

INTRODUCTION TO THE NEW TESTAMENT

Week 7: The Prison Epistles:
Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon and Philippians

Letters from a Prisoner

- Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians and Philemon are often called the prison epistles because they speak of Paul being "in chains" (Ephesians 6:20, Philippians 1:7, Colossians 4:18, Philemon 1, 10)
- This is probably a bit of a misnomer: Paul was under house arrest at Rome (AD 61-62), but had a great deal of freedom



A Timeline of Events

- Paul is sent to Rome where he is imprisoned. He produces a rough outline of Ephesians
- News comes of a new heresy in Colossae which was infecting the church. Onesimus comes before Paul with a confession about robbing and fleeing his owner Philemon
- AD 61: Paul writes Colossians with warnings (taking some material from his outline) and writes Philemon.
- He finishes Ephesians and sends all three letters together.
- AD 62: Paul sees the end of his ordeal in sight, and writes Philippians, which refers to some of the guards being converted.

Ephesians/Colossians/Philemon Connections

- Tychicus is mentioned in both Ephesians and Colossians as the bearer and in the same form (Ephesians 6:21-22, Colossians 4:7-8)
- Strong overlap in language between Colossians and Ephesians
- Colossians has a strong connection with Philemon
 - Timothy is mentioned in opening (Colossians 1:1, Philemon 1)
 - Greetings are sent from the same people (Colossians 4:10-14, Philemon 23-24)
 - Onesimus, the subject of Philemon, is mentioned as being sent with Tychicus in Colossians 4:9
 - Archippus is mentioned in both letters (Philemon 2, Colossians 4:17)

Who Wrote Them?

- Traditionally, and according to each letter, Paul is the author.
- Pauline features abound in all the letters, and there is great points of comparison between Ephesians and Colossians
- The themes of the letters find comparison in other letters by Paul.

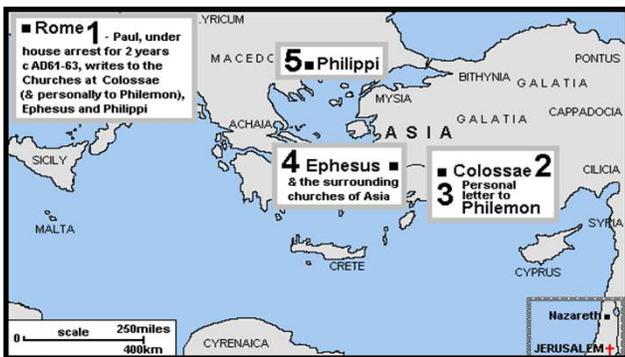


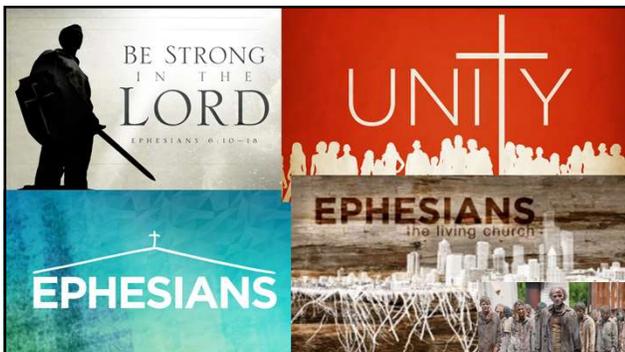
Where Were They Written From?

- Three possible locations: Ephesus, Caesarea, or **ROME**
- Ephesus seems unlikely for two reasons:
 - It is unlikely that Paul would write from prison in that city, to that city
 - We have no positive evidence that Paul was imprisoned in Ephesus
- Caesarea seems unlikely for two reasons
 - Onesimus would not have run to a place where he could not escape notice and not have good access to Paul
 - Paul anticipates his release in Philemon, but in Caesarea he would have been waiting on an appeal to Caesar in Rome

From Rome!

- Three possible locations: Ephesus, Caesarea, or **ROME**
- Several pieces of evidence point to Rome
 - Tradition says Rome, and we must have overwhelming evidence to deny this.
 - We know of a Roman Imprisonment (house arrest)
 - Onesimus would have had access to Paul in Rome
 - Luke is with Paul in Rome (Colossians 4:14, Philemon 24) and this is supported by the "we" section in Acts
 - Paul refers to palace guards (Philippians 1:13)





Is "In Ephesus" Authentic?

- The place of this letter is missing from 1:1 in some of the best manuscripts
- The letter seems impersonal, compare to Paul's relationship with the Ephesians
- Marcion: "Epistle to Laodiceans" (Colossians 4:16)
- May have been a circular letter for many churches
- We cannot conclude with certainty a location for this letter



Ephesians: Major Themes

- The church the body of Christ (Ephesians 4:13)
- What Christ has done, what we should do
 - *Christ has reconciled all creation to God*
 - *Christ has united all people: "Christians, get along with each other!"*
 - *Christians must live as new people*

Ephesus was a wealthy port city, a center of learning and near key trade routes, there was great temple to Artemis in the city, and Ephesus is a key city in several parts of the New Testament

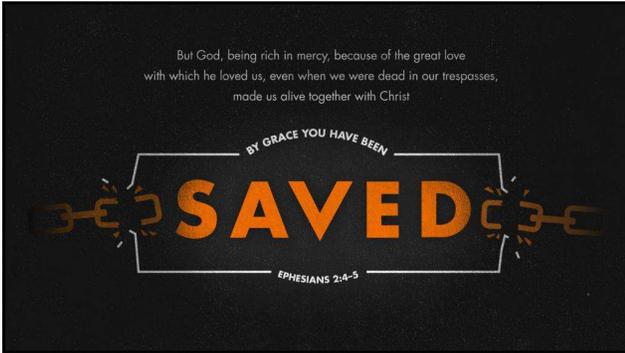


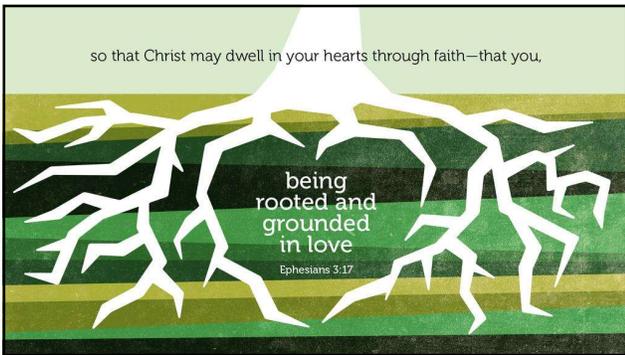
EPHESIANS		
	Our Position in Christ	Our Practice on Earth
Introduction (1:1-9)	Section 1: What God has done for us (1) Emphasis: sovereignty	Section 1: Our new unity (4:1-16)
	Section 2: What Christ has done in us (2:1-10) Emphasis: grace	Section 2: Our new walk (4:17-6:9)
	Section 3: What Christ has done between us (2:11-3:21) Emphasis: reconciliation	Section 3: Our new strength (6:10-20)
	CHAPTERS 1-3	CHAPTERS 4-6
Emphasis	Doctrinal: vertical relationship with God	Practical: horizontal relationship with others
Core Phrase	"He chose us in Him." (1:4)	"Walk in a manner worthy of the calling." (4:1)
Subjects	Declarations of heavenly truths (God's accomplishments)	Exhortations for earthly living (Christians' assignments)
Prayers	Paul's prayer for Ephesians (1:15-23)	Paul's prayer for the whole church (3:14-21) and Christians' prayers for one another (6:18-20)
Theme	The holy community God is creating and how it is to live out its calling	
Key Verses	1:9-10; 4:1-3	
Christ in Ephesians	Jesus is the source of spiritual blessing, the Cornerstone of the church, and the goal of spiritual maturity (1:3; 2:20; 4:11-16).	

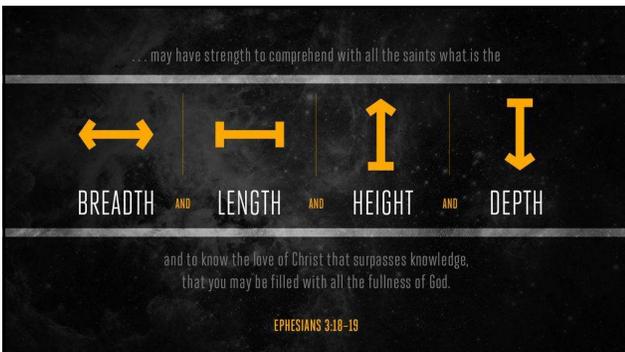
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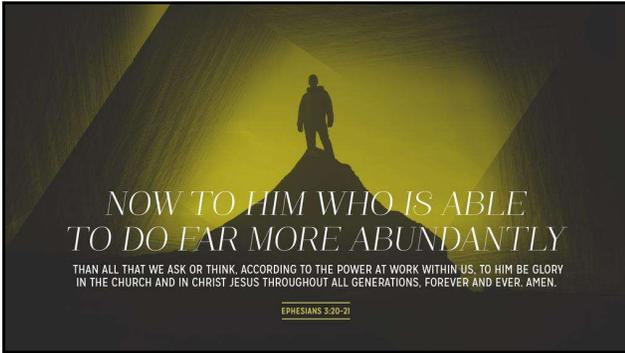
Ephesians: Basic Outline	
I.	Introduction (1:1-14)
II.	Paul's Prayer of Thanksgiving (1:15-23)
III.	Salvation by Grace through Faith (2:1-10)
IV.	Unity and Peace of Christ (2:11-22)
V.	Revelation of the Gospel Mystery (3:1-13)
VI.	Paul's Prayer for Strength and Insight (3:14-21)
VII.	Unity in the Body of Christ (4:1-16)
VIII.	Paul's Testimony (4:17-24)
IX.	Encouragement for a Holy Lifestyle (4:25-32)
X.	New Life in Love (5:1-20)
XI.	Submission to One another (5:21-6:9)
XII.	The Whole Armor of God (6:10-20)
XIII.	Conclusion (6:21-24)

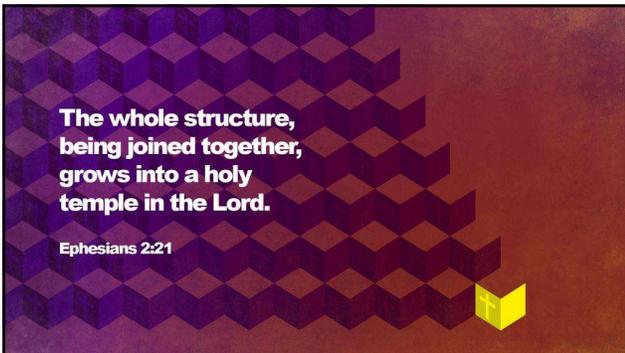


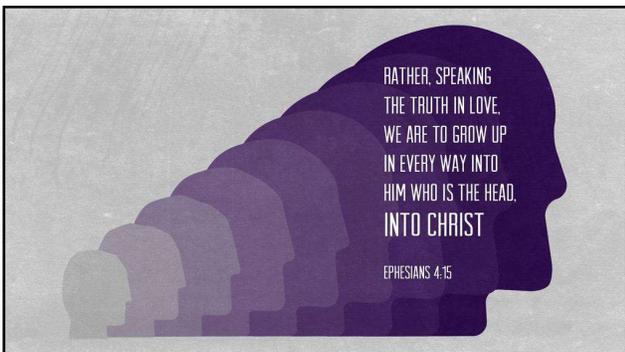


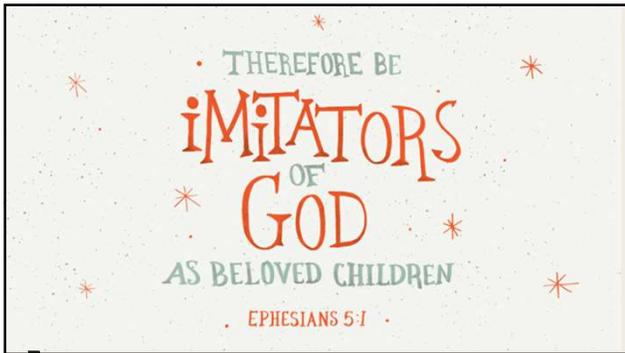


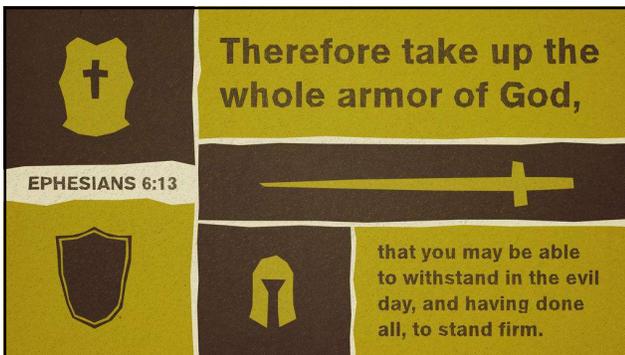






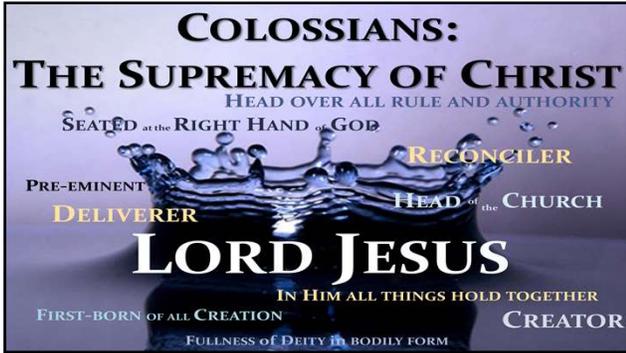






Ephesians: Unique Contributions

- Emphasis on Divine Action as bringing salvation: By grace you are saved (Ephesians 2:8)
- Christ brings peace and reconciliation
- The church has a key role to play in God's working
- "Grasping the love of Christ" (Ephesians 3:14-21)
 - *Agape appears more here than any other book except 1 Corinthians and 1 John*
- The armor of God



Colossians: Major Themes

- The uniqueness, preeminence, supremacy and sufficiency of Christ (1:15-20, 2:9-10, 3:1)
- Believers are in Christ and share in his death, resurrection, new life and fullness (2:9-14, 3:1-4)
- Christ has triumphed over all things on the cross, and we have done so with Him
- Believers are called to grow in spiritual maturity.

Why Write Colossians?

- To stand against false teaching and teach the glory of Christ
- But what was the false teaching?
 - *This false teaching detracted from Christ's place*
 - *This false teaching said Christ was not enough*
 - *This false teaching had a philosophic character (fullness, knowledge)*
 - *This false teaching may be asceticism, but also has roots in the beliefs of Judaizers*
 - *It was likely a combination of Jewish-Gnosticism*

Colossae is about 100 miles east of Ephesus and a commerce center, famous for black wool. The church at Colossae was founded by Epaphras.



COLOSSIANS				
	Christ Is Our Lord		... Our Life	... Our Love
	Lord of creation	Lord of our walk	Our mind	Love for "outsiders"
	Lord of the church	Lord of our salvation	Our body	Love for believers
	Lord of ministry	Lord of our growth	Our attitude	
			Our actions	
	CHAPTER 1	CHAPTER 2	CHAPTER 3	CHAPTER 4
Subject	Instruction	Warnings	Exhortations	Reminders
Christ	His person and work		His peace and presence	
Emphasis	Doctrinal and corrective		Practical and reassuring	
Theme	Christ is our supreme Lord and sufficient Savior.			
Key Verses	2:9-10			
Christ in Colossians	Jesus is the supreme Lord of the church and the world, the all-sufficient Savior in whom the fullness of Deity dwells (1:13-20; 2:9).			

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- Colossians: Basic Outline**
- I. Salutation (1:1-2)
 - II. Orthodoxy: The Sufficiency of Christ Explained (1:3-2:7)
 - III. Heterodoxy: The Sufficiency of Christ Denied (2:8-3:4)
 - IV. Orthopraxy: The Sufficiency of Christ Experienced (3:5-4:6)
 - V. Final Greetings (4:7-18)



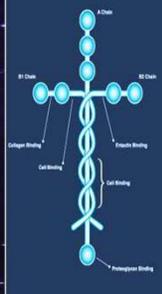
Walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him,
BEARING FRUIT IN EVERY GOOD WORK AND INCREASING IN THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD.
Colossians 1:10

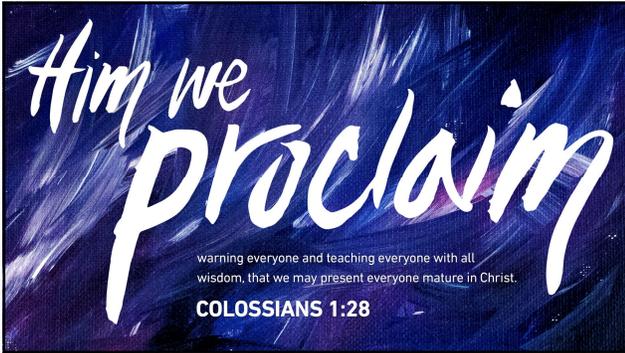
He is the image of the
INVISIBLE GOD,
the firstborn of all creation.
COLOSSIANS 1:15

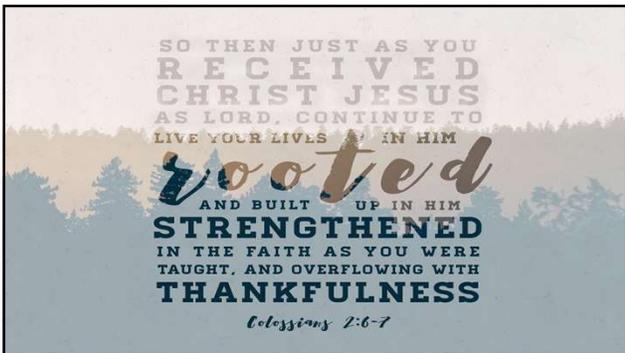


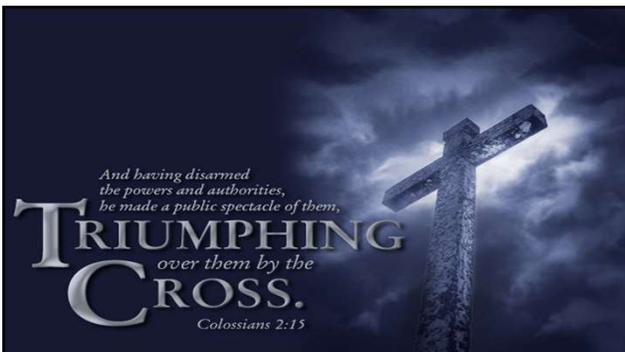
Faithlife

He is before all things
and in Him
all things
hold together
Colossians 1:17

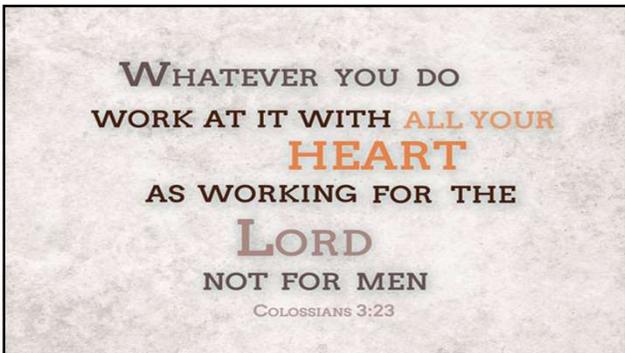




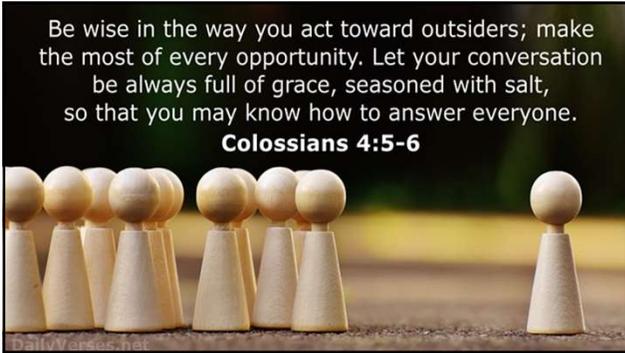












Colossians: Unique Contributions

- The supremacy of Christ, the work of Christ
- "The great themes of Christ's outstanding excellence and the completeness of the salvation he brought about in dying for his people on the cross run through this letter in a distinctive way."
- The truth that all believers form one church (3:11)
- Warnings about false teachings, hollow and deceptive philosophies are never out of season (2:8)
- Contains 55 Hapax Legomena (unique words)

Philemon: Major Themes

- The Gospel of Jesus Christ has the power to reconcile all people including masters and slaves
- That which appears useless, can be made useful in Christ (vs. 2)
 - Onesimus means “useful, profitable”
- An appeal to Philemon with strong considerations



The Book of Philemon				
Focus	"If thou count me...a partner, receive him as myself" (17)			
Divisions	Greetings & Commendation	Ref. to Onesimus	Pledge to Philemon	Salutations & Benediction
	1	3 4	7 8	21 22 25
Topics	Paul's Courtesy	Paul's Compliment	Paul's Counsel	Paul's Conclusion
	Salutation	Commendation	Intercession	Anticipation
Place	Roman Prison			
Time	A.D. 60			
Author	The Apostle Paul			

Philemon: Basic Outline

- I. Salutation (1-3)
- II. Thanksgiving (4-7)
- III. The Plea for Onesimus (8-22)
- IV. Final Greetings (23-25)

Philemon: Unique Contributions

- Shortest of the Pauline letters (335 words in Greek)
- Most personal of the Pauline letters
- Shows us the mutual love and respect that is to characterize the body of Christ
- Shows us the Christian approach to social issues such a slavery
 - *Onesimus must be treated as a brother*
 - *Paul doesn't speak against the institution, but intends to show us that "Christian faith is incompatible with the ownership of slaves"*



Philippians: Major Themes

- Thanksgiving for God's provision
- Regarding others as more important than self
- Rejoicing in salvation and in the face of opposition
- Trusting God for his care
- Living as citizens of heaven in all aspects of life on earth by imitating Christ (2)

The Purpose of Philippians

- A "thank you" to the Philippians for their most recent gift
- To share news of Paul's circumstances
- A response to various questions/problems raised by Epaphroditus (pastoral concerns)
 - Poverty, quarrelsomeness, selfishness, opposition to Paul's Gospel
- A diplomatic reintroduction of Epaphroditus and commendation of Timothy

Philippi was the first city in present day Europe where Paul established a church. It was the site a key military victory and was in every way (legal) an Italian city, transplanted to northern Greece.



Paul's Opponents?

- Described colorfully:
 - "Those who preach Christ out of envy and rivalry" (1:15)
 - "Dogs" (3:2)
 - "Enemies of the cross of Christ" (3:18-19)
 - "Their god is their stomach" (3:18-19)
- A reference to the circumcision means they are likely Judaizers, but this may not be the case for all of them
- Paul probably has different groups in mind
 - Judaizers
 - Antinomians: No moral laws for Christians
 - Pagans who persecuted the church

The Christ Hymn: Philippians 2:5-11

- Tells the story of Christ as an example for us in humility and submission
- Key word: *Kenosis=Emptied himself*
- Three major views on how to view this hymn:
 - Paul is the author
 - Paul is quoting a hymn used by the early church and already in existence (and adapted it)
 - The hymn is a nonPauline addition to the text

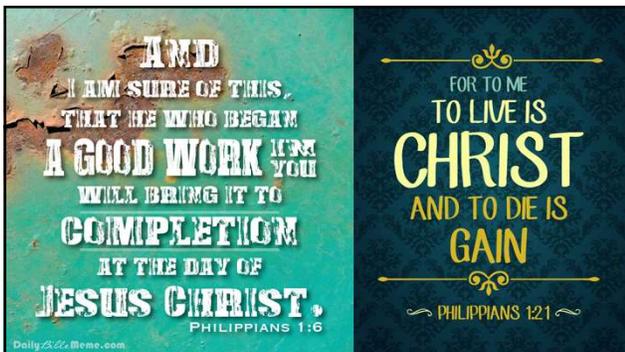


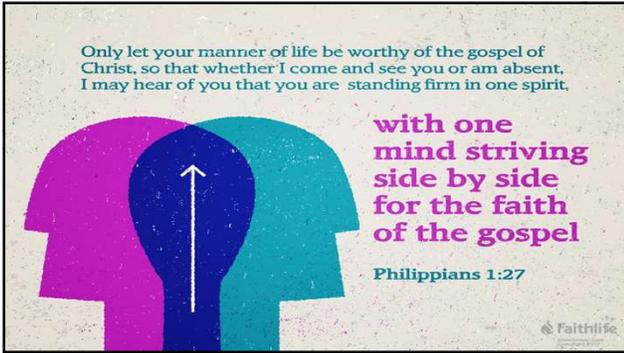
PHILIPPIANS				
	Joy in Living for Christ Even when we don't get what we want In spite of circumstances Even with conflicts	Joy in Serving Christ in Unity Starts with right attitude Maintained through right theology Encouraged by right models	Joy in Knowing Christ A warning A testimony A goal A command	Joy in Resting in Christ Unity Peace Final predictions
	CHAPTER 1	CHAPTER 2	CHAPTER 3	CHAPTER 4
Christ	... my Life	... my Model	... my Goal	... my Contentment
Spirit	His provision (1:19)	His fellowship (2:1)	His worship (3:3)	His peace (4:7)
Positive Reaction	To difficulty: "Now I want you to know, brethren, that my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel!" (1:12)	To others: "Do all things without grumbling or disputing." (2:14)	To the past: "Forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize." (3:13-14)	To the "unchangeables": "Not that I speak from want, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am." (4:11)
Tone	Warm, encouraging, affirming			
Key Words	"Rejoice," "Christ," "Mind," "Act"			
Uniqueness	No major problem passages. "Joy" is found in each chapter. Not one quotation from the Old Testament. Christ mentioned over forty times. Most positive of all Paul's letters, yet written while he was chained to a Roman guard.			
Theme	By centering our lives around Christ, we can experience true joy.			
Key Verse	1:21			
Christ in Philippians	Jesus is the Son of God from heaven, who humbled Himself by becoming human, who suffered for us, and who was exalted to heaven (2:5-11).			

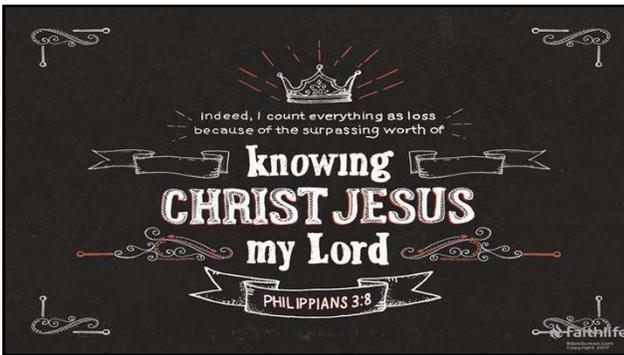
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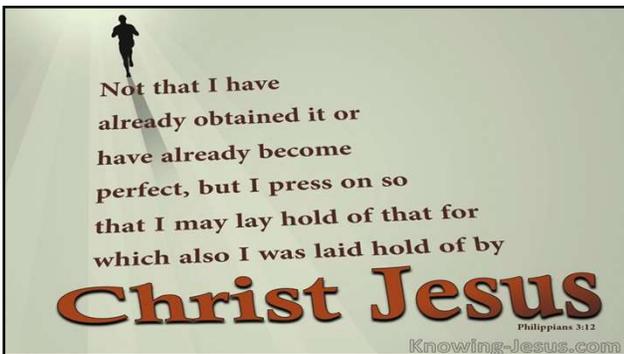
Philippians: Basic Outline

- I. Greeting and Prayer (1:1-11)
- II. Paul's Reflections on His Imprisonment (1:12-30)
- III. Encouragement to Humble Service (2:1-30)
- IV. Opponents of the Gospel: Where does righteousness come from? (3:1-21)
- V. Concluding Encouragement and Thanksgiving (4:1-23)

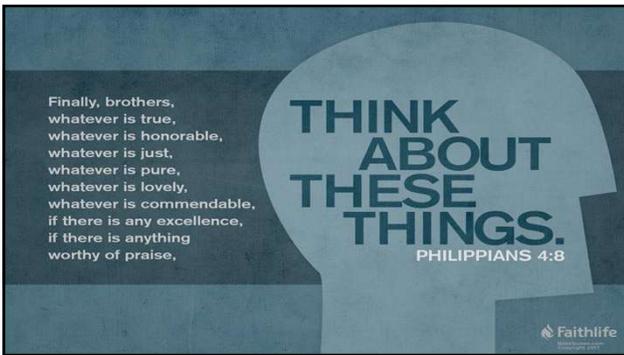
















Philippians: Unique Contributions

- A rarity: A letter to a church Paul founded with which He is well pleased
- The Outstanding Christ Hymn (2:5-11)
- A picture of Paul's struggle for faith, and his example
- Encouragement for those who hear the Gospel preached in ways they don't like
- Joy/Rejoicing is found several times in this letter
- A reminder of the need for partnership in the Gospel

Assignments, Wrap Up

- Discussion Board: Replies to other students
- Read: Carson/Moo: Chapter 17 "The Pastoral Epistles"
- Read: 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus
- Catch-up over the next two weeks on Witherington readings (or read ahead)
