

THE EPISTLES IIIINTRODUCTION:

The Epistles are a distinct division of the Scriptures: (1) being letters in form (Latin, "epistula" - letter); (2) looking backward to the cross; (3) having in view neither Jew nor Gentile primarily, but a new division of the human race, Christians, called out from every nation.

All the Scriptures up to the Acts, except passages in the Gospels recording the resurrection and ascension of Christ, look forward to the cross, the central point in God's plan of redemption and have in view, primarily, the Jew. The uprearing of the cross and the events clustering around it, called for a new body of Scripture explaining its meaning and the blessings and responsibilities of grace.

Toward the close of His ministry Jesus revealed His purpose to bring into being a new institution; namely, the church (Matt. 16:18); but beyond laying the foundation of the church He did not go. No word was given as to who were to compose it, how, when, and for what purpose it was to be instituted nor what the relation of this new body to Israel and the covenant promises was to be. The germ of all that we shall find in the Epistles is in the teaching of the Lord, but the growth and development is brought about by the various ministries of the coming Comforter (John 14:25; 15:26; 16:12-15.)

In the Epistles, then, we have the unfolding of the meaning of the cross, the development of the doctrines of the church, supplying what the Lord had left unsaid of the "many things" that the disciples were not able to bear.

Fittingly, Paul is the chief writer. His training in both Jewish and Greek learning ("sat at the feet of Gamaliel;" cf. also Phil. 3:4-6; Acts 17:28), his birth outside Palestine, his strict religious instruction, made him a suitable instrument of the risen Lord for the confirmation on the one hand of the unfulfilled promises to the Jew, and on the other hand of the position of the Gentile believer in Christ.

- A. His supernatural call (Acts 9:1-19).
- B. Personally instructed by the Lord (Gal. 1:15-2:6; Eph. 3:2-4; II Cor. 12:1-4.)

He did not receive the truth from the other apostles by hearsay or tradition, but was conducted to the school of Arabia, where he received by revelation the truths which form the subject of his peculiar ministry (Gal. 1:11,12,16,17; 2:6-9; I Cor. 11:23; I Thess. 4:15; I Cor. 15:3).

The distinctive ministry of Paul has relation to the new body, the church. Thru him alone we know that the church is a living organism or vital body, as distinguished from an organization or association of persons. Thru him we know also that the church is the espoused Bride of Christ. Thru him we know the nature, purpose, and organization of local churches and the right conduct of such gatherings.

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The Great Themes of the Epistles are:

1. "Salvation by Christ thru faith (repentance being pre- *With heart men*
supposed, according to Acts 2:38 and Acts 20:21) on *believe with*
the ground of His atonement, upon the principle of *righteousness &*
grace alone. *not with the head.*
2. "The church as the living body of the risen and glori-
fied Christ, and distinct therefore, on the one hand,
from the saved of all past ages; and on the other hand,
from the saved of ages and epochs to come. *Jesus*
Gentiles
church
3. "The Holy Spirit in His varied offices and ministries
in relationship to the body of Christ collectively and
to the various local churches.
4. "The walk, service, and future destiny of Christians.
5. "The reconciling of the new covenant of grace of this
present dispensation with the promises to national
Israel.
6. "Prophetic utterances covering the course of this age,
its end, the coming of the Lord, etc.
7. "Incidentally this portion of the Word contains much
interesting, instructive, and touching biographical
matter. Indeed truth is often revealed in and through
human experience rather than dogmatically. --Scofield.

Memorize
sermon

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Lesson One

I THESSALONIANS - (A.D.54)

(Read the Epistle thru at one sitting)

Thessalonica was a city of commercial and political importance in the apostolic age. It was originally called Therma, but afterward took the name of Thessalonica, in honor of the wife of Cassander, who was the sister of Alexander the Great. It is now called Salonica and during the World War was a base of Allied operations. It is about two hundred and seventy-two miles west of Constantinople. Anciently it was a powerful city, the capital of one of the four divisions of Macedonia.

Thessalonica was visited by Paul on his second missionary journey in the year 52 or 53 A. D., that is about 23 years after the crucifixion of Christ. (Read Acts 16 and 17).

Let us follow the stages of this part of his missionary journey:

Philippi, where Paul had established a church and where he had been "shamefully entreated" Acts 16; I Thess. 2:2; Amphipolis and Apollonia, where no stop was made; then Thessalonica. The distance from Philippi to Thessalonica is about 100 miles and four days would be consumed in Paul's day in making the journey. Very probably Paul arrived in Thessalonica with back still lacerated from his awful treatment in Philippi. Paul and Silas evidently sought employment in Thessalonica I Thess. 2:1-12; II Thess. 3:7,8; for their support. While there, Paul preached three successive Sabbaths in the synagogue, and, after the believers were gathered out, continued a ministry of teaching among them.

This church was composed of a few Jews and relatively larger number of Greeks (probably proselytes to Judaism,) among them a number of "honorable women."

The usual Jewish persecution followed Acts 17:5-9, and Paul and Silas fled to Berea and Athens. The persecutors turned upon his newly formed church I Thess. 1:6; 2:14; 3:3,4. When the apostle heard of this, his tender solicitude for their welfare caused him to send Timothy to establish and to comfort them I Thess. 3:1-3. The return of Timothy with good news (3:6) led Paul to write the Epistle.

I Thessalonians was written, then, from Corinth shortly after the return of Timothy, to a church composed of young converts who were undergoing fierce persecution.

The Epistle has a threefold purpose:

1. To confirm the church in the foundational things which had already been taught them. 1:1 to 2:20.
2. To exhort them to go on to holiness. 3:1 to 4:12.
3. To comfort them concerning those who had already suffered death for their faith, or who had died in the faith. 4:13 to 5:28.

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Lesson One - Cont'd.

This Epistle is perhaps the oldest, with the exception of James, of the Christian documents and has much to say concerning the coming of the Lord. cf. 2:19; 3:13; 4:15; 5:23; etc. Some misconceptions had doubtless arisen in the minds of the Thessalonians concerning this event and Paul connects all the themes developed in the Epistle with the doctrine of the Lord's coming.

Lesson TWO.

A most suggestive outline has been given:

The Lord's coming AN INSPIRING HOPE for the young convert, Ch. 1
 The Lord's coming AN ENCOURAGING HOPE for the faithful servant 2-3:11.
 The Lord's coming A PURIFYING HOPE for the believer. 3:12-4:12.
 The Lord's coming A COMFORTING HOPE for the bereaved. 4:13-18.
 The Lord's coming A ROUSING HOPE for the sleepy Christian. Ch. 5

The teaching of the Epistle as a whole seems to revolve about the testimony of Paul concerning the Thessalonian believers in 1:3.

1. "The Work of faith" 1:3 . . . "Ye turned" 1:9
2. "The labor of love" 1:3 . . . "To serve" 1:9
3. "The patience of hope" 1:3. . . "To wait for His Son" 1:10
 (Learn the two above outlines)

Suggestive inductive questions for the student.

NOTE:--Take the text of the Epistle and find the answers to the following questions in each chapter. Write out the answers in your own words.

Chapter One

1. Who were Paul's co-workers in addressing the Thessalonians?
2. What is the believer's position? Is this a safe place? vs. 1
3. What shows Paul's real interest in the churches he had established?
4. Is there anything worth calling to mind concerning them?
5. How did they manifest these three great elements of Christian character? vss. 9,10.
6. How did the Thessalonians know that they were elected (chosen) of God?
7. Find what characterized this Thessalonian assembly (4 points)
8. What great work has Jesus done for us?

Chapter Two

1. Find seven characteristics of the model servant of Jesus Christ vss. 2,3,4,7,8,9,10,11. Try to state them each in one expressive word.
2. What should make us desire to walk worthily?
3. Is the word of God effective?(cf. I Pet. 1:23 also.)
4. What is the portion always of the true believer, in some measure at least? (cf. also II Tim. 3:12).

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5. Prove Paul's affection for these believers.
6. Who is the hinderer? How do you imagine he might have hindered Paul in this case?
7. Explain the meaning of Paul in vss. 18, 19.

Chapter Three

1. What means did Paul use to find out the state of the Thessalonians?
2. For what purpose did he send Timothy?
3. Did Paul have reason to be anxious concerning them? Why?
4. What threefold report did Timothy bring back?
5. What effect did Timothy's report have upon Paul?
6. What great desire did Paul have?
7. What great virtue should every Christian possess? Is there any incentive to growth in grace?

Chapter Four

1. Gather from chapter four the things that should characterize the believer's walk.
2. What is said about quietness and manual labor?
3. Upon what authority does Paul rest his doctrine of the Lord's coming?
4. What is the first event in connection with His coming? The second? The third? ("Prevent" in vs. 15 means "go before").
5. Is this a general resurrection of believers and of unbelievers? (cf. Rev. 20:5,6).
6. What is said of the eternal condition of believers?

Chapter Five

1. What prophetic epoch follows the catching away of the church? (cf. Joel 1:15, 2:1; Isa. 2:10-22).
2. Does the apostle fix the date of the coming of "the day of the Lord"?
3. Will that day come in a time of fear and expectation?
4. What will be the effect of that day upon an unbelieving world?
5. To what is the believer exhorted in relation to the uncertainties of this life?
6. What should be the attitude of believers toward ministers and teachers?
7. What sin against the Spirit is forbidden? What does this mean?
8. Are we to believe everything we hear, even from the pulpit?
9. Is sanctification a human or a divine work?
10. What passage unfolds the threefold nature of man?

SUMMARIZING QUESTIONS

1. State the names of God given in this Epistle. In what relationship is He most prominently presented?
2. Enumerate the doctrines mentioned in the Epistle. Find a Scripture for each one.
3. Summarize the teaching of the Epistle concerning the Holy Spirit.

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NOTE: Do not attempt to learn the following outline, but study through the epistle again, using this as a final review before examination.

ANALYSIS OF THE EPISTLE

Chapter One

1. Salutation -- Paul's co-workers vs. 1
2. Thanksgiving and commendation 2-4
3. Paul's preaching: their response 5,6.
4. Spiritual state of the Thessalonians.
 - (a) Front rank as examples 7.
 - (b) Missionary: their faith 8.
5. Three tenets of the believer's life (Scofield).
 - (a) Turn from idols: "work of faith" 9.
 - (b) Serve the living God: "labor of love" 9.
 - (c) Wait for His Son from heaven: "patience of hope" 10.

Chapter Two

The Model Servant of Christ

Paul's testimony of himself and co-workers.

1. Entrance 1.
2. Zeal, suffering, steadfastness 2.
3. Ministry of the truth 3-6.
4. Love 7,8.
5. Labor 9.
6. Life among them 10.
7. Exhortation 11,12.
8. Response from Thessalonians 13-16.
9. Tender love and solicitude 17
10. Hindrance of Satan 18.
11. Reward 19, 20.

Chapter Three

1. Timothy's return visit.
 - (a) His mission 1-5.
 - (1) To establish them in the faith 2.
 - (2) To comfort them in trial 2.
 - (3) To encourage to press on in the face of difficulty 3-5.
 - (b) His report 6.
 - (1) Their faith and love 6.
 - (2) Loyalty to and love for Paul 6.
2. Paul's rejoicing 7-9.
3. Paul's prayer 10-13.
 - (a) To see them again 10,11.
 - (b) For their increase in love 12.
 - (c) For their maturity at Christ's coming 13.

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Paul's gospel --

1. Required holiness 1-8.
2. Taught love 9,10.
3. Industry and honesty 11,12.
4. Revealed the Lord's coming as the believer's hope 13-18.

Chapter Five

1. The Day of the Lord and the (Believing) World.
(Unbelieving)
- (a) Time revealed 1,2
- (b) Sudden in coming 3.
- (c) Church in relation to it 4-10.
 - (1) Illuminated 4,5.
 - (2) Exhorted to watchfulness 6-8
 - (3) Deliverance promised 9,10.

2. Paul's closing exhortations and prayer. 11-28.

Lesson Three

II THESSALONIANS--(A.D.54).

(Read the entire Epistle at one sitting).

This Epistle was written, possibly, very shortly after I Thessalonians. Information had reached the apostle that besides the trials and persecutions which the Thessalonian Church was enduring (1:4-9); they were "shaken in mind" and "troubled by deceivers who taught that they had already entered the "day of the Lord" (cf. Joel 1:15; 2:1; 3:14; Isa. 2:10-22), instead of being caught up to meet the Lord, as they had been taught by the apostle. I Thess. 1:10; 4:13-18.

Verses 1 and 2 of ch. 2 give us the pivot of the whole Epistle. They are better rendered in the R. V., "Now we beseech you, brethren, touching the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together unto Him (I Thess. 4:15-18); to the end that ye be not quickly shaken from your mind, nor yet be troubled, either by spirit or by word, or by Epistle as from us, as that the day of the Lord (I Thess. 5:1-4) is now present.

It is evident that false teachers were seeking to rob them of "The blessed hope," even forging a letter as from Paul (2:2). False messages, evidently counterfeiting the gift of prophecy or interpretation had been given (2:2).

The great subject of II Thessalonians then, is to set right the relation of the day of the Lord to the two phases of the coming of the Lord, the rapture and the revelation. In I Thessalonians Paul had set forth the first phase and now he elaborates on the second phase.

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Suggestive questions for the study of the Epistle.

Chapter One

1. What brethren were with Paul when II Thessalonians was written?
2. For what does Paul give thanks? What in their experience now gave evidence that Paul's admonition to them in I Thess. ch. 4, had not been in vain?
3. What were these Thessalonians passing through?
4. What gave clear evidence that the judgment of God in counting them worthy of His kingdom was righteous?
5. How would God deal with their enemies and when will their full recompense come?

NOTE:--Read verse 7--"And to you who are troubled (now, because of the persecutions they were enduring) there will be a rest (the word "rest" here is a noun) with us (i. e., the apostles and all the faithful in Christ Jesus) when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with the angels of his power." In other words, when an ungodly world is being judged by Christ at His revelation from heaven, the saints will be enjoying the rest and tranquility of His presence (I Thess. 4:13-18).

6. What to your mind is the most awful thing about the punishment of the ungodly? (vs. 9).

NOTE:--Verse 10 reads:--"When He shall have come to be glorified in His saints and to be admired in all them that believe in that day." The Greek aorist tense is used here, indicating that the glorifying of Christ in His saints shall have taken place, before the judgment of "the day of the Lord." It is after the translation of the church, then, that the day of the Lord with its awful judgments comes.

7. To what end is God working in perfecting the saints?

(Note carefully again the rendering of verses 1 and 2 of the Revised Version in paragraph two at the beginning of the study.)

NOTE:--We might paraphrase these verses somewhat in this fashion: Now we beseech you, brethren, touching the coming (parousia--being present) of our Lord Jesus Christ and as touching our gathering together (the same word is used in Heb. 10:25--"forsake not the assembling of ourselves") unto Him, as I have already taught you in my previous letter (I Thess. 4:13-18), that ye be not quickly shaken from your mind (i. e., the truth as it had already been taught them) neither by some purported revelation given in the spirit realm (some false manifestation supposedly of the Holy Spirit) nor by a message nor by a letter which some one says is from me, that the day of the Lord (not the day of Christ--The Greek text is clear) is now present.

Paul clearly reveals that the day of the Lord, that period so often spoken of in the Old Testament as the day of God's judgment, the great tribulation, could not then be present, for certain events which must come to pass, to indicate its presence, had not yet happened.

THE EPISTLES. IIISuggestive Questions.

1. In what three ways had false teachers endeavored to make the Thessalonians believe that they were already in the day of the Lord?
2. What do you understand by "the day of the Lord"? (See references in paragraph one of the introductory noted.)
3. What two events will precede the day of the Lord? (vs. 3).

NOTE:--The expression, "falling away," or apostasy, means the desertion of one's faith, party, religion.

The expression, "man of sin," is literally "the man of lawlessness or against law," i. e., the law of God.

4. Describe clearly the character of the lawless one.
5. What temple is referred to in verse 4? What does this necessarily imply?
6. Was anything restraining the manifestation of the "man of sin"?

NOTE:--In verse 7 "mystery of iniquity" is again mystery of "lawlessness." Read--"Only he who now restraineth, will restrain, until he be taken out of the midst."

7. Who is it that restrains the manifestation of the mystery of lawlessness in the lawless one himself?

NOTE:--Let the student come to his conclusion by the following process of logic suggested by the questions: Who are ~~the~~ salt of the earth? Who is it in the saints that makes them a preserving element in the world? When will the true body of Christ be removed? When they are removed, does this imply that the Holy Spirit will not exert any further influence in the world and that no one can then be saved? (cf. Rev. 7:13,14).

8. What will be the fate of the Wicked (lawless one)? When will it be visited upon him?
9. Who energizes the lawless one? How does He deceive the world?
10. What two things happen to those who will not receive the love of the truth? How?
11. How does God choose us unto salvation? What must we do in response to this? vs. 13. What means does He use to choose us? 14.
12. To what does Paul exhort the Thessalonians? How would they be enabled to remain steadfast?

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Chapter Three

1. What did Paul's request for prayer embody?
2. What particular form of disorderliness did Paul condemn?
3. What was Paul's example among them?
4. Could fellowship be continued with a disorderly brother?
5. Can you think of any reason why some were neglecting the practical affairs of life in idleness?

NOTE:--"The imminency of the Lord's return which had taken hold of this church, had reacted in some cases in the direction of idleness (cf. I Thess. 4:11,12). If He were coming so soon, why such carefulness as to physical necessities? The answer is practically that of John Wesley that if one knew He would come tomorrow, the duties of today should be performed just the same,"--Gray.

Paul exhorts them in both Epistles to attend to their own business, work that they might be able to pay their honest debts, especially to the world's people with whom they dealt and that they themselves might have their physical necessities supplied. People who are idle are almost without exception those who meddle in other folks' affairs, tale-bearers-- "busybodies in other men's matters."

6. For what purpose and in what kind of a spirit should an unfaithful brother be disfellowshipped?

(do not attempt to learn the following outline, but study through the Epistle again; using **this** analysis as a final review before examination.)

ANALYSIS OF II THESSALONIANS

1. Salutation 1-4.
 - (a) Greeting
 - (b) Thanksgiving for their faith, love, endurance in trial.
2. Comfort in persecution.
 - (a) God's justice 5,6.
 - (b) Reward for faithful endurance 7.
 - (c) The revelation of Jesus Christ in glory 7-12.
 - (1) God's righteousness vindicated in judgment on the ungodly.
 - (2) Saints rewarded at His coming.
3. The day of the Lord. 2:1-2 (cf. Isa. 2:10-22; Joel 1:15; 2:1; 3:14; Amos 5:18-20; Zeph. 1:14,15.)
 - (a) Events to precede it.
 - (1) Mystery of iniquity (lawlessness) already working in Paul's day 7.
 - (2) Apostasy. vs. 3. (cf. Luke 18:8; II Tim. 3:1-8; I Tim. 4:1,2. *of professing church*.)
 - (3) The man of sin. 2:3-12 (cf. Dan. 7:8,20,21; 9:26,27; John 5:43; I John 2:18; Rev. 13)
 - (a) His identity.

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- "Man of sin (lawlessness), son of perdition." vs. 3.
- (b) His character.
 - Enemy of God vs. 4
 - Blasphemous, proud vs. 4
 - (c) His miracles vss. 9, 10 cf. Rev. 13:13
 - (d) What restrains him vss. 6, 7
 - (e) His doom vs. 8 cf. Rev. 19:19, 20; 20:10
4. Apostate church and the world.
- (a) Rejects light 10-12
 - (b) Receives delusion 11
 - (c) Damned 12.
5. Admonition, comfort, instruction to the brethren 2:13 to 3:15.
- (a) God's purpose in predestination 13, 14.
 - (b) Exhortation to steadfastness 15.
 - (c) Consolation 16, 17.
 - (d) Paul's request for prayer 3:1, 2
 - (1) Effective ministry of the Word 1.
 - (2) Deliverance from unreasonable men 2.
 - (e) God's faithfulness 3
 - (f) Paul's confidence in their obedience 4
 - (g) How to treat a disorderly brother 6, 14, 15
 - (h) Paul's example among them 7-9
 - (i) Admonitions--
 - To industry 10.
 - Against gossip 11.
 - To peaceableness 12.
 - To endurance 13.
 - To separation 14.
 - To charity toward the erring 15.
6. Benediction and subscription 16-18.

GALATIANS.

✓ "Galatia was a province in the peninsula of Asia. The people of this region were not of oriental origin. The Galatians, as the name indicates, were Gauls, 'a stream from that torrent of barbarians which poured into Greece in the third century before Christ.' In the time of Paul, Galatia was part of the all-conquering Roman Empire. That many Jews of the dispersion also dwelt in Galatia is evident from the address of First Peter 1:1. The character of these oriental Gauls is sufficiently disclosed in the epistle itself. All secular writers confirm that impression. 'All writers, from Caesar to Thierry, have described them as susceptible of quick impressions and sudden changes, with a fickleness equal to their courage and enthusiasm.'" --- Scofield.

The following scriptures are all the light we have as to Paul's ministry among them and their existence as a church or churches: Acts 16:6; 18:23; I. Cor. 6:1; Gal. 1:2; I Peter 1:1.

Authorities disagree as to the place from which the epistle was written--Corinth or Ephesus--but this is not important. The occasion of the writing of the epistle is clearly unfolded by the letter itself, and takes us back to the church council recorded in

② Diff between just (declare guiltless or blameless) & sanct. (set apart & made holy)

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Galatians

the fifteenth of Acts. The Judaizing teachers referred to there were dogging Paul's footsteps everywhere, seeking to undermine the preaching of a free gospel, based on the grace of God. In order to do this they first must undermine Paul's Apostolic authority, which they attempted. They endeavored to inject the necessity of circumcision and other Mosaic observances as essential to salvation. Good soil for the propagation of such doctrine would be found in these fickle, demonstrative Galatians. Cf. Gal. 1:6; 4:9; 4:15; 5:15. That many had fallen into the error of supplementing faith by works is evident. Cf. 1:6-9; 3:3; 4:9-11; 5:3.

Paul's apostleship having been called into question, he writes, as to the Corinthians, to defend this and to restore these people to the faith. The epistle is an able exposition of the doctrine of justification by faith, apart from law-works of any kind.

The epistle is not written to a single church or churches in one city, but to churches in the province of Galatia ch. 1:2. The epistle falls into three main themes, namely: Paul's defense of his apostolic authority; an unfolding of the doctrine of justification by faith; and the application of this doctrine to the daily life of the Christian.

"Paul received these distinctive doctrines of grace which he calls by direct revelation 'my gospel' and not by tradition from the apostles who were the companions of Christ during His humiliation... Paul's message was not an echo, however faithfully repeated, of the earth teachings of His divine Master. Paul's gospel derives its authority from the risen Lord Himself, is the gospel of the risen Lord Himself."

"The sternness of Galatians, then, is not the sternness of an aroused controversialist, but the solemn judgment of Christ upon the perverters of His gospel--the only means for the salvation of the lost. Much error is, in divine forbearance, graciously borne with, but Galatianism is the destruction of the gospel, and, therefore, intolerable to God. 'Let him be anathema' is the necessary sentence of love upon whomsoever (even Paul or an angel) would preach 'another gospel'". --- Scofield.

ANALYSIS OF THE EPISTLE TO GALATIANS.

Section 1.

Salutation 1:1-5.

Paul's apostolic commission received not from man, but from the Lord Jesus Christ, and God the Father. Vs. 4 gives the essence of the true gospel.

Section 2.

The Theme. 1:6-9.

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The Galatians were removed from grace. Still called themselves Christians, attended the assemblies, had not fallen into gross immorality, etc., but had forsaken the gospel. What they were calling the gospel was not even another gospel but a perversion of the true "good tidings". When human merit in any degree is brought in, grace is excluded, the gospel is destroyed.

QUESTIONS ON LESSON ONE

1. Who were the Galatians and where is Galatia?
2. What was the character of these people according to secular history? According to the Epistle?
3. What was the occasion for the writing of the epistle?
4. Why did Paul again have to defend his apostleship?
5. Into what three main themes may the epistle be divided?
6. Whence did Paul receive what he calls "my gospel", and what was this gospel as contrasted with Galatianism?
7. From whom did Paul receive his apostolic commission?

EPISTLES III.

I. CORINTHIANS

Written by Paul from Ephesus, A. D. 57. Two epistles are addressed to this church, which included not only those who lived at Corinth, but in the adjacent towns of Achaia (the upper portion of the Morea, along the coast of the Gulf of Lepanto). Paul passed eighteen months at Corinth during his second missionary tour, visiting the neighboring cities, and establishing churches in them. Corinth was the great centre of commercial traffic on the overland route from Rome to the East, and also between Upper and Lower Greece. Possessing the only good harbor in that quarter, and being the shortest and safest route, small vessels were dragged across the isthmus, larger ones transhipped their cargoes, and hence all the trade of the Mediterranean flowed through it, so that "a perpetual fair was held there from year's end to year's end;" to which were added the great annual gatherings of Greeks at the "Isthmian Games" (to which Paul alludes, I Cor. 9:24-27).

Its population, and that of Achaia, was mainly foreign, formed of colonists from Caesar's army; and of manumitted slaves (e.g., Tertius, Quartus, Achaicus, Fortunatus, etc.), settlers from Asia Minor returned exiles from the Islands, and at this time a large influx of Jews lately expelled from Rome (Acts 18:2).

Paul's preaching in the synagogue was acceptable till he boldly testified that Jesus is the Messiah, when persecution set in, he was rejected from the community, brought before the Roman governor, and set up a rival church. His disciples were mostly of the lower orders, partly Jews, but mainly Roman freedmen and heathen Greeks, who became enthusiastic admirers of the apostle. Here he wrote the latter or both of his two epistles to the Thessalonians, and one to the Romans immediately after which he returned to Ephesus, and was succeeded in his mission by Apollos, who also made many converts. The latter was imperfectly instructed in Christianity, but was well versed in the Jewish Scriptures, and very eloquent. There arose two factions - a Jewish, clinging to a Pharisaic attachment to the law; a Gentile, prone to push evangelical freedom to license, while keeping the right faith, claiming to indulge in even heathen licentiousness. They joined freely in heathen sacrificial feasts, degraded the holy communion into a festive banquet, women threw off the usual eastern veil of modest attire, and the Greek love of intellectual speculation and discussion ran riot on sacred subjects, till appeals on Christian disputes were brought before heathen tribunals, and morality was scandalized by even incestuous intercourse.

Under such corruption, during three years, factions attained a formidable height. Paul was defamed by the Jewish party, and rumors of alarming disputes reached him, followed by a letter full of inquiries on matters of morality and doctrine, brought by a deputation of freedmen. Paul had already despatched thither Timotheus, but now writes the first epistle to the Corinthians from Ephesus (A.D. 57), instead of going to them, as he intended, because he deemed it his duty to stay for the great Pan-Ionian festival to Diana, held that year at Ephesus.

Central and collateral truths in the first epistle to the Corinthians:

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THE RESURRECTION.

Purity - Consecration - Steadfastness.

Key thoughts: (1) Church order and discipline. (2) "Let all that ye do be done in love" (16:14).

Secondary keys: (14:40 and 7:29-31). See double address (1:2).

A careful study of this epistle, with reference to the character of the apostle, will afford a fine illustration of the practical influence of those doctrines of grace which he taught: for instance, his awful sense of his responsibility as a minister, and his jealousy over himself; his entire dependence for success on the divine blessing, yet his diligent use of means; his prudence, fidelity and tenderness; his humility - even while asserting his apostolic authority; and his little regard for those gifts by which he was so distinguished, as compared with charity, i. e., Christian love. Such conduct is a pattern not only to ministers, but also to private Christians in every age.

For those who profess to have no sympathy with superstition, and little respect for authority, these epistles are peculiarly instructive. They combine, in the most striking way, the utterances of a liberal, manly spirit, with doctrines the most humbling. They cherish the loftiest hopes for man and for truth, and they tell us how alone these hopes may be fulfilled. Further, these epistles more than any other of Paul's writings throw light on the state of the early Christian Church; and on the evil tendencies with which the Gospel had to struggle, even among good men.

Connection with the other parts of the Scriptures. Read in connection with this epistle, Acts 18 and 1 9:10.

II. CORINTHIANS.

Written from Ephesus by Paul, about the latter part of A.D. 57 or the beginning of 58.

This epistle was called for by the effect of the first. In the interval occurred the riot at Ephesus, headed by Dementrius, and Paul's expulsion. Timothy and Titus had both been sent to Corinth, and at Troas he waited their return in vain, till he was bowed down with anxiety and evil foreboding. Titus at last brought sufficiently cheering accounts: the church, as a whole, had bowed to its "father's" reproofs; the incestuous man had been expelled and brought to repentance; the Gentile license had been restrained; confidence between the church and its founder had been restored, but the Judaizers had been reinforced by some bearing "letters of commendation" from some higher authority, and now were arrogant in their supremacy. This epistle expresses two conflicting emotions: (1) Thankfulness for the removal of evils; (2) Indignation at the arrogance of his opponents. The former epistle is a careful and systematic intellectual treatise; the latter is more emotional, expressing the gushing of a warm heart.

Central and collateral truths in the second epistle to the Corinthians:-

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II. CORINTHIANS.

The Eternal Future

Afflictions - Revelations - Glory

Key thoughts: (1) Christian ministry and superiority over all circumstances. (2) "Our sufficiency is of God."

Reasons for a second epistle. Of the seven Gentile churches formally addressed by the Holy Ghost, the Romans, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians received but one epistle each, and the moment the contents of these various epistles are clearly understood, it will be seen that nothing can be added to them. They are complete in themselves. But the reasons for second epistles to the Corinthians and Thessalonians are equally obvious. The condition of these two churches demanded second epistles; and it was not by chance, or oversight, or forgetfulness on the part of the Holy Spirit to say something in the first epistles which needed mention, that two of the seven churches are addressed a second time.

ROMANS.

The moral conditions of the nations to whom the Gospel came, Paul has described in his epistle to the Romans.

We find there were opponents to the Gospel at Rome, who argued against it on the ground of the immoral consequences which followed, as they thought, the doctrine of justification by faith, and even charged Paul himself with maintaining that the greater man's sin is, the greater was God's glory (3:8). Moreover, not all the Jewish members of the church could bring themselves to acknowledge their uncircumcised Gentile brethren as their equals in the privileges of Christ's kingdom (3:9,29; 15:7-11). On the other hand, the more enlightened Gentile converts were inclined to treat the lingering Jewish prejudices with scornful contempt (14:3). It was the aim of Paul to win the former of these parties to Christian truth, and the latter to Christian love. Two things the Jews then stumbled at: (1) Justification by faith without the works of the Mosaic law; and (2) the admission of the Gentiles into the Church. Therefore, both these, Paul in his letter to the church of Rome, studied to clear and vindicate.

⑤ For whom written? For the Christians at Rome. The name of the original founder of the Roman church has not been preserved to us by history, nor even celebrated by tradition. It is therefore probable that it was formed in the first instance by private Christians converted in Palestine, who had brought back Christianity with them from some of their periodical visits to Jerusalem, as the "strangers from Rome", from the great Pentecost in A. D. 29 (Acts 2:10).

Central and collateral truths in the epistle to the Romans:

JUSTIFICATION AND SANCTIFICATION.

Faith - Conflict - Peace - Consecration.

Key thoughts: (1) Christianity unfolded. (2) Condemnation in sin, and justification by faith through grace.

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God is kept prominently in view throughout the epistle - his name occurring one hundred times in the book, and twenty-one times in the opening chapter, where we read of the Gospel of God, the Son of God, the righteousness of God, and the wrath of God. In connection with this, we see in the same chapter the progress of the human race apart from God (v. 21), the results of human culture (v. 22), the achievements of the human intellect (v. 23), the manifestations of human virtue (v. 24), the end reached of human love of truth (v. 25), human religion when man is left to his own resources (v. 25), and the true picture of society, after philosophy, science and art had done their best for the Greek and Roman world (vs. 26-32).

CATHOLIC OR GENERAL EPISTLES.

JAMES.

Written from Jerusalem by James "to the twelve tribes scattered abroad," A. D. 62.

⑥ 7 The design of this epistle was to encourage the believing Jews under their present and approaching sufferings, and to correct several errors into which they had fallen. Amid sins and iniquities, James the apostle and Bishop of Jerusalem, wrote this epistle - an epistle of warning to Jerusalem - the last warning it received from the Holy Spirit. Alone of the twenty epistles of the New Testament, this book begins with no benediction, and ends with no message of mercy. It should be remembered that among these "twelve tribes" were some who were Christians, and some, of course, who had never advanced beyond the Jewish faith; and if this fact is remembered, every apparent difficulty can be readily explained.

Central and collateral truths in the epistle of James:

JUSTIFICATION BY WORKS

Patience - Purity - Wisdom - Service - Benevolence - Prayer

Key thoughts: (1) Christian morality in and out of the Church. (2) Religion justified evidentially before men by works. The words "brother" and "brethren" occur sixteen times. "Patience" is also frequent, in the sense of steadfast endurance in piety. The word "perfect" occurs five times in this epistle. The prevailing error which attended the introduction of the Gospel - and which Paul was appointed to meet, especially in his epistles to the Romans and Galatians - was, that "man is justified in part by works." As opposed to this; Paul shows that we are justified freely by grace through faith alone, independent of the Mosaic law. But now, where the Gospel had been for some time established, the tendencies of corrupt nature were to pervert it by overlooking the importance of works as a necessary evidence of saving faith. Many professing Christians, it appears, were guilty of partiality to the rich, contempt of the poor, censoriousness, envy, contention, covetousness, presumptuous disregard of God's providence, oppression and luxury; and yet, confident of salvation, because they held a speculative belief of the doctrines of the Gospel. To show them the unsoundness of such a faith is the object of the apostle's arguments; and from the very example of Abraham, by which Paul illustrates the

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doctrine of justification by faith alone, he proves that it is of the very nature of saving faith to bring forth good works; and that if good works are not the result, though a man say he have faith, he has none which will profit to his salvation. This epistle may be considered as of the greatest practical importance, especially as a test of character to those who have long made a profession of religion. The vigor of Abraham's faith appeared in that, more than twenty years after he was admitted into a state of justification before God, he displayed its continued practical influence in his readiness to offer up even his son Isaac at the command of God (compare Gen. 15:6 with chapter 22:9-12). This fact again is a lesson to us, and is decisive proof that justifying faith, once exercised, is to be habitual, it is not so much an act as a state.

EPHESIANS.

Written by Paul from Rome. The renowned city of Ephesus was visited by Paul A. D. 54, and whose earnest proclamation of the truth resulted in the conversion of numbers to the Christian faith, many of the sorcerers burning their books, fear falling on Jew and Greek alike, the name of the Lord Jesus being magnified, and the Word of God mightily growing and prevailing. A Christian church was formed, the members of which were commended for their faith and love; and the apostle addressed this epistle to them from Rome while a prisoner there, A.D. 62. It was not evoked by any relapse or special errors, but was written to confirm and strengthen the believers in the faith and hope of the Gospel, and to give them some most important teaching in the deepest and sublimest truths of the Christian religion.

Central and collateral truths in the epistle to the Ephesians:

7 Election - Redemption - Eternal purpose of God - Union
with Christ - Conflict - Victory - Rest.

"The style of this epistle shows remarkably the state of the apostle's mind at the time of his writing it - a mind transported with the unsearchable riches of God's wisdom and love in the redemption of man, though at the very time his body was restrained by bonds and a prison. Of this his prayer for the Ephesians is a very striking example; yet, with a heart thus filled with heavenly things; his minute attention to relative and moral duties is very observable, as also his resting the motive to every duty on the relation in which we stand to Christ and the Holy Spirit. It is sad to know that, years afterwards, a church honored with such a revelation was rebuked by our Lord, because it had left its first love (Rev. 2:1-7), and started that downward course of the professing Christian body that is now fast hastening to a shameful and melancholy end. The candlestick has long been removed out of its place in Ephesus; and the most advanced saint will wall in darkness, unless he keeps his eye single and steadily fixed upon the Lord Jesus Christ. This is a solemn warning to Christians in every age of the fearful consequences of forsaking their first love." - Sel.

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Colossians

Written from Rome by Paul. The letter to the Colossians itself gives us distinct information as to the cause which induced Paul to write it. Epaphras, the founder of that Church (Col. 1:7), was now at Rome, and he had communicated to the apostle the unwelcome tidings that the faith of the Colossians was in danger of being perverted by false teaching. Hence, the object of this epistle was to counteract their errors and to establish the believers in faith and practice. The apostle gives a solemn caution against the philosophical speculations and carnal ordinances set forth by the false teachers, who appear to have been speculatists, mere professors of Christianity, advocating angel worship, occult science, the keeping of feasts, and a false worldly humility and wisdom, thus endeavoring to combine the doctrines of oriental theosophy and carnal asceticism with those of pure Christianity. He sets before them the majesty and all-sufficiency of Christ, as the source of all spiritual blessings. The attention is fixed upon the person of Jesus Christ, whose sacrifice completes the typical offerings of Judaism, crucifies the old man with his affections and lusts, while the resurrection unfolds a new life in him, elevating the soul above earthly objects more effectually than mere mortification of the flesh to quench the emotions of the heart, according to a Stoic philosophy.

Philemon.

Written by Paul to Philemon, from Rome. Philemon, to whom Paul wrote this epistle was an inhabitant of Colosse, and probably owed the means of his conversion to the apostle: His slave, Onesimus, had run away from him to Rome, having, perhaps, been guilty of misappropriation of his master's goods (verse 8). Falling into Paul's hands, he was converted to Christianity, reclaimed to his duty, and sent back to his master with this letter of reconciliation. It is remarkable for its delicacy, generosity and justice. The apostle maintains civil rights (even of slavery), maintaining that Onesimus, though under the liberty of the Gospel, is still the slave of Philemon, and justly liable to punishment for desertion. The damage caused by his absconding, Paul takes upon himself, playfully using his name, "Onesimus" (profitable both to thee and to me), as a means of urging his suit for pardon. As the returning slave was the bearer also of the epistle to the Colossians it was probably written at the same time (A.D. 62), near the close of Paul's first imprisonment at Rome.

Phillippians. *first conversion*

Written from Rome by Paul. Philippi was a city of Macedonia, and the capital city of a Roman colony. It is distinguished as being the first place in Europe where Paul preached the Gospel, about A.D. 51 (Acts 16:12). Here Paul and Silas converted Lydia, came into contact with heathen paganism - the worship of evil spirits - were scourged and imprisoned, which led to the jailer's conversion, and the founding of a faithful Christian community. The epistle was written during Paul's first imprisonment at Rome (Acts 28).

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Phillippians.

The Phillippians were greatly attached to Paul, and testified their affection by sending him supplies, even when laboring for other churches; and when they heard he was under confinement at Rome, they sent Epaphroditus, one of their pastors, to minister to his wants. On the return of Epaphroditus, Paul, by this letter, acknowledges their kindness. His leading object seems to be, while cautioning them against Judaizing teachers, to urge them to higher attainments in holiness and mutual love; directing them to the wonderful condescension of Christ as their pattern; his grace as their strength; and presenting his own example to enforce his precepts. It has often been remarked that this epistle contains less censure and more praise than any other of Paul's letters. It gives us a very high idea of the Christian state of the Phillippians, and the liberality which distinguished them above other churches. The only blemish recorded as existing in the church at Philippi is, certain of its members were deficient in lowliness of mind and were thus led into disputes and altercations with their brethren.

Two women of considerable note among them - Euodias and Syntche by name - had been especially guilty of this fault; and their variance was the more to be regretted because they had labored earnestly for the propagation of the faith. Paul exhorts the church with great solemnity and earnestness to let these disgraceful bickerings cease, and to be all "of one soul and one mind".

HEBREWS

Written from Rome for the Hebrew Christians by Paul. The Gospel according to Moses is explained and the "better things" of the New Testament Gospel added; viz., The Son better than angels, 1:4. Christ better than Melchizedec, 7:7. Better Hope, 7:19. Better covenant, 8:6. Better promises, 8:6. Better sacrifice, 9:23. Better substance, 10:34. Better country, 11:16. Better resurrection, 11:35. Better thing for us, 11:40. The blood of Christ better than that of Abel, 12:24.

This epistle was probably composed by Paul when in very strict custody, either at Caesarea or at Rome, A.D. 62-64, just before his martyrdom (II Tim. 4:6). It was addressed especially to those Aramaic Christians of Palestine who were exposed to severe persecution from their fellow-countrymen, who adhered to the expected return of visible glory of Israel. Brought up in fond reminiscence of the glories of the past, they seemed in Christianity to be receding from their peculiar privileges of intercommunion with God, as a favored people. Angels, Moses, the High Priest, were superseded by Jesus, the peasant of Nazareth; the Sabbath by the Lord's Day; the old Covenant by the New; while the temple and sacrifices were still in vogue, but virtually obsolete. What, they asked, does Christianity give in their place? And Paul answers, CHRIST i.e., God for their Mediator and Intercessor; superior to Angels, because nearer to the Father; to Moses; because a Son, not a servant; more sympathizing than the high priest, and more powerful in intercession, because he pleads his own blood. The Sabbath is but a type of the rest in heaven, the New Covenant is but the fulfilment of the Old. Christ's atonement is perfect and eternal, and heaven itself the true Jerusalem, of which the Church is the temple, whose worshippers are all advanced into the Holy of Holies.