

The Books of Philippians and Colossians

Outline of Lessons Compiled by

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Based on *Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonians*, by William Barclay

LESSON ONE

The Purpose of Paul's Letters

- 1) With a few exceptions, all of Paul's letters were written to meet an immediate situation and not treatises which he sat down to write.
 - a) There were threatening situations in Corinth, Galatia, Philippi, or Thessalonica.
 - b) He wrote a letter to meet these needs.
- 2) Paul did not have us in mind when he wrote these letters.

Introduction

- 1) There are practically no critical problems involved in the church at Philippi.
- 2) Philippi had at least three great claims to distinction.
 - a) There were gold and silver mines as far back as the time of the Phoenicians.
 - i) They made Philippi a great commercial center of the ancient world.
 - b) The city had been founded by Philip in 368 B.C., who was the father of Alexander the Great.
 - i) There was no better strategic location in all of Europe.
 - ii) A range of mountains required anyone who wished to pass through the Europe to go through a narrow pass.
 - iii) It was here that Antony defeated Brutus and Cassius, which decided the future of the Roman Empire.
 - c) Not long afterwards, Philipp attained the dignity of a Roman Colony.
 - i) Colonies had begun by having a military significance.
 - ii) These colonies were the focal points of the great Roman road systems which allowed the far-flung empire to be governed.
 - iii) These colonies were little fragments of Rome, and their pride in their Roman citizenship was their dominating characteristic.
 - iv) The Roman language, dress, and customs were copied.
 - v) The Roman settlers would never dream of being assimilated into the people amongst whom they were sent.
- 3) Paul writes to the church at Philippi that they were a colony of heaven.
- 4) Paul and Philippi.
 - a) Paul first came to Philippi about 52 A.D. on his second missionary journey.
 - b) The story of Paul's stay in Philippi is told in Acts 16.
 - c) This story centered around three people.
 - i) Lydia, the seller of purple.
 - ii) The demented slave-girl used by her masters to tell fortunes.
 - iii) The Roman gaoler.
 - d) These three people were of different nationalities.
 - i) Lydia was an Asiatic.
 - ii) The slave-girl was a native Greek.
 - iii) The gaoler was a Roman citizen.
 - e) They came from very different grades of society.

- i) Lydia was a dealer in purple, one of the most costly substances in the ancient.
 - ii) The girl was a slave, and in the eyes of the law, she was not a person at all, but a living tool.
 - iii) The gaoler was a Roman citizen, member of the sturdy Roman middle-class from which the civil service was drawn.
- 5) Persecution.
 - a) Paul had to leave Philippi after a storm of persecution and an illegal imprisonment.
 - b) That persecution was inherited by the Philippian Church.
 - i) Paul tells them that they have shared in his bonds and in his defense of the gospel.
 - ii) He bids them not to fear their adversaries for they were going through what he himself has gone through and is now enduring.
- 6) True friendship.
 - a) There was a bond of friendship closer than that which existed between Paul and any other Church.
 - b) It was from the Philippians alone that he agreed to accept a gift.
 - i) After he moved on to Thessalonica, they sent him a present.
 - ii) When he arrived at Corinth, they alone remembered him with their gifts.
- 7) The occasion of the writing of the letter (Paul was in prison in Rome).
 - a) It is a letter of thanks.
 - b) It has to do with Epaphroditus.
 - i) Epaphroditus was sent to aid Paul.
 - ii) He became sick and had to return home.
 - iii) "Receive him with all joy, and honor such men, for he nearly died for the work of Christ."
 - c) It is a letter of encouragement to the Philippians in the trials which they are going through.
 - d) It is an appeal for unity.
 - i) From there came the account of Jesus' selfless humility (2:1-11).
 - ii) There were false teachers who were seeking to lure the Philippians from the true path (3:2).
 - iii) This letter is an appeal to maintain the unity of the Church.
- 8) The problem.
 - a) Up until 3:1, everything is serene and seemingly was being brought to a gentle close.
 - i) 3:2, a stern warning comes, "Beware of dogs; beware of evil workers; beware of the concision."
 - ii) After having said, "Finally my brethren...rejoice in the Lord," Paul starts all over again.
 - b) Could have been two different letters, with the second one being brought back by Epaphroditis.
 - c) Explanation.
 - i) The sudden break could be because fresh news may have come of trouble at Philippi.
 - ii) Philippians is a personal letter and a personal letter is never logically ordered like a treatise.
- 9) The lovely letter.
 - a) Philippians is the loveliest letter Paul ever wrote.
 - b) It has been called by two titles.

- i) *The Epistle of Excellent Things.*
- ii) *The epistle of Joy.*
- c) Again and again the words joy and rejoice recur.

Philippians 1:1 - 2 (NKJV) 1Paul and Timothy, bondservants of Jesus Christ, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the bishops and deacons: 2Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

- 1) This is characteristically a letter from a friend to his friends.
 - a) Paul usually begins every letter with a statement of his apostleship.
 - b) To the Philippians, Paul writes, not as an apostle to members of his Church, but as a friend to his friends.
- 2) Paul lays claim to be the servant (literally a slave) of Jesus Christ.
 - a) He lays it down that he is the absolute possession of Christ.
 - b) He lays it down that he owes an absolute obedience to Christ.
 - i) The slave has no will of his own.
 - ii) His master's will must be his will.
 - c) The highest of all titles is *servant of God*.
- 3) This letter is addressed to all the saints in Christ Jesus.
 - a) Not piety, but being different from other things—set apart.
 - b) The priesthood was to be holy to their God.
 - i) They were to be different from other men; they were set apart for a special function.
 - ii) The tithe is holy; different from other things.
 - c) The central part of the temple was the Holy Place; a place that is different from all other places.
 - d) The Jews were to be a holy nation.
 - i) God had severed them from other nations that they might be his.
 - ii) The Jews were different because they had a special place in the purpose of God.
 - e) Today, the Christians, the Church, is a holy people—they are different from other people.
 - i) They are different because they are consecrated to God.
 - ii) They are different because they have a special relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ.
- 4) Paul greets his friends with “grace and peace be to you.”
 - a) *Grace* (charis) is the greeting with which Greek letters always began and ended.
 - i) *Charis* is a lovely word; the basic ideas in it are joy and pleasure, brightness and beauty.
 - ii) Connected with the English word *charm*.
 - b) *Peace* (eirene) was the greeting with which Jews greeting each other.
 - i) It never means the absence of trouble.
 - ii) It means total well-being, everything that makes for a man's highest good.
 - (1) Peace always has to do with man's relationship to himself, to his fellow-men, and to God.
 - (2) It is always the peace that is born of reconciliation.

The Marks of the Christian Life

The whole point of the letter is I do rejoice; do you rejoice.”

Philippians 1:3 - 11 (NKJV) 3I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, 4always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy, 5for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now, 6being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ; 7just as it is right for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart, inasmuch as both in my chains and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers with me of grace. 8For God is my witness, how greatly I long for you all with the affection of Jesus Christ. 9And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment, 10that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ, 11being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

1) The Christian Joy.

a) There is the joy of Christian prayer.

i) Using the hand as a scheme for prayer.

ii) A scheme used by a nurse to teach a man to pray that transformed his life.

(1) Each finger stood for someone.

(a) The thumb is nearest, so you are reminded to pray for those who were closest to you.

(b) The second finger was used for pointing and it stood for all the teachers in school and in the hospital.

(c) The third finger was the tallest and it stood for the V.I.P.s, the leaders in every sphere of life.

(d) The fourth finger was the weakest, and it stood for those who were in trouble and in pain.

(e) The little finger was the smallest and the least important and to the person it stood for.

b) There is the joy that Jesus Christ is preached (1:18).

c) There is the joy of faith (1:25).

d) There is the joy of seeing Christians in fellowship together (2:2).

i) Psalm 133:1. "Behold how good a thing it is, and how becoming well, together such as brethren are in unity to dwell."

ii) There is peace for no one where there are broken human relationships and strife between man and man.

e) There is the joy of suffering for Christ (2:17).

f) There is the joy of news of the loved one (2:28).

g) There is the joy of Christian hospitality (2:29).

i) The open door is the door of Christian welcome and Christian love.

ii) The closed door is the door of selfishness.

h) There is the joy of the man in Christ (3:1; 4:1).

i) There is the joy of the man who has won one soul for Christ (4:1).

j) There is the joy in a gift (4:10).

2) The Christian sacrifice (Philippians 1:3-11).

a) Paul is seeing the life of every Christian as a sacrifice ready to be offered to Jesus Christ.

b) It is the same picture when he urges the Romans to present their bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God (Romans 12:1).

- c) The only gift Jesus desires from us is ourselves.
- 3) The Christian partnership.
 - a) Christians are partners in grace.
 - b) Christians are partners in the work of the gospel.
 - i) Paul uses two words to express the work of Christians for the sake of the gospel.
 - (1) He speaks of the defense of the gospel.
 - (a) The defense of the gospel from the attacks which come from outside.
 - (b) The Christian has to be ready to be a defender of the faith and to give a reason for the hope that is in him.
 - (2) He speaks of the confirmation of the gospel.
 - (a) The building up of its strength from within, the edifying of Christians.
 - (b) Building up the faith and devotion of friends.
 - c) Christians are partners in suffering for the gospel.
 - d) Christians are partners with Christ.
 - i) “The believer has no yearnings apart from his Lord; his pulse beats with the pulse of Christ; his heart throbs with the heart of Christ.” (J. B. Lightfoot).
 - ii) When we are really one with Jesus, his love goes out through us to our fellow-men whom he loves and for whom he died.
 - iii) Christians are partners in the love of Christ.
- 4) The Christian progress and the Christian goal.
 - a) Paul’s prayer was for his people’s love to grow greater every day (vv. 9-10).
 - i) That love was to grow in knowledge and in sensitive perception so that they would be more and more able to distinguish between right and wrong.
 - ii) Love is always the way to knowledge.
 - iii) Love is always sensitive to the mind and the heart of the one it loves.
 - (1) If we really love Jesus, we will be sensitive to his will and his desires.
 - (2) The more we love him; the more we will instinctively shrink from what is evil and desire what is right.
 - b) Real love is not blind; it will enable us always to see the difference between the false and the true.
 - c) The Christian aim is to live such a life that the glory and the praise are given to God.

LESSON TWO

The Bonds Destroy the Barriers

Philippians 1:12 - 14 (NKJV) 12But I want you to know, brethren, that the things which happened to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel, 13so that it has become evident to the whole palace guard, and to all the rest, that my chains are in Christ; 14and most of the brethren in the Lord, having become confident by my chains, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.

- 1) Paul's imprisonment did not end his missionary activity; it actually expanded it for himself and for others.
 - a) Paul was allowed to live by himself under the care of a soldier who was his guard (Acts 28:16).
 - b) Paul said his bonds were manifest in all the palace.
- 2) Paul repeatedly refers to himself as a prisoner or as being in bonds.
 - a) He tells the Roman Christians that, although he had done no wrong, he was delivered a prisoner into the hands of the Romans (Acts 28:17).
 - b) In Philippians 1:7, 13, he repeatedly speaks of his imprisonment.
 - c) In Colossians he speaks of being in bonds for the sake of Christ, and bids the Colossians to remember his bonds (Co. 4:3, 18).
 - d) In Philemon he calls himself a prisoner of Jesus Christ, and speaks of the bonds of the gospel (Philemon 9, 13).
 - e) In Ephesians he again calls himself the prisoner for Jesus Christ (Ephesians 3:1).
- 3) Paul's imprisonment had opened the way for preaching the gospel to the finest regiment in the Roman army.
 - a) His imprisonment had actually been for the furtherance of the gospel.
 - b) Many of the guards were touched for Christ, and this gave fresh courage to preach the gospel and to witness for Christ.
- 4) Some in preaching of Christ are actuated by envy and strife; some by goodwill (Philippians 1:15-18).
 - a) The one preach from love, because they know that I am lying here for the defense of the gospel
 - i) The other proclaims Christ for their own partisan purposes, not with pure motives, but thinking to make my bonds gall me all the more.
 - ii) Either way, Christ is preached.
 - b) Paul knew nothing of personal jealousy or of personal resentment.
 - i) As long as Christ was preached, he didn't care who got the credit.
 - ii) Oftentimes we can think a man can do no good because he does not do things in our way.

The Happy Ending

Philippians 1:19 - 20 (NKJV) 19For I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, 20according to my earnest expectation

and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death.

- 1) Paul was convinced that the situation in which he finds himself will result in his salvation (*soteria*).
 - a) It may mean safety (though Paul says that he's not sure whether he will live or die).
 - b) It may mean his salvation in heaven.
 - c) It can mean *health, general well-being*.
 - i) All that is happening to Paul in this very difficult situation is the best thing for him both in time and in eternity.
 - ii) Paul knows that he has two great supports.
 - (1) The support of the prayers of his friends.
 - (a) To the Thessalonians: "Brethren, pray for us."
 - (b) To the Corinthians: "You must help us by prayer (2 Cor. 1:11).
 - (c) He asks the Church at Rome for their prayers (Romans 15:30-32).
 - (d) When people are in sorrow, one of their greatest comforts is the awareness that others are bearing them to the throne of grace.
 - (2) The support of the Holy Spirit.
 - (a) Paul's hope is that he will never be shamed into silence, either by cowardice or a feeling of ineffectiveness.
 - (b) Paul believed that in Christ he would find courage never to be ashamed of the gospel.
 - (c) Once we have chosen Christ, by our life and conduct we bring either glory or shame to him.
- 2) In life and in death (Philippians 1:21-26)

Philippians 1:21 - 26 (NKJV) 21For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. 22But if I live on in the flesh, this will mean fruit from my labor; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell. 23For I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. 24Nevertheless to remain in the flesh is more needful for you. 25And being confident of this, I know that I shall remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy of faith, 26that your rejoicing for me may be more abundant in Jesus Christ by my coming to you again.

- a) To Paul, it didn't matter whether he lived or died.
 - i) Living "is Christ to me."
 - (1) Christ had been the beginning of life.
 - (2) Christ had been the continuing of life.
 - (3) Christ was the end of life, for it was towards his eternal presence that life ever led.
 - ii) For Paul, "death is gain."
 - (1) Death was entrance into Christ's nearer presence.
 - (2) Paul saw death as immediate entry into the presence of his Lord.
 - (3) If we believe in Jesus Christ, death for us is *union* and *reunion*.
- b) Paul was caught between two desires.
 - i) For himself, he desired to depart and to be with Christ.

- ii) For the sake of his friends and of what he could do with them and for them he desired to be left in this life.
- c) Paul concludes that the choice is not his but God's.

Citizens of the Kingdom

Philippians 1:27 - 30 (NKJV) 27Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel, 28and not in any way terrified by your adversaries, which is to them a proof of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that from God. 29For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake, 30having the same conflict which you saw in me and now hear is in me.

- 1) No matter what happens either to them or to Paul the Philippians must live worthily of their faith and profession.
 - a) "Let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ."
 - b) Today, conversation means "talk," but the Latin root suggests that it means to *conduct oneself*.
 - i) In the seventeenth century, a person's *conversation* was not only his way of speaking to other people; it was his whole behavior.
 - ii) "Let your behavior be worthy of those who are pledged to Christ."
- 2) The Philippians were to be citizens worthy of the kingdom of God.
 - a) He is saying, "You and I know full well the privileges and the responsibilities of being a Roman citizen.
 - i) Though many miles from Rome, you must still live and act as a Roman does.
 - ii) You have an even higher duty than that.
 - b) Wherever you are you must live as befits a citizen of the Kingdom of God.
- 3) Paul expects the Philippians to stand fast.
 - a) Stand fast, unashamed in any company.
 - b) He expects *unity*; they are to be bound together in one spirit like a band of brothers.
- 4) The Christian must never abandon hope or give up the struggle.

The Causes of Disunity

Philippians 2:1 - 4 (NKJV) 1Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, 2fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. 3Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. 4Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.

- 1) The one danger which threatened the Philippian church was that of disunity.
 - a) It is when people are really in earnest and their beliefs really matter to them, that they are apt to get up against each other.
 - b) The greater their enthusiasm, the greater the danger that they may collide.
- 2) In verses 3 and 4, Paul gives us the three great causes of disunity.
 - a) There is *selfish ambition*.

- i) The danger that people should work not to advance the work but to advance themselves.
- ii) Far from being filled with ambition, the great men were filled with a sense of their own inadequacy for high office.
- b) There is the desire for *personal prestige*.
 - i) For some, prestige is an even greater temptation than wealth.
 - (1) To be admired and respected, to have a platform seat, to have one's opinion sought, to be known by name and appearance, even to be flattered, are for many people most desirable things.
 - (2) The aim of the Christian ought to be not self-display, but self-obliteration.
 - ii) The Christian should do good deeds, not that men may glorify him, but that they may glorify his Father in heaven. The Christian's desire should be to focus men's eyes not upon himself but on God.
- c) There is *concentration on self*.
 - i) If a man is forever concerned foremost with his own interests, he is bound to collide with others.
 - (1) Life is a competition whose prizes he must win.
 - (2) He will always think of other human beings as enemies or at least as opponents who must be pushed out of the way.
 - ii) Concentration on self inevitably means elimination of others.
- 3) The cure of disunity.
 - a) The fact that we are all in Christ should keep us in unity.
 - b) The power of Christian love should keep us in unity.
 - i) Christian love is that unconquered good-will which never knows bitterness and never seeks anything but the good of others.
 - ii) It is not a mere reaction of the heart, as human love is; it is a victory of the will, achieved by the help of Jesus Christ.
 - c) The fact that they share in the Holy Spirit should keep Christians from disunity.
 - i) The Holy Spirit binds man to God and man to man.
 - ii) It is the Spirit who enables us to live that life of love, which is the life of God.
 - d) The existence of human compassion should keep men from disunity.
 - e) Paul's last appeal is the personal one.
 - i) There can be no happiness for him so long as he knows that there is disunity in the Church which is dear to him.
 - ii) If they would complete his joy, let them complete their fellowship.

LESSON THREE

The Godhead and True Manhood

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

- 1) Paul is pleading with the Philippians to live in harmony, to lay aside their discords, to shed their personal ambitions and their pride and their desire for prominence and prestige, and to have in their hearts that humble, selfless desire to serve, which was the essence of the life of Christ.
- 2) Being in the form of God.
 - a) Being describes that which a man is in his very essence and which cannot be changed.
 - b) Two Greek words for *form*, *morphe* and *schema*.
 - i) *Morphe* is the essential form which never alters.
 - ii) *Schema* is the outward form which changes from time to time and from circumstance to circumstance.
 - iii) The *morphe* of any human being is humanity and this never changes.
 - c) Paul uses for Jesus being in the *form* of God is *morphe*, that is to say, his unchangeable being is divine.
 - d) However, his outward *schema* might alter, he remained in essence divine.
- 3) V. 7: He emptied himself; he made himself of no reputation.
 - a) Jesus gave up the glory of divinity in order to become man.
 - b) He emptied himself of his deity to take upon himself his humanity.
 - i) When Jesus became man, it was reality.
 - ii) The manhood of Jesus was not permanent; it was utterly real, but it passed.
- 4) Paul's aim was to persuade the Philippians to live a life in which disunity, discord, and personal ambition had no place.
 - a) The great characteristics of Jesus' life were humility, obedience, and self-renunciation.
 - i) He did not desire to dominate men but only to serve them.
 - ii) He did not desire his own way but only God's way.
 - b) If humility, obedience, and self-renunciation were the supreme characteristics of the life of Jesus, they must also be the hall marks of the Christian.
- 5) In the end, every knee (all living creatures in the universe, in heaven, in earth, and even in hell, would worship him).
 - a) This worship does not come from compulsion, but of love.
 - b) When men worship Jesus Christ, they fall at his feet in wondering love.
 - i) Men's hearts are melted and their resistance is broken down.
 - ii) Love so amazing, so divine, demands my life, my soul, my all.

- iii) Worship is founded, not on fear, but on love.
- 6) Jesus is given a new name.
 - a) His new name is *Lord*.
 - b) When Jesus is called *Lord*, it means that he is the Master and the Owner of all life.
 - i) He is the King of kings.
 - ii) He is the Lord of all lords.
- 7) Jesus Christ is Lord were the four words which were the first creed that the Christian Church ever had.
 - a) When men call Jesus Lord, they will do so to the glory of God the Father.
 - b) Jesus draws men to himself that he may draw them to God.
 - i) There were those in Philippi whose aim was to gratify a selfish ambition.
 - ii) The aim of Jesus was to serve others.

Co-Operation in Salvation

Philippians 2:12 - 18 (NKJV) 12Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; 13for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure. 14Do all things without complaining and disputing, 15that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, 16holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain. 17Yes, and if I am being poured out as a drink offering on the sacrifice and service of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. 18For the same reason you also be glad and rejoice with me.

- 1) “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for God’s at work in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.
 - a) *Work out* always has the idea of bringing to completion.
 - b) Don’t stop halfway; go on until the work of salvation is fully wrought out in you.
- 2) Salvation is of God.
 - a) It is God that works in us the desire to be saved.
 - i) The desire for the salvation of God is not kindled by any human emotion but by God himself.
 - ii) The beginning of the process of salvation is awakened by God.
 - b) The continuance of that process is dependent on God.
 - c) The end of the process of salvation is with God; the work of salvation is begun, continued and ended in God.
- 3) There is another side to this: salvation is of man.
 - a) Work out your own salvation means that without man’s cooperation, even God is helpless.
 - i) The offer of God is there; without it there can be no such thing as salvation.
 - ii) But no man can ever receive salvation unless he answers God’s appeal and takes what he offers.
 - b) There can be no salvation without God, but what God offers man must take.
- 4) Paul sets down five signs of salvation.
 - a) There is the sign of *effective action*.

- i) Day by day our salvation must be more fully accomplished.
 - ii) The truly Christian life must be a continual progress, for it is a journey towards God.
 - b) There is the sign of *fear and trembling*.
 - i) This is not the fear and trembling at the prospect of punishment, but that which drives us to seek God with the certainty that without his help we cannot effectively face life.
 - ii) It comes from a horror of grieving God.
 - c) There is the sign of *serenity and certainty*.
 - i) Doing all things without *murmurings and questionings*.
 - ii) *Murmurings and questionings* describes the discontent muttering of a mob who distrust their leaders and are on the verge of an uprising.
 - d) There is a sign of *purity*.
 - i) We are to be *blameless* and *innocent* and without *blemish*.
 - ii) The word translated *blameless* expresses what the Christian is to the world.
 - (1) The word translated *innocent* expresses what the Christian is in himself.
 - (2) Christian purity must issue in a complete sincerity of thought and character.
 - iii) The word translated *without blemish* describes what the Christian is in the sight of God.
 - (1) This word is used in connection with sacrifices that are fit to be offered on the altar of God.
 - (2) We are to present our bodies as living sacrifices unto God.
 - e) There is the sign of *missionary endeavor*.
 - i) The proclamation of the offer of the gospel in words which are clear and unmistakable.
 - ii) It is the witness of a life that is absolutely straight in a world which is warped and twisted.
 - (1) It is the offer of light in a dark world.
 - (2) The Christian offers and demonstrates straightness in a twisted world and light in a dark world.
- 5) Paul longs for the Christian progress of the Philippians so that at the end of the day he may have the joy of knowing that he has not run or labored in vain.
- a) One of the features of Paul's writing is his love of pictures from the life of the athlete.
 - i) He had seen the runners press along the course to the goal (Philippians 3:14).
 - ii) He had seen the judge awarding the prize at the end of the race (2 Timothy 4:8).
 - iii) He knew of the victor's laurel crown and of his exultation (1 Corinthians 9:24; Philippians 4:1).
 - iv) He knew the rigorous discipline of training which the athlete must undertake (1 Timothy 4:7, 8, 2 Timothy 2:5).
 - b) For him, the greatest prize in life was to know that through him others had come to know and to love and to serve Jesus Christ.

A Trusted Follower

Philippians 2:19 - 24 (NKJV) 19But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly, that I also may be encouraged when I know your state. 20For I have no one like-minded, who will sincerely care for your state. 21For all seek their own, not the things which are of Christ Jesus. 22But you know his proven character, that as a son with his father he served with me in the

gospel. 23Therefore I hope to send him at once, as soon as I see how it goes with me. 24But I trust in the Lord that I myself shall also come shortly.

- 1) Since Paul cannot himself come to Philippi, it is his intention to send Timothy as his representative.
- 2) The special relationship between Paul and Timothy.
 - a) He was with Paul in Philippi (Acts 16).
 - b) He was with him in Thessalonica and Berea (Acts 17:1-14).
 - c) He was with him in Corinth and in Ephesus (Acts 18:5; 19:21, 22).
 - d) He was with him in prison in Rome (Colossians 1:1; Philippians 1:1).
- 3) Timothy's great value was that he was always willing to go anywhere.
 - a) Timothy's one desire was to serve Paul and Jesus Christ.
 - b) He is the patron saint of all those who are quite content with the second place, so long as they can serve.

Paul and Epaphroditus

Philippians 2:25 - 30 (NKJV) 25Yet I considered it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, fellow worker, and fellow soldier, but your messenger and the one who ministered to my need; 26since he was longing for you all, and was distressed because you had heard that he was sick. 27For indeed he was sick almost unto death; but God had mercy on him, and not only on him but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow. 28Therefore I sent him the more eagerly, that when you see him again you may rejoice, and I may be less sorrowful. 29Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness, and hold such men in esteem; 30because for the work of Christ he came close to death, not regarding his life, to supply what was lacking in your service toward me.

- 1) The Philippian church sent a gift to Paul in prison with Epaphroditus whom they sent to minister to Paul.
 - a) Epaphroditus fell sick and needed to return home.
 - b) There were those who would have seen him as a quitter.
- 2) Paul gives him a tremendous testimonial, which will silence any possible criticism of his return.

LESSON FOUR

Rejoice in the Lord

Philippians 3:1 (NKJV) 1Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. For me to write the same things to you is not tedious, but for you it is safe.

- 1) Paul sets down two very important things:
 - a) The indestructibility of Christian joy.
 - i) Jesus said, “Your joy no one will take from you” (John 16:22).
 - ii) Christian joy is indestructible because it is *in the Lord*.
 - (1) A person can lose all things, all people, but he can never lose Christ.
 - (2) Even in circumstances where joy would seem to be impossible and there seem to be nothing but pain and discomfort, Christian joy remains, because not all the threats and terrors and discomforts of life can separate the Christian from the love of God in Christ Jesus his Lord (Romans 8:35-39).
 - b) Paul sets down what we might call the necessity of repetition.
 - i) Like any good teacher, Paul was never afraid of repetition.
 - ii) Fundamental truths can neither be spoken nor heard too often for the safety of our souls.
- 2) Philippians 3:2-3

Philippians 3:2 - 3 (NKJV) 2Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the mutilation!
3For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh,

- a) Paul suddenly changes his accent to that of warning.
 - i) Jews followed Paul and tried to undo his teaching.
 - (1) Teaching that we are saved by grace alone; that salvation is the free gift of God, that we can never earn it but can only humbly and adoringly accept what God has offered to us.
 - (2) The Teaching that the offer of God is to all men of all nations; none is excluded.
 - ii) The Jews believed that one must earn credit in the sight of God by countless deeds of the law and that salvation belonged to the Jews and no one else.
- b) Paul calls these teachers three things.
 - i) “Beware of dogs.”
 - (1) In the Bible the dog always stands for that which nothing can be lower.
 - (2) In Greek thought, the dog stands for everything that is shamelessly unclean.
 - (3) The Jews called the Gentiles dogs.
 - (a) There is a Rabbinic saying that “The nations of the world are like dogs.”
 - (b) Jesus: “It’s not proper for me to give the children’s bread to the dogs.”
 - ii) He calls them *evil workers*, workers of evil things.
 - (1) The Jews’ view of righteousness took men further away from God instead of to bring them nearer to him.

- (2) Every teacher must be more anxious to listen to God than to propagate his own opinions or run the risk of being a worker of evil, even when he thinks that he is a worker of righteousness.
- iii) He calls them, *the party of mutilation*.
 - (1) Paul is saying, “You Jews think that you are circumcised when you are only mutilated.”
 - (2) If a man is to be in special relationship with God, something far more is needed than a mark in his body.
 - (a) He must have a certain kind of mind and heart and character.
 - (b) The Jews considered circumcision in itself was enough to set them apart especially for God.
 - (i) The prophets of old spoke of different circumcisions.
 1. Leviticus speaks of the uncircumcised hearts of Israel must be humbled to accept the punishment of God (Lev. 26:41).
 2. Deuteronomy 10:16- “Circumcise the foreskin of your heart and be no longer stubborn.”
 3. He says that the Lord will circumcise their hearts to make them love him (Deut. 30:6).
 4. Jeremiah speaks of the uncircumcised ear, the ear that will not hear the word of God (Jer. 6:10)
 5. The writer of exodus speaks of uncircumcised lips (Exodus 6:1).
 - (ii) Real circumcision is devotion of heart and mind and life to God.
 - (c) Signs of real circumcision.
 - (i) We worship in the Spirit of God.
 - (ii) Our only boast is in Jesus Christ, not in what man has done for himself, but in what Christ has done for him.
 - (iii) We place no confidence in merely human things.
 1. The Jew placed his confidence in the physical badge of circumcision and in the performance of the duties of the Law.
 2. The Christian places his confidence only in the mercy of God and in the love of Jesus Christ.
 3. The real circumcision is not a mark in the flesh; it is that true worship, that true glory, and that true confidence in the grace of God in Jesus Christ.

3) Philippians 3:4-7.

Philippians 3:4 - 7 (NKJV) 4though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so: 5circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; 6concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. 7But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ.

- a) Paul has just attacked the Jewish teachers and insisted that it is the Christians, not the Jews, who are the truly circumcised and covenant people.
- b) The Jews could have responded, “You are a Christian and do not know what you are talking about; you do not know what it is to be a Jew.”

- c) Paul sets out his credentials to show that he had enjoyed every privilege which a Jew could enjoy and had risen to every attainment to which a Jew could rise.
 - i) He was circumcised the eighth day.
 - ii) He was of the race of Israel.
 - iii) He was of the tribe of Benjamin.
 - (1) He belonged to the elite of Israel.
 - (2) It was from the tribe of Benjamin that the first king of Israel had come.
 - (3) Benjamin was the only tribe to remain faithful with Judah.
 - (4) After the return from Babylonian exile, it was from the tribes of Benjamin and Judah that the nucleus of the reborn nation was formed.
 - d) Paul claims that from his birth he was a God-fearing, Law-observing Jew.
 - i) His lineage was as pure as Jewish lineage could be.
 - ii) He belonged to the most aristocratic tribe of the Jews.
 - e) Paul goes on to state his achievements in the Jewish faith.
 - i) He was a Hebrew born of Hebrew parents.
 - (1) Jews were scattered all over the world and often did not speak the Hebrew tongue. Hebrew was a Jew who had laboriously retained the Hebrew tongue.
 - (a) Paul claimed to still speak Hebrew.
 - (b) When he had come to Jerusalem, he spoke to the mob in Jerusalem in their own tongue (Acts 21:40).
 - ii) As far as the Law went, he was a trained Pharisee.
 - (1) The Pharisees were an elite sect of no more than 6000 whose one aim in life was to keep every smallest detail of the Law.
 - (2) Paul is saying that he not only was a Jew, but he had devoted his whole life to its most rigorous observance.
 - (3) No man knew better from personal experience what Jewish religion was at its highest and most demanding.
 - iii) As far as zeal went, he had been a persecutor of the Church.
 - (1) To a Jew, zeal was the greatest quality in the religious life.
 - (2) Paul had been so zealous a Jew that he had tried to wipe out the opponents of Judaism.
 - iv) As for the righteousness which the Law could produce, he was blameless.
 - (1) Paul was claiming that there was no demand of the Law which he did not fulfill.
 - (2) He had a record in Judaism in which no man could mark a fault.
 - f) Paul's claim was that he knew Judaism at its most intense and even fanatical heat.
- 4) When Paul met Christ, he wrote all these things off as nothing more than bad debts.
 - a) All human achievement had to be laid aside, in order that he might accept the free grace of Christ.
 - b) He had to divest himself of every human claim of honor that he might accept in complete humility the mercy of God in Jesus Christ.
- 5) Philippians 3:8-9

Philippians 3:8 - 9 (NKJV) 8Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ 9and be found in Him, not having my own

righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith;

- a) Paul came to the conclusion that all his Jewish privileges and attainments were nothing but a total loss.
- b) Paul is saying that “all my life I have been trying to get into a right relationship with God.
 - i) “I tried to find it by strict adherence to the Jewish Law.”
 - ii) “I found the law and all its ways of no more use than the refuse thrown on the garbage heap to help me to get into a right relationship with God.”
 - iii) “So I gave up trying to create a goodness of my own; I came to God in humble faith and found that fellowship that I had sought so long.”
- c) The basic thought of this passage is the uselessness of Law and the sufficiency of knowing Christ and accepting the offer of God’s grace.

What It Means to Know Christ

Philippians 3:10 - 11 (NKJV) 10that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, 11if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

- 1) *To know* almost always indicates personal knowledge.
 - a) It is not simply intellectual knowledge, the knowledge of certain facts or even principles.
 - b) It is the personal experience of another person.
 - i) “Adam *knew* Eve his wife; and she conceived and bore Cain.”
 - ii) It is not Paul’s aim *to know about Christ*, but personally *to know him*.
- 2) To know:
 - a) *The power of his Resurrection.*
 - i) It is the guarantee of the importance of this life and of this body in which we live.
 - ii) It is the guarantee of the life to come.
 - iii) It is the guarantee that in life and in death and beyond death the presence of the Risen Lord is always with us.
 - iv) The guarantee that this life is worth living and that the physical body is sacred; it is the guarantee that death is not the end of life and that there is a world beyond.
 - v) It is the guarantee that nothing in life or in death can separate us from him.
 - b) It means to know *the fellowship of his sufferings.*
 - i) To suffer for the faith is not a penalty.
 - ii) It is a privilege, for thereby we share the very work of Christ.
 - c) It means to *be so united with Christ that day by day we come more to share in his death, so that finally we share in his Resurrection.*
 - i) To know Christ means that we share the way he walked.
 - ii) We share the Cross he bore.
 - iii) We share the death he died.
 - iv) We share the life he lives for evermore.

Pressing On

Philippians 3:12 - 16 (NKJV) 12Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. 13Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, 14I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. 15Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you. 16Nevertheless, to the degree that we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind.

- 1) Perfection.
 - a) Does not signify what we might call abstract perfection but a kind of functional perfection, adequacy for some given purpose.
 - b) It means *full-grown* in contradistinction to undeveloped.
 - i) Used of a full-grown man as opposed to an undeveloped youth.
 - ii) It is used to mean *mature in mind* and therefore means *one who is qualified in a subject* as opposed to a mere learner.
 - c) Paul is saying that he is not by any means a complete Christian but is forever pressing on.
- 2) He is trying to grasp that for which he has been grasped by Christ.
 - a) When Christ stopped Paul on the Damascus Road, he had a vision and a purpose for Paul.
 - b) Paul felt that all his life was bound to press on, lest he fail Jesus and frustrate his dream.
 - i) Every man is grasped by Christ for some purpose.
 - ii) Every man should all his life press on so that he may grasp that purpose for which Christ grasped him.
- 3) To accomplish this, Paul says two things.
 - a) He is *forgetting the things which are behind*.
 - i) He will never glory in any of his achievements or use them as an excuse for relaxation.
 - ii) The Christian must forget all that he has done and remember only what he has still to do.
 - b) He is *reaching out for the things which are in front*.
 - i) Having eyes for nothing but the goal.
 - ii) It describes the man who is going *flat out* for the finish.
 - c) So Paul says that in the Christian life we must forget every past achievement and remember only the goal which lies ahead.

LESSON FIVE

Dweller on Earth but Citizen of Heaven

Philippians 3:17 - 21 (NKJV) 17Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern. 18For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: 19whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame—who set their mind on earthly things. 20For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, 21who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.

- 1) Unite in imitating me.
 - a) “Become fellow-imitators with me in imitating Jesus Christ.”
 - b) Paul could say not only, “Listen to my words,” but also, “Follow my example.”
- 2) There were those in the Church at Philippi whose conduct was an open scandal and by their lives showed themselves to be the enemies of the Cross of Christ.
 - a) Those who distorted the principle of Christian liberty.
 - i) In Christianity all law was gone and that the Christian had liberty to do what he liked.
 - ii) They turned Christian liberty into unchristian license and gloried in giving their passions full play.
 - b) Those who distorted the Christian doctrine of grace.
 - i) Since grace was wide enough to cover every sin, a man could sin as he liked and not worry.
 - ii) It would make no difference to the all-forgiving love of God.
- 3) “Your citizenship is in heaven; your conduct must match your citizenship.”
 - a) Philippi was a Roman colony, fragments of Rome.
 - i) Roman dress was worn; Roman magistrates governed; the Latin tongue was spoken; Roman morals were observed.
 - ii) Even in the ends of the earth they remained unshakably Roman.
 - b) Just as the Roman colonists never forget that they belong to Rome, you must never forget that you are citizens of heaven and your conduct should reflect that.
- 4) The Christian awaits the coming of Christ, at which everything will be changed.
 - a) As we are now, our bodies are subject to change and decay, illness and death, the bodies of a state of humiliation compared with the glorious state of the Risen Christ.
 - b) But the day will come when we will lay aside this mortal body which we now possess and become like Jesus Christ himself.

Chapter 4

Philippians 4:1 (NKJV) 1Therefore, my beloved and longed-for brethren, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, beloved.

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

- 1) Three great commands which Paul gives *in the Lord*.
 - a) The Philippians are *to stand fast* in the Lord.
 - i) Our only safety against temptation is to be *in the Lord*.
 - ii) The Church and the individual Christian can stand fast only when they stand in Christ.
 - b) Paul bids Euodia and Syntyche to *agree* in the Lord.
 - i) There can be no unity unless it is in Christ.
 - ii) The brotherhood of man is impossible without the lordship of Christ.
 - c) Paul bids the Philippians *to rejoice* in the Lord.
 - i) Joy has nothing to do with material things or with a man's outward circumstances.
 - (1) A man living in the lap of luxury can be wretched.
 - (2) A man in the depths of poverty can overflow with joy.
 - ii) The Christian is in the Lord, the greatest of all friends; nothing can separate the Christian from his presence and so nothing can take away his joy.
- 2) Euodia and Syntyche.
 - a) Apparently two women who had become leading figures in the Church at Philippi, and that they had quarreled.
 - b) It is interesting that women played so leading a part in the affairs of one of the early congregations.
 - i) In Greece women remained very much in the background.
 - (1) Greek women were to "see as little, hear as little and ask as little as possible."
 - (2) A respectable woman never appeared on the street alone.
 - (3) She never joined the male members of the family even for meals.
 - (4) Least of all she had no part in public life.
 - ii) Philippi was in Macedonia where women had a freedom and a place which they had nowhere in the rest of Greece.
 - iii) Paul's work in Macedonia.
 - (1) In Philippi Paul's first contact was with the meeting for prayer by a riverside, and he spoke to the women who resorted there (Acts 16:13).
 - (2) Lydia was obviously a leading figure in Philippi (Acts 16:14).
 - (3) In Thessalonica many of the chief women were won for Christianity.
 - (4) The same happened in Berea (Acts 17:4, 12).
 - iv) In Corinth, women had to be content with a very subordinate place.
- 3) The Marks of the Christian Life

Philippians 4:4 - 5 (NKJV) 4Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice! 5Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand.

- a) Rejoice in the Lord always.

- i) Paul himself was lying in prison with almost certain death awaiting him; the Philippians were setting out on the Christian way, and dark days, dangers and persecutions inevitably lay ahead.
 - ii) The Christian can never lose his joy, because he can never lose Christ.
- b) Let your moderation be known to all men.”
- 4) The word *epieikeia* translated moderation is one of the most untranslatable of all Greek words.
 - a) Wycliffe translates it *patience*.
 - b) Tyndale, *softness*.
 - c) The Geneva Bible, *the patient mind*.
 - d) The Revised Version, *forbearance*.
 - e) Moffatt, *forbearance*.
 - f) Weymouth, the *forbearing spirit*.
 - g) C. Kingley Williams: “Let all the world know that you will *meet a man half-way*.”
- 5) The Greeks themselves explained this word as “justice and something better than justice.”
 - a) They said that *epieikeia* ought to come in when strict justice became unjust because of its generality.
 - i) There may be individual instances where a perfectly just law becomes unjust or where justice is not the same thing as equity.
 - ii) A man has the quality of *epieikeia* if he knows when *not* to apply the strict letter of the law, when to relax justice and introduce mercy.
 - b) *Epieikeia* is the quality of the man who knows that regulations are not the last word and knows when not to apply the letter of the law.
 - i) When the woman taken in adultery was brought before him, Jesus could have applied the letter of the Law according to which she should have been stoned to death; but he went beyond justice.
 - ii) As far as justice goes, there is not one of us who deserves anything other than the condemnation of God, but he goes far beyond justice.

The Peace of Believing Prayer

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

- 1) For the Philippians, life was bound to be a worrying thing.
 - a) Besides the normal worry of the human situation there was added the worry of being a Christian which meant taking one’s life in one’s hands.
 - b) Paul’s solution was “believing prayer”.
- 2) A philosophy of prayer.
 - a) We can take *everything* to God in prayer.
 - i) There is nothing too great for God’s power; and nothing too small for his fatherly care.”
 - ii) We can take anything to God, sure of his interest and concern.
 - b) We can bring our prayers, our supplications and our requests to God.
 - i) We can pray for *ourselves*.

- ii) We can pray for forgiveness for the *past*, for the things we need in the *present*, and for help and guidance for the *future*.
- c) Paul lays it down that “*thanksgiving* must be the universal accompaniment of prayer.”
 - i) Every prayer must surely include thanks for the great privilege of prayer itself.
 - ii) We are to give thanks *in everything*, in sorrows and in joys alike.
 - (1) It implies *gratitude* and also *perfect submission* to the will of God.
 - (2) We are fully convinced that God is working all things together for good.
- 3) When we pray, we must always remember three things.
 - a) We must remember *the love of God*, which ever desires only whatever is best for us.
 - b) We must remember *the wisdom of God*, which alone knows what is best for us.
 - c) We must remember *the power of God*, which alone can bring to pass that which is best for us.
- 4) The result of believing prayer is that the peace of God will stand like a sentinel on guard upon our hearts.

Think on These Things

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

- 1) The human mind will always set itself on something and Paul wished to be quite sure that the Philippians would set their minds on the right things.
 - a) If a man thinks of something often enough, he will come to the stage when he cannot stop thinking about it.
 - b) Thoughts will be literally in a groove out of which we cannot jerk them.
- 2) Thinking right thoughts.
 - a) Things that are *true*.
 - b) Things that are *honesty* (honorable, venerable, worthy).
 - c) Things that are *noble* (holy; that which has the dignity of holiness upon it; not flippant, but serious and dignified).
 - d) Things that are *just*.
 - i) Things one gives that are due.
 - ii) The Christian’s thoughts are on duty to man and duty to God.
 - e) Things that are *pure*.
 - i) That which is morally undefiled.
 - ii) Many gets his mind into such a state that it soils everything of which it thinks.
 - f) Things that are *lovely*.
 - i) Attractive; winsome.
 - ii) That which calls forth love.
 - g) Things that are *of good report*.
 - i) Revised Version suggests *gracious*.
 - ii) Moffatt: *high-toned*.
 - iii) *Whatever that has a good name*.

- iv) *The things that are fit for God to hear.*
- 3) *If there be any virtue...*
 - a) Moffatt and the RSV uses *excellence* instead of *virtue*.
 - b) Think of the past things of your life at its very highest, to spur you on to the new heights of the Christian way.
- 4) *If there be any praise...*
 - a) Every good man is uplifted by the praise of good men.
 - b) Paul says that the Christian will live in such a way that he will neither conceitedly desire nor foolishly despise the praise of men.
- 5) The True Teaching and the True God
 - a) Teaching consists of two things.
 - i) Handing on to men the accepted body of truth and doctrine which the whole Church holds.
 - ii) Illuminating that body of doctrine by the personal interpretation and instruction of the teacher.
 - b) Paul tells the Philippians to copy what they have heard and seen in him.
- 6) Paul's titles for God.
 - a) He is the God of peace.
 - b) He is the God of hope.
 - c) He is the God of patience, of comfort, and of consolation.
 - i) Patience does not simply mean the ability to sit down and bear things but the ability to rise up and conquer them.
 - ii) *Consolation* and *comfort* are the same Greek word.
 - (1) It is far more than soothing sympathy.
 - (2) It is encouragement.
 - d) He is the God of *love* and *peace*.
 - i) Behind everything is that love of God which will never let us go, which bears with all our sinning, which will never cast us off, which never sentimentally weakens but always manfully strengthens a man for the battle of life.
 - ii) Peace, hope, patience, comfort, and love—these were the things which Paul found in God.

The Secret of True Contentment

Philippians 4:10 - 13 (NKJV) 10But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at last your care for me has flourished again; though you surely did care, but you lacked opportunity. 11Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: 12I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. 13I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

- 1) Paul expresses gratitude for the gift which the Philippians had sent to him.
- 2) Paul uses one of the great words of pagan ethics.
 - a) They proposed to eliminate all desire.
 - i) Contentment did not consist in possessing much but in wanting little.

- ii) “If you want to make a man happy, add not to his possessions, but take away from his desires.”
 - iii) Socrates on who was the wealthiest man: “He who is content with least, for self-sufficiency is nature’s wealth.”
 - b) They proposed to eliminate all emotion until a man had come to a stage when he did not care what happened either to himself or to anyone else.
 - c) To achieve contentment, the Stoics sought to abolish all desires and eliminate all emotions.
- 3) Paul says that he could do all things *through Christ* who gives him the strength.

The Value of the Gift

Philippians 4:14 - 20 (NKJV) 14Nevertheless you have done well that you shared in my distress. 15Now you Philippians know also that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me concerning giving and receiving but you only. 16For even in Thessalonica you sent aid once and again for my necessities. 17Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that abounds to your account. 18Indeed I have all and abound. I am full, having received from Epaphroditus the things sent from you, a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God. 19And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus. 20Now to our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen.

- 1) The Philippian church had given practical proof of its love for Paul.
- 2) “It is not that I desire a present from you for my own sake...”
 - a) “I am glad for your sake, for your kindness will stand greatly to your credit in the sight of God.”
 - b) It is as if the smell of the sacrifice was sweet in the nostrils of God.
- 3) Paul valued the gift, but his greatest joy was that it and the love which prompted it were dear to God.
- 4) God shall supply all needs according to his riches...
 - a) The wealth of God is open to those who love him and love their fellow-men.
 - b) He who gives makes himself rich, for his own gifts open to him the gifts of God.

Greetings

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

- 1) Greetings from the Christian brothers.
- 2) Especially those of Caesar’s household.
 - a) The gospel of Jesus Christ had infiltrated what would be called the Imperial Civil Service of Caesar.
 - b) There is hardly any sentence which shows more how Christianity had infiltrated even into the highest positions of the Roman government.
- 3) The letter ends: “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.”

LESSON SIX

The Book of Colossians

Introduction

The Towns of the Lycus Valley

- 1) Three important cities in the valley of the River Lycus, which is about 100 miles from Ephesus.
 - a) Laodicea.
 - b) Hierapolis.
 - c) Colosse.
- 2) Originally, they had been Phrygian cities but now they were part of the Roman province of Asia.
- 3) The Lycus Valley had two remarkable characteristics.
 - a) It was notorious for earthquakes.
 - i) More than once Laodicea had been destroyed by an earthquake.
 - ii) It was so rich and independent that she had risen from the ruins without the financial help which the Roman government had offered
 - iii) John the Revelator spoke of her, in her own eyes she was rich and had need of nothing (Rev. 3:17)
 - b) The waters of the River Lycus and of its tributaries were impregnated with chalk.
 - i) Built up amazing natural formations.
 - ii) They would attract visitors from a distance of twenty miles.
- 4) A wealthy area.
 - a) Famous for two closely allied trades.
 - i) Volcanic ground is always fertile; what was not covered by the chalk was magnificent pasture land.
 - ii) On these pastures were sheep, which made the area perhaps the greatest center of the woolen industry in the world.
 - b) Laodicea was famous for the production of garments of the finest quality.
 - i) The allied trade was dyeing.
 - ii) There was a quality in the chalky water suitable for dyeing cloth.
 - iii) Laodicea became the financial and administrative center of the district.
- 5) At one time all three of these cities were equal, but Colosse had become the least of all of them.
 - a) When Paul wrote Colosse was a small town and perhaps the most unimportant town to which Paul ever wrote a letter.
 - b) There had arisen a heresy which, if it had been allowed to develop unchecked, might well have been the ruination of the Christian faith.
- 6) These three cities stood in an area in which there were many Jews.
 - a) Antiochus the Great had transported two thousand Jewish families from Babylon and Mesopotamia into the regions of Lydia and Phrygia.

- b) These Jews prospered and many of their countrymen had come to share their prosperity.
- 7) The Church at Colosse.
- a) Paul did not found this church, neither did he ever visit it.
 - i) No doubt the church sprang from his directing.
 - ii) During his three years in Ephesus the whole province of Asia was evangelized, so that all its inhabitants, both Jews and Greeks, heard the word of the Lord (Acts 19:10).
 - iii) The founder of the church is not known, but it could well have been Epaphras who was the minister in charge of the area.
 - b) A Gentile Church.
 - i) It is clear that the Colossian Church was mainly Gentile.
 - ii) Paul speaks of making known the mystery of Christ among the Gentiles.
 - iii) In 3:5-7 he gives a list of their sins before they became Christians, and these are characteristically Gentile sins.
- 8) The threat to the church.
- a) It must have been Epaphras who brought to Paul, in prison in Rome, news of the situation which was developing in Colosse.
 - i) Much of the news was good.
 - (1) Paul is grateful for news of their faith in Christ and their love of the saints.
 - (2) He rejoices at the Christian fruit which they are producing.
 - (3) Epaphras has brought him news of their love in the Spirit (1:8).
 - ii) He is glad when he hears of their order and steadfastness in the faith.
 - b) There was trouble at Colosse, but Paul believed that prevention was better than cure. In this letter he is grasping this evil before it has time to spread.
- 9) The Colossian Heresy.
- a) It was clearly a heresy which attacked the total adequacy and the unique supremacy of Christ.
 - i) No Pauline letter has such a lofty view of Jesus Christ or such insistence on his completeness and finality.
 - ii) Jesus Christ is the image of the invisible God.
 - (1) In him all fullness dwells (1:15, 19).
 - (2) In him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and of knowledge (2:2).
 - (3) In him dwells the fullness of the Godhead in bodily form (2:9).
 - b) Paul goes out of his way to stress the part that Christ played in creation.
 - i) By him all things were created (1:16).
 - ii) In him all things cohere (1:17).
 - iii) The Son was the Father's instrument in the creation of the universe.
 - c) Paul also stresses the real humanity of Christ.
 - i) It was in the body of his flesh that he did his redeeming work (1:22).
 - ii) The fullness of the Godhead dwells in bodily form.
 - d) There seems to have been an astrological element in this heresy.
 - i) In 2:8, they were walking after the *rudiments* of this world.
 - ii) The word translated *rudiments* is *stoicheia*, which has two meanings.
 - (1) Its basic meaning is *a row of things*.
 - (a) ABC, the letters of the alphabet were in a row.

- (b) From that it develops the meaning of *the elements of any subject*, the rudiments.
- (c) The Colossians are slipping back to an elementary kind of Christianity when they ought to be going on to maturity.
- (2) The word *stoicheia* can mean *the elemental spirits of the world*, and especially the spirits of the stars and planets.
 - (a) The ancient world was dominated by thought of the influence of the stars; even the greatest and wisest men would not act without consulting them.
 - (b) The science of astrology professed to provide men with the secret knowledge which would rid them of their slavery to the elemental spirits.
 - (c) The false teachers were likely teaching that it needed something more than Jesus Christ to rid men of their subjection to these elemental spirits.
- e) This heresy made much of the powers of demonic spirits.
 - i) The ancient world believed implicitly in demonic powers.
 - (1) The air was full of them.
 - (2) Every natural force—the wind, the thunder, the lightning, the rain—had its demonic superintendent.
 - (3) Every place, every tree, every river, every lake had its spirit.
 - ii) The Colossian false teachers were clearly saying that something more than Jesus Christ was needed to defeat the power of the demons.
- f) Clearly there was what might be called a philosophical element in this heresy.
 - i) The heretics are out to spoil men with philosophy and empty deceit (2:8).
 - ii) The heretics are saying that the simplicities of the gospel needed a far more elaborate and recondite knowledge added to them.
- g) There was an insistence in this heresy to observe special days and rituals—festivals, new moons and Sabbaths (2:16).
- 10) There were ascetic (self-denial or self-mortification for religious reasons) elements in this heresy.
 - a) It laid down laws about food and drink (2:16).
 - b) Its slogans were: “Touch not; taste not; handle not” (2:21).
 - c) It was a heresy which was out to limit Christian freedom by insistence on all kinds of legalistic ordinances.
- 11) This heresy had an antinomian (the belief that under the gospel dispensation of grace, moral law is of no use or obligation because faith alone is necessary to salvation or the rejection of a socially established morality) streak in it.
 - a) Tended to make men careless of the chastity which the Christian should have.
 - b) To make him think lightly of the bodily sins (3:5-8).
- 12) This heresy gave at least some place to the worship of angels (2:18).
- 13) This heresy seems to have had something which can only be called spiritual and intellectual snobbery.
 - a) Limited the gospel to some chosen few and introduced a spiritual and intellectual aristocracy.
 - b) Paul lays down his aim: it is to warn *every man*; to teach *every man* in *all* wisdom; to present *every man mature* in Jesus Christ.
- 14) The Gnostic Heresy.
 - a) Two

- i) Spirit alone was good and matter was essentially evil.
 - ii) Believed that matter was eternal; the universe was not created out of nothing but out of this flawed matter.
- b) This belief had certain inevitable consequences.
- i) Effect on doctrine of creation.
 - (1) If God is spirit, then he was altogether good and could not possibly work with this evil matter.
 - (2) Therefore God was not the creator of the world.
 - (3) He put out a series of emanations (something that issues from a source), each of which was a little more distant from God until at the end of the series there was an emanation so distant that it could handle matter.
 - (4) It was this emanation that created the world.
 - (5) Since each emanation was more distant from God, it was also more ignorant of him.
 - (6) As the series went on that ignorance turned to hostility.
 - (7) To meet that Gnostic doctrine of creation that Paul insisted that the agent of God in creation was not some ignorant and hostile power, but the Son who perfectly knew and loved the Father.
 - ii) Effect on the doctrine of the person of Jesus Christ.
 - (1) If matter was altogether evil and if Jesus was the Son of God, then Jesus could not have had a flesh and blood body.
 - (2) He must have been some kind of spiritual phantom.
 - (3) This removes Jesus from humanity and made it impossible for him to be the savior of men.
 - (4) To meet this Gnostic doctrine, Paul insisted on the flesh and blood body of Jesus and insisted that Jesus saved men in the body of his flesh.
 - iii) Effect on the ethical approach to life.
 - (1) If matter was evil, then our bodies are evil.
 - (2) If our bodies were evil:
 - (a) We must starve and beat and deny the body.
 - (i) Lead to asceticism with all kinds of laws and restriction.
 - (ii) Could issue in antinomianism, in which any immorality was justified.
 - (b) If the body was evil, it did not matter what a man did with it; spirit was all that mattered.
 - iv) Gnosticism was a highly intellectual way of life and thought.
 - (1) Since there was this long series of emanations between a man and god, man must fight his way up a long ladder to get to God.
 - (2) In order to do this, they need all kinds of secret knowledge and hidden passwords.
 - (3) The Gnostics were quite clear that the higher reaches of religion were open only to the chosen few.
 - (4) Christianity was too simple.
 - v) There was a Jewish element in the false teaching threatening the Church at Colosse
 - (1) The festivals and the new moons and the Sabbaths were Jewish.
 - (2) The laws about food and drink were essentially Jewish.

Christian Greetings

Colossians 1:1 - 6 (NKJV) 1Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, 2To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ who are in Colosse: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

- 1) Paul had never been to Colosse, so he has to begin by making clear what right he has to send a letter to the Colossians.
 - a) He is an *apostle*.
 - b) Paul's right to speak is that he has been sent out by God to be his ambassador to the Gentiles.
 - c) He is an apostle *by the will of God*.
- 2) With himself, Paul associates Timothy—as a *brother*.
 - a) He is not described as the preacher, the teacher, the theologian, the administrator, but as the *brother*.
 - b) This is a title that is intimate.
- 3) Paul is addressing the letter to God's dedicated people and to the faithful brothers in Colosse.
 - a) In his earlier letters he always addressed the letter to the *Church*.
 - i) Beginning with Romans, his letters are all addressed to God's dedicated people.
 - ii) As Paul grew older, he came more and more to see what matters is individual people.
 - iii) As the years went on, Paul began to see the Church in terms of individuals hence this style of greeting.
 - b) He also writes to the Christians who are *in Colosse* and who are *in Christ*.

LESSON SEVEN

Double Commitment

Colossians 1:2 - 8 (NKJV) 2To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ who are in Colosse: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. 3We give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, 4since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of your love for all the saints; 5because of the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, of which you heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel, 6which has come to you, as it has also in all the world, and is bringing forth fruit, as it is also among you since the day you heard and knew the grace of God in truth; 7as you also learned from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf, 8who also declared to us your love in the Spirit.

- 1) The Colossians are showing two great qualities in their lives.
 - a) Faith in Christ.
 - b) Love for their fellow-men
- 2) Faith and love depend on the hope that is laid up in heaven.
 - a) Hope is the certainty that, in spite of the world's ways, God's way of love has the last word.
 - b) The Christian hope is that God's way is the best way and that the only real peace, the only real joy, the only true and lasting reward are to be found in it.
 - c) The Christian hope is the confidence that it is better to stake one's life on God than to believe the world.
- 3) The essence of the gospel.
 - a) The gospel is *good news of God*.
 - b) The gospel is *truth*.
 - c) The gospel is *universal*.
 - d) The gospel is *productive*.
 - e) The gospel tells of *grace*.
 - f) The gospel is *humanly transmitted*.

The Essence of Prayer's Request

Colossians 1:9 - 11 (NKJV) 9For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; 10that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; 11strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy;

- 1) Prayer makes for two great requests.
 - a) It asks for the discernment of God's will.
 - b) It asks for the power to perform that will.
- 2) Prayer begins by asking that we may be filled with an ever-growing knowledge of the will of God.

- a) Its great object is to know the will of God.
 - b) We are trying not so much to make God listen to us as to make ourselves listen to him.
 - c) We are not trying to persuade God to do what we want, but to find out what he wants us to do.
- 3) This knowledge of God must be translated into our human situation.
- a) We pray for spiritual wisdom and understanding.
 - i) Spiritual wisdom is *Sophia*, which we could describe as knowledge of first principles.
 - ii) Understanding is *sunesis* which is what the Greeks sometimes described as critical knowledge, meaning the ability to apply first principles to any given situation which may arise in life.
 - b) He is praying that they may understand the great truths of Christianity and may be able to apply them to the tasks and decisions which meet them in everyday living.
- 4) This knowledge of God's will, and this wisdom and understanding, must issue in right conduct.
- a) There is nothing more practical than prayer.
 - b) Prayer and action go hand in hand.
 - c) We do not pray in order to escape life but in order to be better able to meet it.
- 5) To do this we need power.
- a) Paul prays that his friends may be strengthened with the power of God.
 - b) For the most part, we know what to do; our problem is to put that knowledge into action.
- 6) Through prayer we reach the greatest gift in all the world—knowledge plus power.
- 7) The three great gifts.
- a) Paul prays that his friends may possess all fortitude, patience and joy.
 - i) Fortitude is *hupomone*.
 - ii) Patience is *makrothumia*.
 - b) *Hupomone* is translated *patience* in the Authorized Version.
 - i) It does not mean patience in the sense of simply bowing the head and letting the tide of events flow over one.
 - ii) It means not only the ability to bear things, but the ability, in bearing them, to turn them into glory.
 - iii) It is a conquering patience.
 - iv) *Hupomone* is the ability to deal triumphantly with anything that life can do to us.
 - c) *Makrothumia* is usually translated *long-suffering* in the Authorized Version.
 - i) Its basic meaning is *patience with people*.
 - (1) It is the quality of mind and heart which enables a man so to bear with people that their unpleasantness and maliciousness and cruelty will never drive him to bitterness, that their unteachableness will never drive him to despair, that their folly will never drive him to irritation, and that their unloveliness will never alter his love.
 - (2) *Makrothumia* is the spirit which never loses patience with, belief in, and hope for men.
 - d) So Paul prays for *hupomone*, the *fortitude* which no situation can defeat, and *makrothumia*, the *patience* which no person can defeat.
- 8) Added to all of this is *joy*.
- a) The Christian joy is joy in any circumstances.
 - b) "If joy is not rooted in the soil of suffering, it is shallow."

- 9) So the Christian prayer is: “Make me, O Lord, victorious over every circumstance; make me patient with every person; and withal give me the joy which no circumstance and no man will ever take from me.”

Prayers Great Thanksgiving

Colossians 1:12 - 14 (NKJV) 12giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light. 13He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, 14in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.

- 1) Paul turns to grateful thanksgiving for the benefits which the Christian has received in Christ.
 - a) God has given to the Colossians a share in the inheritance of God’s dedicated people.
 - i) Paul to Agrippa: “To open their eyes, that they may turn from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in God” (Acts 6:18).
 - ii) The first privilege is that the Gentiles share in the inheritance of the chosen people of God.
 - b) The second key idea lies in the phrase which says, as the RSV has it, that God has *transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son*, or, that God has *brought us over* into the kingdom of his beloved son.
 - i) A transference *from darkness to light*.
 - ii) A transference *from slavery to freedom*.
 - (1) It was *redemption*—the emancipation of a slave and for the buying back of something which was in the power of someone else.
 - (2) Without God men are slaves to their fears, to their sins and slaves to their own helplessness.
 - iii) A transference from *condemnation to forgiveness*.
 - iv) A transference from *the power of satan to the power of God*.

The Total Adequacy of Jesus Christ

Colossians 1:15 - 23 (NKJV) 15He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. 16For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. 17And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. 18And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence. 19For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell, 20and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross. 21And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled 22in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight— 23if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister.

- 1) There was a tendency of thought in the early Church called Gnosticism.
 - a) The Gnostics were considered *the intellectual ones*.
 - b) These men were dissatisfied with what they considered the simplicity of Christianity.
- 2) The Gnostics began with the basic assumption that matter was altogether evil and spirit altogether good.
- 3) God was spirit and if spirit was altogether good and matter essentially evil, the true God could not touch matter; therefore, he could not himself be the agent of creation.
 - a) The Gnostics believed that God put forth a series of emanations, each a little further away from God until at last there was one so distant from God, that it could handle matter and create the world.
 - b) As the emanations went further and further from God, they became more and more ignorant of him.
 - c) In the distant emanation, there was not only ignorance of God, but also hostility to him.
 - d) The Gnostic concluded that the emanation who created the world was both ignorant of and hostile to the true God.
 - e) Sometimes they identified that emanation with the God of the Old Testament.
- 4) Certain logical consequences.
 - a) The creator was not God but someone hostile to him.
 - i) The world was not God's world but that of a power hostile to him.
 - ii) That is why Paul insists that God did create the world, and that his agent in creation was no ignorant and hostile emanation but Jesus Christ, his Son (Col. 1:16).
 - b) To the Gnostics, Jesus Christ was by no means unique.
 - i) They insisted that Jesus was merely one of these emanations.
 - ii) Paul insists that in Jesus Christ all fullness dwells (Col. 1:19).
 - iii) That in him there is the fullness of the godhead in bodily form (Col. 2:9).
 - c) As the Gnostics saw it, if matter was altogether evil, it followed that the body was altogether evil.
 - i) They concluded that Jesus could not have had a real body.
 - (1) The Gnostics completely denied the real manhood of Jesus.
 - (2) Paul speaks of Jesus reconciling man to God *in his body of flesh* (Col. 1:22).
 - (3) The fullness of the godhead dwell in him *bodily*.
 - ii) Paul insisted on the flesh and blood manhood of Jesus.
 - d) The task of man is to find his way to God.
 - i) Before the soul could rise to God, it had to get past the barrier of each of these emanations.
 - ii) To pass each barrier special knowledge and special passwords were needed.
 - iii) It was these passwords and that knowledge that the Gnostics claimed to give.
 - iv) This meant two things.
 - (1) It meant that salvation was *intellectual knowledge*.
 - (a) Paul insists that salvation is not knowledge.
 - (b) It is *redemption* and the *forgiveness of sins*.
 - (c) The Gnostics held that the so-called simple truths of the gospel were not nearly enough.
 - (2) If salvation depended on this elaborate knowledge, it was clearly not for every man but only for the intellectual.
 - (a) Full salvation was beyond the scope of the ordinary man.

- (b) It was Paul's aim to warn *every man* and to teach *every man*, and so to present *every man* mature in Christ Jesus.
 - (c) Paul presents a gospel which is for every man, however simple and unlettered or however wise and learned he may be.
- 5) What Jesus Christ is in himself.
- a) Jesus Christ is *the image* of the invisible God (Col. 1:15).
 - i) Jesus is the perfect manifestation of God.
 - (1) To see what God is like, we must look at Jesus.
 - (2) He perfectly represents God to men in a form which they can see and know and understand.
 - (3) In Jesus Christ Wisdom has come to men in bodily form for all to see. Jesus is the fulfillment of the dreams of Jewish thought.
 - ii) Look at this Jesus. He shows you not only what God is; he also shows you *what man was meant to be*.
 - b) Jesus is the fullness, completeness of God.
- 6) What Jesus Christ is to creation.
- a) He is the firstborn of all creation (Colossians 1:15).
 - i) In English it might seem to mean the Son was the first person to be created.
 - ii) In Hebrew and Greek thought the word *firstborn* has only very indirectly a time significance.
 - (1) *Firstborn* is very commonly a title of *honor*.
 - (2) *Firstborn* is the title of the *Messiah*.
 - b) It was by the Son that all things were created (v. 16).
 - i) To the Gnostics, you rate Jesus as just one of the emanations such as angels.
 - ii) The agent of God in creation is no inferior, ignorant and hostile secondary god, but the Son himself.
 - c) It was for the Son that all things were created (v. 17).
 - d) "In him all things hold together."
 - i) He holds the world together.
 - ii) All the laws by which this world is order and not chaos are an expression of the mind of the Son.
 - e) The Son is the beginning of creation, and the end of creation, and the power who holds creation together, the Creator, the Sustainer, and the Final Goal of the world.

LESSON EIGHT

What Jesus Christ is to the Church

- 1) He is *the head of the body*, that is, of the Church.
 - a) The Church is the body of Christ, that is, the organism through which he acts and which shares all his experiences.
 - i) Jesus Christ is the guiding spirit of the Church.
 - b) He is *the beginning of the Church*.
- 2) He is *the firstborn from among the dead*.
 - a) The center of all the thinking and belief of the Early Church was the Resurrection.
 - b) Jesus is someone who, because of his Resurrection, is alive for evermore and whom we meet and experience, not a dead hero nor a past founder, but a living presence.
 - i) As a result of all this is that *he has the supremacy in all things*.
 - ii) By his Resurrection he has shown that he has conquered every opposing power and that there is nothing in life or in death which can bind him.
- 3) What Jesus Christ is to all things.
 - a) The object of his coming was *reconciliation*; he came to heal the breach and bridge the chasm between God and man.
 - b) The medium of reconciliation was *the blood of the Cross*.
 - i) “I love you enough to see my Son suffer and die for you.”
 - ii) The Cross is the proof that there is no length to which the love of God will refuse to go in order to win men’s hearts.
 - c) In Christ, God was reconciling *all things* to himself.
 - i) The Gnostics saw matter as evil.
 - ii) As Paul sees it, the world is not evil. It is God’s world and shares in the universal reconciliation.
 - d) Paul says that this reconciliation extended not only to things on earth but also to things in heaven.
- 4) The aim and obligation of reconciliation.
 - a) The aim of reconciliation is *holiness*.
 - b) The love of God takes away our fear of him and assures us that we are no longer criminals at the bar of judgment, certain of nothing but condemnation.

The Privilege and the Task

Colossians 1:24 - 29 (NKJV) 24I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church, 25of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God which was given to me for you, to fulfill the word of God, 26the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints. 27To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. 28Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. 29To this end I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily.

- 1) The essence of the task which Paul was given him by God.
 - a) To bring to men a new discovery, a secret kept throughout the ages and now revealed.
 - b) That was the glorious hope of the gospel not only for the Jews but for all men everywhere.
 - i) Paul took the gospel to the Gentiles and destroyed the idea that God's love and mercy were the property of any one people or any one nation.
 - ii) Had it not been for Paul, Christianity might have become nothing wider than a new Judaism.
- 2) Paul sets down his great aim.
 - a) To warn *every man*, and to teach *every man*, and to present *every man* complete in Christ.
 - i) The Jews would never have agreed that God had any use for every man for he was not the God of the Gentiles.
 - ii) The *Gnostic* would never have agreed that every man could be warned and taught and presented complete to God. They believed that the knowledge necessary for salvation was so involved and difficult that it must be the possession of the spiritual aristocracy and the chosen few.
 - b) The fact is that the only thing in this world which is for every man is Christ.
 - i) Not every man who can be a thinker.
 - ii) There are gifts which are not granted to every man.
 - iii) Not every man can master every craft, or even every game.
 - c) There are gifts and privileges a man will never enjoy, but to every man there is open the good news of the gospel, the love of God in Christ Jesus and the transforming power which can bring holiness into life.

The Marks of the Faithful Church

Colossians 2:1 - 7 (NKJV) 1For I want you to know what a great conflict I have for you and those in Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh, 2that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, and attaining to all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ, 3in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. 4Now this I say lest anyone should deceive you with persuasive words. 5For though I am absent in the flesh, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ. 6As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, 7rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving.

- 1) Paul's conflict.
 - a) He was in prison in Rome.
 - b) He must have longed to go to Colosse himself and face the false teacher and deal with their arguments and recall those who were straying from the truth.
- 2) Paul's prayer for the church distinguishes the great marks of a living and faithful church.
 - a) It should be a Church of *courageous hearts*.
 - i) The idea of enabling a person to meet some difficult situation with confidence and with gallantry.
 - ii) It is Paul's prayer that the Church may be filled with that courage which can cope with any situation.

- b) It should be a Church in which the members are *knit together in love*.
 - i) Without love there is no real Church.
 - ii) When love dies, the Church dies.
- c) It should be a Church *equipped with every kind of wisdom*.
 - i) It is the ability to assess any situation and decide what practical course of action is necessary within it.
 - ii) A real Church will have the practical knowledge of what to do whenever action is called for.
 - iii) In Jesus are hid all the treasures of *wisdom* and *knowledge*.
 - (1) The real Church will have the clear-sighted wisdom which can act for the best in any given situation.
 - (a) The wisdom which can instinctively recognize and grasp the truth when it sees it.
 - (b) The wisdom which can make the truth intelligible to the thinking mind, and persuasively commend it to others.
 - (2) All this wisdom is *hidden* in Christ.
 - (a) Paul is saying in essence, “You Gnostics have your wisdom hidden from ordinary people.
 - (b) Our knowledge is hidden but not in unintelligible books.
 - (i) It is hidden in Christ and is open to all men everywhere.
 - (ii) The truth of Christianity is not a secret which is hidden but a secret which is revealed.
- d) The true Church must have *the power to resist seductive teaching*.
 - i) Such that men cannot beguile it with *enticing words*.
 - ii) The true Church should have such a grip of the truth that it is unmoved by seductive arguments.
- e) The true Church should have in it *a soldier’s discipline*.
 - i) The Church should be like an ordered army, with every man in his appointed place, ready and willing to obey the word of command.
 - ii) The Church should be in disciplined order like that of a trained and disciplined body of troops.
- f) In the true Church *life must be in Christ*.
 - i) Its members must walk in Christ; their whole lives must be lived in his conscious presence.
 - ii) Christ is the source of the Christian’s life and the foundation of his stability.
- g) The true Church *holds fast to the faith which it has received*.
 - i) They never forget the teaching about Christ which it has been taught.
 - ii) Our pathway of thought should always begin and end with the unchanging and unchangeable truth that Jesus Christ is Lord.
- h) The distinguishing mark of the true Church is *an abounding and overflowing gratitude*.

LESSON NINE

False Teachers

Colossians 2:8 - 23 (NKJV) 8Beware 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. 9For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; 10and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power. 11In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, 12buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. 13And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, 14having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. 15Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it. 16So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, 17which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ. 18Let no one cheat you of your reward, taking delight in false humility and worship of angels, intruding into those things which he has not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, 19and not holding fast to the Head, from whom all the body, nourished and knit together by joints and ligaments, grows with the increase that is from God. 20Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations— 21“Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle,” 22which all concern things which perish with the using—according to the commandments and doctrines of men? 23These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh.

- 1) The false teachers wished the Colossians to accept what can only be called *additions to Christ*.
- 2) They were teaching that Jesus Christ himself is not sufficient.
 - a) That he was not unique.
 - b) That he was one among many manifestations of God; and that it was necessary to know and to serve other divine powers in addition to him.
- 3) Five additions these false teachers wished to make.
 - a) They wished to teach men an additional *philosophy* (v. 8).
 - i) The simple truth preached by Jesus was not enough.
 - ii) It had to be filled out by an elaborate system of pseudo-philosophical thought which was far too difficult for the simple and which only the intellectual could understand.
 - b) They wished men to accept a system of *astrology* (v. 8).
 - i) It is most likely that *the elements of the world* were the elemental spirits of the universe, especially those of the stars and planets.
 - ii) They taught that men were still under these influences and needed a special knowledge to be liberated from them.
 - c) They wished to impose *circumcision* on Christians (v. 11).

- d) They wished to lay down *ascetic rules and regulations* (vv. 16, 20-23).
 - i) All kinds of rules and regulations about what a man might eat and drink.
 - ii) Certain days such as festivals and fasts must be observed (the old Jewish teaching).

Tradition and the Stars

Colossians 2:8 - 10 (NKJV) 8Beware 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. 9For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; 10and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.

- 1) Men offer a philosophy which they declare is necessary in addition to the teaching of Christ.
 - a) A philosophy which has been *handed down by human tradition*.
 - i) It is a teaching that has no basis in Scripture but is a product of the human mind.
 - ii) There can be no teaching at variance with the Scriptures.
 - b) A philosophy that has to do with *the elements of this world*.
 - i) Knowledge which is uninstructed and rudimentary because at best it is knowledge of the human mind.
 - ii) Could also refer to *the elemental spirits of the world*, especially the spirits of the stars and planets.
 - (1) Julius Caesar would take no step without consulting the stars.
 - (2) Alexander the Great believed implicitly in the influence of the stars.
 - (3) Men were slaves to the stars.
 - (a) If a man knew the right pass-words and the right formula, they might escape from this fatalistic influence of the stars.
 - (b) One cannot at one and the same time believe in the power of Christ and the influence of the stars.
- 2) The real and the unreal circumcision (Col. 2:11-12).

Colossians 2:11 - 12 (NKJV) 11In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, 12buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.

- a) The false teachers were demanding that Gentile Christians should be circumcised, which in their minds was the badge of God's chosen people.
- b) Two Jewish views.
 - i) The view of those who said that in itself it was enough to put a man right with God.
 - ii) The view that insisted that circumcision was only the outward mark of a man who was inwardly dedicated to God.
 - (1) Not a certain operation carried out on a man's flesh, but having a change effected in his life.
 - (2) Dedication to God lay not in the cutting of the flesh but in the excision from his life of everything which as against the will of God.
 - (3) Means putting off of that whole part of human nature which sets one at variance with God.

Triumphant Forgiveness

Colossians 2:13 - 15 (NKJV) 13And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, 14having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. 15Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.

- 1) Men were dead in their sins.
 - a) Jesus has liberated men both from the power and from the consequences of sin.
 - b) He has given them a new life that has been raised from the dead.
- 2) Jesus Christ blotted out the handwriting of ordinances which was against us.
 - a) The word for *handwriting* literally means an *autograph*.
 - i) A note of hand signed by a debtor acknowledging his indebtedness.
 - ii) Men's sins had piled up a vast list of debts to God and it could be said that men definitely acknowledged that debt.
 - b) The word for *wiping* means God banished the record of our sins so completely that it was as if it had never been; not a trace remained.
 - c) God took that indictment and nailed it to the Cross of Christ.
 - i) On the cross this indictment that was against us was itself crucified.
 - ii) It was executed and put clean out of the way, so that it might never be seen again.
 - iii) The charge list had been *based on the ordinances of the law*.
 - (1) Man is no longer a criminal who has broken the law and is at the mercy of God's judgment.
 - (2) He is a son who was lost and can now come home to be wrapped around with the grace of God.
- 3) Jesus has stripped the powers and authorities and made them his captives.
 - a) Jesus conquered these powers forever.
 - b) He *stripped* them.
 - c) He put them to open shame and then led them captive in his triumphant train.
 - i) When a Roman general had won a really notable victory, he was allowed to march his victorious armies through the streets of Rome and behind him followed the kings and the leaders and the peoples he had vanquished.
 - ii) They were openly branded as his spoils.

Retrogression

Colossians 2:16 - 23 (NKJV) 16So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, 17which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ. 18Let no one cheat you of your reward, taking delight in false humility and worship of angels, intruding into those things which he has not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, 19and not holding fast to the Head, from whom all the body, nourished and knit together by joints and ligaments, grows with the increase that is from God. 20Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations— 21“Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle,” 22which all concern

things which perish with the using—according to the commandments and doctrines of men?
23 These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh.

- 1) Paul is warning against certain Gnostic practices on the grounds that to do so would be not progress but rather retrogression in the faith.
 - a) There is Gnostic *asceticism* (vv. 16 and 21).
 - i) Regulations of what can and cannot be eaten and drunk.
 - ii) A return to all the food laws of the Jews with a list of things clean and unclean.
 - iii) In effect, Paul is saying, “Have nothing to do with people who identify religion with laws about what you may or may not eat or drink.”
 - (1) Jesus had said himself that it made no difference what a man ate or drank (Mat. 15:15-30; Mark 7:14-23).
 - (2) Peter had to learn to cease to talk about clean and unclean foods (Acts 10).
 - (3) Paul says “These things perish as they are used” (v. 22).
 - iv) The Gnostics wished to make religion a thing of regulations about eating and drinking.
 - v) Still those today who are more concerned with rules about food than about the charity of the gospel.
 - b) The Gnostic and Jewish *observation of days* (v. 16).
 - i) They observed yearly feasts and monthly new moons and weekly Sabbaths.
 - (1) They drew out lists of days which specially belonged to God, on which certain things must be done and certain things must not be done.
 - (2) They identified religion with ritual.
 - ii) Paul says, “You have been rescued from all this tyranny of legal rules.”
 - (1) “Why do you want to enslave yourself all over again?”
 - (2) “Why do you want to go back to Jewish legalism and abandon Christian freedom?”
 - c) There are Gnostic *special visions*.
 - i) V. 18 speaks of the false teacher “intruding into those things which he hath not seen.”
 - ii) More correct translation: “making a parade of the things which he has seen.”
 - (1) The Gnostic prided himself upon special visions of secret things which were not open to the eyes of ordinary men and women.
 - (2) The danger is that men will so often see, not what God sends them, but what they want to see.
 - d) There is the worship of angels.
 - i) This kind of thing is only a shadow of truth; the real truth is in Christ (v. 17).
 - ii) There is such a thing as false humility (vv. 18 and 23).
 - (1) To the Gnostics, God was so high and holy, no one could approach him; therefore angels had to be intermediaries.
 - (2) The great truth of Christianity is the way to God is open to the humblest and the simplest person.
 - iii) This can lead to sinful pride.
 - (1) Because he is able to keep all these regulations, he is good.
 - (2) The only goodness is in Christ.
 - iv) This is a return to unchristian slavery instead of Christian freedom (v. 20).

- (1) Does not free a man from fleshly lusts but only keeps them on a leash.
- (2) Christian freedom comes not from restraining desires by rules and regulations but from the death of evil desires and the springing to life of good desires by virtue of Christ being in the Christian and the Christian in Christ.

LESSON TEN

The Risen Life

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

- 1) In baptism, the Christian dies and rises again.
 - a) Now the thoughts of the Christian must be set on the things which are above.
 - b) He can no longer be concerned with the trivial passing things of earth; he must be totally concerned with the eternal verities of heaven.
- 2) Paul is not advocating “an other-worldliness view” in which the Christian withdraws himself from all the work and activities of this world and does nothing but contemplate eternity.
 - a) The Christian should go on with the work of this world and maintain all its normal relationships.
 - b) From now on the Christian will view everything against the background of eternity and no longer live as if this world was all that mattered.
- 3) This will give the Christian a new set of values.
 - a) Things which the world thought important will no longer be worried about.
 - b) Ambitions which dominated the world will be powerless to touch him.
 - i) He will set giving above getting, serving about ruling, forgiving above avenging.
 - ii) The Christian’s standard of values will be God’s not men’s.
- 4) Paul gives to Christ a great title of devotion—he calls him *Christ our life*.
 - a) “For me to live is Christ...” (Phil. 1:21).
 - b) “It is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me” (Gal. 2:20).
- 5) Setting our mind and heart on the things which are above and not on the things of this world.
 - a) He judges everything in the light of the Cross and in the light of the love which gave itself for him.
 - b) The world’s wealth and ambitions and activities are seen at their true value.

The Things Which Lie Ahead

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

- 1) “Mortify your members which are upon earth” (KJV).
 - a) Nowadays *to mortify the flesh* means to practice ascetic discipline and self-denial.
 - b) Paul is saying: “Put to death every part of yourself which is against God and keeps you from fulfilling his will.”

- c) “If you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body you will live” (Romans 8:13).
 - d) Modern language: “The Christian must kill self-centeredness and regard as dead all private desires and ambitions.”
- 2) Some things the Colossians were to cut out of their lives.
- a) Fornication and uncleanness.
 - i) Chastity was the one completely new virtue which Christianity brought into the world.
 - ii) The sexual appetite was regarded as a thing to be gratified, not to be controlled.
 - b) Passion and evil desire.
 - i) There is a kind of person who is the slave of his passions.
 - ii) Who is driven by the desire for the wrong things.
 - c) Covetousness.
 - i) Basically the desire to have more.
 - (1) A sinful desire of what belongs to others.
 - (2) Ruthless self-seeking.
 - ii) Its basic idea is the desire for that which a man has no right to have.
 - iii) The essence of idolatry is the desire to have more.
 - (1) Idolatry is an attempt to use God for man’s purposes, rather than to give oneself to God’s service.
 - (2) The man whose life is dominated by desire to get things has set up things in the place of God—and that is idolatry.
- 3) Things that the Colossians must strip themselves (word for *putting off clothes*).
- a) The Christian must put off *anger* and *temper*.
 - i) *Anger* is a long-lasting, slow-burning anger, which refuses to be pacified and nurses its wrath to keep it warm
 - ii) *Temper* is a blaze of sudden anger which is quickly kindled and just as quickly dies.
 - b) There is *malice*—
 - i) That viciousness of mind from which all the individual vices spring.
 - ii) It is all-pervading evil.
 - c) Christians must put off *slander* and *foul talk* and they must not *lie to one another*.
 - i) The word for slander translates *blasphemy*, which is insulting and slanderous speaking in general.
 - ii) *Foul talk* is likely *obscene language*.
- 4) Three laws for Christian speech:
- a) Christian speech must be *kind*.
 - i) All slanderous and malicious talking is forbidden.
 - ii) Before we repeat anything about anyone we should ask three questions:
 - (1) Is it true?
 - (2) Is it necessary?
 - (3) Is it kind?
 - b) Christian speech must be *true*.
 - i) A belief that more falsehoods are told unaware than deliberately.
 - ii) A child should be checked when he deviates in the smallest detail from the truth.
 - iii) It is easy to distort the truth.
 - (1) An alteration in the tone of voice or an eloquent look will do it.

(2) There are silences which can be as false and misleading as any words.

The Universality of Christianity

Colossians 3:9 - 13 (NKJV) 9Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, 10and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him, 11where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all. 12Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; 13bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do.

- 1) When a man becomes a Christian there ought to be a complete change in his personality.
 - a) He puts off his old self and puts on a new self.
 - b) This change is progressive.
 - i) It is a continual renewal.
 - ii) It makes a man grow continually in grace and knowledge until he reaches that which he was meant to be—manhood in the image of God.
- 2) The effects of Christianity is that it destroys barriers.
 - a) Neither Greek nor Jew; circumcised nor uncircumcised; neither barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free man.
 - b) The ancient world was full of barriers.
 - i) The Greek was the aristocrat of the ancient world.
 - ii) The Jew looked down on every other nation.
 - iii) The Scythian was notorious as the lowest of the barbarians.
 - (1) More barbarian than the barbarians
 - (2) Josephus calls him a little short of being a wild beast
 - (3) He was the savage who terrorized the civilized world with his bestial atrocities.
 - iv) The slave was not even classified in ancient law as a human being; he was merely a living too, with no rights of his own.
 - c) In Christ, all these barriers were broken down.
- 3) In essence, Christianity destroyed these barriers.
 - a) It destroyed the barriers which came from birth and nationality.
 - b) It destroyed the barriers which came from ceremonial and ritual.
 - c) It destroyed the barriers between the cultured and the uncultured.
 - d) It destroyed the barrier between class and class.
- 4) The garments of Christian grace.
 - a) *A heart of pity.*
 - i) The ancient world was void of mercy.
 - (1) The maimed and the sickly went to the wall.
 - (2) There was no provision for the aged.
 - (3) The treatment of the idiot and the simple-minded was unfeeling.
 - ii) Christianity brought mercy into the world.
 - b) There is *kindness.*
 - i) The virtue of the man whose neighbor's good is as dear to him as his own.
 - ii) It is the word Jesus used when he said, "My yoke is easy."

- iii) The Christianity is marked by a goodness which is a kindly thing.
- c) There is *humility*.
 - i) God is the creator, man the creature, and in the presence of the Creator the creature cannot feel anything else but humility.
 - ii) On the human side, all men are the sons of God; there is no room for arrogance when we are living among men and women who are all of royal lineage.
- d) There is *gentleness*.
 - i) A man who is so self-controlled, because he is God-controlled, that he is always angry at the right time and never angry at the wrong time.
 - ii) It is the happy mean between too much and too little anger.
- e) There is *patience*.
 - i) This is the spirit which never loses its patience with its fellow-men.
 - ii) Their foolishness and their unteachability never drive it to cynicism or despair.
 - iii) Their insults and their ill-treatment never drive it to bitterness or wrath.
- f) There is the *forbearing and the forgiving spirit*.
 - i) The Christian forbears and forgives because he is a forgiven man and must always be forgiving.
 - ii) Only the forgiving can be forgiven.

The Perfect Bond

Colossians 3:14 - 17 (NKJV) 14But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. 15And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful. 16Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. 17And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

- 1) The perfect bond of love.
 - a) Love is the binding power which holds the whole Christian body together.
 - b) Let the peace of God be the decider of all things within your heart.
 - c) If the peace of Jesus Christ is the umpire in any man's heart, then, when feelings clash and we are pulled in two directions at the same time, the decision of Christ will keep us in the way of love and the Church will remain the one body it is meant to be.
- 2) From the beginning the Church was a singing Church.
 - a) It inherited that from the Jews.
 - b) The gratitude of the Church has always gone up to God in praise and song.
- 3) Everything we do or say should be done and said in the name of Jesus.
 - a) Can we do it, calling upon the name of Jesus?
 - b) Can we speak it and in the same breath name the name of Jesus?
 - c) If a man brings every word and deed to the test of the presence of Jesus Christ, he will not go wrong.

LESSON ELEVEN

The Personal Relationships of the Christian

Colossians 3:18 - 4:1 (NKJV) 18Wives, submit to your own husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. 19Husbands, love your wives and do not be bitter toward them. 20Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing to the Lord. 21Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged. 22Bondservants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but in sincerity of heart, fearing God. 23And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, 24knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ. 25But he who does wrong will be repaid for what he has done, and there is no partiality. 1Masters, give your bondservants what is just and fair, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven.

- 1) Paul turns to the working out of Christianity in the everyday relationships of life and living.
 - a) The Christian ethic is an ethic of *reciprocal obligation*.
 - i) Husbands and wives.
 - (1) Husbands have as great an obligation as wives.
 - (2) Under both Jewish and Greek laws and custom all the privileges belonged to the husband and all the duties to the wife.
 - ii) Parents and children.
 - (1) Parents have just as binding a duty as children.
 - (2) In the ancient world children were very much under the domination of their parents.
 - (3) A parent could do anything he liked with his child.
 - (a) He could sell him into slavery.
 - (b) He could make him work like a laborer on his farm.
 - (c) He had even the right to condemn his child to death and to carry out the execution.
 - (4) All the privileges and rights belonged to the parent and all the duties to the child.
 - iii) Slavery.
 - (1) Masters have their responsibilities as much as slaves.
 - (2) The slave was a thing in the eyes of the law; there was no such thing as a code of working conditions.
 - (a) When the slave was past his work, he could be thrown out to die.
 - (b) He didn't even have the right to marry.
 - (3) All the rights belonged to the master and all the responsibilities belonged to the slave.
 - iv) The Christian ethic is one of mutual obligation in which the rights and the obligations rest with every man.
 - b) The really new thing about the Christian ethic of personal relationships is that all relationships are *in the Lord*.
 - i) The whole of the Christian life is lived in Christ.
 - ii) In any parent-child relationship the dominating thought must be the Fatherhood of God; we must try to treat our children as God treats his sons and daughters.

- iii) The thing which settles any master and servant relationship is that both are servants of the one Master, Jesus Christ.
- 2) Mutual obligation.
 - a) The wife is to be submissive to her husband; but the husband is to love his wife and to treat her with all kindness.
 - i) The marriage laws and customs of ancient times was that the husband became an unquestioned dictator.
 - ii) The fundamental effect of this Christian teaching is that marriage becomes a *partnership*.
 - b) The Christian ethic lays down the duty of the child to respect the parental relationship.
 - i) Two extremes.
 - (1) If the parent is too easy-going, the child will grow up undisciplined and unfit to face life.
 - (2) The more conscientious a parent is, the more he is likely always to be correcting and rebuking the child.
 - ii) The danger of all this is that the child may become discouraged.
 - (1) Martin Luther's father was so stern, that Martin had a difficult time to pray: "Our Father."
 - (2) The duty of the parent is discipline, but it is also encouragement.
 - iii) The better a parent is the more he must avoid the danger of discouraging his child, for he must give discipline and encouragement in equal parts.
- 3) The relationship between slave and master.
 - a) A slave must be a conscientious worker.
 - i) Must not be content with eye-service; must not work only when the overseer's eye is upon him.
 - ii) He must remember that he will receive his inheritance.
 - (1) Under Roman law, a slave could not possess any property and here he is being promised nothing less than the inheritance of God.
 - (2) The time will come when the balance is adjusted and evil-doing will find its punishment and faithful diligence its reward.
 - b) The master must treat the slave not like a thing, but like a person, with justice and with the equity which goes beyond justice.
 - i) The master must remember that he too has a Master—Christ in heaven.
 - (1) He is answerable to God, just as his workmen are answerable to him.
 - (2) The master must say, "This is God's business. He has put me in charge of it. I am responsible to him.
 - ii) The Christian doctrine of work is that master and man alike are working for God and the real rewards of work are not in earthly compensation.

The Christian Prayer

Colossians 4:2 - 4 (NKJV) 2Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving; 3meanwhile 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, 4that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak.

- 1) The duty and privilege of prayer.
 - a) Persevere in prayer.
 - b) Be vigilant in prayer.
 - i) Be *wakeful*.
 - ii) Don't go to sleep when you pray.
 - (1) Mount of Transfiguration, the disciples went to sleep.
 - (2) Gethsemane—when Jesus prayed his disciples slept.
- 2) Paul asks their prayers for himself.
 - a) He asks their prayer not so much for himself as for his work.
 - b) There were many things for which Paul might have asked them to pray.
 - i) Release from prison.
 - ii) A successful outcome to his coming trial.
 - iii) A little rest and peace at the last.
 - c) But he asks them to pray only that there may be given to him strength and opportunity to do the work which God had sent him into the world to do.
 - i) When we pray for ourselves and for others, we should not ask release from any task, but rather strength to complete the task which has been given us to do.
 - ii) Prayer should always be for power and seldom for release; for not release but conquest must be the keynote of the Christian life.

The Christian and the World

Colossians 4:5 - 6 (NKJV) 5 Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time.
6 Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.

- 1) Three brief instructions for the life of the Christian in the world.
 - a) The Christian must behave himself with wisdom and with tact towards those who are outside the Church.
 - i) Must be a missionary; but must know when and when not to speak to others about his religion and theirs.
 - ii) He must never give the impression of superiority and of censorious criticism.
 - b) The Christian must be a man on the outlook for opportunity.
 - i) Daily life and work are continually offering men opportunities to witness for Christ and to influence people for him.
 - ii) The Christian should always be on the outlook for the opportunity to serve Christ and his fellow-men.
 - c) The Christian must have charm and wit in his speech so that he may know how to give the right answer in every case.
 - i) It is all too true that Christianity in the minds of many is connected with a kind of sanctimonious dullness and an outlook in which laughter is almost a heresy.
 - ii) There is too much of the Christianity which stodgily depresses a man and too little of the Christianity which scintillates with life.
- 2) Faithful Companions.

Colossians 4:7 - 11 (NKJV) 7Tychicus, a beloved brother, faithful minister, and fellow servant in the Lord, will tell you all the news about me. 8I am sending him to you for this very purpose, that he may know your circumstances and comfort your hearts, 9with Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you. They will make known to you all things which are happening here. 10Aristarchus my fellow prisoner greets you, with Mark the cousin of Barnabas (about whom you received instructions: if he comes to you, welcome him), 11and Jesus who is called Justus. These are my only fellow workers for the kingdom of God who are of the circumcision; they have proved to be a comfort to me.

- a) The list of names at the end of this chapter is a list of heroes of the faith.
 - i) Paul was in prison awaiting trial and it is always dangerous to be a prisoner's friend; it is so easy to become involved in the same fate as the prisoner himself.
 - ii) It too courage to visit Paul in his imprisonment and to show that one was on the same side.
- b) A look at each of these men.
 - i) Tychicus.
 - (1) To him was entrusted the duty of bearing to its various destinations the letter we know as the letter to the Ephesians (Eph. 6:21).
 - (2) Tychicus will tell them all about how things are going with him.
 - (a) This shows how much was left to word of mouth and never set down in Paul's letters.
 - (b) The letters could not be very long and they dealt with the problems of faith and conduct which were threatening the Churches.
 - (c) The personal details were left to the bearer of the letter to tell.
 - (3) Tychicus can be described as the personal envoy of Paul.
 - ii) Onesimus.
 - (1) Onesimus was the runaway slave who had somehow reached Rome and Paul was sending him back to his master Philemon.
 - (2) Paul calls him a faithful and beloved brother.
 - iii) Aristarchus.
 - (1) He was a Macedonian from Thessalonica (Acts 20:4).
 - (2) He was a good man to have in a tight situation.
 - (a) He was there when the people of Ephesus rioted in the Temple of Diana and was so much in the forefront that he was captured by the mob (Acts 19:29).
 - (b) He was there when Paul set sail as a prisoner for Rome (Acts 27:2).
 - (3) He was a man who was always on the spot when things were at their grimmest.
 - iv) Mark.
 - (1) He was so close a friend that Peter could call him his son (1 Peter 5:13).
 - (a) When he wrote his gospel, it was the preaching material of Peter that he was setting down.
 - (b) On the first missionary journey Paul and Barnabas had taken Mark with them, but when things got difficult, Mark quit and went home (Acts 13:13).
 - (2) Tradition says that Mark went as a missionary to Egypt and founded the Church at Alexandria.
 - (3) Mark was a man who redeemed himself.

- (a) Mark was with Paul in his last imprisonment, and Paul looked on him as a most useful man to have around (Philemon 24; 2 Timothy 4:11).
 - (b) Paul was instructing the Church at Colosse to receive Mark and to give him a welcome if he should come.
 - v) Jesus, who was called Justus. We know nothing about him but his name.
- 3) More names of honor.

Colossians 4:12 - 15 (NKJV) 12Epaphras, 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. 13For I bear him witness that he has a great zeal for you, and those who are in Laodicea, and those in Hierapolis. 14Luke the beloved physician and Demas greet you. 15Greet the brethren who are in Laodicea, and Nymphas and the church that is in his house.

- a) Epaphras.
 - i) He must have been the minister of the Church at Colosse (Col. 1:7).
 - ii) He was a servant of God who prayed and toiled for the people over whom God had set him.
- b) Luke, the beloved physician, who was with Paul to the end (2 Timothy 4:11).
- c) Demas.
- d) Nymphas.
 - i) The Church of the brothers at Laodicea met in his house.
 - ii) Up until the third century, Christian congregations met in the houses of those who were the leaders of the Church.

The Mystery of the Laodicean Letter

Colossians 4:16 (NKJV) 16Now when this epistle is read among you, see that it is read also in the church of the Laodiceans, and that you likewise read the epistle from Laodicea.

- 1) The letter to Colosse has to be sent on to Laodicea, and a letter is on the way from Laodicea to Colosse.
- 2) What was this Laodicean letter?
 - a) It may have been a special letter to the Church at Laodicea.
 - i) If so, it is lost, yet, an alleged letter to Laodicea still exists.
 - ii) Paul must have written more letters than we possess.
 - iii) Many of his letters must have been lost, and the letter to Laodicea was such a one.
 - b) It may be the letter we know as *Ephesians*.
 - i) The letter to the Ephesians was a letter meant to circulate among all the Churches of Asia.
 - ii) It may be that this letter had reached Laodicea and was now on the way to Colosse.
 - c) It may actually be the letter to *Philemon*.

LESSON TWELVE

The Closing Blessing

Colossians 4:17 - 18 (NKJV) 17And say to Archippus, "Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it." 18This salutation by my own hand—Paul. Remember my chains. Grace be with you. Amen.

- 1) The letter closes with an urgent spur to Archippus to be true to a special task which has been given to him.
- 2) Remember my bonds.
 - a) There is no self-pity and no sentimental plea for sympathy.
 - b) He finishes his letter to the Galatians: "I bear on my body the marks of Jesus" (Gal. 6:17).
- 3) Paul's references to his sufferings are not pleas for sympathy; they are his claims to authority, the guarantees of his right to speak.
 - a) It is as if he said, "This is not a letter from someone who does not know what the service of Christ means or someone who is asking others to do what he is not prepared to do himself.
 - b) It is a letter from one who has himself suffered and sacrificed for Christ.
 - c) My only right to speak is that I too have carried the Cross of Christ.
- 4) The end of every one of Paul's letters is grace.

Review