

# SAINT AMBROSE COLLEGE



PAUL'S PRISON EPISTLES

STUDY GUIDE

GEC 508

# Paul's Imprisonment

## Lesson 1 from the series *Paul's Prison Epistles*

### Study Guide

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### How to use this lesson and study guide

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## Preparation

- Read Acts chapters 21-28.

## Outline

- I. Introduction (0:25)
- II. Background (2:50)
  - A. Events Preceding Arrest (3:50)
  - B. Arrest in Jerusalem (8:48)
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## Notes

### I. Introduction

Prison Epistles: Letters to various churches and people that Paul wrote while he was in prison.

### II. Background

#### A. Events Preceding Arrest

A.D. 56 or 57: Near the end of Paul's third missionary journey, Paul went to Jerusalem to deliver funds to the poor Christians who were enduring a famine.

The Holy Spirit had warned Paul that he would be imprisoned when he arrived in Jerusalem.

Believers prophesied Paul's coming imprisonment. Paul knew these prophecies were to prepare him for his coming hardships.

The prophet Agabus bound his own hands and feet as a prophetic sign, warning that Paul would be arrested and bound if he continued to Jerusalem.

Paul understood that his coming imprisonment would be "for the name of the Lord Jesus."

## **B. Arrest in Jerusalem**

Paul hoped that the gift would make Jewish Christians more eager to receive the Gentiles as full brothers in Christ.

Paul behaved like a Gentile when among Gentiles. But he was willing to follow Jewish traditions for the sake of the gospel.

Paul agreed to participate in the rituals of the temple in Jerusalem:

- To demonstrate his commitment to the Mosaic Law
- For the cause of Christ among the Jews
- For the reconciliation of Jews and Gentiles within the church

The Jews wrongly assumed that Trophimus had also entered that court, and they were outraged.

These Jews roused the city against Paul, and an angry mob dragged him from the court of Israel, intent on killing him.

Paul defended himself before the Sanhedrin, explaining why so many Jews had taken offense to his teachings.

Since Paul was a Roman citizen, he was transported to Caesarea Maritima.

Felix: Governor of the Roman province of Judea.

### **C. Imprisonment in Caesarea**

Caesarea Maritima: The capital city of the Roman province Judea.

Tertullus argued that Paul had disturbed the peace, incited riots, and tried to violate the temple.

Paul's response to his accusers had four main points:

1. There were no witnesses against him.
2. Others had disturbed the peace and not he.
3. He had no desire to defile the temple.
4. The Sanhedrin had not found him guilty.

Felix delayed ruling on Paul's case for two years, until replaced by governor Porcius Festus.

Paul did not want his case heard in Jerusalem. He appealed to his right as a Roman citizen to have his case heard by Nero Caesar himself.

Paul believed that his imprisonment would further his gospel ministry.

#### **D. Imprisonment in Rome**

Late A.D. 59: Paul was placed under the authority of a Roman centurion named Julius and put on a ship heading for Asia Minor.

A violent storm blew their ship past Cauda, far out into the Mediterranean Sea. Eventually, the ship struck a reef near the Isle of Malta and was destroyed.

Paul and everyone else from the ship were stranded in Malta for three months.

Paul presented the people of with the gospel and performed miraculous healings.

Early A.D. 60: Paul and his companions set sail for Italy. Paul arrived in Rome later that year, and was placed under house arrest.

A.D. 60-62: Paul lived under house arrest in Rome. He was permitted to receive guests and to teach freely.

“For two whole years Paul stayed there in his own rented house and welcomed all who came to see him. Boldly and without hindrance he preached the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 28:30-31).

### **III. Ongoing Ministry**

God had orchestrated events so that Paul’s imprisonment in Rome would provide the opportunity for Paul to spread the Gospel of Christ to the heart of the western world.

**A. Book of Acts**

Paul's experiences of imprisonment were very important for Luke, the author of Acts. He dedicated nearly nine chapters to events related to this period in Paul's life.

**1. Awareness of Suffering**

Paul was aware that his service to Christ would bring severe hardship and suffering into his life.

Paul was acutely aware of the difficulties that awaited him in his service to Christ and his gospel, and was willing even to be martyred.

**2. Awareness of Purpose**

Paul was aware of the purpose of his suffering. The Lord also planned to use this suffering to promote the gospel.

Imprisonment would be the means through which Paul accomplished his ministry.

- Paul presented his testimony to the mob that sought his death (Acts 22:1-21).
- Paul testified to the gospel and Christ's resurrection before the Sanhedrin (Acts 23:1-10).
- Paul proclaimed the gospel to the Caesarean court — publicly at his hearing and privately to the governor Felix and his wife Drusilla (Acts 24:14-26).
- Paul proclaimed the gospel to the new governor Festus as all as to the Jewish king Agrippa and his wife Bernice (Acts 25:18–26:29).
- Paul regularly preached the gospel of the kingdom of God to all who had come to see him in Rome (Acts 28:23-31).

Christ's words to Paul summarize the purpose of this suffering: "Take courage! As you have testified about me in Jerusalem, so you must also testify in Rome" (Acts 23:11).

### **3. Awareness of Blessings**

Paul was very aware of God's blessing on his ministry during this time.

- Paul received and interpreted visions to protect the lives of those on the ship that eventually crashed on the reef.
- He healed the sick.
- He ministered to the individual needs of the believers.

## **B. Letters to Churches**

### **1. Preaching**

Paul endured prison mainly to gain new opportunities to proclaim the gospel.

Paul wanted prayer so that he would have the opportunity to preach the gospel.

## **2. Praying**

Paul was in constant prayer for the churches.

Paul's imprisonment actually increased the time he was able to spend in prayer.

Paul's efforts in prayer constituted a vibrant and valuable ministry to those who were not near.

### **3. Suffering**

When the goal and product of suffering is the advancement of God's kingdom through the promotion of the gospel, suffering is ministry.

Our suffering may provide opportunities to bless the church, testify to the gospel, and increase the glory that the church will inherit.

Suffering can be an indisputable testimony to the truth of the gospel.

We should be willing to suffer hardship and even death for the benefit of others.

We should be thankful of the suffering that others endure for this cause.

Paul's suffering was a continuation of the suffering of Christ himself.

Jesus suffers when we suffer:

- Because Jesus loves us so dearly
- Because he is united to all believers

The suffering of the church is the suffering of Christ.

Christ must suffer until his return. Paul was privileged to help Christ fulfill that appointed suffering.

#### **4. Writing**

Paul's writing ministry during his imprisonment is demonstrated by his New Testament letters:

- The church in Colosse
- The church in Ephesus
- The church in Philippi
- The Colossian man Philemon.

Paul's ministry was informed and carefully tailored to the specific situations of the churches and individuals to whom he wrote.

Paul directed his letters to the theological issues that involved the church as a whole.

#### **IV. Theological Unity**

Paul's letters from prison share some important doctrinal foundations.

- Affirm the same gospel.
- Share a common way of presenting the gospel
- Tend to emphasize the same aspects of that gospel.

Common foundation: Jesus Christ is the conqueror and ruler of all creation.

#### **A. King of Creation**

##### **1. Sovereignty**

Christ has the strength and power to accomplish his will, and the legal authority and right to do so.

When Jesus ascended into heaven, God the Father vested him with sovereignty over all creation.

Jesus Christ rules over the entire creation with absolute power.

Not everything in creation obeys him as it should. But Jesus has the right to command its obedience, and the power to make it obey.

## **2. Honor**

Christ's glory and value demand the responses of respect, emulation and worship.

Jesus is God, and God is worthy of the highest honor imaginable.

### **3. Determination**

Christ is determined to return to earth in order to consummate his kingdom.

Paul's outlook on the return of Christ grew out of traditional Jewish views of the end times.

Jesus revealed that this traditional Jewish conception was not entirely accurate. The age to come would replace the present age, but not all at once. The two ages would overlap for a time.

Jesus reigns as king from heaven. He wants and plans to rule over every inch of creation as fully and gloriously as he now reigns in heaven.

Our future inheritance is guaranteed. Jesus must return in order to deliver our inheritance in the consummated kingdom.

**B. Union with Christ**

When we believe in Jesus, we are united to him in a spiritual, though mysterious way.

Paul frequently encouraged his readers through their sharing in Christ's kingship.

Through our union with Christ:

- We are united to Christ's death.
- We are united to Christ in his resurrection and life.
- We are united to Christ in his ascension and kingship.
- We are seated with Christ in the heavenly places.

Paul spoke of our union with Christ in order to encourage believers that they did not suffer alone, and that they did not suffer in vain.

Paul took comfort in the fact that when we suffer for the gospel, our union with Christ ensures that Christ suffers and sympathizes with us.

### **C. Ethical Living**

Paul spent much time teaching about ethical Christian living in addition to addressing doctrinal matters.

## 1. **Christ as King**

Because Christ is both sovereign and just, we are legally and ethically obligated to obey everything that he commands.

Christ's kingship should always be one of our fundamental motivations to live godly lives.

## 2. **United to Christ**

Our union with Christ obligates and enables us to live ethically:

- Christ indwells us by his Spirit, giving us a new nature and compelling us to do good works.
- God has commanded that all who are united to his Son must live holy lives. God has predestined good works for us to do.

- We are united to one another through Christ. This obligates us to treat one another as we would treat Christ himself, and as we ourselves want to be treated.

## **V. Summary**



3. Summarize the events and nature of Paul's imprisonment in Caesarea.

4. Summarize the events and nature of Paul's imprisonment in Rome.

5. How did Paul's imprisonment revealed important insights about God and about Paul's own ministry.

6. Describe three things that the book of Acts teaches us about Paul's ministry during his imprisonment.





11. What is the main theological truth that underlies the theological unity of Paul's prison epistles? How does it relate to the themes of Christ's kingship over creation, our union with Christ, and ethical living?

## Application Questions

1. Paul received many warnings regarding immanent danger in Jerusalem, yet he continued toward the city. What gave Paul the confidence and fortitude to move forward in faith? How may we learn from the example of Paul as he faced difficult circumstances and adversity?
2. Why was Paul able to minister freely both to Jews and to Gentiles? What does it look like for believers today to live out Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 9:20-21?
3. God used Paul's imprisonments to advance the gospel and the kingdom of God. How has God worked through adverse circumstances in your life to advance his gospel and kingdom?
4. Explain how suffering can be a form of Christian ministry. Compare and contrast Paul's outlook on suffering with your present understanding of suffering.
5. While Paul's situation as a prisoner was not ideal, he still continued to seek opportunities to proclaim the gospel. What opportunities do you have to proclaim the gospel?
6. Paul spoke often of our union with Christ. In what ways does understanding the doctrine of our union with Christ bring you hope and comfort?
7. What is the most significant insight you have learned from this study?

**Paul and the Colossians**  
**Lesson 2 from the series *Paul's Prison Epistles***  
**Study Guide**

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## Preparation

- Read the book of Colossians.

## Outline

- I. Introduction (0:25)
- II. Background (2:32)
  - A. Relationships (3:58)
    - 1. Church (4:17)
    - 2. Individuals (7:31)
  - B. Problems in Colosse (10:17)
    - 1. Greek Philosophy (11:32)
    - 2. Jewish Law (16:11)
    - 3. Spiritual Beings (20:22)
- III. Structure and Content (31:57)
  - A. Salutation (32:47)
  - B. Encouragements (33:14)
  - D. Final Greetings (4:7-18) (34:04)
  - C. Supremacy of Christianity (35:20)
    - 1. Supremacy of Christ (36:17)
    - 2. Supremacy of Christ's ministers (48:20)
    - 3. Supremacy of Salvation in Christ (56:44)
    - 4. Supremacy of Christian Living (1:2:41)
- IV. Modern Application (1:10:18)
  - A. Loyalty to Christ (1:11:04)
  - B. Spiritual Focus (1:17:31)
- V. Summary (1:28:37)

## Notes

### I. Introduction

### II. Background

Paul's letters were:

- Personal and pastoral
- Motivated by love and concern
- Occasional —written to address specific issues in particular times and places

#### A. Relationships

##### 1. Church

Paul had probably never visited the church in Colosse.

Paul had an indirect relationship with the Colossians through representatives such as:

- Epaphras
- Philemon
- Onesimus
- Tychicus

Paul and the Colossians corresponded with each other.

Paul and the Colossians ministered to each other.

## **2. Individuals**

Paul had friends that labored alongside him in gospel ministry, including:

- Philemon
- Apphia
- Archippus

Ephphras — Paul’s fellow worker and fellow prisoner, a faithful minister of Christ

Onesimus — Slave who sought out Paul after fleeing from Philemon; ministered to Paul in prison.

## **B. Problems in Colosse**

Paul received a report from Epaphras about false teachings threatening the churches of the Lycus Valley. In order to defend the church against these false teachings, Paul wrote his letter to the Colossians.

### **1. Greek Philosophy**

“Philosophy” — Typically applied to occult religions, especially those that were based on religious traditions such as:

- Mysteries
- Rites
- Secret knowledge
- Secret wisdom

True mystery, wisdom and knowledge were found only in Christ, and not in pagan religions.

False teachers in Colosse were enamored with beliefs and practices similar to those found in Greek religion and occult mysticism.

Asceticism — An improper avoidance of physical pleasure; often rooted in the mistaken idea that pleasure is immoral; sometimes advocates inflicting physical pain on oneself.

Paul objected to the ascetic practices in Colosse:

- Asceticism was based on the basic principals of the world.
- It was of no value in resisting sin.

**2. Jewish Law**

In Colosse, their use and understanding of Jewish law departed both from traditional Judaism and from proper Christian practices.

False teachers were using Jewish teachings and practices in corrupt ways.

Their practices distorted Old Testament law and endangered the eternal destinies of those who followed them.

Paul wrote against abuses of the Mosaic Law, but he did not write against the law itself.

### 3. **Spiritual Beings**

The false teachers in Colosse promoted the worship of spiritual beings.

#### a. **Angels**

Ministering spirits — it is important to recognize their work.

According to the false teachers, angels were:

- Cosmic powers
- Oracles that revealed mysterious teachings to those who would:
  - Perform their cultic rites
  - Worship them

This exaggerated view of the power and influence of angels was not uncommon in the ancient world.

**b. Rulers and Authorities**

“Powers” and “authorities” — spiritual beings such as angels.

Paul emphasized Christ’s superiority over every power and authority in heaven and on earth.

The false teachers attributed to these invisible rulers actions and abilities that belong to Christ alone.

The real contrast was not the spiritual over the earthly, but Christ over all.

The spiritual powers worshipped by the false teachers in Colosse were fallen, powerless, defeated demons.

**c. Basic Principles**

Greek term *stoicheia* — “basic principles”

- The gods
- Spiritual powers associated with stars and planets
- Four basic physical elements:
  - earth
  - wind
  - fire
  - water

The basic principles were the basis for the philosophy of the false teachers.

The false teachers appear to have combined:

- Jewish legalism
- Pagan religion
- Christianity

The false teachers appear to have encouraged the worship of the basic principles.

### **III. Structure and Content**

#### **A. Salutation (1:1-2)**

Identifies the apostle Paul as the authoritative author of this letter, and mentions that the letter also comes from Paul's disciple Timothy.

#### **B. Encouragements (1:3-14)**

The encouragements of thanksgiving and intercession follow reports that Paul received from Epaphras.

**D. Final Greetings (4:7-18)**

Paul sent greetings to the Colossians from the many people who were with him in prison.

Colossians, Ephesians and Philemon were written and delivered at approximately the same time.

Paul wrote these letters to specific people in particular circumstances, but he intended them to be applicable to different audiences.

**C. Supremacy of Christianity (1:15-4:6)**

In the main body of the letter, this section details the supremacy of Christianity over the religion of the false teachers.

**1. Supremacy of Christ (1:15-20)**

Christ is the image of the invisible God.

**a. Image of God (1:15)**

In some Greek philosophies, the universe was thought to be God's image, the greatest revelation of God.

Paul pointed to Christ as the image of God. He adopted this Greek philosophical meaning of the term "image of God" to show that Christ was the ultimate revelation of God.

**b. Firstborn over all Creation (1:15)**

Paul mentioned that Christ is the firstborn over all creation.

The Greek term *prototokos* (translated “firstborn”) often referred to superiority and authority rather than to order of birth.

Paul associated Christ’s status as “firstborn” with his authority and supremacy over all creation. He said nothing about a time when Jesus did not exist.

The false gods of the false teachers had no power or authority to give any blessings to anyone.

**c. Agent of Creation (1:16)**

Christ was the agent of creation, the one through whom God created the universe.

Christ was the only agent of creation. Other powers were inferior to him and subject to him.

Christ's priority as the agent of creation makes him far superior to everything within creation.

**d. Supreme Lord (1:18)**

Christ is the supreme Lord because God employed him as the agent of creation and placed him as head over the church.

Any system that seeks to supplant or qualify Christ's unique sovereignty must be false.

**e. God Incarnate (1:19)**

Christ is God incarnate

**f. Only Reconciler (1:20)**

Christ is the only reconciler between God and man.

Jesus Christ is the agent and the means through whom God is purging sin from the world, and making peace with humanity.

**2. Supremacy of Christ's ministers (1:21-2:5)**

**a. Reconciliation through the Christian Gospel (1:21-23; 2:5)**

Paul and the Colossians had already experienced reconciliation through the gospel.

**b. Altruism (1:24)**

Paul suffered on behalf of the church.

Paul's suffering benefited the church by:

- Providing a powerful witness to the gospel
- Encouraging the church
- Completing the sufferings of Christ

**c. Divine Commission (1:25)**

Paul had been appointed to his apostleship by the Lord himself.

The false teachers relied on ideas that idolatrous human beings had invented.

**d. Revelation (1:25-28; 2:2-4)**

The revelation Paul had received was superior to that attested by the false teachers.

Paul had spent three years in the desert of Arabia and in Damascus receiving revelations from God (Gal. 1:15-18).

**e. Empowerment (1:29-2:1)**

God gave power to Christ's ministers.

The Holy Spirit gifted Paul with astounding gifts to advance the kingdom of God on earth:

- Words to speak
- Opportunities to speak
- Miracles to confirm his witness

**3. Supremacy of Salvation in Christ (2:6-23)****a. Life in Christ (2:6-15)**

Because Christ is our Lord:

- We are rooted, built up and strengthened in him
- We feel great thankfulness toward him as a result

We have spiritual vitality because we are in union with Christ.

- Christ's death results in forgiveness.
- Christ's resurrection and life result in the rebirth of our spirits.

We are freed from having to merit salvation through works of the law.

**b. Life under Elements (2:16-23)**

Subjection to the elements:

- Places one under the tyrannical lordship of man
- Results in separation from Christ
- Leads only to asceticism

The salvation offered in Christ is far better than the blessings purported by the false teachers in Colosse.

**4. Supremacy of Christian Living (3:1-4:6)**

The Christian lifestyle is far more ethical than the lifestyle advocated by the false teachers.

We are to value the spiritual and heavenly things more highly than the earthly things.

The ascetics:

- Did not bother to emphasize ideals that were truly heavenly and spiritual
- Their goal may have been spiritual, but their efforts were spent on earthly things.

Paul taught specific ways that believers could focus on and strive for things that were spiritually oriented.

The key to ethical living is this:

- We are united to Christ.
- We have “new selves” or “new natures.”
- We are being inwardly renewed by God.
- This union and renewal enable us to live ethically.

Paul offered practical ways that believers can rely on God's power to overcome sin.

Believers can succeed in ethical living by:

- Emphasizing heavenly, spiritual virtues like compassion and kindness
- Not by focusing on the sins we are trying to avoid

Unlike ascetic practices which are of no value against sin, Paul's method actually made ethical living possible.

#### **IV. Modern Application**

##### **A. Loyalty to Christ**

During the first century, the dominant religious ideas in the Roman Empire were polytheistic.

- Acknowledged the existence of many gods
- Worshipped many gods

Christ demands exclusive worship. If we worship Christ, we cannot worship anything else.

If we do not remain faithful to Christ, we are not saved.

Our modern world frequently challenges our loyalty to Christ by presenting many different gods for us to worship.

Not all pressures come from outside the church.

We feel pressures to be disloyal to Christ. We must reject these false notions and embrace Christ alone.

**B. Spiritual Focus**

Our salvation does not depend upon our earthly pursuits, but upon spiritual realities:

- Restored spirits
- Union with Christ

Regeneration makes us new people. We are not just forgiven; we are also spiritually changed.

Our spirits have been made new; now we are spiritual people. The most beneficial thing for us to do is to focus on our spiritual lives.

To focus on suppressing sinful desires is still to focus on sinful desires.

We should refocus our attention away from earthly matters and onto spiritual matters. But spiritual matters require our participation in the world.

To be heavenly minded is to focus on the one who has ascended to heaven, namely Christ, in order that we might be more like him while we are here on earth.

Paul's moral instructions pertain to spiritual or heavenly matters. Yet, they can only be carried out through active involvement in the present world.

## **V. Summary**



3. Why is it important to understand the background of Colossians as we seek to understand Paul's reason for writing this letter?

4. How did Paul demonstrate to the Colossians that Christ was supreme?

5. How were Christ's ministers supreme over the false teachers in Colosse?

6. How is Christ's salvation superior to the plans that the false teachers in Colosse offered?

7. What makes Christian living superior to other approaches to morality?

8. Summarize the structure and content of Colossians.

9. Why is it important to remain loyal to Christ?

10. Why is it important to have a spiritual focus?

## Application Questions

1. The negative influence of the false teachers made it difficult for the Colossian believers to discern truth from error. What influences in your own culture make it hard to discern truth from error? How can Paul's focus on the supremacy of Christianity guide our own strategy in dealing with error?
2. How should understanding that Christ is the supreme agent of creation shape your approach to the world's challenges and opportunities?
3. How has Christ reconciled you to God? What areas of your world or relationships would be different if Christ's reconciling work were brought to completion?
4. Paul prayed for the Colossians. What benefits might there be to following his example?
5. How does union with Christ help Christians live ethically? Why should this strategy be more effective than the ethical strategies of the ascetics? How does asceticism contrast with appropriate uses of the Christian disciplines?
6. In what areas of life are you challenged in your loyalty to Christ?
7. How should the truth of regeneration shape our view of ourselves and of others? How does regeneration makes us new people?
8. What is the most significant insight you have learned from this study?

**Paul and the Ephesians**  
**Lesson 3 from the series *Paul's Prison Epistles***  
**Study Guide**

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## Preparation

- Read the book of Ephesians.

## Outline

- I. Introduction (0:28)
- II. Background (2:35)
  - A. Authorship (3:45)
  - B. Audience (6:11)
    - 1. Primary audience (6:36)
    - 2. Secondary audience (10:23)
  - C. Purpose (18:29)
    - 1. Kingdom of God (19:37)
    - 2. Challenges (27:33)
- III. Structure and Content (34:00)
  - A. Salutation (34:52)
  - B. Praise (35:20)
  - C. Prayer (38:34)
  - D. Body (41:40)
    - 1. Citizenship (42:46)
    - 2. Administration (48:20)
    - 3. Code for Living (54:00)
  - E. Final Greetings (1:00:50)
- IV. Modern Application (1:1:08)
  - A. Honoring the King (1:1:47)
    - 1. Praise and Worship (1:5:45)
    - 2. Obedience (1:7:54)
  - B. Building the Kingdom (1:11:23)
  - C. Conquering the Cosmos (1:22:53)
- V. Summary (1:28:58)

## Notes

### I. Introduction

### II. Background

Paul's letters were pastoral and caring, and they spoke directly to the problems that the church faced in the first century.

#### A. Authorship

A number of modern scholars have argued that Ephesians was written by one of Paul's students, but there are good reasons to accept Paul's authorship.

The letter states that it was written by Paul.

Ephesians closely resembles Paul's other letters in both doctrine and language.

According to Acts 19–21, Paul had planted the church in Ephesus, and had lived in Ephesus for two years.

**B. Audience**

**1. Primary audience**

Paul identified the church in Ephesus as his audience.

Ephesus was the capital city of the Roman Province of Asia.

Many details in the letter would have been particularly relevant to Ephesus.

Several early church fathers testified that Paul sent this letter to Ephesians.

“We have it on the true tradition of the Church, that this epistle was sent to the Ephesians, not to the Laodiceans” (Tertullian, *Against Marcion*, book 5 chapter 17).

## 2. Secondary audience

In the first century a number of churches grew in the Lycus Valley.

- Colosse
- Laodicea
- Hierapolis (possibly)

**a. Unfamiliar audience**

There was a significant portion of Paul's audience whose faith he had not seen firsthand.

Paul's letter contains no personal references.

**b. Relevance**

Tychicus delivered at least two letters for Paul, and probably three:

- One to Ephesus
- One to Colosse
- One to Laodicea (probably)

The churches in the Lycus Valley were prominent in Paul's mind during his imprisonment.

Ephesians and Colossians address similar problems. So, Ephesians would have been relevant and appropriate for the churches of the Lycus Valley.

## **C. Purpose**

Paul responded to the problems of several churches in different locations, many of which he had never met.

### **1. Kingdom of God**

Paul explicitly referred to God's kingdom sixteen times in his letters, and he used other royal vocabulary at least as often.

Christ's kingdom exists in the overlap of the ages:

- The present age — sin and death
- The age to come — God will pour out ultimate blessings and curses

Preaching about the kingdom of God formed the core of Paul's apostolic ministry.

The gospel is cosmic in scope. Our divine King is using his power and authority:

- To conquer sin and bring his enemies into subjection
- To redeem his people from their bondage
- To establish his people as rulers over the New Earth

Paul instructed the Ephesians regarding the nature of the kingdom of God to give them a larger picture of the gospel.

**a.      **Citizenship (Eph. 2:12, 19)****

In the Old Testament, God's people were organized as the kingdom of Israel.

The most valuable and well-known citizenship in Paul's day was citizenship in the Roman Empire.

**b. Inheritance (Eph. 1:14,18; 5:5)**

Inheritance rights were only available to citizen of the kingdoms. Paul explicitly associated our inheritance with Christ's kingdom.

**c. Military Service (Eph. 6:10-18)**

War was associated most directly with the reality of life within kingdoms.

Paul's insistence that Christians engage in spiritual warfare also implied citizenship in God's kingdom.

**d. Rule over Creation (Eph. 1:20–2:6)**

Rule over creation was associated with God's kingdom.

**e. Source of Names (Eph. 3:15)**

In the Old Testament, God's people were called by his name because they were a part of his kingdom.

It was common for those who were granted Roman citizenship to take the name of their sponsor or of the emperor.

**f. Ambassador (Eph. 6:20)**

In both Old Testament and Roman settings, an ambassador was an official representative of the king or emperor.

## **2. Challenges**

### **a. Sinful Nature**

Sin must not characterize the citizens of God's kingdom.

### **b. Racial Tension**

Paul used the imagery of the kingdom of God to address tension between Jews and Gentiles in the church.

Paul discussed the church in terms of citizenship and covenants.

### **c. Demonic Forces**

Demons have "the kingdom of the air," ruled by Satan.

The church — God’s kingdom — is in a cosmic battle with the kingdom of darkness, ruled by Satan and his demons.

### **III. Structure and Content**

#### **A. Salutation (1:1-2)**

The salutation states that the letter comes from the apostle Paul, and mentions that he holds his apostleship “by the will of God.”

#### **B. Praise (1:3-14)**

This is Paul’s only canonical letter in which the salutation is followed by such a section of praise to God.

Great benevolences were commonly directed by ancient kings toward their people.

Paul praised God for our inheritance in Christ.

**C. Prayer (1:15-23)**

The kingdom of God provides the context for Paul's prayer.

Paul mentioned God's sovereignty when he spoke of:

- The Father's "incomparably great power" and "mighty strength"
- Christ being enthroned above all other rulers

Christ shares his inheritance with us, so that his inheritance is our inheritance too.

**D. Body (2:1-6:20)**

The body focuses on the contrast between the righteous kingdom of God and the sinful kingdom of demons and fallen humanity.

**1. Citizenship (2:1-22)****a. Kingdom of Darkness**

The human race is sinful and fallen.

**b. Kingdom of Light**

God sovereignly determined to deliver people so they would inherit salvation.

**c. Nature of Citizenship**

God has fulfilled the Old Testament ideal of combining both Jews and Gentiles into one kingdom under God's sovereign rule.

**2. Administration (3:1-21)**

Just before his arrest in Jerusalem, Paul had warned the Ephesian elders that false teachers would arise from their own ranks.

Paul instructed the elders to guard against false teachers.

In Paul's day, God administered his kingdom through the office of apostle. This office no longer exists today.

The apostles were vested with God's authority and ruled infallibly over the entire church, including over the elders.

The apostles possessed:

- Special grace from God that empowered them in their ministry
- Special revelation from God that taught them infallible truth

Paul spoke God's words to God's people in order to lead them into the truth.

**3. Code for Living (4:1-6:20)**

**a. Ecclesiastical Order in the Kingdom (4:1-16)**

When each person does his or her assigned tasks, it benefits Christ. Because it benefits Christ, it benefits the whole kingdom.

Paul portrayed the Lord as a victorious king returning from battle.

Christ has divided his gifts in ways that enable the citizens of the kingdom to serve one another.

**b. Purifying the Kingdom (4:17-5:20)**

Corruption remains in the kingdom of light.

Believers within the kingdom of light have a new nature that they can rely on to overcome their sin.

God's kingdom is to be as morally pure as possible; it is to reflect the character of its king.

**c. Domestic Order in the Kingdom (5:21-6:9)**

Proper relationships of authority must be maintained within all levels of Christ's kingdom.

Everyone should honor and respect those who hold positions of leadership, influence, and authority in the church.

Those in positions of leadership should work for the benefit of all.

**d. Warfare of the Kingdom (6:10-20)**

Everyone in the kingdom of light is called to serve in God's army, fighting the spiritual war against the kingdom of darkness.

To make sure we can stand firm against our enemies, he suits us in his armor and arms us with his word.

**E. Final Greetings (6:21-24)**

Paul offered a closing blessing, and indicated that Tychicus would deliver this letter.

**IV. Modern Application****A. Honoring the King**

Our divine king has done many wonderful things for us. We should respond by honoring him, especially through:

- Thankfulness
- Obedience
- Loyalty

God demonstrates his love when he:

- Regenerates us
- Transfers us into his kingdom
- Places us in a position of authority and honor
- Gives us our inheritance

Love — faithfulness and devotion; expressed primarily by:

- Benevolence and protection on the part of the king
- Obedience and loyalty on the part of his subjects

God's faithfulness to us is demonstrated through his kindness and protection, as expressed in things like:

- Predestination
- Christ's death on our behalf
- Regeneration of our spirits
- Our citizenship in God's kingdom
- Our union with Christ the heavenly king
- The glory we will inherit in the future

Paul honored God in doxological praise by ascribing glory to him.

Paul exhorted his readers to honor God through their obedience, by living a worthy life.

## **1. Praise and Worship**

We are to express our heartfelt gratitude in:

- Psalms
- Hymns
- Spiritual songs
- Music in our hearts

Paul included several models of praise for us to follow, including:

- His praise in Ephesians 1:3-14
- His doxological prayer in Ephesians 3:14-21

## **2. Obedience**

Paul taught us to render obedience to our divine king as a way of honoring him.

Our love for the Lord is to be:

- Undying
- Never-ending
- Persistent
- Devoted
- Steadfast

God also created us anew in Christ so that we would be productive citizens in his kingdom, doing the good works he assigned to us.

## **B. Building the Kingdom**

God requires that we help him expand and grow his earthly kingdom.

The kingdom of God is a building, with each Christian being a stone in the structure.

The goal of this building is to become God's dwelling, so that God will live in the midst of his people.

When Paul taught that both Jews and Gentiles would live in God's presence as his Temple, he meant that God's kingdom was moving toward its final goal.

The big picture:

- Honoring God
- Living in his presence
- Striving to increase Christ's glory rather than our own

We must be humble — no believer is more deserving of blessing than any other.

We must repent of:

- Wrongly dividing from one another
- Wrongly elevating ourselves to the detriment of others

We must embrace all believers as equals in the kingdom of God.

The metaphor that Paul used most frequently to explain kingdom building in Ephesians was Christ's body:

- Christ as the head
- All believers collectively composing Christ's body

Like the metaphor of the Temple, the image of the body described the kingdom of God:

- Christ was seated as king in heaven
- He ruled for the benefit of his people, the church

Paul's fullest use of the body imagery appears in Ephesians 4:1-16, where he argued for ecclesiastical order in the kingdom.

God has established leaders in the church who are to prepare the rest of us to minister to one another.

These leaders are to guide the church toward two goals:

- Unity in the faith
- Attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ — to bring all of creation under the rule of Christ

Love must characterize both the leader's teaching and the church's works of service.

Our love for our neighbors:

- Not merely a feeling of personal connection
- A loyal commitment and dedication that seeks their benefit

### **C. Conquering the Cosmos**

God's kingdom currently co-exists with the present age of sin and death. God's forces battle against the kingdom of the demons and fallen humanity.

By our connection with Christ, we have the upper hand in the battle against demonic forces.

The very existence of the church testifies to the doom of all of God's enemies.

Even before the creation of mankind, God planned to use his church to reveal his glory to his demonic enemies.

God loves and values his people. And in the process of reconciling all things to himself, and renewing and purifying the cosmos, he is starting with us.

Proof that the kingdom of God has begun:

- The existence of the church
- The forgiveness of the church
- The sanctification of the church

**V. Summary**



3. In what ways does knowing the background of Paul's letter to the Ephesians help you better understand the letter he wrote?

4. How does Paul's teaching about praise and prayer function within the overall structure of the letter?

5. Describe Paul's teaching in Ephesians regarding the citizenship, administration and code for living within the Kingdom of God.

6. Why and how are Christians to honor our divine King?

7. Why should Christians work to build the kingdom of God?

8. Describe Paul's teaching about this age and the age to come.

9. How are Christians to respond to the blessings we receive from Christ our King?

## Application Questions

1. What blessings and benefits result from being citizens of the kingdom of God?
2. How does your understanding of the gospel fit with Paul's teaching on the kingdom of God?
3. How should Paul's teachings on the kingdom of God shape our approach to Christians from different cultural or racial backgrounds?
4. Dr. Kidd mentioned that "in Christ each believer is counted as if he or she were Jesus himself." What practical implications should this have for you in your Christian life?
5. How should our interaction with others inside the kingdom of God differ from our interaction with those who belong to the kingdom of darkness?
6. In light of Paul's teachings in Ephesians, what are some practical things you can do to be more effective in your pursuit of moral purity?
7. How is the relationship between a king and his subjects similar to God's relationship to believers?
8. What is the most significant insight you have learned from this study?

**Paul and Philemon**  
**Lesson 4 from the series *Paul's Prison Epistles***  
**Study Guide**

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## Preparation

- Read the book of Philemon.

## Outline

- I. Introduction (0:27)
- II. Background (1:56)
  - A. People (2:59)
    - 1. Philemon (3:31)
    - 2. Onesimus (6:23)
    - 3. Witnesses (9:12)
  - B. Problem (11:53)
  - C. Mediation (17:37)
    - 1. Onesimus' Petition (18:05)
    - 2. Paul's Agreement (20:56)
- III. Structure and Content (26:52)
  - A. Salutation (28:50)
  - B. Thanksgiving (29:59)
  - C. Petition (32:48)
    - 1. Paul as advocate (33:45)
    - 2. Onesimus as Petitioner (37:16)
    - 3. Philemon as Master (40:55)
    - 4. God as Ruler (43:25)
    - 5. Petition (45:32)
    - 6. Confidence (53:01)
  - D. Final Greetings (54:53)
- IV. Modern Application (55:54)
  - A. Accountability (57:26)
  - B. Compassion (1:2:59)
    - 1. Kindness (1:4:34)
    - 2. Intercession (1:6:39)
  - C. Reconciliation (1:8:32)
- V. Summary (1:13:39)

## Notes

### I. Introduction

### II. Background

#### A. People

##### 1. Philemon

Philemon — Paul's partner in gospel ministry, and the host of the local church.

Philemon seems to have had a significant history with Paul that formed a strong bond between the men.

Philemon owed Paul a great debt.

We don't know how Paul and Philemon became friends. But they knew each other very well.

## **2. Onesimus**

Onesimus — Philemon's slave and a member of Philemon's household; not initially a believer.

Paul referred to Onesimus as his son because he had brought him to faith in Christ, and because he had developed a fatherly love for him.

## **3. Witnesses**

Paul mentioned a number of other Colossians in his letter to Philemon:

- Apphia
- Archippus
- Epaphras

Paul expected them to serve as familiar witnesses in his appeal to Philemon on Onesimus' behalf.

Epaphras had a keen interest in making sure that Philemon would respond properly to Paul's letter.

**B. Problem**

“Onesimus” is derived from a Greek word meaning “useful” or “profitable.” But Onesimus had been a useless or unprofitable slave.

Onesimus may have caused a significant loss for Philemon.

Under Roman law, a master had the right to punish slaves severely, even with heavy beatings. Onesimus fled in fear.

God had a positive reason for allowing the situation.

The law permitted slaves to leave their masters temporarily to find an advocate or mediator.

If Onesimus fled in order to ask Paul to be his advocate and mediator with Philemon, he was not a fugitive.

## C. Mediation

### 1. Onesimus' Petition

Some scholars conclude that Onesimus was seeking to start a new life far from Philemon, and encountered Paul only accidentally.

Scripture provides some details suggesting that Onesimus sought out Paul as his advocate.

- Onesimus knew where Paul was — the church at Colosse had sponsored Epaphras' mission to care for Paul in prison.
- Onesimus pursued a meeting with Paul.
- Onesimus pursued Paul's advocacy.

Paul wrote to Philemon only after Onesimus had endeared himself to Paul:

- Paul converted Onesimus to Christianity.
- Onesimus ministered to Paul in prison.

## 2. Paul's Agreement

Philemon had the right to punish Onesimus. So, Paul defended Onesimus on the basis of mercy.

Godly authority figures carry out appropriate punishments because it is the right thing to do.

Onesimus initially stayed with Paul to convince the apostle of his good intent. During this time:

- Paul preached the gospel to Onesimus.
- The Holy Spirit brought Onesimus to faith in Christ.

Onesimus might have remained with Paul without becoming a fugitive.

- Morally, this would not have been the best solution.
- The Christian values of charity and reconciliation demanded his return to Philemon.

### **III. Structure and Content**

Philemon is Paul's only canonical letter that does not focus on teaching. In Philemon, Paul wrote as an advocate rather than as a teacher.

Philemon is Paul's most personal letter, expressing his deep concern both for Onesimus and Philemon, and making requests based on their friendship.

#### **A. Salutation (1-3)**

Paul is the primary author of the letter. The letter also came from Timothy.

Philemon is the letter's primary recipient and several others were to bear witness to the letter.

**B. Thanksgiving (4-7)**

Paul thanked the Lord for the ways Philemon had blessed his fellow believers in Colosse.

God loves and forgives all believers. Paul encouraged the Colossians to:

- Reflect the same love toward one another
- Patiently bear with one another when wronged
- Forgiving grievances rather than demand recompense

**C. Petition (8-21)****1. Paul as advocate**

Paul had the authority to order Philemon to do the right thing. Instead, he wrote to Philemon in ways that elicited Philemon's sympathy and concern.

Paul spoke as a weak, elderly man in need of help.

Paul wanted Philemon to respond to this situation with genuine Christian love.

- Compassion for an elderly man in prison
- Compassion for the newly converted brother in Christ who ministered to him

## 2. **Onesimus as Petitioner**

Paul explained the relationship between Onseimus and Paul.

Wordplay in Philemon 11-13:

- Onesimus was “useless” (a-chrestos)
- When he was “without Christ” (a-christos)
- He became very “useful” (chrestos)
- When he received “Christ” (christos) as his Lord

Onesimus was taking Philemon’s place in service to Paul.

Onesimus was returning to Colosse to petition Philemon for mercy:

- Hoping for reconciliation
- Hoping for release

### **3. Philemon as Master**

Philemon had authority over Onesimus.

Paul wanted Philemon himself to choose to do the right thing.

Paul thought that a voluntary reconciliation between the two men would make their brotherly relationship in Christ all the stronger.

#### **4. God as Ruler**

Paul pondered the greater good that God might bring out of Onesimus' sin, if Philemon would only grant his request.

Paul suggested God had orchestrated events to bring Onesimus and Philemon into conflict in order that:

- Onesimus would be forced to seek Paul's advocacy
- Onesimus might be brought to faith in Christ
- Onesimus might be reconciled to Philemon as an equal in the Lord

#### **5. Petition**

Paul asked Philemon to forgive Onesimus.

Paul offered himself as Onesimus' substitute in the event that Philemon chose to exact payment or recompense for his slave.

Paul stood in front of Onesimus as his father and protector:

- Shielding him from Philemon
- Providing reasons that Philemon should be merciful for Paul's sake

Christian faith does not require all Christian masters to free their believing slaves.

- Freedom is preferable to slavery (1 Cor. 7:21).
- The relationship of slave and master can be conducted in ways that are both godly and beneficial to all parties
- Handle slavery in a Christ-like fashion.

## **6. Confidence**

Paul believed that Philemon would do as he asked.

Scripture does not record Philemon's response, or tell us what happened to Onesimus.

**D. Final Greetings (22-25)**

Paul expected to be released from prison rather quickly, and asked Philemon to prepare a room for him.

Epaphras served as a remote witness to the Philemon's resolution of the matter with Onesimus.

**IV. Modern Application**

Paul's epistle to Philemon shows us how Paul applied his own theology in his own life.

Paul's mediation between Onesimus and Philemon corresponds to his teachings in other epistles like Colossians and Ephesians.

**A. Accountability**

Paul called on several individuals to encourage Philemon to do the right thing.

The wise thing to do is to expose our lives to the fellowship of the kingdom of light, so that we are prevented from sinning.

The Lord commonly used the potential for shame to motivate his people to do the right thing in the Old Testament.

- Habakkuk 2:16
- Ezekiel 7:18

One way for the church to hold us accountable is for believers to stay in close fellowship.

Paul did not emphasize shame when he spoke to Philemon, because Philemon was not living a shameful life.

We are to hold one another accountable through the mutual submission that all believers must render to one another.

The church can prevent sin and encourage good works by:

- Showing disapproval for sin
- Offering encouragement
- Submitting to the church's wise counsel

## **B. Compassion**

Paul encouraged us to imitate Christ's compassion through Paul's praise, teaching and example in his letter to Philemon.

**1. Kindness**

Modern Christians must be moved by pity and love for those in the church, and we must respond to their needs so far as we are able.

**2. Intercession**

Intercession can be simple as an expression of opinion, without personal risk, that sways circumstances in favor of another.

Intercession can be as intense as giving up one's life to protect another who is guilty.

Modern Christians are called to intercede for other believers.

**C. Reconciliation**

Reconciliation is:

- Creating unity and love where hostility existed before
- Rooted in forgiveness and mercy
- Maintained through patience and longsuffering

Paul insisted that both Onesimus and Philemon had an obligation to:

- Restore their relationship
- Embrace one another as brothers in Christ without holding grudges

Because we are united to Christ, we are all forgiven and blessed. So, we have no basis for resenting or refusing to be reconciled to any believer.

Reconciliation between believers should be a high priority in the modern church.

**V. Summary**





5. Why did Paul offer thanksgiving in verses 4-7?

6. Describe the six aspects of Paul's petition found in verses 8-21.

7. Summarize the main features of the letter's structure and content.

8. How did Paul's letter anticipate the presence of accountability among Christians?

9. Describe two aspects of compassion that Paul stressed as important in our relations with Christians.

10. How did Paul advocate reconciliation between Onesimus and Philemon?

11. Summarize three main ways in which Paul's teaching to Philemon applies to the church.

## Application Questions

1. What types of problems often require the mediation of an outside party? Have you ever faced a problem that required mediation?
2. With which person in this letter do you most identify: Paul, Philemon or Onesimus? Why?
3. Paul was an advocate for Onesimus and incurred a potential cost by defending him before Philemon. Who has been an advocate for you? For whom should you advocate?
4. What inspired Paul's advocacy for Onesimus?
5. Paul recognized that God is at work even in the midst of conflict and strife. How has this been true in your own experience?
6. Paul appealed to his friend Philemon on the basis of mercy. Why did he adopt this strategy? Which do you find easier to do: appeal for mercy or make demands?
7. How has forgiveness brought reconciliation to your life?
8. Onesimus and Philemon had to assume responsibility in order to restore their relationship. Is there any responsibility you need to assume in order to bring reconciliation to a fractured relationship?
9. What is the most significant insight you have learned from this study?

**Paul and the Philippians**  
**Lesson 5 from the series *Paul's Prison Epistles***  
**Study Guide**

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## Preparation

- Read the book of Philippians.

## Outline

- I. Introduction (0:26)
- II. Background (2:22)
  - A. Relationship (3:33)
  - B. Suffering in Prison (8:41)
  - C. Conditions in Philippi (17:11)
    - 1. Concern for Paul (17:49)
    - 2. Problems for the Church (22:03)
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## Notes

### I. Introduction

### II. Background

#### A. Relationship

Paul had planted the church in Philippi during his second missionary journey, around the year A.D. 49 or 50.

In Philippi, Paul:

- Gained his first European convert
- Was jailed for an exorcism
- Led the Philippian jailer to a profession of faith in Christ

The church was poor and not always able to help Paul financially. But, when they had opportunity, they gave to him generously.

Paul referred to the Philippians as his “dear friends” (2:12, 4:1)

## **B. Suffering in Prison**

Paul often suffered greatly. He did not always bear up well under these hardships. At times, he was depressed, even despairing.

Paul spoke frequently of death as welcome relief from his suffering.

Paul’s circumstances were so oppressive that the benefits of being with Christ outweighed:

- His desire to continue in ministry
- His hatred for death itself

Paul was not absolutely convinced that he would die.

## **C. Conditions in Philippi**

### **1. Concern for Paul**

As soon as the Philippians were able, they demonstrated their concern by sending:

- A gift to meet Paul's earthly needs
- Epaphroditus to deliver the gift and minister to Paul

Epaphroditus delivered a report to Paul expressing the Philippians' fear that:

- Paul was being persecuted by other believers
- A threat of death hung over his head

The Philippians were worried that Paul might die, whether through assassination or public execution.

## **2. Problems for the Church**

### **a. Persecution**

After Paul planted the church in Philippi, he encountered great resistance from Jews in Thessalonica.

The church was truly suffering at the hands of unbelievers.

### **b. False Teachings**

Paul prepared the Philippians to reject false teaching.

Paul may have been concerned about:

- Heresies that had threatened the churches in Colosse and the other cities of the Lycus Valley.
- Christian Judaizers from Jerusalem (see Gal.2:11-21; Rom. 4:9-17)

**c. Conflicts**

The Philippians struggled with conflicts among believers within the church.

Paul exhorted two women, who seem to have been unable to resolve their differences, to reconcile.

Paul spent a substantial amount of his letter emphasizing the importance of unity and love in the church.

**III. Structure and Content**

**A. Salutation (1:1-2)**

Paul is the primary author of the letter. The letter also comes from Timothy.

Philippians is Paul's only letter that never calls explicit attention to his apostolic authority.

**B. Thanksgiving (1:3-8)**

Paul presents a fairly standard statement of thanks, speaking of:

- The joy the Philippians have brought to him
- His expectations for their ultimate salvation

**C. Prayer (1:9-11)**

Paul's prayer is packed with statements that reflect the emphasis of the entire letter:

- Make proper judgments
- Perform good works
- Persevere in faith and practice
- Bring glory and praise to God

**D. Body (1:12-4:20)**

Paul let the Philippians know how much he loved them and how thankful he was for their friendship and ministry.

**1. Paul's Perseverance (1:12-26)****a. Present Ministry (1:12-18a)**

Paul persevered by finding reasons to be joyful despite his suffering.

**b. Future Deliverance (1:18b-21)**

Paul focused on the possibility that he might eventually be released from prison.

**c. Future Ministry (1:22-26)**

Paul looked to the possibility of a future ministry to the Philippians as a source of joy.

**2. Exhortations to Persevere (1:27-4:9)**

Paul instructed the Philippians to remain faithful to Christ and to live exemplary lives even in the midst of distressing circumstances.

**a. Importance of Perseverance (1:27-2:18)**

God had planned the Philippians' sufferings as a means of blessing them.

Paul wanted the Philippians to rejoice in the midst of suffering because of the blessings it produces.

**b. Help for Perseverance (2:19-30)**

It is much easier to endure suffering when we have real people helping us on a daily basis, and suffering right alongside us.

Paul sent Epaphroditus back to them in order to ease their minds as well as to minister to them.

Paul planned to send Timothy to Philippi.

Paul hoped that he would be released from prison, and would come to minister to the Philippians.

**c. Examples of Perseverance (3:1-16)**

Paul was a positive example of perseverance in the faith:

- Mindset
- Behavior

Paul refused to rely on his earthly merits. He depended only on Christ's merit, which God credited to him by means of faith.

We must maintain our faith and live holy lives, or else we prove our faith to be false.

Professing faith is not enough — we must prove our faith by persevering.

**d. Challenges to Perseverance (3:17-4:9)**

Paul encouraged the Philippians not to falter in their faithfulness to God because of:

- False teachers
- Conflict within the church
- Personal hardship

True believers within the church could present challenges to the perseverance of other believers.

Believers should ask God to relieve their anxieties.

**3. Affirmation of Perseverance (4:10-20)**

Paul loved the Philippians with all his heart. Their gift encouraged him.

**E. Final Greetings (4:21-23)**

The mention of believers within Caesar's household demonstrates that Paul's imprisonment had not hindered his gospel ministry.

**IV. Modern Application****A. Nature of Perseverance****1. Definition**

True faith and righteous living

All Paul's human status and good works were useless for obtaining true righteousness and salvation.

As long as we continue to rely solely upon Christ's merit for our righteousness, we are persevering, standing firm in our faith.

## 2. Necessity

If we fail to maintain true faith:

- We will not be found in Christ
- Therefore, we will not be resurrected to a life of eternal glory

If we do not persevere in righteous living, we prove ourselves to be unbelievers, and we will not be saved.

## 3. Assurance

In light of assurance:

- Paul's teachings on perseverance are not a threat to believers
- They are a comfort

Every true believer will certainly persevere in both faith and righteous living, so that our salvation is guaranteed.

God controls our hearts and minds for his good purpose.

- This includes perseverance.
- There is no way we can fail to stand firm until the end.

## **B. Mindset of Perseverance**

### **1. Humility**

Paul had every reason to be humble before God. By accepting this reality, he prepared himself to be built up by God.

Paul patterned his own mindset after the mindset of Jesus, who willingly humbled himself in order to obtain God's blessings for himself and for us.

Some scholars have suggested the Philippians 2:6-11 is a portion of a hymn that was known in the church before Paul wrote to the Philippians.

Philippians 2:6-11 describes Christ during three stages of history:

- His pre-incarnate state
- His humiliation
- His exaltation

Humility helps us persevere in righteous living and faith.

## 2. **Optimism**

Paul's optimism — a conscious decision to focus his attention on those things that were truly good instead of those things that were truly bad.

While Paul was being troubled by insincere preachers of the gospel:

- He focused on the blessing that Christ was being preached
- Not on the preachers' evil motives

Focusing on the good and fighting against anxiety and discouragement is a means of calling on God to guard our hearts and minds.

### **3. Joy**

Paul concentrated on finding joy in order to persevere through his distressing circumstances.

Paul encouraged the Philippians to be joyful because the Lord was near as:

- Their help in time of need
- The king who would return to bring his reign of peace to all the earth

### **C. Ministry of Perseverance**

The Philippians' gift somewhat alleviated Paul's suffering, so that persevering became a bit easier.

The Philippians ministered to Paul through their love and encouragement.

We may help others persevere by:

- Spending time with people
- Helping them with their physical needs

## **V. Summary**





5. In what areas did Paul persevered? By what means did he persevere?

6. What types of exhortations to persevere did Paul offer to the Philippians?



9. Summarize three aspects of the nature of perseverance mentioned in this lesson.

10. Explain three characteristics of the proper mindset of perseverance.

11. In what ways does the church express the ministry of perseverance?

12. How should the modern church apply Paul's teachings about perseverance?

## Application Questions

1. Paul wrestled between his desire to depart and be with Christ, and his continued usefulness in ministry on this earth. How can knowing that God has a purpose for each of us on this earth help you to persevere?
2. Paul had many friends in Philippi who ministered to him, which brought him great encouragement. Has anyone ministered to you in a time of need? What impact did that have, and how did it help you persevere?
3. How can our salvation be both secure in Christ (John 3:36; John 17:3; Eph. 1:13-14; Rom. 3:22-24), yet still depend upon our perseverance in faith?
4. Paul's optimism in the midst of discouragement and suffering helped him to persevere. How does the cultivation of a thankful heart to God help in perseverance?
5. How can rejoicing in the Lord and praying about our anxieties bring us peace and help us persevere?
6. How can pride hinder our perseverance?
7. What is the most significant insight you have learned from this study?