

Someone came to replace him in Crete so Titus journeyed north and met Paul in western Macedonia and continued his missionary work northward into what is now Albania (2 Timothy 4:10). The gospel was really spreading into Europe, Back in Crete, though, Titus was a busy man as he cared for all the new Cretan believers, especially because the people just didn't know how to do what is good in God's eyes. Paul knew Titus needed some encouragement and reminders of what was important to teach the people. Paul wrote to Titus soon after writing 1st Timothy, probably while Paul was in Macedonia, on his way to Nicopolis (Titus 3:12). Paul hoped to join Titus again, but there is no way of knowing whether that meeting ever took place. Tradition has it that Titus later returned to Crete and there served out the rest of his life, remained there into his old age, dying in Gortyna, near the city of Candia (modern Heraklion).

PHILEMON

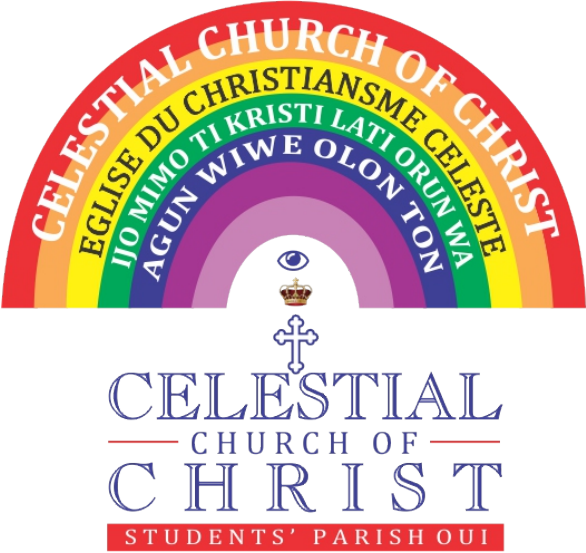


The Epistle of Paul the apostle co-authored with Timothy “v1” to Philemon who was a leader in the Colossian church. Whose wife is Apphia through whom was bore Archippus son of Philemon, a pastor of the church at Colossae in Philemon's house as said according to tradition. With the theme of forgiveness and reconciliation, it is a personal letter addressed to Philemon, referencing it to Apphia, Archippus and the church at Colossae also known as Colossian (v2). It is a plea for Philemon to forgive his runaway slave who had

fled to Rome, Onesimus who was sent back to Colossae having been converted under Paul in Rome (v10-19; Col. 4:9), and was returning with this epistle wherein Paul wrote from a prison cell in Rome asking Philemon to receive him as a "brother beloved." and not as a slave anymore. He ends the letter urging Philemon to prepare to receive him as he may be released. This is one of the shortest epistle recorded with only one chapter and 25 verses.

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Dr. Robert Stein; Dr. Reggie Kidd; E.p. Sanders; Chuck Swindoll's; Douglas A. Campbell; Daily Bible Study; Wikipedia; Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary; Biblica.com; biblegateway.com; livethecross.org/author/johnbotkin/; Encyclopaedia Britannica; int.icej.org; and other anonymous; online picture: google, **Prophet Ayodele, CCCSPUI Bible Coordinator.**



FOUNDATION BIBLE SCHOOL ARCHIVES

TOPIC: THE TWELFTH APOSTLE’S EPISTLE

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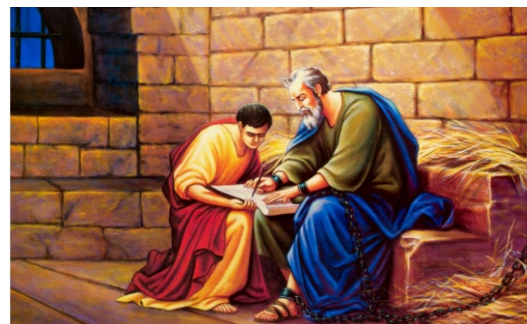
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According to *Faxe's Book of Martyrs*, which was written several centuries later (originally published in 1563), Timothy remained in Ephesus until AD 97. During a pagan celebration of a feast called "Catagogian," Timothy severely reproved the people in the procession for their ridiculous idolatry. This antagonized the partygoers who beat him with clubs "in so dreadful a manner that he expired of the bruises two days later."

TITUS

This Epistle of Paul the Apostle to Titus a true son, A young Pastor, faces the unenviable assignment of setting in order the church at Crete.



Titus is believed to be a Gentile converted to Christianity by Paul from early days in Antioch, perhaps in Acts 11:25, 26 and, according to tradition, he was consecrated as Bishop of the Island of Crete.

Paul brought him to Jerusalem (Galatians 2:1-4) to show the apostles and other Jewish believers

how a Greek non-Jew could love God just as much as they did. Titus represented all the other non-Jewish people who became Christians and were completely accepted by God through their faith in Jesus Christ

Titus continued to travel with Paul on missionary journeys, helping in the work of sharing the gospel. During the 3 years Paul was in Ephesus teaching them about the amazing power of God (third journey), Titus was there. Then, Paul sent him to Corinth to alleviate tension there (2 Corinthians 7:6, 13-14) and to collect money for the poor in Jerusalem (2 Corinthians 8:6, 16, 23). Paul thought of Titus not only as a very faithful friend but also as his spiritual son because he had led him to trust Christ.

After Paul was released from the Roman prison which is noted as "his first imprisonment in Rome" where he had been for two years, he and Titus traveled to the island of Crete. Paul and Titus taught the people, called Cretans, about their need for God and the good news about Jesus (Titus 1:4-5). Soon there were enough believers to start churches in several towns. Paul wanted to go visit the church in Corinth Due to their needs, requiring his presence, he ordained his disciple Titus as bishop of that island, and left him to finish the work he had started, teaching the new Christians and to appoint church leaders for each new church. Chrysostom says that this is an indication of the esteem St. Paul held for Titus.

arrived at Corinth just after 1 Corinthians reached that city.

Timothy was with Paul in Corinth during the winter of 57–58 when Paul dispatched his Letter to the Romans (Romans 16:21). According to Acts 20:36, Timothy was with Paul in Macedonia just before Passover in 58; he left the city before Paul, going ahead of him to await Paul in Troas (Acts 20:45). During the 3 years Paul was in Ephesus teaching them about the amazing power of God, Timothy was there, too. When Paul was imprisoned in Rome for two years, Timothy was right alongside him much of the time unselfishly taking care of Paul's needs. By now, Timothy was a young man of about 30 who for at least 13 years had been learning how to teach about Jesus and serve God's people well as he watched Paul do it. Paul thought of Timothy not only as a very faithful friend but also as his spiritual son.

After Paul's release from prison in Rome, Timothy and Paul traveled to visit friends in the churches they had founded. When they got to Ephesus, Paul recognized some men in the church were teaching error about Jesus saying that Jesus could not have been a man and God at the same time. Paul wanted to go on to visit his friends in Macedonia, but he didn't want to leave the Ephesian church in turmoil. So, he left Timothy to teach truth to the church there while Paul went on to Macedonia. As an "apostolic representative, Timothy had the authority to order worship (1 Timothy 2:1-15) and appoint elders and deacons (1 Timothy 3:1-3). Paul thought he'd get back to Ephesus soon, but that didn't happen. He was concerned about what was going on in Ephesus, so he wrote Timothy the letter called 1st Timothy around AD 64 from Macedonia.



His relationship with Paul was close and Paul entrusted him with missions of great importance. Timothy's name appears in the salutations on 2 Corinthians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians, and Philemon. Paul wrote to the Philippians about Timothy, "I have no one like him" (Philippians 2:19-23). When Paul was in prison and awaiting martyrdom, he summoned his faithful friend Timothy for a last farewell. The most tender and moving of Paul's letters was his last one to Timothy. He was a prisoner in a Roman dungeon when he wrote 2 Timothy, approximately AD 67. He knew he had a short time to live, so the letter is his spiritual last will and testament his "dying wish" to encourage Timothy and to request that Timothy join him during his final days of imprisonment (2 Timothy 1:4; 4:9, 21).

Timothy is known to suffer against stomach and intestinal disorders which lead to Apostle Paul Advising him in 1 Timothy 5:23 saying "Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities."

THE TWELFTH APOSTLE'S EPISTLE

It is obviously understood on what Christ meant in John: 6:70 when he said "Did I not choose you, the twelve, and one of you is a devil?" furthermore He went on in Jn. 13:18 saying "I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen: but that the scripture may be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me." All this words shed a brighter light to the apostles and us which make us understand that "JUDAS ISCARIOT" was not chosen to be numbered with the twelve nevertheless as it is written Jesus Christ chose the Eleven Apostles Himself and sanctified them, Prayed for them, and sent them on a primary assignment. Although it wasn't stated that the eleven apostles asked Christ about who the Twelfth Apostle was to be but it was clear that Apostle Peter stood up in the presence of 120 people (followers) and explained to them the importance of appointing the twelfth apostle in replacement of Judas Iscariot According to (Ps 109:8) in Acts 1:15-26. Then they prayed to God to choose from the two people they've selected (but what if the Twelfth Apostle was not in the gathering of the one hundred and twenty people, How can we tell?) yet the lot was casted between the two and it fell on Matthias and he was numbered along with the eleven apostles though all these was done before the Day of Pentecost, when they where not yet filled with the Holy Spirit. Nevertheless after a period of time on a man's journey to Damascus heading to butcher many Christians, the Lord called the Twelfth which makes us understand what Apostle Paul meant when he said in Rom. 1:1, "Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated to the Gospel of God". Furthermore Jesus said in John 15:16; Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it to you.

We will understand that Matthias was chosen by the apostle to complete the figure and not exactly by Christ. Those to whom Christ choose Himself, He definitely has important purpose and assignment for, at a specific period of time.

If Apostle Paul is an "APOSTLE" appointed by Jesus Christ as an "APOSTLE" then will agree with the fact that Matthias is not the twelve Apostle (or should we say there are thirteen Apostles?)

Revelation 21:9-14

And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife. And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God: and her

light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal; and had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: On the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates. And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

From this scripture it is crystal that there can't be thirteen Apostle but TWELVE APOSTLE ONLY chosen by Jesus Christ Himself.

Paul an outstanding missionary, theologian, and writer of the early church. Paul is a very important figure in the New Testament and in the history of Christianity. He wrote 13 epistles that comprise almost one-fourth of the New Testament. Approximately 16 chapters of the book of Acts (13-28) focus on missionary labors. Thus Paul is the author or subject of nearly one-third of the New Testament and the most important interpreter of the teachings of Christ and of the significance of His life, death, and resurrection.

Early life and Training (A.D. 1-35) Birth and Family Background Paul was born in a Jewish family in Tarsus of Cilicia (Acts 22:3), probably sometimes during the first decade of the first century. According to Jerome, Paul's family moved to Tarsus from Gischala in Galilee. Paul's family was of the tribe of Benjamin (Phil. 3.5), and he was named for the most prominent member of the tribe- King Saul. Paul probably came from a family of the tentmakers or leatherworkers and, according to Jewish custom, and was taught this trade by his father. Apparently the business thrived and Paul's family became moderately wealthy. Paul was a citizen of the city of Tarsus, "an important city" (Acts 21:39). According to one ancient writer, the property qualification for Tarsian citizenship wage was 500 drachmae, a year and a half's wages.

Apostle Paul's Roman Citizenship and more importantly; Paul was born a Roman citizen. Many speculate that Paul's father or grandfather was honored with citizenship because of some special service rendered to a military proconsul. However, early Christian tradition preserved by Jerome and Photius stated that Paul's parents had been carried as prisoners of war from Gischala to Tarsus, enslaved to a Roman citizen, then freed and granted citizenship. Regardless of how Paul's parents received their citizenship, the book of Acts states three times that he possessed it, and his citizenship was accompanied by important rights that would benefit him in his missionary labors.

The Roman citizen had the right of appeal after a trial, exemption from imperial service, right to choose between a local or Roman trial, and protection from degrading forms of punishment like scourging. Paul might have carried a wax tablet that functioned as a birth certificate or certificate of citizenship. However, most people who claimed citizenship were trusted since the penalty for impersonating a Roman citizen was death.

TIMOTHY

The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to his beloved son and a young pastor Timothy, who is facing a heavy burden of responsibility in the church at Ephesus. The task is challenging: false doctrine must be erased, public worship safeguarded, and mature leadership development. Furthermore, he must be careful to avoid false teachers and greedy motives, pursuing instead righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance and the gentleness that befits a man of God. Nevertheless, Prison is the last place from which to expect a letter of encouragement, but that is where Paul's second letter to Timothy originates. He begins by assuring Timothy of his continuing love and prayers, and remind him of his spiritual heritage and responsibilities.



Timothy was a teenager when he met Paul. His family lived in Lycaonian city of Lystra in Asia Minor, so he was a Galatian. His father was a Greek man; we know nothing of his faith. But, Timothy's mom and grandmother were faithful Jewish women who taught the Old Testament scriptures to

this boy they loved so much (Acts 16:1; 2 Timothy 1:5). As the women heard Paul preach during his first visit in Lystra with Barnabas, they believed in Jesus, and so did Timothy. Timothy may have seen Paul heal a lame man in his town. That would have been exciting! He may also have watched as an angry mob threw stones at Paul and left him for dead (Acts 14:8-20). Yet, he also knew Paul survived. When Paul came back with Silas to Lystra a couple of years later on his second missionary journey, Timothy was already a respected member of the Christian congregation, as were his grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice, both Jews. In 2 Timothy 1:5, his mother and grandmother are noted as eminent for their piety and faith. Timothy is said to have been acquainted with the Scriptures since childhood. When Apostle Paul met Timothy, he became Paul's companion and co-worker along with Silas, traveling with Paul the Apostle, who was also his mentor.

Timothy helped Paul to establish churches at Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea (Acts 16:1 – 17:14). When Paul left Berea to go to Athens he left Timothy and Silas behind, but later sent word for them to join him (Acts 17:13-15). Timothy was sent to Thessalonica to strengthen the faith of believers there (1 Thessalonians 3:1-2). Timothy was a trustworthy friend who carried money collected by the Philippian church to care for Paul's needs in Corinth. and in late 56 or early 57 Paul sent him forth to Macedonia with the aim that he would eventually arrive at Corinth. Timothy

rose again, so we also believe that God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus (1Thessalonians 4:13-14:).

Paul assured the Thessalonians that although the departed saints had died physically, they were still alive with Christ, and they would accompany Christ when he returned.

In addition to discouragement and confusion, the message of the false prophets had led to irresponsible living. It really isn't hard to understand what happened at Thessalonica. Put yourself in their situation. If you believed that the world would end next month, would you still go to work, or repair your house, or build schools? If you were highly confident that Jesus would return in just a matter of days, normal activities would no longer seem very important.

This is precisely what happened in Thessalonica. The false prophets convinced some of the Christians there that they no longer needed to support themselves. Their attitude was "Why bother with work when Jesus is coming back so soon?" This is why in 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12 Paul wrote that they should return to work: Endeavor to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business and to work with your hands, just as we commanded you, so that you behave properly toward outsiders and so that you lack nothing (1 Thessalonians 4:11-12).

Unfortunately, even after Paul had encouraged attention to daily affairs, some believers in Thessalonica still did not return to their responsibilities. So, Paul addressed this subject again in 2 Thessalonians, but this time more strongly. In 2 Thessalonians 3:6-12 he wrote:

We command you, brothers, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, to keep away from every brother who behaves lazily rather than according to the teaching you received from us... For even when we were with you, we commanded this of you: 'If someone does not want to work, he is not permitted to eat.' We hear that some among you are behaving lazily. They are not busy; they are busybodies. Such people we command and encourage in the Lord Jesus Christ to live quietly, earning the bread they eat (2 Thessalonians 3:6-12).

False prophecies about the imminent return of Christ had encouraged the Thessalonians to become lazy and idle. And idleness had led to other problems.

So we see that in Thessalonica the problems were manifest but interrelated. Persecution had opened the door for misconceptions about the immediate return of Christ. And those false beliefs led to practical problems such as discouragement and irresponsibility. Paul hoped that his letters to the Thessalonian church would help them deal with these difficult problems.

Now that we have seen some of the important issues that form the background to Paul's epistles to the Thessalonians, we are ready to look at the content of these letters.

Apostle Paul's Rabbinic Training; Acts 22:3 shows that Paul grew up in Jerusalem. Paul used this fact to prove that he was no Diaspora Jew who was more influenced by Gentile culture than Jewish ways. He was educated in Jerusalem in the Jewish religion according to the traditions of his ancestors (Acts 22:3). The Mishnah taught. "At five years old [one is fit] for the scripture, at ten years for the Mishnah, at thirteen [for the fulfilling of] the commandments, at fifteen for the Talmud, at eighteen for the bride chamber, at twenty for pursuing a calling, at thirty for authority." This is probably a fairly accurate description of the regimen of training that Paul was trained by Rabbi Gamaliel which he frequently use in expressing many of his opinions. Gamaliel was listed among 13 great rabbis whose deaths marked the decline of Judaism: "When Rabbi Gamaliel the Elder died, the glory of the Law ceased and purity and abstinence died. "The passage implies that Gamaliel was as renowned for his high moral standards as for his interpretation of the Scriptures. Paul quickly excelled as a Jewish rabbinical student. As Paul says in Gal. 1:14, "I advanced in Judaism beyond many contemporaries among my people, because I was extremely zealous for the traditions of my ancestors." In Phil. 3 Paul describes himself as "circumcised on the eight day; of the people of Israel of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, persecuting the church; as to righteousness that is in the law, blameless" (HSCB). In Acts 26:5 Paul again identifies himself with the section of the Pharisees. His father has also been a Pharisee. (Acts 23:6).

Persecution of Christians as an ideal Pharisee, Paul was probably active as a Jewish missionary winning Gentiles as proselytes. He may have been like the Pharisee Jesus described who traveled "over land and sea to make one convert" (Matt 23:15 HCSB). Paul's words "if I still preach circumcision" may allude to his past as a Jewish missionary (Gal 5:11). Paul, more than his mentor Gamaliel (Acts 5:34-39), recognized the serious threat that the followers of Jesus posed to the traditional Jewish religion. The Mishnah taught that a Jewish male was ready for a position of authority at age 30. Thus Paul's clearest description of persecution is found in Acts 26:9-11, "I myself supposed it was necessary to do many things in opposition to the name of Jesus the Nazarene. This I actually did in Jerusalem, and I locked up many of the saints in prison, since I had received authority for that from the chief priests. When they were to be put to death, I cast my vote against them. In the synagogues I often tried to make them blaspheme by punishing them. Being greatly enraged at them, I even pursued them to foreign cities" (HSCB). Some believe this reference to casting a vote (literally "casting a pebble"-black for no or white for yes) implies that Paul was a member of the Sanhedrin. However, it is difficult to imagine that Paul would have explicitly stated this especially on those occasions in which he highlights his devout Jewish pedigree. Most commentators thus take the statement as a

metaphor implying that Paul consented to the execution of believers or suggest that he was a member of a committee appointed by the Sanhedrin and vested with this authority. Paul's initial and adamant rejection of Jesus as the Messiah may largely have been motivated by Jesus' ignoble death. Death by crucifixion was indicative of divine curse (Deut. 21:33). Certainly the Messiah could not have died under the curse of God. But when Paul wrote his first epistle, this death curse was recognized as the grounds for substitutionary atonement (Gal. 3:10-14). In 1 Cor. 1 Paul explained that the idea of a crucified Messiah was a stumbling block to the Jews. Probably Paul was speaking from his own past experience.

Paul's Conversion (A.D. 35) While Saul was on his way to Damascus to arrest and imprison believers there, the resurrected and glorified Christ appeared to him with blinding radiance. Christ's words "It is hard for you to kick against the goads" indicate that God had already begun His convicting work earlier. Like an ox kicking against a goad in the hand of the ox driver, Paul had been resisting divine guidance and leadership resulting in his own harm and pain. At the appearance of Christ, Saul immediately surrendered to His authority and went into the city to await further orders. There his blindness was healed and he received the Holy Spirit and accepted believer's baptism. No doubt Ananias shared with Paul the message that the Lord had given him in a vision: "This man is My chosen instruments to carry My name before Gentiles, kings; and the sons of Israel. I will certainly show him how much he must suffer for My name!" there Paul spent a few days with the disciples in Damascus.

ABOUT THE EPISTLES

The Pauline epistles, also called Epistles of Paul or Letters of Paul, are the thirteen books of the New Testament attributed to Paul the Apostle, although authorship of some is in dispute. Among these letters are some of the earliest extant Christian documents. They provide an insight into the beliefs and controversies



of early Christianity. As part of the canon of the New Testament, they are foundational texts for both Christian theology and ethics. The Epistle to the Hebrews, although it does not bear his name, was traditionally considered Pauline for a thousand years, but from the 16th century onwards opinion steadily moved against Pauline authorship and few

scholars now ascribe it to Paul, mostly because it does not read like any of his other epistles in style and content.

This conflict with the false prophets raises another issue for us as we read Paul's letters to the Thessalonians: What were these false prophets teaching? We cannot be sure of everything they taught, but when we recall the ongoing persecution in Thessalonica and examine the content of Paul's Thessalonian epistles, we may surmise that the false prophets had a variety of misconceptions about the second coming of Christ. Their central problem, however, was that they believed that Jesus would return almost immediately. In fact, as incredible as it may seem to us, some false prophets had even proclaimed that Christ had already returned. Listen to 2 Thessalonians 2:1-3:

With respect to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him, we ask, brothers, that you not be easily unsettled or alarmed by a spirit, report or letter... saying that the day of the Lord is already here. Do not let anyone deceive you (2 Thessalonians 2:1-3).

Evidently, at least some of the false prophets had taught that the church of Thessalonica had already missed Christ's return. It is possible that they drew these ideas from the civic cult of Thessalonica that worshiped Cabirus, a murdered local hero who was said to return to the world periodically; the false teachers may have applied this kind of outlook to the Christian faith by telling the Thessalonians that Christ had already returned.

Whatever the source of these errors, Paul strongly condemned the false prophets, instructing the Thessalonians to hold fast to what he had told them about the return of Christ.

Christian Living

Now that we have seen how persecution and false prophecy had come to the Thessalonians, we should look at some practical ways these problems impacted the church. A number of significant concerns appear in Paul's letters to the Thessalonians, but we will focus on two: discouragement and irresponsibility. Let's look first at the Thessalonians' discouragement.

Usually, when Christians have believed that Jesus' return was just around the corner, they have inevitably been discouraged because Jesus has not appeared. In Thessalonica, many believers had oriented their entire lives around the immediate return of Christ. They had suffered and given up much for the sake of Christ. Yet, as the months went by, not only were they disappointed, but to make matters worse, a number of believers passed away. Those who remained alive worried about the eternal fate of the departed believers. This confusion led to doubts, and doubts to discouragement. Listen to the way Paul gently corrected them in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-14:

We do not want you to be ignorant, brothers, about those who are sleeping, lest you grieve like the rest, who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and

place, throughout history, when Christians have suffered persecution for long periods of time, they have often longed for Jesus to return to deliver them from their trials. Simply put, suffering Christians tend to orient their entire lives toward the second coming of Christ. When this life offers little more than disappointment and suffering, we turn our eyes toward the day when Jesus will rescue us.

In the second place, when Christians are highly concerned with the return of Christ, they often become susceptible to false teachers or false prophets who have extreme views regarding the second coming. And this is precisely what happened to the Thessalonians. False teachers came into the church with misguided beliefs about the nearness of Christ's return.

To appreciate how much trouble the false teachers in Thessalonica stirred up, we will touch on two matters: the conflict that developed between the false prophets and Paul, and the content of the false prophets' teaching. Let's look first at the challenge of false prophecy.

It is apparent in many sections of 1 and 2 Thessalonians that false teachers strongly opposed Paul's teaching. For example, when he received Timothy's reports on the condition of the Thessalonian church, Paul learned that false prophets had entered the fellowship of believers and had spoken against some of his teachings. One of Paul's responses to this problem was to remind the Thessalonians to examine every prophecy they heard. Listen to his words in 1Thessalonians 5:20-21:

Do not despise prophecies. Test everything; hold on to the good (1Thessalonians 5:20-21).

Paul instructed the Thessalonians to "test everything" and to "hold on to the good" because he wanted them to evaluate the content of every instruction they received. They were to retain only the good, disregarding everything that did not comport with what they knew to be true from the Scriptures and from Paul's teaching.

But the false prophets did not give up easily. Instead, they continued to teach and preach their false doctrines. In fact, they may have gone so far as to forge letters under Paul's name in an attempt to persuade the Thessalonians of their views. Paul was clearly worried about this type of activity when he wrote in 2 Thessalonians 2:1-2:

We ask you brothers, that you not be easily unsettled or alarmed by a spirit, report or letter supposed to have come from us (2 Thessalonians 2:1-2).

Paul's concern with the problem of forgeries is also apparent in 2 Thessalonians 3:17, where he wrote:

The greeting of Paul by my own hand. This is a sign in all my letters; this is how I write (2 Thessalonians 3:17).

Paul added words written by his own hand as a signature that distinguished his letters from forgeries, helping the Thessalonians to identify letters that were genuinely his and to reject false prophecy.

ROMANS

The Epistle to the Romans was written to Christians residing in the city of Rome (1:7,15). Paul wrote the letter to the Romans from the city of Corinth, while he was on his third missionary journey. At the time he was gathering an offering from the Gentile Christians for the church in Jerusalem (15:25; Acts 24:17). This would place the letter's composition date at ca. AD 56, Paul mentions three people that help to identify the letter's composition with Corinth: Phoebe (16:1), Gaius (16:23), and Erastus (16:23). He sent Phoebe of Cenchrea to the church in Rome as the bearer of the epistle.

The Expulsion from Rome

Priscilla and Aquila had been co-workers with Paul for a number of years. In the Book of Acts, we meet this devout couple for the first time when Paul arrives in the Greek city of Corinth. "After these things Paul departed from Athens and went to Corinth. And he found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla (because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to depart from Rome)." (Acts 18:1-2). The couple helped Paul to establish the church in Corinth and moved on with him to Ephesus, where they remained actively involved in church planting alongside Paul. Like him, they were followers of Jesus of Jewish descent. In Acts, it is stated that they were forced to leave Rome because the Emperor Claudius had expelled all the Jews from Rome.

The Roman historian Suetonius confirms this event and the early church historian Orosius gives the date as the year 49 AD. Others even place it as early as 41 AD. This expulsion was no isolated case. Only a few decades earlier, Tiberius had expelled all Jews from Rome to the island of Sardinia. Suetonius explains the expulsion came about because of the "disturbances and riots among the Jews at the instigation of Chrestus." Most church historians today agree that this refers to Christ. Christians were also frequently referred to as "Chrestiano." Apparently, there was an internal dispute among the Jewish residents of Rome over the Messianic claims of Jesus, as had happened in Jerusalem (Acts 8:1), Antioch (Acts 15:50); Iconium (Act 14:1-7), Thessalonica and Berea (Acts 17), and elsewhere. But Claudius had little tolerance for their debate and expelled all the Jews.

This included Priscilla and Aquila, who fled to Corinth where they met up with Paul. For several years, they joined his ministry team, moving with him to Ephesus. But when a new emperor arose in Rome named Nero, he allowed the Jews to return in 54 AD. Priscilla and Aquila returned around this time, which is why Paul greets them at the end of his letter.

The First Gentile Church

The expulsion of Jews from Rome is therefore of central importance in

understanding Paul's message to the church there. The church in Rome had existed long before Paul ever arrived there. Like other churches in those early decades of the movement, many of the congregants and undoubtedly most of the teachers were Jewish. They were the most versed in the Holy Scriptures, which at that time consisted of only the writings of the Old Testament. Thus when Claudius decided to expel the Jews from Rome, including those who believed in Jesus, this meant the church in Rome was probably the first one entirely made up of Gentiles. This must have presented a great challenge. All the teachers and elders who instructed them every Sabbath were gone! Yet the Holy Spirit was also with them and the Gentile believers managed to keep the church in Rome intact and growing on their own for a season. This likely brought a new sense of confidence, as they discovered the church could still operate without the Jews.

Tensions with the return to Rome

But then the Emperor Nero allowed the Jews to return, and no doubt tensions developed. Priscilla and Aquila were among those who came back to their home congregation, where they probably encountered a changed attitude towards them and their fellow Jewish believers.

The historic context strongly suggests that Paul wrote to the church in Rome to set things in order and resolve the tensions between the new Gentile leadership and the returning Jewish congregants. For instance, we see Paul firmly admonishing the Gentiles not to forget their spiritual roots are in Judaism. This begins even in his initial greeting, where he reminds them that Jesus “was born of the seed of David according to the flesh.” But in chapter 2, he also advises the returning Jews to lead more through example than by words. And in chapter 14, he addresses questions regarding Jewish dietary laws which seem to have arisen. Still, the main thrust of the letter is directed towards Gentile believers and their need to respect the Jewish roots of their faith. Paul stressed that the oracles, covenants and redemptive purpose of God began centuries earlier with the Jewish people. In addition, he made clear that the Messiah was not a Roman citizen but descended from King David's royal lineage.

The Roman church found itself in a conflict between Jew and Gentile from which it may never have recovered. Eventually, we find Priscilla and Aquila back in Ephesus, where Paul greets them again in 2 Timothy 4:19. Meanwhile, several decades later, the church at Rome became the breeding ground for Replacement theology, as one of the greatest heretics of the early Church – Marcion – arose from the fellowship in Rome. He taught there from 137 until 144 AD, and maintained that the God of the Old Testament was one of vengeance and wrath, whereas the God of the New Testament was a different Deity, one of love and mercy. And even some of the books of the New Testament were too “Jewish” for him.

Marcion was finally expelled from the church, but would end up taking large

Paul most likely wrote 1 Thessalonians from Corinth shortly after Timothy's arrival in order to address these issues. 2 Thessalonians was probably written a few months later, also from Corinth.

What was so serious that he wrote to the Thessalonians not once but twice? As in any situation, there were many interwoven difficulties in Thessalonica. But as we read Paul's letters to this church, three main problems move to the foreground:

- the struggle of persecution;
- the rise of false prophets within the church;
- some issues of practical Christian living that the false prophets brought to the church.

Persecution

When Paul had first brought the gospel to Thessalonica, the believers there had become the object of violence, enduring serious, life-threatening persecution. Listen to Luke's description of events in Thessalonica recorded in Acts 17:5: The Jews were jealous, so they rounded up some wicked men from the marketplace, formed a mob and started a riot in the city. They attacked Jason's house, seeking to bring Paul and Silas out to the crowd (Acts 17:5).

In fact, the unbelieving Jews in Thessalonica were so aggressive that they were not satisfied simply to drive Paul and Silas out of their city. Instead, they followed the missionaries to Berea to trouble them even further. Luke recorded this fact in Acts 17:13:

When the Jews in Thessalonica learned that Paul was preaching the word of God at Berea, they went there too, agitating and stirring up the crowds (Acts 17:13).

The Jewish opponents of the gospel were tenacious, and they even inspired Gentiles to oppose the Christian faith as they pursued Christians from town to town.

Paul's letters to the Thessalonians indicate that this suffering continued after his departure from Thessalonica. In 1 Thessalonians 2:14-16, Paul described their trials in this way:

You suffered the same things at the hands of your own countrymen that those churches suffered from the Jews, who killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove us out, who displease God and are hostile to all men, keeping us from speaking to the Gentiles in order that they might be saved (1 Thessalonians 2:14-16).

From the time Paul first preached in Thessalonica until he wrote his epistles to them, persecution had been a prominent feature of living for Christ in Thessalonica. And as Paul wrote to the believers in that city, he was very concerned about this persecution and the effects it was having on them.

False Prophets

In addition to suffering persecution, the Thessalonian church had also come under the influence of false prophets. In some ways, this is not surprising. In the first

astray by false teachings.

Colossians 3:15-17: In this beautiful passage, Paul calls the Christians in Colosse to accept Christ and receive his peace.

THESSALONIAN

Paul has many pleasant memories of days he spent with the infant Thessalonians church. Their faith, hope, love and perseverance in the face of persecution are exemplary. Paul's labours as a spiritual parent to the fledgling church have been richly rewarded, and his affection is visible in every line of his letter. Since

Paul's first letter, the seeds of false doctrine have been sown among the Thessalonians, causing them to waver in their faith. Paul removes these destructive seeds and again plants the seeds of truth. He begins by commending the believers on their faithfulness in the midst of persecution and encouraging them that present suffering will be repaid with future glory. Therefore, in the midst of persecution, expectation can be high.

FURTHERMOER

Letters of Paul to the Thessalonians, two New Testament letters written by Paul from Corinth, Greece, about AD 50 and addressed to the Christian community he had founded in Macedonia.

The first letter was written after Timothy, his co-worker, returned from Thessalonica to report that the new converts had stood fast in the Lord despite persecution. Apparently to refute slanderous charges that he used guile and flattery to gain converts, Paul points out that the Thessalonians themselves were eyewitnesses to his "holy and righteous and blameless" behaviour (2:10). He likewise calls attention to the fact that he worked night and day so as not to burden anyone. In answer to a question that disturbed the community, Paul explained that everyone, both the living and the dead, will share Christ's Resurrection at the time of his Second Coming.

The second letter was written shortly after the first, but some question Pauline authorship because there is notable ambiguity about the proximity of Christ's Second Coming. Christians apparently believed that it was useless to work because the end of the world was close at hand. The letter thus explains that the final day will not arrive until after the Antichrist appears and proclaims himself God. Christians must consequently continue "to earn their own living" (3:12), as did Paul himself in Thessalonica, who "did not eat any one's bread without paying" (3:8).

It was during this second missionary journey that Paul wrote his two letters to the Thessalonians. According to 1 Thessalonians 3:1-2, while Paul was in Athens he sent Timothy back to Thessalonica to encourage the believers there. This would have been around the year A.D. 49 or 50, shortly after Paul and his company had left Thessalonica. When Timothy returned, probably in A.D. 50 or 51, Paul was most likely in Corinth. Apparently, Timothy had told Paul about a number of serious misunderstandings and practical problems that had arisen in the Thessalonian church.

numbers of Gentile Christians with him. The impact of his erroneous doctrines, based on the rejection of our Jewish roots because Israel largely rejected Jesus, is felt to this day.

Although According to Dr. Robert Stein:

Paul wrote to Romans because of his unique view of his apostleship. If he was indeed THE apostle to the Gentiles, then here is a church out in Rome that falls under his leadership, his area of responsibility. As THE apostle to the Gentiles, so he writes as the apostle in charge of that church, even though he had nothing to do in founding it, nor did any of his disciples (like Erastus and others who worked from Ephesus, establishing churches in Laodicea, Colossae, etc.). what we have here in Romans is a letter written by Paul to a church that he feels is under his apostolic authority and care. And this becomes fairly evident, even in the opening verses. The first seven verses are very unusual -- this is not the typical introduction. A typical letter would have been something like the first part of the first verse, "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, To all God's beloved in Rome who are called to be saints: Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." That would be very typical, like the Corinthian correspondence, the Thessalonian correspondence, etc. But you have this large section in between. Why? Because he's writing to a church in which he has to establish his apostleship from the beginning. These are not his converts -- he hasn't been there before. Why is this strange man, Paul, writing to us? Well, he establishes that from the very start.

"Paul a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scripture, concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh and designated Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord"

Why the reference here to the resurrection of Jesus? He doesn't mention that in other introductions. He mentions it here because that's where he gets his apostleship. It's the risen Christ who has given him his apostleship. The other apostles were called during the ministry of Jesus. Paul was called by the risen Christ. Then in the thanksgiving section, v. 8-15, he does the same thing. He establishes his relationship with the church,

"First I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is proclaimed in all the world. For God is my witness [he's trying to build up a relationship here] whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I mention you always in my prayers [I have always been praying for you], asking that somehow by God's will I may now at last succeed in coming to you. For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you."

you say this to a Gentile church which falls under his authoritative leadership.

"I want you to know, brethren, that I have often intended to come to you (but thus far have been prevented [or as the King James Version translates it, 'thus far have been let']), in order that I may reap some harvest among you as well as among the rest of the Gentiles. I am under obligation

both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish. So I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome.”

So in this salutation and thanksgiving, he's building up his relationship. The reason he writes this letter is that he is their spiritual father, and as their apostle (“God has given me this grace of apostleship”), he wants to establish and help them to be sure that they're on the right track. In essence, “I rejoice in what's going on; I just want to help you in this way.” He has a unique view of his apostleship: he's not just AN apostle, but THE apostle to the Gentiles. Then, when he gets to chapter 15 he continues along these lines. Beginning at v. 14, “I myself am satisfied about you, brethren, that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able to instruct one another.” Who is he it would matter to them that he's satisfied? It matters that he's satisfied because he has the responsibility over this church; he's the apostle.

“But on some points I have written to you very boldly by way of reminder, because of the grace given me by God [same expression once again, right?] to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles in the priestly service of the gospel of God, so that the offering of the Gentiles may be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit. In Christ Jesus, then, I have reason to be proud of my work for God. For I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me to win obedience among the Gentiles in word and deed, by the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the Holy Spirit— so that from Jerusalem and as far away as Illyricum [the coast of Yugoslavia, opposite Italy], I have fully preached the gospel of Christ; and thus I make it my ambition to preach the gospel, not where Christ has already been named, lest I build on another man's foundation, [That's why I can write you — I'm not building on anyone's foundation here in Rome] but as it is written, 'They shall see who have never been told of him, and that shall understand who have never heard of him.'”

This is the reason [v. 22] why I have so often been hindered from coming to you. But now, since I no longer have any room for work in these regions, and since I have longed for many years to come to you, I hope to see you in passing as I go to Spain, and to be helped on my journey there by you, once I have enjoyed your company for a while. At present, however, I am going to Jerusalem bringing aid to the saints. For Macedonia [Philippi, Thessalonica] and Achaia [Corinth] have been pleased to make some contribution for the poor among the saints at Jerusalem. They were pleased to do it, and indeed they owe it to them. For if the Gentiles have come to share in their spiritual blessings, they ought also to be of service to them in material blessings. When therefore I have completed this and have delivered to them what has been collected, I will leave for Spain by way of you. I know that when I come to you I will come in the fullness of the blessing of Christ.”

So, why does Paul write this letter? There are a number of reasons, not just a single one. One reason is that he wants to be assisted by them as he goes to Spain on a mission trip. But above all, he writes as the apostle to the Gentiles because of the grace that has been given to them, to write to establish them, and to make sure things are going well at the church in Rome because that's his responsibility.

was the cruel and insane emperor of the Roman Empire who could ignore the claims of Paul's Roman citizenship. Paul penned this letter to the Colossian church after he had received a report that they were struggling with a Christological heresy. The report came from Epaphras, likely the leader of the church at Colossae and a convert of Paul's from his more than two-year ministry in Ephesus, located about one hundred miles to the east. Epaphras had come to Rome in part to serve Paul during his imprisonment (Philemon 1:23) but also to confide in him regarding the dangerous teachings the Colossians were hearing. The problem was *syncretism*: Jewish and Gentile beliefs and practices were being combined, creating a sort of hybrid religion that no longer resembled true Christianity. So Paul sent this letter, along with the letters to Philemon and to the Ephesians, with Tychicus, accompanied by Onesimus (Colossians 4:7; Philemon 1:10-12). Tychicus was a coworker of Paul who would have been able to help the Colossian believers understand and apply the apostle's teachings in the letter.

Philemon was a citizen of Colossae and an upright leader in that church. He also was a slaveholder whose slave Onesimus had escaped, had later encountered the Apostle Paul, and had responded to the gospel message about Jesus. In the letter to the Colossians, Paul addresses how our relationship to God through Jesus Christ affects us in the workplace. Specifically, he writes about how slaves are to do their work for their masters and how masters are to treat their slaves. The short personal letter to Philemon extends our understanding of Paul's command in Colossians 4:1.

This letter challenges the believers in Colosse to look solely to the divinity of Jesus Christ, through whom we are all saved. In it, Paul refutes the gnostic heresy spreading throughout the Colossian church and presents Jesus as God, creator of the universe. He emphasizes the importance of the cross: Jesus is Savior, and only by his blood we are saved. Paul also presented Christ as the center of the universe, not only as the active Creator but also as the recipient of creation—in His taking on of human flesh. Christ was and is the visible image of the invisible God, containing within Himself the fullness of Deity (Colossians 2:9). Because of His divine nature, Jesus is sovereign, above all things with an authority given Him by the Father. As such, Jesus is also Head over the church. He has reconciled all things to Himself through His death on the cross, making believers alive to God and setting them on the path to right living. This proper view of Christ served as the antidote for the Colossian heresy as well as a building block for Christian life and doctrine both then and now.

Noteworthy passages:

Colossians 1:15-18: Paul asserts the supremacy and divinity of Jesus Christ as the head of the church.

Colossians 2:8-9: Paul warns to people of Colosse not to allow themselves to be led

CHARACTERISTICS

- Philippians contains no OT quotations (but see note on Job 13:16).
- It is a missionary thank-you letter in which the missionary reports on the progress of his work.
- It manifests a particularly vigorous type of Christian living:
 - Self-humbling (2:14);
 - Pressing toward the goal (3:13-14);
 - Lack of anxiety (4:6);
 - Ability to do all things (4:13).
- It is outstanding as the NT *[New Testament]* letter of joy; the word “JOY” in its various forms occurs some 16 times.
- It contains one of the most profound Christological passages in the NT *[New Testament]* (2:5-11). Yet, profound as it is, Paul includes it mainly for illustrative purposes.

COLOSSIANS

The ancient city of Colossae was built on a major trade route through the Lycus River Valley in the Roman province of Asia Minor (in the southwest corner of modern-day Turkey). There the Colossians manufactured a beautiful dark red wool cloth (*colossinum*) for which the city became famous. But Colossae's importance as a business center diminished significantly around 100 BC, when the neighboring city of Laodicea was founded as an active and commercially aggressive competitor. The two towns, along with neighboring Hierapolis, were destroyed by earthquakes in AD 17 (in the reign of Tiberius) and again in 60 (in the reign of Nero). Rebuilt after each earthquake, Colossae never regained its early prominence, and by 400 the city no longer existed.

Before Paul wrote this letter to the Christians in Colossae which is near Laodicea Church (Rev 1:11; 3:14), he had never been to their city (Colossians 2:1). This helps explain the personal greetings he included at the end of the letter, a practice he usually reserved for letters to churches he had not visited (for example, Romans).

The Apostle Paul had spent two years planting a church in Ephesus, and in Acts 19:10 we learn that, radiating from that center, “all the residents of Asia, both Jews and Greeks, heard the word of the Lord.” Whether Paul himself fanned out in missionary activity throughout the province or whether some of his converts did so, a church was planted in Colossae. It is likely that Epaphras founded the Colossian church (Colossians 1:7), and from 1:21 we assume that the church was composed mainly of Gentiles.

In A.D. 60–62, during his first imprisonment in Rome (around the same time he wrote his epistles to the Philemon, Ephesians and Philippians), At that time, Nero

CORINTHIANS

CORINTH, the most important city in Greece during Paul's day, was a bustling hub of worldwide commerce, degraded culture, and idolatrous religion. There Paul founded a church (Acts 18:1-17), and two of his letters are addressed “To the church of God which is at Corinth” (1:2; 2 Cor. 1:1).

First Corinthians reveals the problems, pressures, and struggles of a church called out of a pagan society. Paul addresses a variety of problems in the life-style of the Corinthian church: factions, lawsuits, immorality, questionable practices, abuse of the Lord's Supper, and spiritual gifts. In addition to words of discipline, Paul shares words of counsel in answer to questions raised by the Corinthian believers.



SINCE Paul's first letter, the Corinthian church had been swayed by false teachers who stirred the people against Paul. They claimed he was fickle, proud, unimpressive in appearance and speech, dishonest, and unqualified as an apostle of Jesus Christ. Paul sent Titus to Corinth to deal with these difficulties, and upon his return, rejoiced to hear of the Corinthians' change of heart.

Paul wrote this letter to express his thanksgiving for the repentant majority and to appeal to the rebellious minority to accept his authority. Throughout the book he defends his conduct, character, and calling as an apostle of Jesus Christ.

FURTHERMORE

Paul's relationship to the Corinthians Christians is a complicated one. His first encounter with the Corinthians came as he first brought the gospel to them. He spent about a year and half in Corinth, establishing the church there. When he felt like this work of establishing the church was done, Paul left the city and continued his missionary journey. It was about a year and half later that Paul wrote a letter to the Corinthians. We don't have this letter, but we know about it because Paul mentions of the letter in 1 Corinthians chapter 5 (verse 9), this earlier epistle is sometimes referred to as the “warning letter”. He wrote in response to news that the church was struggling spiritually.

The church at Corinth was a mess. Counting 15 distinguishable problems that Paul addresses in 1 Corinthians: partisanship, with the Corinthians factionalizing behind rival leaders (1:10–4:21; 16:10–18); incest (5:1–13); prostitution (6:12–21); celibacy within marriage (7:1–7); Christians married to one another asking about divorce (7:8–11, 39); Christians married to pagans asking about divorce (7:12–16); questions surrounding marriage and remarriage (7:25–40); lawsuits (6:1–11); idolatry (8:1–11:1); concerns about women praying and

prophesying in immodest ways (11:2–16); chaos in worship, with speaking in tongues and competing voices (chapter 14); inequality in the communal meal (11:17–34); denials of the bodily resurrection of Jesus and of Christians (15:1–58); the collection of a large sum of money to be sent to Jerusalem (16:1–4); and a change in Paul's travel plans (16:5–9).

The Corinthians responded with a letter of their own, asking for clarification on certain matters of life and theology. Those questions revealed some deep confusion that resulted in some serious problems with how they lived their lives. This prompted Paul to write another letter, the first we have, called 1 Corinthians. In that letter, Paul not only offered counsel and direction for the church, but also said that he hoped to actually go back to Corinth and encourage them face-to-face. However, his plans changed and he wasn't able to go. His partner, Timothy, did go, however, and found the situation in Corinth bad. They hadn't done anything Paul told them to do his letter (1 Corinthians), and the church was fragmenting under the weight of its sin.

Paul immediately put aside everything else and made an urgent visit to Corinth to try to put things right. But this direct confrontation with the Corinthians turned out to be a bitter and humiliating experience for Paul. This was a “painful visit” that caused him much sorrow (2 Cor 2:1). The church had not only rejected Paul's instructions but had chosen to follow other men who opposed Paul, and treated him with disrespect and ridiculed his apostleship. Not surprisingly, Paul didn't stay long in Corinth. And even this was used by his opponents as evidence of Paul's indecisiveness and lack of love for the Corinthians. But the truth was that Paul did care for the Corinthians, and he couldn't leave things as they were, fearing his enemies would destroy the work of the gospel among the church.

Therefore, Paul wrote a third letter to the Corinthians. Again, we don't have this letter, but we know from his fourth letter that this third one was a severe and tearful letter (2 Cor 2:3-4, 9; 7:8). While Titus took this letter to Corinth, Paul remained in Ephesus, where he faced some of the worst opposition to the gospel he had yet encountered. Eventually, Paul and Titus reunited, and the apostle received news of Corinth. The good news was that many had repented of their treatment of the Paul and the gospel message. But all was not good. Some still remained in a lifestyle of immorality, while others continued to look down on Paul because of his suffering. All of this was made worse by a group of false apostles who undermined Paul's authentic apostleship and made it difficult for Paul to minister to the Corinthians. It's into this context that Paul writes his fourth letter to the Corinthians, the second one what we have in the Bible. Although we only have two letters from Paul to the Corinthians in our Bible, it would appear that there were four letters, a warning letter, a teaching letter [1 Corinthians], a severe letter and a pastoral letter [2 Corinthians] in which Paul also defended his apostleship.

had he been elsewhere he could have always appealed to Caesar;

- The Marcionite prologue indicates that Rome was the site for the writing of the letter.

If the place of writing is indeed Rome, the date of the letter is probably sometime between 60-62 CE, perhaps toward the end of his imprisonment since he seems to allude to a speedy release (Phil 2:24).

There is no need to assume up front that there must have been only one purpose in the writing of Philippians. In fact, as we read the letter, several objectives seem to be in the mind of the apostle. Which are:

It is clear that Paul wanted the church to know how things were going for him in his imprisonment (1:12-26) and what his plans were should he be released (Phil 2:23-24).

There appears to have been some discord and division in the church and so the apostle writes to encourage humility with a view toward unity (2:1-18; 4:2-3).

Paul, the pastoral theologian, writes to head off the negative teaching and consequences of certain false teachers (3:2-3).

Paul wrote to commend Timothy to the church as well as to give the church a report about the health and plans of Epaphroditus (2:19-30).

Paul also wrote to thank the church for their concern for him and the gifts they had given (4:10-20).

However, Starting in the 1960s, a general consensus emerged among biblical scholars that Philippians was not written as one unified letter, but is rather a compilation of fragments from three separate letters from Paul to the church in Philippi. According to Philip Sellev, Philippians contains the following letter fragments:

- **Letter A** consists of Philippians 4:10-20. It is a short thank-you note from Paul to the Philippian church, regarding gifts they had sent him.[Phil 4:17]
- **Letter B** consists of Philippians 1:1-3:1, and may also include 4:4-9 and 4:21-23.
- **Letter C** consists of Philippians 3:2-4:1, and may also include 4:2-3. It is a testament to Paul's rejection of all worldly things for the sake of the gospel of Jesus.

Today, a majority of scholars believe that Philippians is a composite of multiple letter fragments. According to the theologian G. Walter Hansen, "The traditional view that Philippians was composed as one letter in the form presented in the NT [New Testament] can no longer claim widespread support." Nevertheless, a number of scholars continue to argue for the unity of Philippians.

Regardless of the literary unity of the letter, scholars agree that the material that was compiled into the Epistle to the Philippians was originally composed in Greek, sometime during the 50s or early 60s AD.

Philippi. As she listened to Paul speak, the Lord opened her heart to respond. Evidently her entire household responded as well, since all of them were baptized together (Acts 16:14-15). Both the reference in Acts 16:15 to “the members of her household” and the fact that Paul and his companions stayed with her, together may indicate that Lydia was a woman of some means. This, then, is the rather auspicious beginnings of the Philippian church.

We must also note the rather lengthy section Luke devotes to Paul's encounter with the slave girl in Philippi and the events that ensued. In Acts 16:16-18 Paul encountered a slave girl with a demonic spirit which could foretell the future and by which she earned her masters a great deal of money. Paul eventually rebuked the spirit and it left her. As a result she also lost the ability to foretell the future which created no little anger on the part of her owners. So they took Paul and Silas and brought them before the magistrates (Philippi was like a “little” Rome), charging that the missionaries were forcing them, as Roman citizens, to follow customs which were unlawful. The result was that Paul and Silas were thrown into prison after being stripped, beaten, and severely flogged (Acts 16:20-24). Around midnight there was an earthquake and all the prison doors flew open. Paul and Silas did not flee, but instead stayed and shared the gospel with the jailer who subsequently—both he and his entire family came to the Lord (Acts 16:25-34). After Paul had made a point about his Roman citizenship to the magistrates who were wishing simply to release them, the missionaries went to the home of Lydia (Acts 16:35-40) and then departed for Apollonia and Thessalonica (Acts 17:1).

We are uncertain as to the exact amount of time Paul stayed and ministered in Philippi on this first visit, but it is clear, nonetheless, that he had developed a deep love for them (cf, Phil 1:7). Thus we have Luke's description of the events of the mission in Philippi a strategic inroad for the gospel in Europe.

Though these letters could have been written from Ephesus in 52–55 AD or Caesarea Maritima in 57–59, but the most likely city of provenance is Rome, around 62 AD, or about 10 years after Paul's first visit to Philippi.

If the journeys described in Philippians can be fitted in the two year imprisonment there is evidence that

- There was a palace guard in Rome (Phil 1:13);
- Paul was free to send and receive friends (Phil 2:19-30; Acts 28:30);
- The reference to “Caesar's household” fits well with a Roman imprisonment (Phil 4:22);
- “most of the brothers in the Lord” (Phil 1:14) may indicate a well-established church which fits well with the Roman church (and not so well with what we know about the church in Caesarea);
- The fact that Paul was faced with the possibility of death fits best with Rome since

In summary: Paul wrote his two canonical letters to the Corinthians during this third missionary journey, as well as two additional letters that have not been preserved. First Corinthians was probably written from Ephesus, perhaps in A.D. 55. Shortly after sending this letter, Paul briefly visited Corinth, during which time he was grievously offended by a member of the church there. Subsequent to this visit, he wrote a letter that is now lost to us, sometimes called his "Sorrowful Letter." Later, after receiving a report from Titus about the positive way his sorrowful letter had been received, Paul wrote 2 Corinthians, probably from Macedonia, and most likely within a year or so of writing 1 Corinthians.

GALATIANS

The Galatians, having launched their Christian experience by faith, seem content to leave their voyage of faith and chart a new course based on works, a course Paul finds disturbing. His letter to the Galatians is a vigorous attack against the gospel of works and a defense of the gospel of faith.

Paul begins by setting forth his credentials as an apostle with a message from God: blessing comes from God on the basis of faith, not law. The law declares men guilty and imprisons them; faith sets men free to enjoy liberty in Christ. But liberty is not license. Freedom in Christ means freedom to produce the fruits of righteousness through a Spirit-led life-style.

This journey began around A.D. 46 after God told the church in Syrian Antioch to set aside Paul and Barnabas for special missionary work. Paul and Barnabas began their journey by sailing to the isle of Cyprus. Beginning in the eastern city of Salamis, they proclaimed the gospel from synagogue to synagogue as they moved to the western city of Paphos. From Cyprus Paul and Barnabas sailed to Perga, and then moved inland to Antioch in the region of Pisidia, which at that time was a part of the Roman province of Galatia. After hearing Paul preach the gospel in the synagogue there, many of the Jews responded positively. But within a week, unbelieving Jews incited the city against Paul and Barnabas and ran them out of town. From Pisidian Antioch, Paul and Barnabas moved further east in the province of Galatia, and stopped first in the city of Iconium. When they preached in the synagogue there, many Jews and Gentiles came to faith, but the church was not firmly established because Paul and Barnabas quickly left the city when unbelieving Jews plotted to murder them.

Their next stop was the city of Lystra, where Paul managed to start another church. In Lystra, Paul healed a man who had been lame from birth. But when the people of the city saw this miracle, they mistook Paul for the god Hermes and Barnabas for Zeus. They tried to offer sacrifices to the missionaries, but Paul and Barnabas explained that they were mere men. Thereafter, some unbelieving Jews arrived from Iconium, and were able to turn the disillusioned citizens of Lystra against Paul and Barnabas, but God spared Paul's life and he moved on once again.

Paul and Barnabas traveled east in Galatia as far as Derbe where many people trusted Christ. In Derbe, Paul finally had time to organize the church by appointing elders. But Paul was still deeply concerned for the Christians in Lystra, Iconium and Pisidian Antioch. So, at risk of life and limb, Paul and Barnabas returned to each of these cities. They strengthened the fledgling churches and explained that the kinds of sufferings the believers had seen in Paul and Barnabas were the sort of tribulations all Christians should expect to endure as they further the kingdom of God. From Pisidian Antioch, the missionaries made their way back to the coast, preaching in the cities of Perga and Attalia. And from Attalia, they sailed for Syrian Antioch.

One of the great things God did through Paul's first missionary journey was to bring many Gentiles to Christ. Much to Paul's surprise, most of the Jews in Galatia rejected the gospel. When Paul faced this widespread opposition, he came to realize that God wanted him to focus on reaching Gentiles. Listen to Paul's words to the Jews in Pisidian Antioch, recorded in Acts 13:46-47: We had to speak the word of God to you first. Since you reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles. For this is what the Lord has commanded us: "I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth" (Acts 13:46-47). This passage reveals a major shift in Paul's ministry. As a Jew, he naturally gave priority to Jewish evangelism. But their negative reactions to the gospel convinced Paul that God was calling him to reach the Gentiles. And this he did with much success. Listen to the way Luke summarized Paul's work in Iconium in Acts 14:1.

Now, we might think that everyone would have rejoiced to see so many Gentiles in the Galatian churches. But the influx of Gentiles actually caused serious problems in Galatia. And these problems incited Jewish false teachers to rise in reaction. Until Paul's first missionary journey, the Christian church had been predominantly Jewish. The early church began in Jerusalem and had held firmly to this Jewish identity. Consequently, the influx of Gentiles led to all kinds of theological and practical troubles. Did these Gentiles have to adopt Jewish traditions? Did they have to keep the law of Moses as Old Testament believers were required to do? These kinds of questions gave rise to false teachers in Galatia. These Jewish teachers came up with their own ways of dealing with Gentiles in the church by insisting that they be circumcised.

Touching the three ways in which Paul believed that insisting on circumcision for Gentile Christians reflected serious misunderstandings of the Christian faith.

- It denied the sufficiency of Christ's death and resurrection for salvation.
- It demonstrated an improper reliance on the power of the flesh.
- It resulted in division within the churches of Galatia.

the city and named it after himself. He eventually established it as a military stronghold in order to protect the lands he had already acquired and the nearby gold mines which yielded him yearly a thousand talents. It was also important as a land route across Asia.

In 168 BC Philippi became part of the Roman empire when they latter defeated the Persians at the battle of Pydna and Macedonia was divided into four districts, Philippi belonging to the first.

Philippi is famous for one particular event. In 42 BCE Mark Antony and Octavian defeated Brutus and Cassius, the assassins of Julius Caesar, in a battle at Philippi. Later in 31 BCE when Octavian defeated Antony and Cleopatra at Actium, he assumed the named Augustus and rebuilt the city of Philippi. He placed retired soldiers there to ensure loyalty to Rome and established it as a military outpost. He also gave the new colony the highest privilege obtainable by a Roman provincial municipality the *ius italicum*. Colonists could buy, own, or transfer property and maintained the right to civil lawsuits. They were also exempt from the poll and land tax.

When Paul came to the city around 49 CE, Philippi was an urban center at the eastern end of the plain, a few miles northwest from Neapolis. The people there were both Romans and Greeks and spoke predominantly Greek even though Latin was the official language. The church in Philippi was founded by the apostle Paul on his second missionary journey, recorded in Acts 16:1-40. Paul originally went to Macedonia because of a night vision described for us in Acts 16:9. In it Paul saw a man of Macedonia standing and asking that he come over to help them. Paul responded and so the gospel went triumphantly westward beginning in Philippi as the first city to be evangelized in Europe.

When Paul arrived in the city of Philippi he stayed there several days (Acts 16:12). The religious life of those in Philippi was marked by very syncretistic practices including the worship of the emperor (Julius, Augustus, and Claudius), the Egyptian gods Isis and Serapis, as well as many other deities. When the Sabbath came Paul went outside the city to the river looking for a place of prayer. The Greek text of Acts 16:13 is somewhat uncertain, but it seems that there were not enough men (i.e., 10) practicing Judaism in Philippi to have a synagogue. This being the case, Paul probably went to the Gangites River (or the Crenides river), approximately 1.5 miles away, in hopes of finding a Jewish "meeting place." Perhaps it was near a river so that water was accessible for Jewish ritual purifications, though this is uncertain.

Paul spoke to the women who had gathered there, including a woman named Lydia (or perhaps the Lydian lady) who was a dealer in purple cloth and a proselyte to Judaism (Acts 16:14). She had probably converted to Judaism (since her name is a Gentile name) when living in Thyatira and brought her faith with her to

most famous passage, Paul compares the relationship of Christ and the Church to the marriage relationship of husband and wife (Ephesians 5:21-33).

God's secret is revealed, that those who are united by the blood of Jesus Christ all make up the Body of Christ, one that expresses the fullness of Christ on earth. While Jesus was no longer present in the flesh, His spirit dwelt among and in the midst of those who believed in Him. And the beauty of the Body of Christ is expressed by the spiritual union of both Jews and Gentiles. The remainder of the book of Ephesians is to instruct the believers in the Body of Christ how to live an empowered Christian life, and how to conduct themselves within the Body.

Second Corinthians and Galatians abound with personal touches from Paul, either about his own life or that of the recipients. Ephesians, on the other hand, stands at the opposite end of the spectrum as one of Paul's most formal letters. While Galatians offers instructions particularly important for those churches overrun with legalism, Ephesians deals with topics at the very core of what it means to be a Christian—both in faith and in practice regardless of any particular problem in the community.

Within its chapters, the book of Ephesians teaches believers to seek after unity, to use their gifts and ministries for the benefit of the Church, to conduct all relationships according to God's divine order, and more. In closing, Paul reminds believers that their struggle is not with flesh and blood, but with the rulers of darkness in the spiritual realm. (6:12) He exhorts them to put on the Armor of God so that they will be fully equipped to withstand the evil works of the enemy.

God has given us the Holy Spirit as a pledge or earnest -- (2 Corinthians 1:22, 5:5; Ephesians 1:14), which is the deposit or first installment of a future inheritance, so that we fully possess the promise of God for forgiveness of sins, redemption, and salvation. Paul's love for the Ephesians mirrored the love of Jesus Christ for the Church. His desire was for all believers to be united, and to grow and mature in their faith, for the purpose of leading others to Christ. No other book in the Bible so clearly communicates this message than the book of Ephesians.

PHILIPPIANS



The city of Philippi is located in north eastern Greece (Macedonia). The city was already ancient by the time Paul arrived there around 49 CE (Acts 16:11-40). In fact, its beginnings go back to the fourth century BCE when it was occupied by the Thracians. In 356 BCE, however, King Philip II of Macedon, the father of Alexander the Great, took over

Let's look first at the way the false teachers had denied the sufficiency of Christ's death and resurrection for salvation and then move to the next respectively.

From the book of Galatians we may surmise that the Galatian false teachers saw circumcision as a sacrifice of blood that enabled believers to live in a way that pleased God. In their view, Christians had to add circumcision to Christ's saving work. But from Paul's perspective, this belief stripped Christ's death of its true meaning and value. This is why Paul wrote these words in Galatians 5:2: I, Paul, tell you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no value to you at all (Galatians 5:2). In addition to denying the sufficiency of Christ's saving work, the false teachers in Galatia challenged Paul's gospel by teaching that believers must rely on the flesh to complete their salvation. Paul expressly referred to this problem in Galatians 3:3 where he sarcastically asked these questions: Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort? (Galatians 3:3).

When Paul first ministered in Galatia, his preaching had been accompanied by dramatic displays of the Spirit's power. The Galatians had begun their Christian lives in the power of the Spirit. But now, by turning to circumcision, they had begun to depend on their own human abilities to live in ways that please God. Ironically, this reliance on human ability actually condemned them to impotence and failure. In addition to denying the value of Christ's work and the importance of the Holy Spirit, Paul was also deeply troubled because the false teachers had created divisions in the church. As Paul put it in Galatians 6:15-16: Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is a new creation. Peace and mercy to all who follow this rule, even to the Israel of God (Galatians 6:15-16).

In Christ the divisions between Jews and Gentiles had been eliminated. Disunity in the churches of Galatia deeply troubled Paul. Quarreling and divisiveness among the people of God was absolutely contrary to what Christ had done and against the ideal toward which the church was to strive. But the false teachers followed the Old Testament teaching that circumcision was necessary for full inclusion among the people of God. For many in the church especially Jewish Christians it was natural to think that anyone who refused circumcision was at best second class. It is no wonder then that divisions developed between those Christians who were circumcised and those who were not.

So, we see that the false teachers had brought some very serious problems to the Galatian churches. And having heard what these false teachers were doing, Paul could not remain silent. The Galatians were his spiritual children; they were his loved ones. So, he wrote his epistle to rescue both Jewish and Gentile believers from the destructive views of these false teachers.

Now we will understand the reason why Paul immediately attacked the

problem of false teaching in Galatia. He expressed astonishment, and warned his readers how dangerous it was to follow the false teachers. In no uncertain terms, Paul insisted that to reject his teaching was to accept a false gospel. Listen to the dire curse he laid on the false teachers in 1:8: Even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned! (Galatians 1:8). To follow the teachings of the false teachers was to reject the true gospel of Christ it was to reject salvation itself. This section of the letter makes it clear that the problems in Galatia were not insignificant. The Galatians' eternal destinies were at stake.

EPHESIANS

Ephesians is addressed to a group of believers who are rich beyond measure in Jesus Christ, yet living as beggars, and only because they are ignorant of their wealth. Paul begins by describing the contents of the Christian's heavenly bank account": adoption, acceptance, redemption, forgiveness, wisdom, inheritance, the seal of the Holy Spirit, Life, grace, citizenship In short, every spiritual blessing.

THIS EPISTLE WRITTEN DURING THIS TIME	ABOUT A.D.
First missionary journey (Acts 13–14)	47— 50
Second missionary journey (Acts 15:36–18:22)	50—53
Third missionary journey (Acts 18:23–21:15)	53—57
Imprisonment in Caesarea and Rome (Acts 21:16–28:31)	57—62
Through second Roman imprisonment	62—65

The book of Ephesians was a letter written by the Apostle Paul during the first-century church. Paul wrote this letter to the believers in Ephesus in order to provide them with doctrinal teaching.

Ephesus was a major city of commerce and trade on the western coast of Asia Minor(modern-day Turkey), situated on the Mediterranean Sea. It was a city famous for its Temple of Artemis, also named Diana, a Greek goddess of fertility. Much of the trade that took place in Ephesus involved the making and selling of statuettes of Artemis. From silversmiths and coppersmiths these tiny idols became a much sought-after household item. However, when Paul spent over two years in Ephesus, his teachings against idolatry sparked riots within the marketplaces. Tradesmen were angry with him for taking away their method of earning a living (Acts 19:21–41).

Despite the opposition, there was an amazing level of believing among the people of Ephesus. At one point during Paul's ministry, aprons and handkerchiefs were brought from Paul's body and taken to the sick who experienced healing as a result of coming in contact with those items. Even evil spirits were cast out. These

were special miracles that God made available to Paul during his missionary journey because the believing was so incredible in Ephesus. As a result, Ephesus became the city out of which the movement of the Word of God reached its pinnacle. In less than three years, the message of the gospel had traveled out of Ephesus through the entire region of Asia Minor.



The Apostle Paul wrote the book of Ephesians while imprisoned in Rome (around AD 62), to gentile converts who were baptized members of the Church, not people who were converts from Judaism and who had once lived under the law of Moses. The Epistle is written in a general manner and lacks personal references, so it was probably

sent to several congregations in the area. Sometime in A.D. 60–63, around the same time he wrote Colossians and Philemon, as he sent all three letters by the hand of Tychicus, accompanied by Onesimus (Ephesians 6:21; Colossians 4:7-9; Philemon 1:10-12). It was during this time that Paul sat in Rome undergoing his first Roman imprisonment (Ephesians 3:1; 4:1), making Ephesians one of the four epistles commonly known as the Prison Epistles. The others are Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon. Paul's relationship to the Ephesians was very close, one of intense love and mutual admiration. This is evident in the book of Ephesians as Paul unfolds the great mystery of the church like no other letter. In this unique book, Paul instructs the people of Ephesus in some of the most incredible, insightful Christian doctrine in the whole of Scripture.

St. Paul visited Ephesus with Priscilla and Aquila on his second missionary journey, and returned to live in Ephesus on the Aegean Sea during his third missionary journey, for a total of three years (Acts 20:31). The Letter of St. Paul to the Ephesians follows his Letter to the Galatians and precedes his Letter to the Philippians in the New Testament of the Bible.

The Letter to the Ephesians is most noted for its description of Jesus Christ and the Church. Paul speaks of the Father's Plan for Salvation (Ephesians 1:3-6), that he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Christ. Paul refers to God's dispensation (stewardship, administration, economy) in 1:10 and 3:2. He calls for the Unity of the Church in Christ (1:15 - 2:22); the Church as the Body of Christ (1:22-23); and Unity of the Body of Christ in "one body, one spirit, one hope, One Lord, one Faith, one Baptism, one God and Father of all" (4:4-6). St. Paul outlines the Five-fold Ministry - apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers - and its purpose in 4:11-13. He calls for the exemplary living of its members through one's daily conduct (4:1-5:5); to live as children of the light (5:8 - 5:20); and, finally in the letter's