

MASTERING THE ENGLISH BIBLE

Galatians to Thessalonians



DAVID W. CLOUD

Mastering the English Bible: Galatians to Thessalonians

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PO Box 610368, Port Huron, MI 48061
866-295-4143 (toll free) - fbns@wayoflife.org
www.wayoflife.org

Canada:
Bethel Baptist Church
4212 Campbell St. N., London Ont. N6P 1A6
519-652-2619 (voice) - 519-652-0056 (fax)
info@bethelbaptist.ca

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Introduction to *Mastering the English Bible*

Mastering the English Bible is a comprehensive survey of the Old and New Testaments, covering the entire Bible history and every book of the Bible.

It consists of the following segments:

- Old Testament History Genesis to the Silent Years (scheduled November 2022)
- Old Testament Job to Psalms
- Old Testament Proverbs
- Old Testament Prophetic Books (scheduled summer 2023)
- The Gospels (scheduled spring 2023)
- Acts (scheduled spring 2023)
- Romans to Corinthians (scheduled November-December 2023)
- Galatians to Thessalonians (scheduled November-December 2023)
- Pastoral Epistles (scheduled November-December 2023)
- General Epistles (scheduled November-December 2023)
- Revelation (scheduled November 2023)

Mastering the English Bible is for beginning Bible students as well as for advanced ones. It is for youngsters (teens and above) and oldsters. In fact, the Bible pictures can be used for children. It is for individuals, homes, and churches. It is for preachers, both for those formally educated and informally.

Mastering the English Bible is nearly a complete Bible college curriculum in one course. The aim is to educate the student in **Bible history**, **Bible times** (e.g., Egypt, ancient Babylon, the Hittites, Assyria, neo-Babylon, Persia, Greece, Rome), **Bible interpretation** (e.g., context, comparing Scripture with Scripture, defining words, paying attention to details, understanding repetition, interpreting metaphoric language), **Bible doctrine**, **theological terms**, **Bible geography**, **Bible typology** (e.g., the Passover, the Tabernacle, the Levitical Priesthood, the Levitical offerings), **Bible culture**, **Bible biography**, **Bible archaeology**, and **Bible prophecy**, and to teach the fundamentals of the law of Moses, the Gospel, Israel, and the Church. The course aims to give the student a broad comprehension of the Bible as a whole and how each part fits into the whole.

Mastering the English Bible is very practical. There are extensive lessons on prayer, Christian growth, spiritual warfare, the husband-wife relationship, child training, evangelism, church planting, pastors, deacons, church discipline, the woman's ministry, youth discipleship, the church as a body, spiritual gifts, congregational singing, and much more.

Mastering the English Bible is accompanied by the **Way of Life Pictorial Bible**, which is an extensive series of multimedia PowerPoints packed with detailed maps, historical backgrounds, treasures from archaeology, Bible pictures, reconstructive drawings of ancient places, charts, video clips, and other visual aids. Many of these were captured by the author in the best archaeological museums in America and abroad, plus research trips to Israel, Greece, Turkey, Jordan, Egypt, Europe, and England.

Mastering the English Bible is the textbook, and *The Pictorial Bible* is the multi-media supplement. Both are an essential part of the course.

Mastering the English Bible is more than a Bible course. It is a philosophy that a true New Testament church is a church in which every member is a serious, lifelong Bible student. If this is not the case, the church cannot possibly be what God wants it to be. It cannot even have the congregational singing that God requires. Consider Colossians 3:16, “**Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another** in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.” This is a description of a true New Testament church. It is a church in which the Word of God is dwelling in the members richly, not slightly, in all wisdom, meaning that the Word of God is getting down into the daily lives and producing practical wisdom for godly Christian living.

To be a serious, lifelong Bible student is necessary to know God (the greatest benefit), to know God’s will, to be prepared for God’s will (priest, ambassador, teacher, soldier, builder of the church, minister of spiritual gifts, builder of the home); to make wise decisions; to be victorious in spiritual warfare; and to grow in Christ. Philip Henry, father of the Bible commentator Matthew Henry, observed, “All grace grows as love to the word of God grows.”

The goal is that this course will be the foundation for a whole lifetime of Bible study. The student must learn how to carve out time from his schedule so that he makes daily Bible study a habit; he must learn how to *read* the Bible and how to *study* the Bible; he must learn how to apply rules of interpretation and how to use Bible study tools and how to pursue Bible study projects. These things are taught in the Way of Life course *The Effectual Bible Student*.

https://www.wayoflife.org/publications/books/effectual_bible_student.php. This is a basic course. The advanced course is *Understanding the Bible for Yourself*, also available from Way of Life Literature.

Mastering the English Bible is a product of 49 years of serious Bible study and teaching. The author has a passion to help God’s people become effectual Bible students, beginning at the youngest age possible. The church and the home are to work in harmony toward this objective.

Mastering the English Bible also features a syllabus, review questions, tests, test scores, and other teaching tools. These are available to those who purchase the textbooks and register online.

The course syllabus is very important. It explains the course objectives, the requirements, and the student projects, and it gives a weekly timeline of what the student should accomplish and when to take the tests. It is a class schedule that can be used by teachers or by private students. For the larger courses, there are two ‘paces,’ one shorter and one longer.

In 2022, we are in the process of making our multi-media materials (e.g., videos, PowerPoints) available for free viewing and downloading at the Way of Life web site, www.wayoflife.org.

The textbooks are available for purchase.

Passionate about serious Bible study

I am passionate about helping people master the English Bible, because of what it has meant to me. I absolutely love the Bible, and I absolutely love the old English Bible. I fell in love with it as soon as I was saved in 1973. I have loved it more and more as I have studied it for five decades. It is the Book of my life. Since I was saved, no one has ever had to force me, or even to encourage me, to study the Bible. It is truly my delight. I can’t put into words what it has meant to me, but King David has already expressed it.

Paul and His Epistles

Paul is prominent in the early history of the churches. Eighteen of the 28 chapters of the book of Acts are devoted to his ministry. He wrote 14 of the 27 New Testament epistles (if we include Hebrews).

Paul began his life as Saul, a Jew of the tribe of Benjamin (Php. 3:5), doubtless named after Israel's first king who was of the same tribe (1 Sa. 9:1-2).

Saul was called Saul of Tarsus, because he was born in Tarsus, the chief city of the Roman province of Cilicia (Ac. 9:11; 22:3). It was "one of the great learning centers of the Eastern World." He was brought up a Pharisee (Php. 3:5), the son of a Pharisee (Ac. 23:6). He was educated in Jerusalem by Gamaliel, a prominent rabbi, and his expertise was "the law of the fathers," referring to Jewish tradition (Ac. 22:3). He was "exceedingly zealous of the traditions" (Ga. 1:14). This is the rabbinical tradition that was later incorporated into the Talmud.

Paul was also a freeborn Roman citizen (Ac. 22:25-29). He was familiar with pagan literature (Ac. 17:28; Tit. 1:12) and was taught the trade of tent making (Ac. 18:1-3).

Saul persecuted Christians unto death, beginning with his consent to the martyrdom of Stephen (Ac. 7:58; 22:4; Ga. 1:13; 1 Ti. 1:13).

Paul apparently was not impressive in appearance (2 Co. 10:1, 10; 11:6), and he had some sort of eye problem (Ga. 4:13-15).

Paul was converted in about AD 48 in the midst of his persecuting activity. A large portion of Scripture is devoted to the account of his conversion (Ac 9:1-31; 22:1-21; 26:1-23). On a journey to Damascus, the resurrected Christ appeared to him in a bright light and spoke to him. He fell to the ground, was stricken with blindness, and was led to Damascus, where he was healed at the hands of Ananias, put his faith Jesus as the Christ, and was baptized. Ananias was instructed by the Lord that Paul "is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles" (Ac. 9:15). Paul immediately began to preach Jesus as Christ, and the Jews tried to kill him. He escaped by being let down the city wall in a basket (Ac. 9:20-25). He went to Arabia (Ga. 1:17), then to Jerusalem after three years (Ga. 1:18), where he was befriended by Barnabas (Ac. 9:26-28). There, the Greek Jews plotted again to kill him, and he went to Tarsus (Ac. 9:29-30; Ga. 1:21).

Saul began to be called Paul (Greek *Paulos*) after his conversion (Ac. 13:9) and is called by this name 163 times in the New Testament. Peter called him "our beloved brother Paul" (2 Pe. 3:15). The Greek *Paul* means "small," whereas Hebrew *Saul* means "asked for."

When Antioch began to receive the gospel, Barnabas traveled to Tarsus and fetched Saul from thence to be his co-laborer in the establishment of that church (Ac. 11:19-26). This is an example of the great benefit of two or more ministry-gifted men working together in founding churches. We see the same pattern in chapter 13.

Barnabas and Saul traveled to Jerusalem with aid for the brethren who were suffering from a famine (Ac. 11:27-30).

Barnabas and Saul were called by God to be sent out from Antioch as the first foreign missionaries (Ac. 13:1 - 14:28). On this journey, they preached on the island of Cyprus, where the sorcerer Elymas was smitten with blindness and the Roman deputy Sergius Paulus believed

(Ac. 13:4-12). They then preached in the Roman provinces of Pamphylia, Pisidia, and Lycaonia. Paul was stoned at Lystra and raised from the dead (Ac. 14:19-23). Churches were founded in Antioch of Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe (Ac. 14:20-23). “And thence sailed to Antioch, from whence they had been recommended to the grace of God for the work which they fulfilled. And when they were come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles” (Ac. 14:26-27).

Paul and Barnabas attended the conference in Jerusalem to establish the doctrine of salvation by grace alone without the works of the law (Ac. 15).

After returning to Antioch, Paul and Barnabas had a falling out, and Paul chose Silas as his partner for the second missionary journey (Ac. 15:40-41). The highlights of that journey are as follows: Timothy was chosen to be Paul’s co-laborer (Ac. 16:1-3); Paul had the “Macedonian Call” (Ac. 16:6-10); Lydia became the first member of the church at Philippi (Ac. 16:11-15); Paul and Silas were imprisoned in Philippi and the jailor was converted (Ac. 16:16-40); the church at Thessalonica was founded (Ac. 17:1-9); the Jews at Berea were called noble in that they searched the Scriptures daily and tested Paul’s doctrine by it (Ac. 17:11); Paul preached on Mars Hill in Athens (Ac. 17:16-34); the church at Corinth was founded and Paul’s lifelong friendship with Aquila and Priscilla began (Ac. 18:1-17). Paul returned to Antioch (Ac. 18:18-22).

Paul then left on a third missionary journey (Ac. 18:23). The highlights of this journey are as follows: the church at Ephesus was founded (Ac. 19:1-20); a riot was stirred up in Ephesus by Demetrius the silversmith in support of the goddess Diana (Ac. 19:21-41); at Troas, Paul preached until midnight and Eutychus was raised from the dead after falling down from the loft (Ac. 20:7-12); Paul delivered his final message to the elders of the church at Ephesus after calling them to Miletus (Ac. 20:17-36).

Paul determined to go to Jerusalem for the feast of Pentecost, and there, he was arrested during a riot in the temple (Ac. 21:17 - 23:11). When a plot to kill him was exposed, Paul was taken to Caesarea on the coast (Ac. 23:12-35). During his two years there (Ac. 24:27), he appeared before Felix the governor (Ac. 24:1-27), Festus (Ac. 25:1-12), and Agrippa (Ac. 25:13 - 26:32). Paul was transported from Caesarea to Rome on ship and was shipwrecked at Melita (Ac. 27:1 - 28:10). From there he traveled to Rome (Ac. 28:11-31).

Paul spent two years in Rome, living in his own hired house (Acts 28:30). It does not appear that he was free to go outside of the house, but he could receive visitors. During this time, he wrote “the Prison Epistles” (Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon). It was probably during this time that the book of Acts was written, with Luke working together with Paul on this project.

Paul was released from prison in Rome in AD 64. There are several reasons to believe this. First, in Philemon 22 and Philippians 1:23-25 and 2:24, Paul expressed confidence that he would be released. Second, that he was released was commonly believed by Christians during the early centuries. Clement and Eusebius stated this in their extant writings. Third, Paul was planning to visit Spain after he went to Rome (Ro. 15:24-29). Fourth, we know that 2 Timothy was written just before Paul was put to death (2 Ti. 4:6-8), and here Paul mentions things that were not true of his first imprisonment. For example, he says he left Trophimus at Miletum (Miletus) sick (2 Ti. 4:20), but Paul did not go by Miletus on his first voyage to Rome.

Galatians

The Province of Galatia

Galatia was a client state of Rome from 64 BC and was made a Roman province in 25 BC, under the reign of Caesar Augustus. It was a large territory stretching from the Black Sea nearly to the Mediterranean. It encompassed the districts of Phrygia and Lycaonia. It was bordered on the west by the provinces of Bithynia, Asia, and Phrygia, on the south by Lycia and Pamphylia, and on the east by Cappadocia and Cilicia.

Paul's Ministry in Galatia

Paul preached in southern Galatia on his first missionary journey, in the cities of Antioch in Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe (Ac. 13:13 - 14:20). Paul preached again in Galatia on his second missionary journey (Ac. 16:6) and on his third (Ac. 18:23). When Paul was in prison in Rome at the end of his life, he sent Crescens to Galatia (2 Ti. 4:10).

The Context of Paul's Epistle to the Galatians

The churches were being invaded by false teachers who were trying to turn the believers from the true grace of Christ to a false gospel of grace plus works, faith in Christ plus the law (Ga. 1:6-7).

It appears that Paul wrote this epistle after his first missionary journey (Acts 13-14) and before the council at Jerusalem described in Acts 15. His statement in Ga. 1:6, that they were "soon removed" from the gospel he had taught them, indicates that this occurred soon after his visit to Galatia.

The fact that Paul made further visits there on his first and second journeys (Act. 16:6; 18:23) is a cheerful indication that the churches in Galatia were saved from the false gospel.

Main Themes of Galatians

Galatians is a defense of the gospel of the grace of Christ against false gospels. The gospel of the grace of Christ is defined in Galatians as salvation by God's grace alone, without works, based on Christ's blood atonement, and received by faith alone. Any other gospel is false.

Galatians is a divinely-inspired treatise on the law of Moses vs. the gospel of Christ. It deals with the purpose of the law and its relationship to the New Testament believer. It contains one of three major New Testament passages on this subject, the other two being Romans 3 and 2 Corinthians 3.

The main words in Galatians are "**faith**" (22 times, "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ," Ga. 2:16), "**grace**" (7 times, "I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness *come* by the law, then Christ is dead in vain," Ga. 2:21), "**promise**" (9 times, "And if ye *be* Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to

the promise,” Ga. 3:29), and “**Spirit**” (18 times, “This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh,” Ga. 5:16).

The need for this epistle has increased throughout the church age. False gospels began in the days of the apostles and spread quickly. The false gospel of Roman Catholicism became dominant for more than a thousand years. Rome’s gospel is salvation by God’s grace plus the works of the sacraments.

The need for this epistle has never been greater than today. There are multitudes of false gospels preached by false teachers in false churches. This is the apostasy prophesied by the apostles (1 Ti. 4:1-3; 2 Ti. 3:1-5; 4:3-4; 2 Pe. 2:1-2).

Roman Catholic Church - “[Christ] also willed that the work of salvation ... should be set in train through the sacrifice and sacraments, around which the entire liturgical life revolves. Thus by Baptism men are grafted into the paschal mystery of Christ” (Second Vatican Council, “Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy,” Chap. 1, I, 5, 6, pp. 23-4).

Seventh-day Adventist - “Do you want to be a Christian? ... The steps to Christ are few and plain and easy to understand, and we will turn to God’s Guidebook now for information. ... **Believe**; that’s the first step toward becoming a Christian. ... the second step is **repentance** ... repentance is simply being sorry for our sins and putting them away ... the next step in becoming a Christian is **confession** ... real repentance and confession mean not only to stop sinning, but to do everything possible to make past wrongs right ... The next step is **baptism**, and the proof for that is found in Acts 2:38-39 ... Fifth, **obedience** through Christ in us ... So we have clearly **outlined the steps that** we need to take in order to become a Christian: to believe in God, to repent of and to confess our sins, to be baptized, AND TO OBEY ALL THE COMMANDMENTS OF THE LORD. ... He may stumble and fall, but he gets up and presses forward again, determined to overcome by God’s enabling power. Such a fall is not counted against him when he repents and asks forgiveness and divine help to live the right life” (*New Life Voice of Prophecy Guide*, #12).

Church of Christ - “Unlike most Protestants that believe that salvation is given to all those who have faith in Christ, the Church of Christ believes that salvation is a process that follows these six steps: (1) You must first **hear the word of God** (John 5:24-25). (2) You must **believe** and have faith in the word of God (Hebrews 11:6; Mark 16:16). (3) Then you must **repent** of your sins, that is turning away from your previous lifestyle and choosing God’s way (Ac. 17:30). (4) You must **confess** your faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God (Acts 8:36-37; Romans 10:9-10). (5). You have to **be baptized** in the name of Jesus Christ (Acts 2:38). (6) Finally, you must **live your life faithfully** as a Christian (1 Peter 2:9)” (“Church of Christ Beliefs,” MeridethGould.com).

United Pentecostal Church - “The seven steps of salvation: Grace, faith, confession, repentance, baptism, Holy Spirit, endure to the end” (apostolic.edu).

Jehovah’s Witness - “All who by reason of faith in Jehovah God and in Christ Jesus dedicate themselves to do God’s will and then faithfully carry out their dedication [doing works!] will be rewarded with everlasting life...” (*Let God be True*, p. 298).

Mormon - “We believe that through the atonement of Christ, all mankind may be saved, by ‘obedience’ to the ‘laws’ and ordinances of the Gospel” (*Mormon Articles of Faith*, Article 3).

Ephesians

Introduction

The Ancient City of Ephesus

Ephesus was the chief city of the region of Lydia in the Roman province of Asia. During the time of Caesar Augustus, it bore the title “the first and greatest metropolis of Asia” (*McClintock and Strong*). It was called “the light of Asia” and “the market of Asia.” “It was considered the most important Greek city and the most important trading center in the Mediterranean region” (history.com). It was here that the Roman proconsul or governor of Asia lived. During Paul’s day, Ephesus was the fourth largest city in the Roman Empire, with an estimated 200,000 residents (Mark Wilson).

Its prestige and wealth stemmed largely from its situation. It was located on the coast of the Aegean Sea, surrounded by very fertile soil and enjoying an exceptional climate. It had a large artificial harbor, the greatest in Asia, though it was subject to silting and shifting. After centuries of this process the sea has receded, and the shore is now six miles away from the ancient city. “Standing at the entrance of the valley which reaches far into the interior of Asia Minor, and connected by highways with the chief cities of the province, Ephesus was the most easily accessible city in Asia, both by land and sea” (*International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*).

Homes of wealthy Ephesian citizens have been excavated dating to Paul’s time. Some of the expensive wall frescoes and floor mosaics are still intact. It is possible that some of these belonged to Demetrius and his fellow idol makers. “For a certain *man* named Demetrius, a silversmith, which made silver shrines for Diana, brought no small gain unto the craftsmen” (Ac. 19:24).

The Celsus Library at Ephesus was the third largest in the Roman Empire (after Alexandria’s and Pergamum’s). It held around 12,000 scrolls. It was built in the AD 110s by Gaius Julius Aqulia as a monument to his father, former proconsul of Asia Tiberius Julius Celsus. Tiberius was buried in a marble sarcophagus in a crypt beneath the library. It had an elaborate two-story façade with three front entrances accessed by a nine-step staircase. The interior was 2,000 square feet (180 sq. meters). It was a large open room with an upper level balcony overlooking the main floor. Windows lined the second and third levels. The scrolls were protected by a double outer wall. The library featured statues of Sophia (wisdom), Episteme (knowledge), Ennoia (intelligence), and Arete (excellence), depicting the virtues that the user could supposedly obtain by the library’s contents. The true source of these things is Jesus Christ, in whom are hid all treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Col. 2:3), and the Holy Scripture, which is the revelation of Christ. Paul’s epistle to Ephesus alone, just one of the 66 books of the Bible, contains infinitely more wisdom than the entire contents of the Celsus Library in its heyday. The library’s interior was destroyed in a fire in AD 262, either by an earthquake or a Gothic invasion, both of which occurred that year, and the façade was destroyed in an earthquake in the tenth or eleventh century. It was restored by archaeologists in the 1970s. Some of the original statues are in museums in Ephesus, Istanbul, and Vienna (where the Museum of Art History holds the statues of Sophia, Episteme, Ennoia, and Arete).

Ephesus had a magnificent theater that seated 24,000. It is one of the best-preserved theaters from that era. It was in this theater that the event described in Acts 19:23-41 took place, when the people were stirred up against Paul by the idol-maker Demetrius. The theater was adorned with numerous pagan statues such as Cupid and Nike (also called Victory).

Ephesus featured wide boulevards lined with columns. There was the Marble Way (the *cardo maximus*), the Priests Way (also called *Curetes* and *Embolos*), and the Arcadian Way that ran from the theater to the harbor.

Ephesus was supplied with water from three major aqueducts, one 42 kilometers in length (26 miles), one 20 kilometers (12.5 miles), and another 15 kilometers (9 miles).

When the water reached the city, it was channeled to a distribution building called "CASTELLUM AQUAE" (water castle), which was the major water pipe junction and pressure control mechanism. The water entered the water castle, collected in a reservoir, then routed to pipes to transport the water to fountains, public baths, and houses of the wealthy.

Many of the well-preserved ancient pipes are still visible in the ruins or on exhibition in the museum. They were made of terracotta which is a clay ceramic fired at a high temperature. The pipes were glazed for water proofing and durability. Many of the pipes are still waterproof after 2,000 years.

The Ephesus water castle (also called *Hydrekdoscheion*, the Fountain of Laecanius Bassus, and the *Nymphaion*) had a storage reservoir with a large cistern below ground and a pool above ground. The pool was 12.35 x 8.3 meters (40.5 x 27 feet), 103 square meters (1,090 square feet). The pool was backed on three sides by a richly decorated two-story façade. The statues of Tritons and Muses (sea and river gods) that once adorned the water castle are on display at the Ephesus Museum.

The city had two other major fountains, the Trajan Fountain and the Pollio Fountain. The Pollio featured images of Zeus, the chief Greek god, and Odysseus and Polyphemus of the Trojan War myth. These statues are in the Ephesus Museum.

The city had a sewer system to carry away dirty water and refuse.

Ephesus had a large three-level bathhouse with hot, warm, and cold water. The heating system, called "hypocaust," was used to heat public bathhouses as well as palaces and private villas. Hot air from a furnace was drawn into an open space under the floor. Small columns made of tiles or cement, which held up the floor, collected, circulated, and radiated the heat. A sauna room could be created by adding a pool of water to produce steam. The air was drawn up through the walls and the gases were exhausted through pipes or hollow bricks. Attached to the bathhouse was a multiple seat toilet. Flowing water carried away the refuse. Adjoining the bathhouse was a "gymnasium," which was used for athletic training, education, and socializing.

Ephesus had a brothel that was attached to the temple of Hadrian. It was two stories and adorned with statues of the goddess Venus (Aphrodite) and other filthy images.

Ephesus was dedicated to the worship of Diana (Ac. 19:24-28). (The Greeks called her Artemis.) There was a magnificent temple of Diana at the head of the city's harbor. The temple, which took 220 years to build with funds provided from cities throughout Asia Minor, was listed among the "seven wonders of the ancient world." It was 110 meters (361 feet) long and 55 meters (180.5 feet) wide, sitting on a platform 127 meters (420 feet) long and 73 meters (240 feet) wide (Edwin

Yamauchi, *New Testament Cities*, p. 103). “It was supported by 127 columns, each of which had been contributed by some prince, and were 60 feet high; 36 of them were richly carved. [They were also overlaid with gold.] ... The temple was built of cedar, cypress, white marble, and even gold, with which it glittered. ... The magnificence of this sanctuary was a proverb throughout the civilized world” (*McClintock and Strong*). One ancient writer testified: “I have seen the walls of the hanging gardens of Babylon, the statue of Zeus of Olympia, the Colossus of Rhodes, the lofty pyramids, the pharos of Alexandria and the ancient tomb of Mausolus. But when I beheld the temple at Ephesus towering in the clouds, all these other marvels were eclipsed” (J.T. Marlin. *The Seven Churches of Asia Minor*, p. 36).

The temple of Diana was filled with treasure that was donated to the goddess, and because of its strength and prestige, it became a banking center where people stored their money for safe-keeping. The right of sanctuary or asylum was granted to any criminal who took refuge within a bowshot of the Diana temple, but this system became so abused and the number of criminals so increased in the surrounding village that it was abolished by the emperor Tiberius.

The temple of Diana burned in AD 262 for the fifth time and was never rebuilt. Some of the marble and columns were used to build the Church of St. Sophia in Constantinople, the Basilica of St. John in Ephesus, and Catholic churches in Rome. In the 14th century, the Cayster river overflowed its banks and deposited mud over the place of the former temple, “and at last its very site was forgotten.” The temple ruins were discovered in 1870 during an excavation for the British Museum led by John T. Wood. “Almost by accident it was then found in the valley outside the city walls, several feet below the present surface. Its foundation, which alone remained, enabled Mr. Wood to reconstruct the entire temple plan. The temple was built upon a foundation which was reached by a flight of ten steps. ... like the temples of Greece, its interior was open to the sky” (*International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*).

Ephesus was also famous for its magic arts. The “Ephesian letters,” containing magic formulas written on paper or parchment, were much sought after for use as amulets to ward off evil spirits and to bring good luck. Through Paul’s preaching and the conversion of many people at Ephesus, a bonfire was made of magic books at the time of the founding of the church (Ac. 19:17-19).

Extensive archeological excavations have been carried out since the discovery of the ruins of the Diana temple in the 19th century. Ephesus is one of the premier archaeological sites pertaining to the ancient Roman Empire.

Present day Ephesus is located in Turkey and is called Selcuk, with a population of 10,000. It is a few miles from the ancient city.

For a pictorial study, see the PowerPoint, *Cities and Places of Bible Times*, “Ephesus,” www.wayoflife.org.

The Context of the Epistle to Ephesus

Ephesians is one of the four epistles that were written during Paul’s first imprisonment in Rome. Called the Prison Epistles, they were written in about AD 61. The other three are Philipians, Colossians, and Philemon.

Philippians

Introduction

The City of Philippi

Prior to 356 BC, the city was named Crenides (meaning “springs”) and was a part of the territory of Thrace. It was famed for its gold mines. According to the historian Diodorus, the Philippi mines produced 1,000 talents annually. In 356, King Philip II of Macedonia conquered the city and changed the name to Philippi. Philip’s son was Alexander the Great who conquered Persia and built the Greek empire.

It was here in 42 BC that Octavianus and Antony won their victory over Brutus and Cassius. The latter had murdered Julius Caesar and intended to capture Rome’s government. Caesar’s successors, Octavianus and Antony, gathered 19 legions from across the empire and pursued Brutus and Cassius and their legions. The battle, involving up to 200,000 men, Roman legion against Roman legion, was one of the largest of the civil wars. In 27 BC, Octavianus was appointed Augustus Caesar, and he established Philippi as a Roman colony. “A *colony* was in fact a portion of Rome itself transplanted to the provinces, an offshoot from Rome, and as it were a portrait of the mother city on a small scale [Aulus Gellius, *Attic Nights*, 16.13]. Its inhabitants were Roman citizens, having the right of voting in the Roman tribes, governed by their own senate and magistrates, and not by the governor of the province, with the Roman law and Latin language” (Jamieson, Fausset, Brown).

In 168 BC, Macedon was made a Roman province and Philippi was a prominent city. In Paul’s day it was “the chief city of that part of Macedonia, *and* a colony” (Ac. 16:12).

In the second century BC, Rome constructed a major highway (about 700 miles) called the Via Egnatia that connected Constantinople to the east with Dyrrachum on the coast of the Adriatic Sea to the west. Dyrrachum was across the Adriatic from the terminus of the Appian Way (Brindisi) which ran from Rome to the southeastern tip of Italy. Thus, the Via Egnatia connected Constantinople with Rome. It was 19.6 feet wide and most of it was paved with stone slabs. It ran through Neapolis, Philippi, and Thessalonica. Paul would have traveled this road on his journeys in Macedonia. (See Ac. 16:11-12; 17:1; Ro. 15:19.). Crusaders later traveled the road to Constantinople on the way to the Holy Land.

Philippi was located about 10 miles from the harbor town of Neapolis where Paul landed after traveling from Troas. This is the closest seaport. The journey from Troas to Philippi was about 110 miles.

Philippi in Paul’s day was a typical Roman city with walls and gates, wide streets (the Via Egnatia served as Philippi’s *cardo maximus* or main north-south boulevard), a large theater, an agora (for commerce and gatherings), a forum (administrative center), a library, and temples. Many of the ancient graves depict the goddess Diana (Artemis). The city acropolis was located on Mt. Orvelos.

For a pictorial study, see the PowerPoint: *Cities and Places of Bible Times*, “Philippi,” www.wayoflife.org.

The Church at Philippi

The church at Philippi was the first church in Europe.

It was established on Paul's second missionary journey, the highlights of which are as follows:

- Paul and Silas strengthened the churches in Syria and Cilicia (Ac. 15:41).
- In Derbe, Paul chose Timothy to be his co-laborer (Ac. 16:1-3).
- They journeyed through Phrygia and Galatia preaching the gospel and strengthening the churches (Ac. 16:4-6).
- They were forbidden to go to Asia (Ac. 16:6).
- At Troas, Paul had the Macedonian Call (Ac. 16:6-10).
- They landed at Neopolis and went inland to Philippi, the chief city of Macedonia. (Ac. 16:11-12).
- Lydia became the first member of the church at Philippi (Ac. 16:13-15). She was a seller of purple, which was the dye used to produce the most expensive clothing of that day. Lydia's household also believed and were baptized. The church started in her house.
- After Paul cast the demon out of a girl who was a diviner, Paul and Silas were imprisoned, and the jailor was converted following an earthquake (Ac. 16:16-40).
- The church at Thessalonica was founded (Ac. 17:1-9).
- The Jews at Berea were called noble in that they searched the Scriptures daily and tested Paul's doctrine by it (Ac. 17:10-13).
- Paul traveled to Athens and preached in the synagogue, in the marketplace, and on Mars Hill (Ac. 17:14-34).
- The church at Corinth was founded and Paul's lifelong friendship with Aquila and Priscilla began (Ac. 18:1-17).
- Paul returned to Antioch (Ac. 18:18-22).

Context of the Epistle to Philippi

The epistle was written during Paul's first imprisonment in Rome (Php. 1:12-13; 4:22). This was about 10 years after the church was founded. The congregation had heard of Paul's bondage and had sent a gift by Epaphroditus (Php. 4:18). While in Rome, Epaphroditus had gotten sick, and when he was well, Paul sent him back to Philippi with the epistle (Php. 2:25-30).

Theme of the Epistle

Paul writes this epistle to confirm the saints in their security in Christ (Php. 1:1-2, 6), to express his love for the church (Php. 1:3, 8), to explain the purpose of his imprisonment (Php. 1:12), to encourage them in their trials (Php. 1:28-29), to instruct them in Christian living (Php. 1:27), to focus their attention on the imminent return of Christ (Php. 4:5), and to thank them for their support (Php. 4:18).

One overriding theme is God's will for the saints to shine as lights in the midst of a crooked world (Php. 2:12-16).

Another major theme is the pursuit of God's perfect will (Php. 3:8-15).

Other Themes

The following are listed in the order that they appear in the epistle:

The supremacy of the Lord Jesus Christ. “Jesus” and “Christ” appear 60 times in the epistle. Philippians contains a preeminent passage on Christ’s incarnation and exaltation (Php. 2:5-11). Consider some lessons about Christ from this epistle: The saints are in Christ (Php. 1:1). Grace and peace are from Christ (Php. 1:2). The day of Christ is coming (Php. 1:6). The fruits of righteousness are by Christ (Php. 1:11). Christ humbled himself unto the death of the cross (His incarnation) (Php. 2:8). Christ has a name above every name (His exaltation) (Php. 2:9). At the name of Jesus every knee shall bow (Php. 2:10-11). God supplies all of the saints’ needs by Christ (Php. 4:13, 19).

Prayer (Php. 1:4, 9-11, 19; 4:6-7)

The security of the believer (Php. 1:6)

The proclamation of the gospel (Php. 1:7). “Gospel,” “preach,” “speak the word,” and “word of life” are mentioned 14 times. See also Php. 1:5, 12, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 27; 2:16, 22; 4:3, 15.

Living a sincere Christian life abounding in love and filled with the fruits of righteousness (Php. 1:9-11)

Magnifying Christ by life and death (Php. 1:20-21)

Living a life becoming to the gospel in the midst of suffering (Php. 1:27-30)

Right thinking (Php. 1:27). “Think” and “mind” appear 15 times. See also Php. 2:3, 5; 3:15, 16; 4:2, 7, 8. It is essential that the believer learn to think right by thinking according to God’s Word. This comes by immersing oneself in Scripture, reading, studying, rightly dividing, meditating, applying, and obeying.

Having one mind in Christ, spiritual unity (Php. 1:27; 2:2; 3:16; 4:2). This is true Christian unity. It is a unity in doctrinal purity, not an ecumenical unity in diversity.

Pursuing Christ-likeness (Php. 2:3-5) (humility, submission to God). This is the rule of the Christian life. Christ is the believer’s law. Compare Ro. 8:29; 2 Co. 3:18; 1 Jo. 3:2.

Ministering to preachers (Php. 2:30; 4:10-19)

Beware of false teachers (Php. 3:1-2, 17-19)

Rejecting man’s righteousness for God’s righteousness; the true gospel of the gift of righteousness by Christ (Php. 3:1-7)

Pressing toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God (Php. 3:12-16)

Rejoicing in the Lord in all circumstances (Php. 4:4). “Joy,” “rejoice,” and “glad” appear 19 times in this epistle. See Php. 1:4, 18, 25; 2:2, 16, 17, 18, 28, 29; 3:1, 3; 4:1, 4, 10. We are commanded to rejoice in the Lord always (Php. 4:4). There are a great many reasons for rejoicing stated in this one epistle: We rejoice because we have grace and peace from God (Php. 1:2), because of God’s promise to perform a good work in us until the day of Christ (Php. 1:6), because of the power of prayer (Php. 1:19; 4:6), because of the supply of the Spirit in every situation (Php. 1:19), because to die is to be with Christ (Php. 1:21, 23), because of the ministry of the brethren (Php. 1:25-26), because of faith in Christ (Php. 1:25), because persecution is a token of God’s blessing (Php.

1:28), because it is God's will that we suffer for Christ's sake (Php. 1:29), because of the consolation in Christ, the comfort of love, the fellowship of the Spirit (Php. 2:1), because of the mind of Christ in us (Php. 2:5), because of the exaltation of Christ (Php. 2:9-11), because God works in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure (Php. 2:13), because we are the sons of God (Php. 2:15), because we have the word of life to preach to the world (Php. 2:16), because of the free righteousness of God in Christ by faith (Php. 3:9), because I can know Christ (Php. 3:10), because of the prize of the high calling of God (Php. 3:14), because of the imminent return of Christ (Php. 3:20; 4:5), because of the bodily resurrection (Php. 3:21), because of the peace of God (Php. 4:7), because we know the things that are true (Php. 4:8), because the God of peace shall be with you (Php. 4:9), because I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me (Php. 4:13), because of the ministry of the brethren (Php. 4:10-18), because God will supply all your need according to his riches in glory (Php. 4:19), because unto God and our Father be glory for ever (Php. 4:20). What a cause for rejoicing!

The imminent return of Christ (Php. 4:5). See also Php.1:6, 10: 2:16; 3:20-21.

Peace in the midst of trials (Php. 4:6-7, 9)

Importance of the Epistle

The epistle has themes that are necessary for every church in every time and place.

The epistle to the Philippians is more needed today at the end of the age than ever before.

Outline of the Epistle (for this highlight study)

Paul's greeting (Php. 1:1-2)

Paul's passion and purpose in life (Php. 1:20-26)

An exhortation to live as it becometh the gospel (Php. 1:27-30)

An exhortation to Christ-likeness (Php. 2:5-11)

An exhortation to live like the sons of God (Php. 2:12-18)

Warning about false teachers who corrupt the gospel (Php. 3:1-9)

Pressing toward the prize of the high calling of God (Php. 3:10-16)

Further warning about false teachers (Php. 3:17-19)

Our conversation is in heaven (Php. 3:20-21)

Supporting Ministers (Php. 4:10-19)

Paul's Confidence of Their Salvation (Php. 1:5-6)

This is one of the fundamental passages on the "eternal security" of the believer.

Salvation is something to be confident of ("being confident").

- "**Confident**" is *peitho*, which is often translated "persuaded" (Ro. 15:14; 2 Co. 5:11). Salvation is an "everlasting consolation and good hope through grace" (2 Th. 2:16). It is "an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast" (Heb. 6:19).

- The confidence of salvation comes by God's promises. Security does not come by one's feelings or by man's word. It comes by God's Word. "And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; *and* he that hath not the Son of God hath not

life. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God” (1 Jo. 5:11-13).

- The confidence of salvation comes by the evidence of a changed life. Paul had the confidence of verse 6 because of the “good work” of God that he saw in them.

Salvation is a good work of God (“he which hath begun a good work in you”).

- Salvation is 100% the work of God. It is of grace, which means it is an unearned, undeserved, unmerited gift of God. It was purchased 100% by Christ’s blood atonement. The believer’s works are the product of salvation and do not add anything whatsoever to it. “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them” (Eph. 2:8-10). Salvation is either a gift or it is works; it is either grace or works. Grace and works cannot be mixed without destroying both. Any addition of human works or sacraments is a false gospel. “Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness” (Ro. 4:4-5). “And if by grace, then *is it* no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if *it be* of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work” (Ro. 11:6).

Salvation will be performed until the day of Jesus Christ (“will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ”).

- When God saves a soul, He saves eternally and seals the transaction with the Holy Spirit, “Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession” (Eph. 1:14). The purchased possession is resurrection glory, and the redemption of it is the fulfillment of it.

- The day of Jesus Christ is the day of His coming to receive the church age saints. Compare Php. 1:10; 2:16. The day of Christ is identified as “the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and ... our gathering together unto him” (2 Th. 2:1-2). Paul instructed the church at Thessalonica that the day of Christ is not “at hand” in the sense of having already happened, as some false teachers were saying. It is “at hand” in the sense of being imminent. Compare Ro. 13:12; Php. 4:5; Re. 1:3; 22:10.

- Paul gave the same promise to the church at Corinth. “So that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall also confirm you unto the end, *that ye may be* blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God *is* faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord” (1 Co. 1:7-9).

Paul’s Passion and Purpose in Life (Php. 1:20-26)

In this fundamental passage on Christian living, Paul expresses his purpose in life.

Paul lived earnestly. “According to my earnest expectation” (Php. 1:20).

- Paul was passionate about life. There was nothing halfhearted or lukewarm about Paul! Before salvation, he wasn’t content to be a Jew; no, he was a Pharisee: “after the most straitest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee” (Ac. 26:5). And after salvation, he was sold out to Jesus Christ. As soon as Paul was converted, “straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God” (Ac. 9:20).

Paul lived for Christ. “Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death ... For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.”

- This was Paul's objective and passion for living in a nutshell. Paul was passionate to live for Christ, to magnify and glorify Christ, to do Christ's will, to serve Christ, to please Christ in all things. Christ was Paul's very life. "For to me to live is Christ." Paul understood that he had no life apart from Christ. Christ created Paul, owned Paul, and sustained Paul. He believed Christ's words, "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (Joh. 14:6). Paul understood that he lived, moved, and had his being in Christ (Ac. 17:28). He understood that "of him, and through him, and to him, *are* all things" (Ro. 11:36). Paul wasn't passionate about life in general; he wasn't passionate about living for himself; he wasn't passionate about politics or business or some hobby. His passion was Christ.

- This is true biblical Christian living and thinking. It is what we see in the lives of true Christians throughout the New Testament. We see it in the lives of the first members of the first church in Acts 2:41-42, "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized ... And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." True Christianity is not nominal Christianity.

- "To me to live is Christ" is the opposite of the lifestyle and mindset of the vast majority of professing Christians today, who mainly live for themselves in this present life and think that they will live for Christ after death. How would you summarize your true passion and objective in life in one sentence? I am not referring to what you *think* you should say as a Christian; I am referring to how you actually live. How would your daily lifestyle be summarized? Do you *largely* live for Christ or for self? What is the reality?

Paul lived for others. "For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you" (Php. 1:23-24). Paul wanted to go to heaven to be with Christ, but he was willing to stay in this world for the sake of benefiting others.

Paul taught the truth about death.

- "**To depart, and to be with Christ.**" Death is a journey. It is not "soul sleep." At death, the soul journeys either to heaven or to hell, depending on the individual's relationship with Jesus Christ. In Christ's account of the rich man and Lazarus, the unsaved rich man went immediately to hell, and Lazarus went immediately to heaven (Lu. 16:22-23). That this is not a "parable" is clear from the fact that Christ used the personal names of Lazarus and Abraham. Peter described death as putting off the tabernacle of the body (2 Pe. 1:14).

- "**To die is gain.**" For the believer, death is personal gain. To die is to be rid of the "body of this death" (Ro. 7:24), which is the natural body that is under the curse of death and has "the old man" dwelling in it. To die is to be in the very presence of Christ in glory. To die is to be in the "Father's house" where there are "many mansions" (Joh. 14:2-3). What gain!

An Exhortation to Live as It Becometh the Gospel (Php. 1:27-30)

Paul begins a series of exhortations to the believers. There is the exhortation to live as it becometh the gospel (Php. 1:27-30), the exhortation to a life of love and unity among the brethren (Php. 2:1-4), the exhortation to Christ-likeness (Php. 2:5-11), and the exhortation to be the sons of God in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation (Php. 2:12-16).

For the believer to live as it becomes (fitting to, worthy of) the gospel is a major theme of this epistle and of all the epistles. Now that we are saved, we are to live a life that pleases and glorifies God. "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:10). "For ye were sometimes darkness, but

now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light" (Eph. 5:8). "This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men" (Tit. 3:8). See also Ro. 6:1-2; 2 Co. 5:17; Col. 2:6; 3:9-12; Tit. 2:14; 1 Pe. 2:9; 4:1-2; 1 Jo. 3:2-3.

"Only let your conversation" (Php. 1:27).

- "Conversation" is the Greek *politeuo*, "to live as a good citizen, to conduct oneself according to the laws and customs of a state, to live or to order one's life and conduct in accordance with a certain rule" (*Complete Word Study Bible*). Philippi was a Roman colony, and its citizens were obligated to live according to the laws and customs of the mother country. Though living far from Rome, they were citizens of Rome and were under the headship of Caesar. Likewise, the believer is an adopted son of God, a citizen of heaven, an ambassador for Christ, and he is to live according to the laws of his country and the rule of his true Master. Each New Testament church is a colony of heaven. It is an outpost of Christ's kingdom in a foreign world. Its Head is Christ, and its rule is God's Word. Its members are to be heavenly-minded.

"that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs" (Php. 1:27).

- Every church must be concerned about its testimony before other churches and before the world and chiefly before Christ. We are compassed about with a great cloud of witnesses (Heb. 12:1). We will all appear before the judgment seat of Christ. We must have a large view of the Christian life and church.

"that ye stand fast" (Php. 1:27)

- It is the believer's responsibility to stand fast in Christ and in the truth of God's Word.
- This refers to spiritual warfare. We must stand fast because there are enemies that attempt to move us out of God's will.
- We must be zealous to stand; we must be active, aggressive. We must do everything that is necessary to stand, by obedience to God's Word, by faithfulness to a sound church, by diligent study of God's Word, by prayer, by the armor of righteousness, by separation from the world, and by protection from false teachers.
- Paul often used the language of standing fast. "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Co. 15:58). "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong" (1 Co. 16:13). "Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand" (Eph. 6:13). "... so stand fast in the Lord, *my* dearly beloved" (Php. 4:1). "... that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God" (Col. 4:12). "Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle" (2 Th. 2:15).

"in one spirit, with one mind" (Php. 1:27)

- This is the unity that is everywhere commanded in the New Testament. It is not an ecumenical unity in diversity. Paul returns to this theme in Php. 2:2, "... being of one accord, of one mind" and again in Php. 3:16, "let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing."
- This is a unity of "**one spirit**," meaning a spiritual unity, a unity of those who are born again and led of the Spirit. It is impossible to be united in spirit unless we have the Spirit of God and have a spiritual mind created by the Spirit.

- It is a unity of “*one mind*,” meaning a unity of those who have one mind in God’s Word, those who are united in doctrinal truth. It is believing the same thing. It is being united in the faith once delivered to the saints. Compare Ro. 15:6; 1 Co. 1:10; Eph. 4:3-6; Jude 1:3. This kind of unity can only be found in perfection in the assembly where the doctrine is pure and can be required of all the members and enforced by discipline. This is the reason why our church has an extensive statement of faith and all members are required to subscribe to it.

“striving together for the faith of the gospel” (Php. 1:27).

- This refers to the defense of the true gospel. Compare Ga. 2:5; Jude 1:3. The gospel must be kept, guarded, and defended. This requires that all of the members be well educated in the gospel. It requires the right training of preachers who can build up the saints in the gospel and protect them from false teaching (Tit. 1:9).

“And in nothing terrified by your adversaries” (Php. 1:28).

- God does not want His people to be frightened by opposition and persecution. Paul emphasized this personally to Timothy. “For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God” (2 Ti. 1:7-8). Christ emphasized this: “Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you” (Mt. 5:10-12). Peter emphasized this: “But and if ye suffer for righteousness’ sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled” (1 Pe. 3:14). “Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified” (1 Pe. 4:12-14).

- “Paul’s call to courage in the face of danger has been heeded down through the centuries by millions of believers whose exploits have earned them mention on the honor roll of heaven. Foxe’s *Book of Martyrs*, although out of vogue now, is still a tribute to the often supernatural bravery of God’s people in the face of terrifying ordeals. Nowhere has man’s inhumanity to man been more dreadfully displayed than in the persecution of believers. ... The bravery of the victims and their spirit of love and forgiveness turned the blood of the martyrs into the seed of the church. Nonbelievers had been known to die bravely, hurling defiance and vindictiveness into the faces of their executioners. The bravery of the Christians was different. They died with hymns on their lips, forgiveness in their hearts, and the light of Heaven on their faces. As he wrote, Paul could still remember how the face of Stephen had haunted him until he too made peace with God through the Lord Jesus Christ” (John Phillips).

“which is to them an evident token of perdition” (Php. 1:28).

- Persecutors are wolves, not sheep. Those who persecute God’s people prove that they are not of the truth. “Although persecution and trial as they come into the life of a Christian may be interpreted by the unbelieving world as the disfavor of God--evidence that they are under God’s judgment—they are actually just the opposite--evidence that they are separated from the world that knows not salvation and knows not God” (*Everyman’s Bible Commentary*).

“but to you of salvation, and that of God” (Php. 1:28).

- Persecution for the truth's sake is evidence of salvation. "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Ti. 3:12).

"For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake" (Php. 1:29).

- This is emphasized throughout the New Testament. What a great privilege it is to suffer for the sake of the Son of God! "From this scripture it is evidently of great moment spiritually that we should keep up in our souls good courage in face of the foe, and confidence in God, not only for our own sake, but for others" (William Kelly). Consider how the Bible emphasizes the doctrine of suffering. "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you" (Joh. 15:19). "... and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God" (Ac. 14:22). "And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together" (Ro. 8:17). "If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us" (2 Ti. 2:12). "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Ti. 3:12). "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you" (1 Pe. 4:12).

Exhortation to Christ-likeness (Php. 2:5-11)

This is a continuation of a series of exhortations to the believers that begins in chapter 1 verse 27.

This is a fundamental passage on Christ's incarnation and is packed with important teaching. Philippians 2:5-11 explains what happened at the virgin birth. It is a companion passage to Isa. 7:14; 9:6; Jer. 23:6; Mi. 5:2; Mt. 1:20-23; Lu. 1:31-35; 2:11; Joh. 1:14; Ro. 1:3; 9:5; 1 Co. 15:47; 2 Co. 4:4; Ga. 4:4; Col. 1:15-16; 1 Ti. 3:16; Tit. 2:13; Heb. 1:3; 2:14-17; 10:5; 13:8.

Every word in Php. 2:5-11 is important for a proper understanding of Christ's incarnation.

"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus."

- Christ is the example of humility and self-emptying and obedience to God. We are to imitate him.

- The mind of Christ is the rule and law of the Christian life. This is the law of Christ (Ga. 6:2). The Spirit of God reveals Christ in the Scripture and transforms the believer into His image. "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, *even* as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Co. 3:18).

- The mind of Christ is the way of God's perfect will. When the mind of Christ is reproduced in me, I am conformed to His perfect will for my life. His mind in me is my individual calling. All of the saints are to be conformed to the same character of Christ, but the saints are different in gifting and calling.

- The mind of Christ is the essence and power of the Christian life. It is "Christ is me, the hope of glory." The true Christian life is to be born again by God's grace, indwelt with the Holy, and living out the new life in Christ by His power. Paul described it in a nutshell: "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Ga. 2:20).

- "**Let this mind be in you**" is present imperative active. This is a submissive, yielding thing, but it is not a passive thing. The present tense signifies continuous action. The imperative mood signifies a

1 Thessalonians

Theme of 1 Thessalonians

The major theme of both Thessalonian epistles is Christ's coming. This theme is dealt with in every chapter for a total of forty verses. See 1 Th. 1:10; 2:19; 3:13; 4:13-18; 5:1-11, 23; 2 Th. 1:6-10; 2:1-12; 3:5.

The return of Christ is a *major* theme of the New Testament, from Matthew to Revelation. See Mt. 13:37-43, 47-50; 16:27-28; 24:3-30; 25:31-32; 26:64; Mr. 13:3-37; 14:62; Lu. 21:25-28; Joh. 14:1-3; Ac. 1:11; 3:19-20; Ro. 11:26; 13:12; 1 Co. 1:7-8; 4:5; 11:26; 15:51-58; Php. 1:6, 10; 2:16; 3:20-21; 4:5; Col. 3:4; 1 Th. 1:10; 2:19; 3:13; 4:13-18; 5:1-11, 23; 2 Th. 1:7-9; 2:1-12; 3:5; 1 Ti. 6:14; 2 Ti. 4:1, 8; Tit. 2:13; Jas. 5:7-9; Heb. 9:28; 10:37; 1 Pe. 1:7; 4:7; 5:4; 2 Pe. 1:19; 3:10-13; 1 Jo. 2:28; 3:2; Jude 1:14-15, 21; Re. 1:7; 2:25-27; 3:10, 11; 19:11-21; 22:7, 12, 20.

Bible prophecy is a fundamental of the faith once delivered to the saints. It is not a secondary matter. It will be a major theme of every sound Bible-believing church. God's people must be well grounded in prophetic truth so they can have a proper worldview and understanding of the times. God's people must be protected from heresies pertaining to Bible prophecy. A right understanding of Bible prophecy produces holiness, obedience, comfort, zeal, and watchfulness.

"In our days we often hear the statement that the coming of our Lord is an unessential doctrine. Those who make such an assertion are ignorant of the fact that ... Christian preaching and teaching which ignores the blessed hope, the coming of the Lord, is incomplete; it omits one of the most vital truths which the Spirit of God has linked with the gospel and with the life and service of the believer" (Arno Gaebelein).

1 Thessalonians contains the major teaching on the Rapture, including the timing. The Rapture is pre-tribulational. This is so clear in Scripture that I consider it a fundamental doctrine and will not have any ministry association with preachers or churches that do not hold to it.

The pre-tribulational Rapture is taught in 1 Thessalonians as follows:

1. The coming of the Lord for the redeemed of this age is imminent. "For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, *even* Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come" (1 Th. 1:9-10). The believers are to be watching at all times, waiting, ready. The church at Thessalonica modeled this. See also Ro. 13:12; Php. 4:5; Tit. 2:13; Jas. 5:8-9; 1 Pe. 4:7. The only way that the Rapture could be imminent is if it occurs before any part of Daniel's 70th Week, which begins with the Antichrist's peace covenant with Israel (Da. 9:27). That will mark the building of Israel's third temple and the preaching ministry of the two prophets in Jerusalem (Re. 11:1-6). The first six seal judgments will be poured out upon the world, as described in Revelation 6. These events will be unique in history and will be unmistakable, and as soon as they begin, it will be known that in seven years Christ will return in glory to establish His kingdom. If the church age believers were on earth for any part of these events, there could be no imminency of Christ's return. I consider the Bible's doctrine of the imminency of Christ's return to be a major fundamental of the Bible prophecy issue.

2. The Rapture is a mystery revealed to the church and is not something that pertains to Israel.

The only way to understand the Rapture properly is to understand the clear distinction between Israel and the Church, which is plainly taught in Scripture if prophecy is interpreted literally.

The doctrine of the Rapture was written to churches for churches. It is a mystery revealed to the churches (1 Co. 15:51-52). It is not about Israel. It was not revealed to Israel and has nothing to do with Israel and her program with God and her covenants.

The Rapture is when Christ will collect His bride (Eph. 5:27) and bring her to the mansions He has prepared for her (Joh. 14:1-3) and she will see Him in His glory (Joh. 17:24). Israel has no such promise or hope.

The church has nothing to do with the day of the Lord, which is a day pertaining to the unsaved world (“the indignation of the LORD is upon all nations,” Isa. 34:2) and pertaining to Israel (“the time of Jacob’s trouble,” Jer. 30:7). The church has nothing to do with Daniel’s 70 Week prophecy, which pertains to “thy people” (Daniel’s people, Israel) and “thy holy city” (Jerusalem) (Da. 9:24). The churches are not seen on earth in Revelation after chapter three. The earthly events of Revelation 5-18 pertain to the world and to Israel. The church of God is a separate entity with her own program with God (“the Jews ... the Gentiles ... the church of God,” 1 Co. 10:32).

3. The Rapture precedes the day of the Lord (1 Th. 5:1-8). Immediately after describing the Rapture, Paul mentions the day of the Lord and says the New Testament believer will not be overtaken by it. Again, we see that the Rapture is pre-tribulational. It occurs before any part of the day of the Lord. In a sense, the Rapture marks the onset of the day of the Lord.

4. The church age believer is not appointed to wrath (1 Th. 5:9-11). This refers to the time of God’s wrath, which is the context. Compare 1 Th. 1:10, which says the Lord has delivered New Testament believers from the wrath to come. Church-age saints have been subject to the wrath of men and devils throughout the age, but we are not appointed to go through the wrath of God that will be poured out upon this wicked world. The day of the Lord, from its beginning, is the day of God’s wrath. The wrath does not begin with the last half of the Tribulation. “Wrath” is mentioned 13 times in Revelation 6-19. The first mention is at the very beginning of that time. Men will cry out, “For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?” (Re. 6:17). This happens when the sixth seal is broken, long before the opening of the seventh seal and the trumpet judgments of Revelation 8-9 and the final vial judgments of Revelation 16.

5. The Rapture is a comfort for the believers (1 Th. 4:18), and it can only be a comfort if it is the promise of deliverance from the wrath to come. It would be no comfort to know that we are going through that terrible time described in Revelation 6-18 before we can see the Lord.

In settling any major Bible doctrine, we must first stand back and look at the big picture. We must look at the whole tenor of Scripture. We must consider the major passages and the clearest teaching on that doctrine. In that way, we settle the big issues and answer the big questions. Only then can we settle the details. The details are not always easy to settle, but the details must not be allowed to overthrow the big, clear teaching. That is true for the Trinity, divine election, eternal security, and the major points of Bible prophecy.

Other Themes of the Thessalonian Epistles

Love (1 Th. 1:3; 3:6, 12; 4:9; 5:8, 13; 2 Th. 1:3; 2:10; 3:5)

NEW TESTAMENT PICTORIAL TIMELINE



4 BC

Jesus' Birth



AD 9

Jesus' Visits Jerusalem
Age 12

AD 27

Jesus Begins Public Ministry



AD 30

Jesus' Crucifixion & Resurrection



AD 30

Pentecost (Acts 2)



AD 33

Paul Converted (Acts 9)



AD 45

Barrabas Calls Paul to Antioch (Acts 11:22-26)

AD 47

Paul's 1st Missionary Journey (Acts 13-14)
Galatians

AD 49

Jerusalem Council (Acts 15)



AD 52

Paul's 2nd Missionary Journey (Acts 15-18)
James
1 Thessalonians
2 Thessalonians



AD 57

Paul's 3rd Missionary Journey (Acts 18-20)
Romans

AD 58

Paul Imprisoned at Caesarea (Acts 24-26)



AD 60



AD 60

Paul's Journey to Rome (Acts 27)
1 Peter



AD 61

Paul under house arrest in Rome (Acts 28)
Ephesians
Philippians
Colossians
Philemon

AD 62

AD 64

Acts 2 Peter Jude
1 Timothy Titus

AD 67

Paul's Imprisonment in Rome
Death



AD 68

1 John, 2 John
and 3 John



AD 96

Revelation given to John on Isle of Patmos
Revelation