

BGM BIBLE COLLEGE

NEW TESTAMENT SURVEY

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LEC NO 25

THE EPISTLE OF SAINT PAUL THE APOSTLE TO THE PHILIPPIANS

The Background of the Epistle to the Philippians

(Acts 16:6–40)

When Saint Paul, in his second missionary journey, came unto Philippi, which was a Roman colony (**Acts 16:12**), he found there a few Jewish women which resorted unto the river side for prayer; for in Philippi there was no synagogue (**Acts 16:13–15**). Saint Paul preached throughout the streets; and when he cast the spirit of divination out of a certain damsel, there arose a great uproar in the city (**Acts 16:16–19**). The masters of the damsel brought Paul and Silas before the magistrates, accusing them of troubling the city (**Acts 16:19–21**). By reason of Jewish prejudice in the city, Saint Paul and Silas were beaten without trial, and cast into prison (**Acts 16:22–24**). But when it was known that Saint Paul was a Roman citizen, they released him. Paul demanded that, even as they had beaten him openly, so also should his release be public (**Acts 16:37–40**). Afterward, Saint Paul began his ministry again in the house of Lydia, which likely became the meeting place of the new church (**Acts 16:40**).

Saint Paul's Relationship with the Church at Philippi

Saint Luke the physician, who at the beginning of the church had companied with Saint Paul, likely remained in Philippi. It is notable that whenever Saint Paul came near unto Philippi, Saint Luke joined him (**Acts 20:5**). The church at Philippi sent gifts unto Saint Paul during his ministry at Thessalonica (**Philippians 4:15–16**). Paul likely visited the Philippian church at the beginning of his third missionary journey when he came into Macedonia (**Acts 20:1**). At the end of the same journey, as he went toward Jerusalem, he visited Philippi again (**Acts 20:6–16**). When Saint Paul was imprisoned at Rome, the church at Philippi sent an offering unto him by the hand of Epaphroditus (**Philippians 4:10–14**). From prison he sent this Epistle by Epaphroditus unto the beloved church of Philippi (**Philippians 1:1–3**). Saint Paul was persuaded that after his release he should again visit Philippi (**Philippians 1:25–26; 2:24**).

The City of Philippi

Philippi was first established as a centre of gold-mining; and because it lay upon the chief road leading from the western world unto Rome, it became a city of renown. It was an important city in the region of Macedonia, though Thessalonica was the capital of that Roman province. Philippi was a Roman colony; and being such:

- i. The inhabitants were Roman citizens.
- ii. The city was a model of Roman law and education.
- iii. The people were known for culture, learning, and order.
- iv. The city permitted no official synagogue and bore a measure of hostility toward the Jews.

When Was the Epistle to the Philippians Written?

This Epistle was written chiefly as an expression of thanksgiving, for the church at Philippi had sent financial support unto Saint Paul during his imprisonment at Rome. There is but one corrective note in the Epistle, concerning two individuals in the church who were not of one mind (**Philippians 4:2**). The Epistle was likely written toward the end of Paul's first Roman imprisonment, for he had hope of release (**Philippians 2:24**). Therefore the date is placed between **A.D. 62 and 64**.

The Principal Themes of Philippians

The central theme of this Epistle is *joy and rejoicing*. The words *joy* and *rejoice* are used eighteen times. This Epistle is a letter of thanksgiving unto God, of love toward the believers at Philippi, and of joy in the midst of affliction. Though Saint Paul had suffered imprisonment and hardship in Philippi itself, yet he written unto them a message of joy.

Fourfold Revelation of Christ in Philippians

1. Christ is the life of the believer (**Philippians 1:21**).
2. Christ is the mind of the believer (**Philippians 2:5**).
3. Christ is the goal of the believer (**Philippians 3:10**).
4. Christ is the strength of the believer (**Philippians 4:13**).

The Heavenly Citizenship of the Believer

The citizenship of the believer is not Roman, but heavenly.

1. The believer must walk according to the laws of heaven (**Philippians 1:27**).
2. We look not unto Rome for our blessings, but unto heaven (**Philippians 3:20**).

THE EPISTLE OF SAINT PAUL THE APOSTLE TO THE COLOSSIANS

Background

1. The City of Colossae

Colossae was situated about a hundred miles east of Ephesus, and about twelve miles north of Laodicea. Once it had been a city of great importance; yet in the days of Saint Paul its international standing had diminished. It lay upon the chief commercial routes of the region; therefore many nations and cultures passed through it. Cities of such nature ever possess both positive and negative influences. After this Epistle was written, a great earthquake struck, and the city was utterly destroyed; yet it was soon rebuilt. Even unto this day the remains of that ancient city are found in ruins.

2. The Founder of the Church

In the New Testament there is no direct mention of the establishment of the church at Colossae. The church was not founded directly by Saint Paul, though it arose through his influence; for Saint Paul had never visited Colossae (**Colossians 1:2**). Most scholars agree that the church was founded through the effect of Paul's ministry at Ephesus, when all Asia heard the Word of God (**Acts 19:10, 26**). In this Epistle the greetings sent unto various persons show that Saint Paul knew many within the church. The church was likely established by Epaphras (**Colossians 1:7**), who himself was a native of Colossae (**Colossians 4:12**). Epaphras was probably the fruit of Paul's ministry during his service at Ephesus (**Acts 19:10, 26**). He likely planted also the church at Laodicea (**Colossians 4:12–13**). Saint Paul ever spoke of him with honour and commendation.

Epaphras is described as:

- A faithful minister of Christ (**Colossians 1:7**)
- A preacher of the Gospel (**Colossians 1:23**)
- A teacher of foundational doctrine (**Colossians 2:6–7**)
- A fervent labourer in prayer (**Colossians 4:12**)
- One full of zeal and love for the local church (**Colossians 4:13**)

The church at Colossae consisted chiefly of Gentile believers (**Colossians 1:21; 2:13, 20–22**).

The Purpose of the Epistle

Although seventy-eight of the ninety-five verses of Colossians have close parallel with the Epistle to the Ephesians, yet this Epistle is unique, for it was written for a specific purpose. Saint Paul wrote to refute certain false teachings and heretical doctrines which had begun to spread in the region and within the church. In this respect it is akin to the Epistle to the Galatians, which also contended against false doctrines.

Date of Composition

Saint Paul wrote this Epistle during his imprisonment at Rome. When Epaphras came unto Saint Paul, he informed him of the difficulties faced by the church. Paul therefore wrote this Epistle about the same period as the Epistles to the Ephesians and to Philemon (A.D. 62–64). It was sent unto the church at Colossae by the hand of Tychicus. Moreover, he instructed that this Epistle be read also in the church of Laodicea ([Colossians 4:16](#)).

THE PARTICULAR ERRORS WHICH SAINT PAUL SOUGHT TO CORRECT

Epaphras made known unto Saint Paul that false doctrines had crept into the Church. In this Epistle warning is given against the heresies of **Gnosticism** and of the **Judases**, who sought to corrupt the purity of the Gospel.

THE FIRST AND SECOND EPISTLES OF PAUL THE APOSTLE UNTO THE THESSALONIANS

The Founding of the Church in Thessalonica (Acts 17:1–10)

Saint Paul began his ministry in the synagogue of the Jews, and for the space of about three weeks he was granted liberty to proclaim the word unto them. And, as it was oft in his labour, twofold was the response of men. The multitude, being stirred, made an assault upon the house of Jason, where the Christians were wont to assemble. Because of the severity of the situation, Saint Paul was sent away from that region with haste.

Saint Paul's Concern and Connection with the Church in Thessalonica

Saint Paul sent Timothy back unto Thessalonica, that he might strengthen the believers in their faith ([1 Thessalonians 3:1–5](#)). When Timothy returned again, he brought his report unto the Apostle Paul. His report had **two aspects**:

The Positive Aspect:

The Church, notwithstanding persecution, stood firm in the faith.

The Negative Aspect:

There were certain matters which Saint Paul judged necessary to set in order.

A few months after writing the First Epistle, Saint Paul also wrote the Second Epistle unto them.

INFORMATION CONCERNING THE CITY OF THESSALONICA

This city was founded in **315 B.C.**, and it was named *Thessalonica*. It was a chief commercial centre and possessed the greatest harbour of the region. It was the second greatest city of Macedonia, the first being Philippi.

DATE OF COMPOSITION

These two Epistles belong unto the earliest writings of Saint Paul. They were likely written during his second missionary journey, either in Athens or in Corinth. The probable date of their composition is **A.D. 52 to 54**. A deep and strong connection exists between these two Epistles.

THE CENTRAL THEME

The chief theme of both Epistles is the **Second Coming of Christ**. In nearly every chapter there is a reference unto His return. The Greek word *Parousia* is used **seven times**. In these Epistles Saint Paul corrected false ideas concerning the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. Some were saying that the believers who had died would be deprived of the glorious experience at His return (**1 Thessalonians 4:13–17**). Saint Paul declared plainly that His coming would not be a silent matter, for the Lord Jesus Christ shall descend with a mighty shout, the voice of the archangel shall be heard, and the trumpet of God shall sound; and the dead in Christ shall behold Him first.

Some taught that since the coming of Christ was near, there was no need for labour or work (**1 Thessalonians 4:9–12; 2 Thessalonians 3:11–12**).

OTHER IMPORTANT THEMES IN THESE EPISTLES

Saint Paul also praised this Church in **three distinct aspects**:

1. **Faith:**
The word *faith* is used **thirteen times**. They had turned from idols unto the living God, remained steadfast in affliction, and were filled with the joy of the Holy Ghost.
2. **Love:**
The word *love* is used **eight times**. They served the living God faithfully.
3. **Hope:**
The word *hope* is used **five times**. They waited earnestly for the second coming of Christ (**1 Thessalonians 5:3**).

THE DEITY AND GLORY OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST (Acts 17:2–3)

Saint Paul reasoned with them out of the Scriptures, declaring that Christ must needs suffer and rise again from the dead, and affirmed that **this Jesus**, whom he preached unto them, **is the Christ**.

In these two Epistles—eight chapters in total—the name **Jesus** appeared **fifty-four times**.

DISTINGUISHING FEATURES OF THESE EPISTLES

The Marks of True and False Ministers (1 Thessalonians 2:3–12)

False Ministry

- Founded upon error
- Unclean
- Deceitful
- Seeking to please men
- Flattering
- Greedy
- Lovers of praise
- Domineering over others

THE MARKS OF TRUE MINISTRY

The qualities of true ministry are these: gentle, loving, free from selfish motive, diligent, godly, righteous, blameless, and exhorting as a father doth his children.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE BELIEVERS IN THESSALONICA IN THEIR AFFLICTION

First, keep thy testimony steadfast in tribulation (1 Thessalonians 1:6–8).

Second, maintain courage and boldness; fear not the faces of men (1 Thessalonians 2:2).

Third, stand firm in the faith, for affliction is appointed unto the believer as part of his life (1 Thessalonians 3:3–5).

Fourth, God shall recompense tribulation unto them that trouble you (2 Thessalonians 1:6).

Fifth, at the coming of Christ ye shall receive rest (2 Thessalonians 1:7).

THE REVELATION OF THE MAN OF SIN (2 Thessalonians 2:3–12)

He is called the man of sin, the son of perdition, and the lawless one (2 Thessalonians 2:3, 8–9).

He shall show lying wonders and false miracles (2 Thessalonians 2:9).

He shall deceive many, and men shall worship him as though he were God (2 Thessalonians 2:4).

At the coming of Christ he shall be destroyed (2 Thessalonians 2:8).

BACKGROUND: THE FIRST AND SECOND EPISTLES OF PAUL THE APOSTLE UNTO TIMOTHY

The two Epistles unto Timothy, together with the Epistle unto Titus, are known as the **Pastoral Epistles**, for they are written unto servants of God and ministers of the Church.

TIMOTHY

He was of the city of Lystra (**Acts 16:1**).

His mother was a Jewess, and his father a Greek (**Acts 16:1**).

His grandmother and his mother had great influence upon his spiritual life (**2 Timothy 1:5; 3:15**).

Timothy believed during the ministry of Saint Paul at Lystra. At that time he was about fifteen years of age (**Acts 14:23–16:2**).

Paul, in his second missionary journey, took Timothy with him as a helper and fellow-labourer.

Saint Paul oft sent him in his stead (**Acts 19:22; 1 Corinthians 4:17; 16:10–11**).

Paul and Timothy journeyed together many times.

Paul called him his son in the faith (**Philippians 2:19–24**).

During Paul's first imprisonment at Rome, Timothy was also with him (**Philippians 1:1; Colossians 1:1**).

After Paul's release, Timothy went with him unto Ephesus, where he was appointed as a pastor (**1 Timothy 1:3**).

Paul continued his ministry, while Timothy remained at Ephesus as shepherd of the flock. According to ancient tradition, Timothy was later martyred by Roman authority.

DATE OF COMPOSITION

The First Epistle is believed to have been written after Paul's release from his first imprisonment at Rome, when Timothy was pastor of the church at Ephesus. The date is approximately **A.D. 62–64**.

The Second Epistle was written during Paul's second imprisonment at Rome. It is the last letter he wrote, dating about **A.D. 64–66**. In this letter Saint Paul mentioned by name three and twenty persons, sending unto them personal salutations.

CENTRAL THEMES

In these two Epistles Saint Paul emphasized the matters which leaders and churches face in the labour of the ministry (**1 Timothy 3:14–15**).

THEMES OF THE FIRST EPISTLE

Resistance against false doctrines and teachings (**1:1–20**).

The principles of prayer and church worship (**2:1–8**).

Instructions unto women (2:9–15).

Qualifications for elders and deacons (3:1–13).

Warning concerning false teachings (4:1–11).

Personal instructions of Saint Paul unto Timothy (4:12–16; 5:1–21; 6:11–16; 6:20–21).

Conduct toward church members, especially elders and widows (5:1–16).

Relations between masters and servants (6:1–2).

Warnings against the love of money and exhortation unto rich believers (6:3–10).

THEMES OF THE SECOND EPISTLE

Personal exhortations unto Timothy as a soldier of Christ (1:8–2:25).

Be not ashamed of the Gospel (1:8–12).

Hold fast the word of God (1:13–14).

Be strong in grace (2:1).

Be diligent and faithful in ministry (2:15).

Flee youthful lusts (2:22).

Avoid foolish questions (2:23).

Warning concerning the apostasy of the last days (3:1–9; 3:13–14).

INSIGHTS INTO THE CHARACTER OF TIMOTHY

It is very probable he was yet comparatively young (1 Timothy 4:12). His age was about forty years; yet he dwelt among a people who greatly honoured elders. If a man were under forty, he was not esteemed trustworthy. Saint Paul taught him that spiritual maturity is of greater value than physical age.

Timothy was naturally timid and somewhat hesitant (2 Timothy 1:6–12). Saint Paul exhorted him to stir up the spiritual gift within him (1:6), to cast away the spirit of fear (1:7), and to be not ashamed of the Gospel (1:8).

Timothy also struggled under the pressures and mental burdens of ministry (1 Timothy 5:23).

Moreover, Timothy may have had an inclination toward philosophical disputations; therefore Paul warned him against seducing spirits and doctrines of devils (1 Timothy 4:1–5). He was instructed to avoid fables and endless genealogies which do not edify the faith (1 Timothy 1:4), to refuse profane and old wives' tales (1 Timothy 4:7), to turn from false teaching which led men astray (1 Timothy 6:4–7), and to shun vain babblings which overthrow the faith (2 Timothy 2:16–18).

QUALIFICATIONS FOR SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP

Saint Paul provided a full list of the qualities required for leadership within the Church of God.

God is exceedingly careful in choosing those who shall oversee His Church; for the Church is

His, and the servant appointed to labour therein must be of His choosing. No man may make himself a shepherd of the flock by his own will.

Saint Paul speaketh of six diverse affections of love.

First, the love of money.

Second, the love of the self (**Eph. 2:3**).

Third, the love of pleasure and worldly delights (**Eph. 4:3**).

Fourth, the love of the world (**1 Tim. 4:10**).

Fifth, the love of God (**Eph. 3:4**).

Sixth, the love of His appearing (**2 Tim. 4:8**).

Moreover, Saint Paul declared many spiritual qualities of a mature believer. He described him as a faithful man (**2 Tim. 2:2**), as a good soldier of Jesus Christ (**2 Tim. 2:3–4**), as an athlete striving lawfully (**2 Tim. 2:5–6**), as a labouring husbandman, as a workman approved of God (**2 Tim. 2:15**), as a vessel unto honour (**2 Tim. 2:21**), and as a servant of the Lord (**2 Tim. 2:24**). Saint Paul also uttered his final charge in **2 Timothy 4:1–5**. All these matters are taken from *Nelson's Complete Book of Maps and Charts*, page 437.

And what must Timothy do? He must endure afflictions for the Gospel's sake, that others may obtain salvation (**2 Tim. 1:8**). He must continue steadfast in sound doctrine (**2 Tim. 2:10**), for false teaching spreadeth ungodliness (**2 Tim. 2:13, 16–17**). He must flee youthful lusts, that he may become a vessel sanctified for honour (**2 Tim. 2:21**), and with meekness bring men unto God. He must avoid foolish and contentious disputes (**2 Tim. 2:23–26**). And he must preach the Word with zeal and spiritual might, for perilous times shall come (**2 Tim. 4:2–3**).

Concerning the Epistle of Saint Paul the Apostle unto Titus: Titus was a Greek by birth, a disciple of Paul, and his son in the faith (**Titus 1:4**). He journeyed with Paul and Barnabas unto the council at Jerusalem, that he might bear witness of the faith of the Gentiles (**Gal. 2:1–3**). Titus was also a companion in Paul's final missionary travels (**2 Cor. 8:23**). Paul sent him unto the Church at Corinth, not only to deliver the epistle, but also to aid them in resolving their disputes (**2 Cor. 7:14–16; 8:16–17**). It is likely that he himself read the letter before the congregation, and afterward returned to Paul declaring the state of the Church. Titus likewise bore the second epistle unto the Corinthians (**2 Cor. 8:16–23**). He may also have assisted in the collection for the saints at Jerusalem (**2 Cor. 8:18–22**).

When Paul was released from his first imprisonment, Titus journeyed with him unto Crete; and Paul left him there, that he might set in order the things that were wanting, and ordain elders in every city (**Titus 1:5**). Titus abode with the Apostle for a season even during his imprisonments. Tradition declared that the end of his life came in a city of Crete, where he served as bishop; and it is possible that he ministered apostolically among all the Churches of that region. Titus, it is believed, died a natural death.

THE EPISTLE OF TITUS — DATE AND SETTING

The Epistle unto Titus was likely written in the interval between the First and Second Epistles unto Timothy, even between the years **A.D. 63 and 65**.

THE CHURCH IN CRETE

The people of Crete had not a good reputation (**Titus 1:12–13**). They were known for lying, and were given to slothfulness and carelessness; therefore the Churches stood in need of order and discipline. They were of a warlike temper, intolerant toward strangers, and narrow of mind. In ancient writings, “to play the Cretan” signified to speak falsehood. Yet by the Gospel they received the opportunity to be changed.

Cretans were present at Pentecost (**Acts 2:11**); it may be that, believing the Gospel, they carried the message back unto their own land. After Paul’s first imprisonment, he established Churches in many cities of Crete (**Titus 1:5**), and left Titus there to set the Churches in order.

THE CENTRAL THEME OF TITUS

Although this Epistle contained many practical instructions for the Church, its chief theme is the establishment of Church leadership and the discipline of the congregations. Therefore Paul charged Titus to appoint elders in every city who were spiritually and morally qualified (**Titus 1:5–9**). A similar list is found in 1 Timothy 3. Even as Jethro counselled Moses in **Exodus 18:21**, so Paul exhorted Titus.

Saint Paul emphasized four chief qualities:

1. Moral Qualifications

The elder must be blameless, temperate, sober, grave, of good behaviour, not given to wine, not soon angry, not greedy of gain, not quarrelsome, nor self-willed, but a lover of good men.

2. Family Qualifications

He must be the husband of one wife, given to hospitality, able to rule well his house, and having his children in subjection.

3. Spiritual Qualifications

He must not be a novice; he must have a good report even of them that are without; he must be just, holy, patient, and steadfast in the Word.

4. Leadership Qualifications

Not only must he possess a good character and a godly household, but he must also bear spiritual gift and calling. Of the fivefold ministry—apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor, and teacher (**Eph. 4:11**)—he must manifest such grace as is needful, being able to teach and to exhort.

CONCERNING HERETICS AND TROUBLEMAKERS

(Titus 1:9–11; 3:10–11)

Paul instructed Titus on how to deal with false teachers and those who subvert the faith.

THE EPISTLE TO PHILEMON

BACKGROUND

This letter is a personal epistle from one friend unto another. It is the shortest of Paul's writings, containing only 334 Greek words. Its purpose was to bring reconciliation betwixt two persons—a master and his runaway servant. It is a precious letter in which the gentleness and Christ like love of Paul shined brightly.

Paul was in bonds at Rome when he wrote this letter (Acts 28:30–31). Though chained, he had liberty to receive visitors, to preach, and to teach.

ONESIMUS THE RUNAWAY SERVANT

During that time, a runaway servant named Onesimus came unto Paul in Rome.

1. Onesimus had been the servant of Philemon (Philem. 11, 16).
2. Philemon was a resident of Colossae and a prominent member of the Church there (Philem. 2).
3. Onesimus had stolen from his master and fled to Rome, hoping to mingle among the crowds unseen (Philem. 18–19). Yet God apprehended him.
4. It is possible he met Epaphras, founder of the Church at Colossae, who then brought him unto Paul.

A MIRACULOUS TRANSFORMATION

Onesimus came under the influence of Paul's ministry, and by the Holy Ghost was changed—from being an unprofitable servant (v. 11) unto a faithful and beloved brother (v. 16). He ministered unto Paul for a season in his imprisonment (vv. 11, 13). Afterward, bearing fruits meet for repentance, and at Paul's exhortation, he resolved to return and be reconciled unto his master.

A LETTER OF RECONCILIATION

Paul wrote unto Philemon on behalf of Onesimus, that he might fulfil his moral duty, return, and be restored.

1. Paul besought Philemon to show mercy and forgive Onesimus. Under Roman law he could have been condemned to death.

2. Onesimus likely bore this letter together with Tychicus, who also carried the Epistle to the Colossians (**Col. 4:7–9; Eph. 6:21–22**).
3. Paul appealed, not on legal grounds, but on spiritual grounds, that Philemon receive Onesimus not merely as a servant but as a brother in Christ.
4. Paul lovingly pressed his friend:
 - He entreated him (v. 8).
 - He reminded him of his good testimony (vv. 4–7).
 - He sought a personal favour as a fellow-labourer in the Gospel (v. 17).
 - He offered to pay whatever debt Onesimus owed (v. 19).
 - He reminded him that he himself was indebted unto Paul (v. 19).
 - He appealed by the bonds he bore (v. 20).
 - He expressed confidence in Philemon's obedience (v. 21).
 - He announced his intention to visit Philemon shortly (v. 22).

DATE OF PHILEMON

The Epistle unto Philemon was written near the same time as the Epistle unto the Colossians, about **A.D. 62–64**.

THE CENTRAL THEME OF PHILEMON

The central theme is **forgiveness and reconciliation**. Its key word is *receive* (vv. 12, 15, 17). The letter revealed the very heart of the Gospel:

- The sinner hath fled from God.
- The Law condemned him.
- The sinner cannot pay his debt.
- The sinner findeth refuge in Christ.
- Christ payeth his debt in full.
- The sinner bringeth forth fruits meet for repentance.
- The sinner is forgiven, not by the Law, but by grace.
- The sinner becomes a new creature and is freed from the bondage of sin.

DISTINCTIVE FEATURES OF PHILEMON

Paul often speaketh of his own condition:

- “A prisoner of Jesus Christ” (v. 1).
- “Paul the aged, and now also a prisoner” (v. 1).
- “In my bonds” (v. 13).
- Hope of release (v. 22).
- “My fellow-prisoner” (v. 23).

Paul wrote this letter with his own hand, perhaps because it was a personal matter and he would not involve others (v. 19).

THE FUTURE OF ONESIMUS

It is possible that Onesimus later became bishop of Ephesus.

