1:1-23
Purpose in Suffering	1:24-2:5
The Pressure to Recant	2:6-23
Strength in the Resurrection	3-4

Themes in Colossians:

- Psalm on the True Nature of the Messiah (1:15-20)
- Christ (God Incarnate) Fully Human & Fully Divine
  - o One in Perfect Union with God
  - o Preeminent (Singular focus of Devotion)
  - o No Syncretism, No Legalism, Christ Alone

Themes in Colossians(Cont.):

- Christian Hope: Creation will be Purified (Made New) & United with the Supernatural (Kingdom of Heaven)
  - o A Foretaste of Redemption is Already Present in the Believer (1:27)
  - o The Work of Redemption is Completed in Christ
  - o All Are Welcome to Salvation
- Practical Instruction for a Christian Household (3:18-4:1)
  - o Contrast with Roman Household
  - o Jesus is Lord in the Home
    - Mutual Submission
    - All Are Honored & Loved (Including Slaves)
- Prelude to Philemon (4:2-18)
  - o Onesimus (Slave)/Philemon (Master)
    - Escaped Slave
    - “Greet as a *beloved* brother in the Lord” (4:9)

Letters to the Thessalonians:

- I Thessalonians is Potentially Paul’s Earliest Epistle (Acts 17)
  - o Christians Accused of Treason
  - o Report from Timothy: Church Flourishing Despite Persecution
- II Thessalonians Paul Responds to
  - o Increased Persecution
  - o Confusion About the 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming of Jesus

Outline:

I Thessalonians:

The Faithfulness of the Thessalonian Church	Chs.	1-3
Charge to Grow & Mature		4-5

II Thessalonians:

Hope in the Midst of Persecution	1
The Day of the Lord	2
Do Not Grow Idle, Disruptive, or Weary	3

Themes in Thessalonians:

- The Difference Regeneration Provides
- The Present Suffering is a Means of Participating in Christ
  - o Great Success = Great Resistance
- Reliance on God’s Strength & Fortitude
- Commitment to God’s Ethics & Righteousness
  - o Showcase the Difference Agape Makes
- Death Does Not Separate the Believer from God’s Love
- The Hope We Have in Christ Should Compel Holiness
  - o Waiting + Watching + Working
  - o Those Who Separate Themselves from Christ Now will be Separated from God on the Day
- A Rebellious Ruler in the Mold of the Evil Kings of the Past will Rise... & Fall (Do Not Fear)
- Work Diligently & Lead a Balanced Life
  - o Providing for Self & Family Without Compromising Beliefs
  - o Provide for the Church & the Less Fortunate

For Discussion:

Share Your Notes and Highlights with Your Groups.

Consider:

How does the experience of the early church echo in us today?  
How expectantly are we waiting for Christ’s return?

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