

# Letters From Prison



**Colossians, Philemon, Ephesians and Philippians**

## Letters from Prison

Nearly two thousand years ago, an aged man sat calmly entertaining visitors under the constant watchful eyes of a Roman soldier. The past few years had not been kind to the man, yet from his disposition and conduct, one would think he had been blessed far above anything others could even expect. He was Paul, "the aged." During the two years of house arrest in Rome, he wrote four letters to the churches at Ephesus and Colosse in Asia, and one to a personal friend named Philemon.

A brother named Epaphroditus risked his life coming to minister to Paul. He brought greetings and financial help from Philippi. Also, a runaway slave had found his way to Paul. His name was Onesimus. Some slaves, due to poverty, became servants to their masters and had certain obligations to the one to whom he was indebted. Onesimus had run from his master. What brought him to Paul is unknown, but Paul was comforted and happy over Onesimus. During their visits Onesimus came to know the Lord through Paul's gentle teaching. He obeyed the gospel. Paul urged him to return and make things right with his master, Philemon. Onesimus quickly agreed. Their frequent association made Onesimus very dear to Paul. He sent him back to Colosse with an inspired letter in hand.

Epaphroditus not only had risked his life serving Paul, he came close to dying (Phil. 2:25ff). Paul felt the mercy of God had sustained his life. He felt blessed that God had lovingly spared him to eliminate Paul's sorrow. He too had become very dear to Paul.

At the same time he had composed a letter to the church at Colosse, the church of which Philemon was a member, and possibly one of its leaders, he sent the personal letter to Philemon pleading the case for Onesimus. Another faithful brother, Tychicus, visited Paul often. Him, Paul sent with Onesimus back to Colosse with both letters.

Chained to a Roman soldier, the days were spent in much meditation, prayer, writing, and teaching all that came to Paul. The soldiers who guarded Paul must have been deeply impressed by him. They were of the elite guards assigned to safeguard the emperor and his family. Had some of these elite soldiers learned of Paul's treatment of the Philippian jailer? Had Julius, the centurion in charge of Paul on the way to Rome, told the soldiers what kind of man was Paul? Each guard heard the great apostle teach things concerning the kingdom of God.

There can be no doubt that Paul preached not only to his guests, but to the soldiers guarding him as well. He would naturally get well acquainted with him, and they would naturally be impressed by him. They would hear him speak of the one for whom he had suffered the loss of everything, who was

worthy of his complete devotion, the one he said was his very life (Phil. 1:21).

Through the long days and nights, under constant guard, the apostle took note of the soldiers. He saw them as brave men who never retreat. He noted the items of their armor and equipment as he penned the letter to Ephesus. These were special soldiers, who had been hand picked to guard the Roman Caesar. Paul, with great joy, could write his brethren in the Roman colonial city of Philippi of those among the elite guardsmen.

At regular intervals, the beloved physician Luke visited Paul. Paul had not enjoyed good health for a number of years. His body had been through so much. He wrote of his suffering a "thorn in the flesh" (2 Cor. 12:7-8). It was a weakness of his flesh (Gal. 4:13-14). For the past decade, he had traveled through difficult and dangerous mountain passes, where dangerous brigands and thieves lived. He had been shipwrecked three times, spent a night and day in angry waters, had been in severe hunger and thirst, and suffered a poisonous snake bite. He had been stoned and whipped and left for dead by angry mobs. He even suffered anxiety and depression (2 Cor. 4:8-10). But nothing moved him away from the Lord. Who can doubt this was evident to the soldier even more than to any others?

The great apostle passed the time actively serving the Lord, even with limitations. His spirit was buoyed by his deep and abiding conviction that he would personally be able to again see these good brethren to whom he wrote the letters. By the good providence of God, he wrote of his joy and concerns. He knew of the difficulties and dangers invading the churches. He wrote with the confidence that nothing could stop the work of God. He offered his encouragement that all things can be done through Christ who strengthens and who supplies every need (Phil. 4:13, 19). His final request to the brethren in Ephesus was that they remember him in prayer that he could be bold and strong to the end.

One by one, he sent his co-workers back east with inspired documents to be delivered to the saints and faithful brethren. No doubt Paul whispered a prayer as he saw them fade out of his sight on a long and dangerous journey.

As we study these epistles, we marvel at the man whom God used to pen them. We will learn even more about him and his companions. We will come to realize the tremendous strength of the man who, for all practical purposes was physically unable to preach - but did. We will learn a lot about the churches that received his letters. We will receive strength to live our lives more devoted to the Lord Jesus Christ. We will not only learn more of Paul, but of these wonderful documents that can richly bless our lives in the service of God. May the Lord bless us richly as we study these great works of Paul.

Dudley Ross Spears

## Colossians

### Introduction:

1. The group of letters from Paul we will study is made up of those he wrote during his first imprisonment in Rome. They are Colossians, Philemon, Ephesians, and Philippians. A Christian named Tychicus delivered Paul's letter to the Colossians (Col. 4:7-9), Ephesians (Eph. 6:21) and Philemon (Phile. 10-17). Onesimus traveled with this messenger to Colosse (Col. 4:9) and was the principal subject of Paul's letter to Philemon. Colossians, Philemon and Ephesians mention eight people who likely were with Paul at that time. All four of these letters deal with primarily the same subject and Paul speaks of his condition as unchanged in

all of these letters (Col. 1:24; 4:3; Eph. 1,13; Philemon 1,9-13,23; Phil. 1:7; 2:17).

2. Some question has been raised over where Paul was imprisoned at the time he wrote these letters. Several things indicate that he was in a Roman prison at the time he wrote them. Acts of the Apostles ends with Paul under house arrest in Rome and his reference to "saints in Caesar's house" (Phil. 4:22) and the Praetorian Guard (Phil. 1:13) verify the assertion that Paul was in a Roman prison when he wrote these letters.  
Paul's Letter to the Colossians

#### 1. **The Authorship and Evidence for it:-**

- a. Ignatius, whom we have mentioned earlier, may have referred to Colossians in his work called, Epistle to the Ephesians (ch. x). The Epistle of Barnabas has a statement that in all probability was based on Col. 1:16. Justin Martyr uses expressions like "the first-born of all creation" numerous times.<sup>1</sup>
- b. A number of other early Christians who wrote refer to this as Paul's letter to Colosse.<sup>2</sup>
- c. Internally, again the letter has the plain statement from Paul that he is the author (Col. 1:1,23; 4:18).
- d. It bears all the trademarks of Paul's writing style, content, and personality.

#### 2. **The background of the letter:-**

- a. Paul had never seen the faces of many of the Christians at Colosse (2:1), but during his second preaching trip he had gone north from his work in southern Galatia, which means he would have been traveling in the general direction of Colosse as he came to Asia. He preached where he found people, some of whom could easily have come to hear him as he got near Colosse.
- b. On this third trip, while traveling to Ephesus, he went through the "upper country" (Acts 19:1) even closer in proximity to Colosse. Having missed Colosse on both trips, still some had heard the gospel and obeyed it.
- c. During the three years he spent in Ephesus Luke says "all they that dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks" (Acts 19:10, cf. vs. 26).
- d. Colosse was ten miles south east of Laodicea. Hierapolis

was six miles north of Laodicea. Historians say that Antiochus the Great (B.C. 223-187) moved over two thousand families of Jews from Mesopotamia and Babylon to the provinces of Phrygia and Lydia.<sup>3</sup> Many of them lived in this region at the time Paul preached near there. These are the people who made up the church at Colosse and to whom Paul wrote this letter.

**3. Occasion and Date of the Letter:-**

- a. Paul received a visitor named Epaphras who related to Paul the problems the church faced at Colosse. The problems are detected by the content of this letter.
- b. The church was being torn into two segments going in opposite directions. Some Jewish Christians, evidently influenced by the paganism of their surroundings, were teaching that inferior and created beings, angelic mediators, could replace Christ as the Head of the church (2:8,18). Yet, on the other hand, they insisted on ritual and ascetic observance of human ordinances as the basis of their moral teaching (2:11,16,17,20-23).
- c. One view is known historically as Gnosticism, the other as Judaism. Paul treats both of these errors in this letter.
- d. It was written in the same time reference as the other "prison epistles." Generally, scholars date it around A.D. 60.

**4. Purpose and Plan of the letter:-**

- a. In this letter, Paul does not use his personal authority as an apostle to meet the error. He simply sets forth the truth.<sup>4</sup>
- b. He advocates the utter supremacy of Christ (1:13-19). He meets the Gnostic influence by reminding Christians that the gospel freed them from human legislation (2:4-15).
- c. He meets the Jewish influence by showing the truth of salvation as the result of divine influences, through revelation, and not from human restrictions.

**A Brief Outline**

- I. **Introduction**, 1:1-12
- II. **The Doctrinal Section**, 1:13-2:3
  - A. The Nature of Redemption, 1:13,14
  - B. The Person of Christ, 1:15-19
  - C. The Work of Christ, 1:20-23
  - D. Paul's purpose in preaching Christ, 1:24-2:3
- III. **The Polemic Section**, 2:4-3:4
  - A. The Warning Against Philosophy, 2:4-8
  - B. The Person and Work of Christ, 2:9-15
  - C. The Obligations Resulting from it, 2:16-3:4
- IV. **The Practical Section**, 3:5-4:6
  - A. Application of the Death and Resurrection in Personal lives, 3:5-17
  - B. Application to Domestic life, 3:18-4:1
  - C. Application in regard to the World, 4:2-6

- V. **Personal Section**, 4:7-17
  - A. Mission of Tychicus and Onesimus, 4:7-9
  - B. Salutations from His Companions, 4:10-14
  - C. His Own Salutations, 4:15
  - D. Message to Laodicea, 4:16,17
- VI. **Conclusion**, 4:18

**Questions for Study and Discussion:**

1. What internal evidence is there that Colossians was written from prison?

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2. List the other letters that have the same evidence.

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3. How well acquainted was Paul with the church at Colosse?

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4. When and how is it most likely Paul met some from Colosse?

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5. Who brought news to Paul about problems at Colosse?

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6. What were some of the problems?

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7. What two philosophical groups did Paul deal with in the letter?

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8. Approximately when was the letter written and what evidence supports the conclusion?

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9. What was his purpose in writing the letter? \_\_\_\_\_

10. Rather than assert his apostolic authority, to what does Paul appeal?

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11. How did Paul meet and deal with the Jewish influence?

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12. Who were the "saints" and "faithful brethren?" Was there a difference?

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13. What caused the Colossians to have hope? \_\_\_\_\_

14. From whom did they learn the grace of God in truth? \_\_\_\_\_

15. What two verses in chapter one tell us how far the gospel had gone?

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16. What was Paul's prayer for the Colossians? \_\_\_\_\_

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17. How does God make people "meet" (qualified) to share in his inheritance of the saints in light?

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18. Of what is Christ the visible image? List the things that are directly related to Christ in the creation of all things. What does "firstborn of every creature" mean?

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19. Of what is Christ the head? (Consider more than one thing)

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20. How are sinners reconciled to God?

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21. What was Paul's aim in preaching Christ?

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22. How did Paul tell the Colossians they should walk in Christ? (vs. 6)

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23. What does Col. 2:12 teach us about baptism? \_\_\_\_\_

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24. What does Col. 2:14 teach us about the Law of Moses? \_\_\_\_\_

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25. What did Paul mean by "Handle not, nor taste, nor touch?"

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26. In Col. 3:1 from what does Paul argue that we should seek things above and set our minds on things above and not on things of the earth?

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27. As God's elect, how should brethren treat each other (3:12-15).

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28. Fill in the blanks: "Let the \_\_\_\_\_ of Christ dwell in you \_\_\_\_\_ in all \_\_\_\_\_, teaching and admonishing one another in \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_."

29. What does Paul say wives should do that is "fitting in the Lord"?

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30. If husbands love their wives they cannot be against them.

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31. What does Paul say children must do to be pleasing to the Lord?

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32. In chapter 4, Paul tells us how we should react to those who are not members of the church. What did he tell us to do? (Show ways we can do this - verse 7) Who was Tychicus and what did Paul say he would do?

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33. Who did Paul send with Tychicus?

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34. Who was Epaphrus?

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35. Who, along with Paul, sent greetings to the Colossians?

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(Lesson II)

## **Philemon**

Introduction:

1. Slavery, one of man's most egregious crimes against himself, was a normal way of life in New Testament times. It has been estimated that there were 60,000,000 slaves in the Roman empire, many of whom were either already Christians or who became Christians. There is a puzzling thing about the New Testament. No direct prohibition is directed against the system of slavery, nor against those who owned slaves. Slaves were told how to react to their masters and masters to their slaves. The interesting factor of God's word to the issue of slavery is that Christianity is the single most effective force that led to the abolition of slavery. Through the influence of general instruction on how to live together as brothers, slavery came to an end.

2. Philemon had a slave named Onesimus. Onesimus, for one reason or another, ran away from his master and found his way to Rome, the imperial city. There he came in contact with Paul and was converted. This means that both parties in the case at hand were converts of Paul. Paul's letter is designed to make things right again between the slave and his master. Some have spoken of Philemon as a letter that gives us more insight into the domestic life of early Christian than any other New Testament work.

3. In this letter we will see what repentance is. The whole thought is that repentance followed by restitution, insofar as humanly possible, is the normal reaction true and faithful Christians will have to being converted to the Lord.

4. While many think of Philemon as a purely private letter, it is addressed not only to Philemon, but the church meeting in his house is included, along with Apphia (possibly his wife) and Archippus. Many surmise that Archippus, mentioned also in Col. 4:17, was the local preacher at Colosse and the son of Philemon. All of these views are simply educated surmises.

Paul's Letter to Philemon

### **1. Authorship and Evidence for it:-**

- a. One thing not mentioned thus far in this series of studies is the role Marcion played. Marcion is one of the early Christians who developed a Canon of the New Testament. It was not authoritative or always accurate, but he did include this letter.
- b. Tertullian (A.D. 160 -220) was a converted lawyer who became one of the most brilliant defenders of Christianity, and he remarked that he had seen and read the letter.
- c. Ignatius apparently refers to verse 20 in two of his writings.<sup>1</sup>
- d. Internally, three times Paul affirms he is the author, which settles it for believers (1,9,19).
- e. It is closely linked with Colossians (compare Col. 4:10-17 to Phile. 1,23,24).

### **2. The Background of the Letter:-**

- a. Paul's former association with Philemon was that of teacher

to student. Paul converted Philemon, who in lieu of the fact that he was a slave owner, was probably a wealthy and influential man. It is surmised that Apphia was his wife and Archippus was his son.

- b. The slave, Onesimus, by some providential way, finds Paul in Rome and is converted.

Onesimus, being a Phrygian was a "slave of the lowest order."<sup>2</sup> He had no rights, no real future and simply rebelled. It appears that he took some of his master's personal possessions as he made his escape (vs. 18).

- c. We know only that Paul converted him. That implies that some way Onesimus found Paul. Many have speculated that he knew Paul from former times, the time when Paul had taught and converted his master. Others think that Tychicus may have found Onesimus in Rome and brought him to Paul. No one can say definitely. Rome was the perfect place for a runaway slave to get lost in a crowd. But, even a runaway slave must have food and lodging. Possibly even these needs led Onesimus to Paul. It is even possible that he was already under the influence of Christians, like Philemon and his family, and was having second thoughts about his action. The fact is that Paul converted him.
- d. Conversion brings on restitution in life. Paul now sends this slave back to his master, but in a different relationship. Paul would gladly have kept Onesimus, but tactfully tells Philemon, only with the permission of the owner. Philemon, according to Roman law, could have severely punished the slave. Tychicus, who was to deliver Paul's letter to Colosse very likely accompanied Onesimus.
- e. Paul's letter is to Philemon, and to the church meeting in his house, is a letter of introduction for a former slave, now a brother and new creature in Christ.

### 3. Occasion and Date:-

- a. Onesimus is the central figure in the letter. His return to his master is the by-product of Christianity. Slavery was not abolished by direct renunciation from God, but through the leavening force of principles of Christianity.
- b. Letters were swapped among churches in the first century (Col. 4:16). Paul asks the church to exhort Archippus to finish his mission (Col. 4:17). This leads to the conclusion that Archippus lived in Colosse. If he is the son of Philemon and Apphia then the church in their house is the church at Colosse.
- c. It is also often surmised that the letter to Philemon was the "letter to Laodicea" that Paul wanted read in Colosse (Col. 4:16). The cities are geographically close, but there is no solid proof for any of the assumptions--only the fodder for interesting possibilities.
- d. Thiessen believes it was written around A.D. 60, in the same time frame as Colossians.<sup>3</sup>

**4. Purpose and Plan of the Letter:-**

- a. Regeneration, repentance, restitution and reconciliation are the four "R's" of this short letter.
- b. It is Paul's plan to convert anyone, regardless of social standing, economic condition, or racial background. Not only did he intend to convert, he expressed his purpose to "perfect" all men (Col. 1:28).
- c. Affectionately he addresses Philemon, Apphia, Archippus and the congregation. He gives thanks for the faith of Philemon that had been demonstrated in kind and benevolent deeds.
- d. He presents a series of reasons why the slave should be received as a brother in Christ, rather than a piece of chattel property.
- e. He ends with a statement of his own plans and sends greetings to other workers.

**A Brief Outline**

- I. Salutation, vss. 1-3
- II. His Thanksgiving for Philemon, vss. 4-7
- III. Entreaty on behalf of Onesimus, vss. 8-21

**Questions for Study and Discussion:**

1. What was the occasion that caused Paul to write this letter.

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2. From the salutation, describe Philemon.

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3. What was the ground of Paul's boldness toward Philemon?

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4. How does Paul describe his age in this letter

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5. What did Paul mean that he had begotten Onesimus as his child in bonds?

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6. What was the relationship between Philemon and Onesimus? Look up the meaning of the name "Onesimus."

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7. In what way had Onesimus been "unprofitable" to Philemon?

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8. What changed to make him profitable to both Philemon and Paul?

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9. About when was this letter written?

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10. Can you think of something that is true of the letter to Philemon that is not true of any of Paul's other letters? If so, what?

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11. List those mentioned in the salutation and which one was kin to Philemon?

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12. At the end of the letter who else saluted Philemon?

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13, How did Paul appeal to Philemon to accept Onesimus again?

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14. What had happened to the hearts of the saints because of Onesimus?

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15. What indicates that Paul wanted Philemon to no longer have Onesimus as a slave, but as a brother?

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16. In what way could Paul have meant that he might be considered as a partner with Philemon (verse 17).

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17. What could Philemon have done "beyond" (verse 21) what Paul had said?

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18. What indication is there in the letter that Paul felt he might get out of prison long enough to visit Philemon?

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19. Where did Philemon live and of what New Testament church was he a member? Show how the New Testament deals with slavery.

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20. What relationship had Philemon with Onesimus?

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21. What part of life does this letter, more than other New Testament letters, provide us with insight into?

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22. What command from God does this letter emphasize?

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23. This letter was addressed to Philemon alone (True or False).

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(Explain) \_\_\_\_\_

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24. Who was Marcion? What is significant about him and this letter?

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25. Who was Tertullian and what is significant about him and this letter?

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26. What does the letter say that confirms that Paul wrote it?

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27. What had formerly been the relationship of Paul and Philemon?

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28. Tell what you have learned about Onesimus.

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29. In keeping with what requirement of God did Paul send Onesimus back to Philemon?

30. What did Roman law allow a slave owner to do to a runaway slave? How did Paul cause this not to happen?

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31. Who accompanied Onesimus? \_\_\_\_\_

32/ What letter is mentioned that some think is really the letter to Philemon? Give the passage where it is mentioned.

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33. What are the four "R's" of the letter? \_\_\_\_\_,  
\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_

34. What future plans did Paul announce in this letter?

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(Lesson III)

## **Ephesians**

Introduction:

1. Years ago, a lecturer in Memphis, Tennessee, said in substance, "As I began my preparation for this study of the Ephesian letter, I approached it as one entering a colossal, magnificent, and royal temple--the temple of the living God." His approach to this letter was based on the way Paul uses the figure of the holy temple of God which Paul calls the church.

2. Ephesians is a letter to the church and in the broader sense of the church. It is directed to a local church but deals with the church general. This was expressed by one author, "The 'Church' of this Epistle is not any local assembly, nor any denomination, but the aggregate of all believers in Christ, disciples of Christ everywhere throughout the Christian age. This 'Church' is not an organization, but an organism, and her one and only Head is the Risen Christ."<sup>1</sup>

3. There are several words that emphasize the theme of the book. They are heavenlies, glory, power, mystery, dispensation, and eternal purpose. The expression in the heavenlies is found five times in the letter and range from descriptions of the church here, to her grand and glorious destiny in eternity, to the realm of spiritual conflict between good and evil that exists both now and from now on.<sup>2</sup>

4. There are similarities with Colossians but there are also differences. Colossians is a book of controversies, setting forth the dignity and supremacy of Christ. Ephesians is a book that stresses reverence, peace, and awe as one beholds the great power of God which worked through Christ to His eternal glory and honor.

### Paul's Letter to the Ephesians

#### **1. Authorship and Evidence for it:-**

- a. Some of the earliest existing writings of Christians who lived during Paul's lifetime bear witness to an acquaintance with the letter. These are not all by direct quotation. Some are from references to it.
- b. Clement of Rome uses expressions in his writings very similar to Eph. 1:3,4; 4:4; 1:18; 5:21. Another Clement, this one called "Clement of Alexandria" seems to quote directly from Eph. 5:21-25 in a work called Stromata and here he calls the letter, "the Epistle to the Ephesians."<sup>3</sup>
- c. The internal evidence is also strong. Paul identifies himself as the author twice (1:1; 3:1). There are some ways in which the letter differs from Paul's general style and language, but for the most part, it is definitely Paul's way of writing. (For a little more information, see the note at the end.)<sup>4</sup>

#### **2. The Background of the letter:-**

- a. When Paul came first to Ephesus, he encountered some of the disciples of John the Baptist (Acts 19:1-5) and these were "rebaptized" in the name of the Lord. This little nucleus started the church in Ephesus.

- b. Opposition to his message was strong and Paul went to a school, the School of Tyrannus, to continue and it was here for two years that he continued preaching. The message reached "all Asia" (Acts 19:10). Some of the local craftsmen were antagonized when Paul expelled a demon from a young lady who had been gainfully exploited by charlatans and the resultant uproar forced Paul to leave Ephesus. He then went toward Macedonia (Acts 19:23-20:1).
  - c. After his imprisonment, he apparently stationed Timothy at Ephesus to put down erroneous teaching (I Tim. 1:3). In prison, Paul now writes what we have in our New Testaments called Ephesians.
  - d. But was this letter actually written to the church at Ephesus? Just here in our study, we will digress a little to consider several factors involved, most of which will leave the honest inquirer with some doubt that the letter was a letter only for the church at Ephesus.
    - (1) On most of the later manuscripts<sup>5</sup> we have, there is the expression, en Ephesoi, Greek for "in Ephesus", in the salutation. But the older manuscripts do not have this designation.
    - (2) Paul was certainly familiar with the establishment of the church at Ephesus, but writes in this letter, as if he had only "heard of the faith of the Lord Jesus Christ which is among you, and the love when ye have toward all the saints" (Eph. 1:15).
    - (3) Paul had spent a full three years at Ephesus, and the above statement sounds strange if, indeed, Paul was writing to the church there.
    - (4) Another strange statement is from Eph. 3:2. Here Paul says, "if so be that ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which was given me to you-ward."
    - (5) Surely, within three years of preaching there, they would have heard of God's commission to Paul to preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.
3. **A Solution--Background and date:-**
- a. Some letters were designed to be circulated among churches. 2 Corinthians 1:1 says, "unto the church of God which is at God which is at Corinth, with all the saints that are in the whole of Achaia."
  - b. Paul ordered the circulation of the letter he wrote to Colosse and the "Letter to the Laodiceans" (Col. 4:16).
  - c. It is probable, considering the prominence of Ephesus and the church there, that they were the first to get the letter and made a copy of it, and the copyist simply added the "in Ephesus" to the salutation.
  - d. This accounts for the strange statements mentioned earlier as well as the absence of personal remarks and warm greetings.
  - e. With the apostle in prison, news reaches him of the spread

of heretical doctrines, his thoughts go to all churches he has established. He agonized with the "anxiety for all the churches" (2 Cor. 11:28). He is divinely guided to write a fuller treatise on the eternal purpose of God for mankind. Ephesians, as we know it, is the greatest document of record which deals with that theme.

- f. Since Tychicus and Onesimus were coming to Asia with the letter to Colosse and to Philemon, Paul writes this great letter which is designed to be circulated among churches, of which Ephesus could easily have been the first.
- g. With these things to consider, the letter would have been written very near the same time as Colossians and Philemon, A.D. 60.

4. **Purpose and Plan:-**

- a. The object Paul sought to achieve is simply stated in the first chapter. He affirms that God's rich provisions for mankind were revealed through apostolic teaching. He says God's plan was then "to sum up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens, and the things upon the earth" (Eph. 1:10).
- b. He intended to emphasize God's great power and grace which is conveyed to humanity through Christ and the church. The role of the church is strongly emphasized in this letter.
- c. To offset any of the current heresies, Paul intends for the church to remain one, undivided, and solid against all of the foolish heresies of that time.
- d. He also wanted Christians to know how to live together in all human relationships, economic, domestic, and social.
- e. His purpose also was to evoke comradeship from the brethren everywhere, calling for them to pray for his continued strength in preaching this great message and to remain firm in their fight against error.

**A Brief Outline**

**I. Salutation, 1:1,2**

**II. The Doctrinal Part, 1:3-3:21**

- A. The Believer's Blessings in Christ, 1:3-14
- B. The Prayer for Illumination, 1:15-23
- C. The Power of God, Manifested in Salvation, 2:1-12
- D. The Unity of Jew and Gentile in Christ, 2:11-22
- E. The Revelation and Proclamation of this Unity, 3:1-9
- F. The Church and the Eternal Purpose, 3:10-13

**III. The Practical Part, 4:1-6:20**

- A. Admonition to Unity in Life and Doctrine, 4:1-6
- B. The Nature of God's Gifts and their purpose, 4:7-16
- C. Admonition to Live a New Life in Christ, 4:17-5:21
- D. Application to Domestic Relationships, 5:22-6:9
- E. Put on the Whole Armor of God, 6:10-20
- F. Explanation of the Mission of Tychicus, 6:21,22

**IV. Benediction, 6:23,24**

**Questions for Study and Discussion:**

1. In what way is Ephesians written to a local church, but not exclusively to that local church?

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2. On what continent was Ephesus situated and on what missionary journey did Paul go there with the gospel?

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3. Around what year did Paul write Ephesians?

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4. What was his purpose in writing the letter?

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5. List some of the things that might cause one to wonder if the letter was actually written to the church in Ephesus.

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6. Who was the bearer of the letter?

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7. How many times can you find the expression "in heavenly places" in Ephesians? The phrase may read "in high places" or "in the heavenlies" in some translations.

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8. What does the phrase "in heavenly places" mean?

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9. Verses 15-23 record Paul's prayer for the church. He mentions "the faith in the Lord Jesus which is among you." What does this mean about their faith?

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10. Chapter two has a contrast of before and after. List the things in the first 5 verses that are the "before."

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11. Now read verses 6 - 10 and list the things that are "after."

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12. In chapter 2 verse 8, what is the "gift of God?"

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13. In verses 11-22 Paul shows another contrast. List the things you find contrasted before becoming a saved person and after.

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14. What is the mystery mentioned several times in chapter 3?

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15. How is the manifold wisdom of God made known through (by) the church?

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16. Verses 14 - 15 mention the every (the whole, KJV) family in heaven and on earth is named. Does this give us reason to have a name that identifies us as the family of God? If so, what is the name God gave us?

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17. What is the source of that strength? \_\_\_\_\_

18. What part of a believer is strengthened? \_\_\_\_\_

19. How does Christ dwell in our hearts? \_\_\_\_\_

20. List the things mentioned in (4:1-6) of which there is only one.

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

21. What was done so that all things might be fulfilled? (4:19-10).hat gifts did the Lord give, to whom did he give them, and for what purpose were they given?

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22. Verses 17 - 24 present a contrast between believers and alien sinners. What are believers to put away and in what are they to be renewed?

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23. How does one imitate God? (5:1-2).

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24. In 5:11 he says to have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness. How do we do this?

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25. What kind of music is mentioned as part of our worship in chapter 5?

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26. In verses 23-31, Paul uses the relationship of Christ and the church to instruct husbands and wives how they should treat each other.

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What does being in subjection mean? \_\_\_\_\_

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27. How are husbands to love their wives? \_\_\_\_\_

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28. For what did Paul seek the prayers of the brethren?

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29. What words in the letter emphasize the purpose for which it was written?

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30. What similarities do you find in Ephesians with Colossians?

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31. What differences do you find in these two letters?

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32. What, in the letter, shows that Paul wrote the letter?

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33. What indicates that an apostasy Paul foretold (1 Tim. 4:1-4) began in Ephesus?
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34. Discuss the thoughts that the letter may not have actually been written to the church at Ephesus alone.
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35. Show that some letters were designed to be circulated among other local churches.
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36. What is the probable reason the letter is titled "To the Ephesians"?
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37. How did Paul emphasize the role of the church in the great power of God conveyed to the world through Christ?
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38. What was the purpose of mentioning the "one body" and emphasizing the other "ones" in chapter 4?
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39. What purpose was served for wives and husbands in the use of Christ and the church?
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40. What was Paul's final request of the church for his personal benefit?
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(Lesson IV)

## Philippians

Introduction:

1. A. T. Robertson called this letter, "Paul's Epistle of Joy" and with good reason. This is a letter written to the first local church Paul established in what we today call Europe. He responded to the "Macedonian Call" (Acts 16:6-10). Many have said that the bond between Paul and the church at Philippi was unique and closer than that which he had with any other local church. It is a fact that from the very first, they asserted their loyalty to truth and to Paul. Very little is said in a critical way of them in this letter.

2. There seems to be nothing in the letter designed to offset any doctrinal problem the church faced. In this sense it is different from other letters.

3. It is called the most "letter-like" of all the letters Paul wrote. Plummer remarks, "the most perfect kind of letter-writing is that which comes nearest to good conversation; and of all the Pauline Epistles, none comes nearer to that than the Letter to the Philippians."<sup>1</sup>

### Paul's Letter to the Philippians

#### 1. **The Authorship and Evidence for it:-**

- a. Among those of the last part of the first century who quoted from the letter are Irenaeus,<sup>2</sup> Clement of Alexandria,<sup>3</sup> Polycarp,<sup>4</sup> and Ignatius.<sup>5</sup> All of the oldest "Versions" of the New Testament include this epistle.
- b. Archaeologists have found significant things that correlatively affirm the authenticity of the letter. There are a number of names found on various inscriptions in the ruins of that city today, one of which is Clemens.<sup>6</sup>
- c. The internal evidence is also very positive. Paul signs the letter in the salutation (1:1). Except the radical critics like Baur and others the letter is above question the work of Paul.

#### 2. **The Background of the letter:-**

- a. The city of Philippi is the first city Paul visited after he left Asia. Here he encountered a businesswoman named Lydia. He met her and her servants (household) near a river that Luke says was a "place of prayer." This indicates that there was some Jewish influence in Philippi, but precious little. No evidence of a synagogue there can be found. Little in the letter itself is indicative of any Jewish problem. Lydia and her household were baptized into Christ, becoming the very first converts. Later, Paul exorcised a demon from a damsel and her owners cried for their own peculiar brand of "justice." Paul and Silas were jailed, but here they converted the jailer and his family. So, this congregation began with a businesswoman, a young slave girl, and a pagan jailer and his family.
- b. Here are passages from the letter that give some evidence that Paul was replying to their letter to him, or to mess-

ages conveyed to him. (1:12;1:19;1:25ff;2:26;3:2;4:10-13). Paul informs them of his condition, a natural response to an inquiry from them. He speaks of those in whom they had an interest, as if they had asked about the health of Epaphroditus. He thanks them for the gift they sent as his response to their gift and attendant message. So, there are indications that this is one of the most personal letters Paul wrote and that it was written more on a personal basis of fellowship in Christ than as a doctrinal treatise or instructional manual on daily living. These things do appear in the letter but not as prominently as in others.

**3. Occasion and Date of the Letter:-**

- a. The occasion for writing this letter arose from the need to communicate with the church. As already mentioned, Paul responds to things asked of him by the church. This is the church that had fellowship with Paul in matters of giving and receiving and there is gratitude by Paul for their concern and loyalty. He thanks them. This was not always true of Paul, for he would not allow the church at Corinth to support him (2 Cor. 11:1-11). Here, he graciously accepts the gift and responds in the letter.
- b. The one problem they had internally involved two of the sisters, Euodia and Syntyche, and he urges them to come to a meeting of minds and hearts.
- c. He urges closer unity, explaining their strategic position among a world full of darkness and sin.
- d. This was written probably near the end of Paul's two years of imprisonment in Rome. Several factors indicate this.
  - (1) Time enough to exchange messages between Rome and Philippi had passed.
  - (2) Paul had been in Rome long enough to convert some of the royal guards and of Caesar's household.
  - (3) His preaching there had aroused some ugly dispositions of those who preached Christ of envy and strife.
  - (4) In other letters written from the Roman prison, Luke and Aristarchus are mentioned in the greetings, but in this one neither are mentioned. The church at Philippi would certainly have known Luke and had he been with Paul, it is strange that he is not listed among those sending their warm greetings to Philippi. This indicates that the Philippian letter was probably the last letter Paul wrote during his first imprisonment. That places the date around A.D. 61.

**4. Purpose and Plan of the Letter:-**

- a. His purpose is to express gratitude to them for their fellowship in the gospel. He does this by showing them that at first they were the only ones who sent to him.
- b. He intends for them to be united, have the proper attitudes toward one another and to think of others first rather than self first.
- c. He also wants them to know of his plans to send Timothy and Epaphroditus to them and to warn them of the Judaizers whom

- he calls the party of "concision."
- d. He simply wants the contact and communion that warmed his heart as he saw his fateful appointment with the enemies of the cross approaching nearer with each passing hour.

**A Brief Outline**

- I. **Salutation**, 1:1,2
- II. **Thanksgiving and Prayer**, 1:3-11
  - A. Fellowship, 3-5
  - B. Confidence, 6-8
  - C. Ambition, 9-11
- III. **His Personal Circumstances in Rome**, 1:12-26
  - A. Progress of the Gospel in Rome, 12-14
  - B. Rivalry and Zeal among Preachers, 15-18
  - C. His own hopes and fears, 19-26
- IV. **Exhortation to Fulfill Various Duties**, 1:27-2:18
  - A. To Unity, 1:27-2:4
  - B. To Humility, 1:5-11
  - C. To Consistency, 2:12-18
- V. **His Plans for the Future**, 1:19-30
  - A. To send Timothy to them, 19-24
  - B. To Send Epaphroditus to them immediately, 25-30
- VI. **Warnings against Judaism and Lawlessness**
  - A. Against Judaistic influences, 3:1-14
  - B. Against Lawlessness, 3:15-4:1
- VII. **The Appeal for Reconciliation**, 4:2,3
- VIII. **Exhortation to Follow Him**, 4:4-9
  - A. In Joy, 4
  - B. In Prayer, 5-7
  - C. In Pursuit of all Good, 8,9
- IX. **His Acknowledgment of the Gift they sent**, 4:10-20
- X Salutation and Benediction, 4:21-21

**Questions for Study and Discussion:**

1. Philipians was addressed to the "saints." Who are saints

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2. Who are "Bishops" and what role do they play in the church?

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3. How far does their role as bishops extend?

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4. Who are "deacons" and what is their role in the church?

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5. When and from where did Paul write Philippians?

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6. Give his purpose in writing the letter. (Start with, "He wanted to:

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7. How did the Philippians have "fellowship" with Paul "in the furtherance of the gospel (ASV)?"

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8. In the New Testament, is there any other way one local church had fellowship with an apostle or evangelist in the furtherance of the gospel? \_\_\_\_\_ (yes or no)

If so, where is the scriptural reference? \_\_\_\_\_

9. Where does Paul say things that shows he was a prisoner? List all the verses in Philippians you can find.

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10. Why were some men preaching a Christ of envy and strife?

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11. What was Paul's attitude toward them?

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12. What internal perplexity did Paul say he had?

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13. In chapter two, how did he say Christians should view each other?
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14. What example did he use to stress this point?
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15. What do the following expressions mean? "Form of God" "Form of a servant" "Fashion as a man"
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16. Multiple Choice: What were the Philippians to "work out"?
- (a) Personal differences (b) Why Jesus humbled himself?
- (c) Their personal salvation.
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17. Was Timothy with Paul when the letter was written? Explain your answer.
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18. Who was Epaphroditus and what were his circumstances?
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19. What kind of dogs were they to beware of?
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20. Fill in the blanks: Paul said "That I may know \_\_\_\_\_ and the \_\_\_\_\_ of his resurrection, and the \_\_\_\_\_ of his sufferings" (Phil. 3:10).

21. If chapter 3, verse 17, he says to mark some. Who were they and how can one Christian "mark" another? (Read Rom. 16:17-18).

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22. Who were Euodia and Syntyche? What did Paul want them to be?

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23. What did Paul tell the Philippians not to be anxious about? \_\_\_\_\_ . What does "anxious" mean?

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24. In what things were the Philippians told to do as Paul did them?

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25. How often did Paul receive financial support from Philippi?

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26. Who did Paul say sent their salutations to the Philippians?

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Notes:

### **Lesson I**

1. To Autolycys and Dialogue with Trypho are two of

Justin Martyr's works that heavily use Paul's expressions used in Colossians.

2. Irenaeus says that Paul in the Epistle to the Colossians says, "Luke, the beloved physician, greets,..." taken from Against Heresies, III. xiv.1.
3. Antiquities of the Jews, Josephus, XII.iii4.
4. Godet, Studies in the Epistles, page 185.

### **Lesson II**

1. Ignatius in chapter ii of his Ephesians and in ch. xii of his Magnesians seems to allude to Philemon 20. (Taken from Homily XIX.)

2. David Smith, Life and Letters of St. Paul, p. 545
3. "Since the Epistle is so closely connected with the Epistle to the Colossians and since the two were sent at the same time, we naturally date the present Epistle the same as the Epistle to the Colossians, viz., at A.D. 60." Introduction to the New Testament, p. 239.

### **Lesson III**

1. W. Graham Scroggie, The Unfolding Drama of Redemption, Vol. III, p. 182
2. These are the references to "in the heavenlies." Eph. 1:3; 1:20; 2:6; 3:10; 6:12.
3. Henry C. Thiessen, Introduction to the New Testament, p. 239
4. Critics have alleged that the author of Ephesians does not write in Paul's style, that many unique words and phrases are found here that nowhere else are used by Paul. This is truly a case of mote hunting, for, as Thiessen well says, "...is a man always obliged to use a word in the same sense unless he does not care about losing his identity?" There is criticism because the letter lacks the personal greetings in the last chapter, a characteristic writing trait of Paul, but if Paul is writing this as a letter to be circulated among churches, rather than exclusively to Ephesus, the objection is answered.
5. This involves the long debated question of the Byzantine or Eastern manuscripts against those which are unquestionably of a much earlier date. The later manuscripts include the inscription, the older do not.

### **Lesson IV**

1. As quoted by W. Graham Scroggie, The Unfolding Drama of Redemption, Vol. III, p. 201
2. H.C.G. Moule in Cambridge Greek New Testament for Schools and Universities (Introduction, p. xlff).
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid., p. xiv.