



THE LIFE AND WRITINGS OF PAUL (cont.)

Let's pick up where we were in Paul's missionary journeys. We have Paul at the Jerusalem Conference. He and Barnabas are sent down from Antioch in order to be a part of this conversation, and while they are at this Jerusalem Conference, the leaders decide how they are going to accept Gentiles into the church, into the people of God.

They travel back to Antioch, and it is time for the Second Missionary Journey. So, they set out for their Second Missionary Journey, a few years long, about 2,800 hundred miles, and they set out again from Antioch and come back to Antioch. It is their home base. During that time, he most likely writes the books of 1 and 2 Thessalonians during that missionary journey. What you will see on the map is that they start from Antioch, which is over on the far middle right of this map, and they are going back to the regions where they have been before. That was their plan, but then Paul gets this Macedonian call that says the gospel needs to farther than these regions. So, they go all the way up, and they start going to different places. They go over to Corinth, and they make their way down to Ephesus. They head back to Jerusalem and then round it out back up to Antioch. It is in Corinth, on this missionary journey, that Paul really starts to get a vision for going farther to the west, especially Rome at this point.

So, when we see Paul come to his Third Missionary Journey, he leaves Antioch, but he is not planning on going back. Some people even think he had fallen out of a little bit of favor with some of the churches there, but he leaves on his Third Missionary Journey from Antioch, and they start going up some of the places they had been before. During this time, he spends about three years in Ephesus, and on this journey, he writes the book of Romans and then 1 and 2 Corinthians. Now, he is in Corinth when he writes the book of Romans. That is near Rome. He is headed towards Rome. What he is doing is he is taking an offering to the saints who are down here in Jerusalem. The church needs some help and support. While he is going there, he stops right about in the middle of the map in Ephesus, and he spends some time with some of the church leaders there that he knew really well. It is at that point they know that, if he goes to Jerusalem, his life is at risk, and they are trying to dissuade him from going to Jerusalem. What does Paul say? He says, *"I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace."* Acts 20:22-24 is a huge passage. Then, you get over to Acts 21, and it is actually told to Paul through a prophet that, when he goes to Jerusalem, he would be bound and the people there thought that maybe this would dissuade him. Prophet, tell them what you think. Listen to what Paul says. He says, *"Why are you weeping and breaking my heart? I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus."* (Acts 21:13) I think we have heard testimony from tonight that people aren't surprised in parts of the world when they face persecution. It doesn't shock them. They know that it is a very real risk right in front of them, but they have said, "I consider my life worth nothing to me. I will embrace whatever it takes to make the gospel known." That is the picture we see in Paul on his Third Missionary Journey.

He gets to Jerusalem. He goes to the Temple, and he is falsely accused and arrested and, basically, spends about two years in prison there at Caesarea by the Sea. Then, he appeals to the Emperor, to the Roman Emperor, and is taken from Caesarea by the Sea on a trip to Rome. You see, the trip to Rome goes from about 60 to 61 A.D. because there was a shipwreck in there, about three months, as if anything else could go wrong for Paul.

Even when he is in prison and being taken up to the Emperor, he gets ship wrecked on an island, and they spend three months before finally getting up to Rome where he has his first imprisonment. This is, basically, a kind of house arrest where visitors could come and visit Paul, but he was in Rome under house arrest there, and he writes the Epistles that are called the Prison Epistles. They are called the Prison Epistles: Philippians, Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon, all written from imprisonment in Rome.

Now, there is a lot of evidence that, on the last part of Paul's journey, a lot of people believe Paul was released from the imprisonment for at least a very small window of final ministry. Where he went, exactly what he did during that time, not exactly sure, but, then, he was imprisoned again. This imprisonment most likely led to Paul's death. His final imprisonment is when he wrote the Pastoral Epistles, including, as Johnny just mentioned, 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus, the Pastoral Epistles. They are actually letters that are written to individuals, but they really address the Church. You see Paul's concern for the Church. It is an incredible picture of Paul's heart as he is facing his last days on the earth.

Paul, the writer. In your notes, I just put an overview of the kind of way Paul wrote some of his letters, but I want us to dive into each of these letters and see how he wrote different things to different people at different times to emphasize the picture of the gospel, contextualizing the gospel in different places.

Romans

Primary Information for Starters...

The first letter that we have in the New Testament, and probably my favorite book in the Bible, is the book of Romans. It is arguably the most influential book in all of Christian history. Many people have come to faith, Augustine came to faith, he said, because of reading the book of Romans. It was Luther that basically said Romans, and, in a sense, Galatians too, but Romans, specifically Romans 1:16-17 "*the righteous will live by faith*," was the catapult for the entire Protestant Reformation here in the book of Romans. John Wesley, who was, obviously, used in the Great Awakening by God to lead thousands and thousands of people to faith in Christ through his preaching, actually came to faith in Christ from reading Romans. He was converted when he was in a Bible study where they were simply reading Luther's preface to the book of Romans. They were reading the introduction to the book when John Wesley came under conviction of the picture of the gospel "*by grace through faith*." Through this phrase in Romans, he came to faith in Christ. It has had a huge mark on the influence of Christian history.

Romans was written to Jewish and Gentile Christians, obviously, who were living in Rome. There was some tension, still, of how the Jews and Gentiles go together.

The primary theme is really two-fold. The "righteousness of God" is mentioned over 60 times in the book of Romans. The "righteousness of God" is emphasized over and over again, and, then, the "Gospel of God." From the very beginning, the "Gospel of God" was promised beforehand by the prophets in the Holy Scriptures. Then, you get to Romans 1:16-17, kind of the theme verses. "*I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the righteousness from God for all who believe. The righteous will live by faith.*" These go together, righteousness and the gospel because, if God is righteous, and we don't have a

gospel, then we are really in trouble. The gospel is the Good News about how we can be made right with God, and that is the book of Romans.

We see a threefold purpose in the book of Romans. First of all, to instruct the church in basic doctrines of the Gospel. Second, to show the practical implications of the Gospel. Basically, Romans 1 through 11 gives some pretty heavy doctrinal truths. Romans 12 through 16 gives some pretty practical out workings of that truth, but I believe one of the primary purposes, if not the primary purpose, is Paul was writing this book to garner support for the expansion of the Gospel to unreached peoples. Paul is writing to Rome, but what we find out in Romans 15, at the very end of this book, is that Paul's ultimate goal is not to get to Rome. He says, "I need you to help me get to Spain" because Spain had no exposure to the gospel whatsoever.

I am convinced that the reason Paul wrote this book was not just to give us a systematic treatise of the gospel. I believe he wrote this book to show those Roman Christians how great the gospel was and why they needed to make it known among all the peoples of the earth, especially those who had never heard it, and he needed their support. He needed their financial support to get there. You know how sometimes people go on a mission trip, and they will write out letters to garner support. "I would like you to be praying for this trip that I am going on, and, if possible, if God has given you resources, could you give some to help this happen." I think Romans is one big missionary support letter. I have never seen a missionary support letter like Romans in our day today. You might try to write one for the next mission trip you go on, but I think that is what he is doing. He is saying the gospel is too good to be kept from these people. Ladies and gentlemen, there are still, 2,000 years later, over a billion people who have not heard the precious gospel as exposed in the book of Romans. Whenever we see the book of Romans, may it compel us to go to the unreached people groups of the world and make this gospel known to them. That is what we get from the book of Romans. Okay. I am preaching. Okay, here we go.

Key verses you see listed there. (Romans) 3:21-26 is what I call "How God solves the riddle of the Old Testament." The Old Testament is showing the need of man before God, and we see an incredible picture of the gospel in Romans 3:21-26. Romans 8:28-39. I am convinced one of the most triumphant, if not the most triumphant chapter in all of scripture, is chapter 8 in Romans, and it comes to a climax there at the end.

Practical Advice for Study...

You look at the overall structure and you see the highlight of all of those verses: The need for righteousness. Basically, what Paul does from Romans 1:18 all the way to 3:20 is he tells us how bad man is. It is a bleak picture of the sinfulness of man. It starts off with "*the wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against godlessness and the wickedness of men who suppressed the truth of God by their wickedness*" (Romans 1:18), and from there, all the way to 3:20, he just paints a deeper and deeper picture of man in sin. The first part, the first half of that section, deals with the Gentiles. You can almost picture the Jewish people "Amening" at every verse. "You know those Gentiles, those are heathens, they are horrible." Then he gets to about middle way through Romans 2, and he says, "Now you, if you call yourself a Jew; if you rely on the law and brag about your relationship to God," and he starts to let the Jews have it. He says (v.24), "*God's name is blasphemed because of you.*" Then, he gets to Romans 3:9. He says, "*What shall we conclude then,*" and he basically says we are all in the same boat.

There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands; no one who seeks God. All have turned away; they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one." ...Now we know

that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God. Therefore, no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin.

It is a bleak picture. I can almost picture Paul, whether he is writing or dictating this, in tears by the time he gets to Romans 3:20. It is a very low point.

Then, whether he picks up the pen or tells somebody else to, he says in verse 21, it is one of the best transitions in all of scripture, he says,

But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, (to which the Law and the Prophets testify). This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.

Don't just get the bad news. Get the Good News! This is the gospel. It is GOOD NEWS! Okay. So, even when you are sharing the Roman Road with somebody, just throw in verse 24. It is not going to hurt. I think it will actually help a little bit. So, you got it. You got that. Then, you see if just gets better.

We come by faith. We are declared just before God in Romans 5. In Romans 6, we have sin out there that we are still struggling with. Romans 7 says, "I don't know what to do." Schizophrenic Paul, "I do what I don't want to do" and "I don't know what I do" and "everything that I want to do, I am not doing." It is like, "Paul, you are giving us a headache," and he comes to the end and says, "What a wretched man I am," and we are saying, "What a wretched man that we are." And he says, but "*Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!*" (Romans 7:25). Then, he gets to Romans 8:1 "*Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set us free,*" ladies and gentlemen "*from the law of sin and death,*" and it just gets better and better and better. It climbs to the end, and he says,

If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us all—how will He not also, along with Him, graciously give us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written, 'For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.'

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:31-39)

Romans is a good book. It is a good book. I am sorry for those who have to translate all of that into another language. All right.

So, we know that the core Christian doctrines, which fill this letter: the revelation of God, the depravity of man, justification, propitiation. Maybe one of these Secret Churches, we can dive into some doctrinal truths so we can know what propitiation means. Faith, original sin, all these things, all over this passage, all over this book.

I would encourage you to read this book, study this book, and memorize this book. This book is key to unlocking the entire Word of God. I think it is key to unlocking the whole picture because it is the clearest presentation of the gospel that we have, and it propels us into mission. Okay.

1 Corinthians

Primary Information for Starters...

Now, 1 Corinthians was written to the church in Corinth. Now, we know a little bit about Corinth. Corinth was really more a Greek city than it was Roman, and it was pretty immoral. I mean, Paul wrote the book of Romans from Corinth. It is not a good commentary on your city when somebody is writing a letter about the wrath of God and says, "They have been given over to evil, greed, depravity. Their sinful nature is just full." It is not a good picture of Corinth. In fact, to "Corinthianize" was a term that was used to refer to sexual immorality. There was a temple to the goddess Aphrodite in Corinth, and there were, literally, day after day, thousands of temple prostitutes that were available, both men and women, to male worshipers. So, that is why you see homosexuality mentioned in the very beginning of the first chapter of the book of Romans. It is the picture that was there in Corinth. It was not an easy place to be. When you see Paul there, in Acts 18, which we will look at a little later, we know it is not an easy place to be. So, he is writing to this church amidst a very pagan city, and he is trying to encourage them, but what had happened was it had been a divided church. He is writing to a divided church in Corinth, and some people are following Paul's teaching, other people are following this guy's teaching or that guy's teaching, and you have all these different leaders in the church and everybody is trying to figure out who they are going to follow. They are in different camps, and he is writing them to try to unify them around one thing.

The primary theme is the "wisdom of the cross." The "wisdom of the cross." They need to see the foundational nature of the cross. We don't follow Paul. We don't follow Apollos. We follow Christ. He is the one around whom our lives revolve. The cross is where we find our unity. From 1 Corinthians 1:18-31, you see the cross and the wisdom of the cross against the foolishness of man emphasized, and it continues throughout.

Practical Advice for Study...

In fact, you notice the letter's bookends. When you read this letter, you will see the cross at the very beginning and the very end. 1 Corinthians 15, a triumphant chapter on the resurrection. A great passage on the resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15.

So, you have the cross and the resurrection, and, in between, you have, basically, a theology of the cross, and how the cross affects our ethics, and how the cross affects our priorities, and how the cross affects our attitudes, and how the cross affects the church, and how the cross affects how we worship, and how the cross affects all these different things. Cross-centered ministries at the center of the book of 1 Corinthians.

I want to you see how Paul addresses, when you read through that, at least eleven different issues in the church. Over and over again, he is primarily responding to issues including the purpose of spiritual gifts, regulations for worship, sexual immorality. So, you have to put yourself in the shoes of those in Corinth at that time and hear what Paul is saying because he is reacting to these things. He is not just saying, "I am going to give you a list of

regulations for worship that will be the regulations we use for thousands of years." He is responding to how they were worshiping and offering correctives for those things. That is something that we need to understand when we come to the book of 1 Corinthians.

2 Corinthians

Primary Information for Starters...

2 Corinthians is somewhat similar. Written to a church that, frankly, hadn't received the first letter very well and there were still a lot of needs. There were still a lot of needs. There is still dissension there.

So, the primary theme is reconciliation in the body of Christ. Reconciliation in the body of Christ. 2 Corinthians 5:17: "(Therefore,) if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!" Then, it goes on to talk about how we are reconciled to God through Christ. Now, that is a passage that many times we use to share the gospel to show people who don't have faith in Christ that we become new in Christ. However, don't forget that Paul wrote that to the church, saying,

Don't you realize, the church that is divided, don't you realize that Christ died to reconcile you not only to God but to man? That is why we need to be reconciled to each other in the church. That is part of why Christ died, so that, we would be new creations. The old is gone. Stop acting like the world. You are the church. Reconcile to one another. This is ridiculous, he is saying. Be done with this dissension.

So, you see four main elements in this letter: Paul's explanation of his plans to come visit Corinth, his collection for the church in Jerusalem, which is 2 Corinthians 8-9, Paul's defense of apostleship and ministry. You see some pretty deep emotions from Paul, in his defense here, because people were doubting his apostleship, basically, and, then, Paul's concern about Jewish Christian opponents to the Gospel.

Practical Advice for Study...

Overall structure: I want to encourage you, when you read 2 Corinthians, you can get bogged down in some of the details of the things he is addressing. I want to encourage you to feel the heart of Paul in this book. It is one of his most personal and intimate letters in the New Testament.

So, feel his heart and look for these themes: forgiveness, restoration, which we talked about, Christian giving as an expression of generosity. You know, the whole picture of the tithe that we see in the Old Testament is not in 2 Corinthians 8-9. Instead, you see, instead of this law that says you give this in Malachi 3, what you see is the generosity of God's people with their resources that God has entrusted to them, and you see Paul talking about how poor churches were gathering together money to help the church in Jerusalem. They were indebted to believers around the world. So, you see those themes all throughout 2 Corinthians.

Galatians

Primary Information for Starters...

Okay. Galatians. Remember, Galatians was written around the Jerusalem Conference, either right before, or sometime right in the middle of that happening, and so, you see Paul addressing some of the issues between Jews and Gentiles. It is written in response to the Jerusalem Conference. Which, basically, we had asked the question on what ground are the Gentiles going to be brought into the people of God. Paul is an apostle of the Gentiles, so,

he sees the need to address this issue. So, he is countering these Judaizers, which are, basically, people who are putting regulations on Gentiles in order to enter the church.

Paul flat out condemns the false gospel, and he calls it a false gospel in Galatians 1:6-9. He condemns the false gospel of faith and works, faith plus works. "Gentiles, you trust in Christ, and you get circumcised, and you do this, then, you are a part of the people of God," and Paul says, "No, that is ridiculous," and it is a sharp edge in Paul's teaching. He condemns this gospel. The false gospel, he says, is faith plus works equals justification. The true gospel is that faith is justification that leads to works. Are works in Paul's letters part of salvation? Yes. They are not part of being justified before God, but, as a result of our walk with Christ, we work out our salvation with fear and trembling. We walk with Him, and our lives show the effects of our faith, but that is not what saves us. Our works do not save us. The work of Christ saved us, and it is faith and faith alone. You don't boast about what you have done to get to Christ. That is what he is saying over and over again in this book.

Practical Advice for Study...

The Overall structure: You see grace emphasized, the Gospel, the very beginning, the Law and, then, the Spirit.

You see some of the key words mentioned that reflect that theme, but I think this is God's strongest word in Galatians against legalism. It is God's strongest word against legalism, and it expresses the joy of the freedom that we have in Christ. "Freedom," being the word there in that blank. Some have called it the "*Magna Carta*" of Christian liberty. I think there is a word that Galatians has for the Church in our context today. Many times, we can go so far into legalism that there is no heart, no passion and no freedom in what is found in our relationship with Christ. At the same time, I see a developing trend in the Church across our culture today that is embracing freedom in Christ at the expense of truth in Christ and leaving the Law behind. What we need to understand is that we are free. We are free to do what? We are free to obey the Law. They go together, and our greatest freedom is found in obeying the Law. "*I run in the path of your commands,*" Psalm 119 says, "*for You have set my heart free.*" That is why I run in the path of your command because You have freed me up to do that. So, we see the tension there between legalism and freedom that we need to have in Christ. That is Galatians.

Ephesians

Primary Information for Starters...

Next to Ephesians. Remember, a prison Epistle written from prison to church leaders in Ephesus. He was really close to them. He had spent three years with them and the surrounding areas. Probably, kind of a circular letter. It went to different areas as well, but mainly, to the church at Ephesus.

Three Major Themes: First of all, the unity of the church. The unity of the church. This is the major theme in Ephesians. Second, the victory of Christ. This book, more than probably any other, emphasizes Christ and the Church over and over and over again. The victory of Christ, in particular, because witchcraft was rampant in Ephesus. When Paul went there and started preaching, there was a positive response to the gospel, and some of these magicians started throwing their books away, and people were turning from idolatry. All the silversmiths were getting run out of business, and they were not very happy with Paul. This is one of the things that we kind of use as kind of a theme for us, even when doing ministry in the French Quarter down in New Orleans. It was like, "We want to put some places out of business by letting the gospel take over because the gospel creates this need to follow him and abandon the things of this world," but it didn't make the silversmiths very happy. So, a riot came about and Paul had to leave. It is this battle, we have to realize that Ephesians

represents, between the god of this world and the true God, between Christ and the spiritual powers of this world. We don't talk about that as much, but there are a lot of contexts around the world where that battle is very real. I know in the context, the few times I have been over in some parts of Asia, that tension between fear and power.

I remember, in one particular house church setting, sitting there, and there were about 20 or 30 believers in this room training in the Word, and a new lady comes one day. She has not come to faith in Christ. Somebody invites her. She comes to faith in Christ that day, and, then, she starts coming to the training. Here is this lady for the first time being exposed to this. While we are studying the Bible, she says she realizes and comes to one of the church leaders after, in one of our breaks, and said, "You know, I have a bunch of idols and false gods that I have been worshiping. They are setup all over my house. I probably need to get rid of those. Eh?" The church leader said, "I think that would be a good idea." So, we went over and took those idols out, and we prayed over the house, and we started the next training session. We could smell the burning idols right outside the window. Isn't that a great way to study the Word? The power of Christ over anything that this world would setup as an idol, and that is the picture we have in Ephesians. The victory of Christ.

The power of the Spirit. The key verses are in the notes. I hope we will have time later on to dive into 1:3-14, but we will see.

Practical Advice for Study...

The Doctrine of the Church, and The Practice of the Church. Basically, in the first three chapters, you see an emphasis on doctrine, and, then, it is very practical in the last three chapters. I would encourage you to mark every time you see "love" mentioned. Love is mentioned all over this book, over and over again, more than any other letter that Paul writes. So, I want to encourage you to emphasize marking "love." *"And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ."* Love is a major emphasis.

Then, mark each time you see the phrase "in Christ" or "with Christ." 35 different times you see that mentioned here. "In Christ" or "with Christ'.

Philippians

Primary Information for Starters...

Ephesians then Philippians. The book of Philippians. Written from prison, again, a prison Epistle to the church at Philippi, which is a Roman colony. It was delivered by Epaphroditus, "God's gambler." The guy who, that the end of Philippians 2, is said to risk his life for the sake of a kingdom. He gambled his life. That is how he is described.

The primary themes are joy and unity in Christ. Nineteen different times "joy" is mentioned throughout the book of Philippians. It is emphasized over and over and over again.

Practical Advice for Study...

The overall structure. One of my favorite passages, and, maybe, one of the most significant passages in the New Testament is the "Christ hymn" in Philippians 2:5-11. We study this at Christmas, but this picture of Christ Jesus,

Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made Himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled himself and became obedient to death— even death on a cross! Therefore, God exalted Him to the highest place and gave Him the name that

is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

That picture of Christ gives us a totality of him. It is Jesus as God: "*being in the very nature of God.*" It is Jesus as man: "*took on the appearance of man.*" Jesus as Savior: "*became obedient to death—even death on the cross.*" Then, finally, Jesus as Lord: "*God exalted him to the highest place and gave Him a name that is above every name.*" All four of those truths are highlighted in this picture of Christ, and it is a picture that is intended to show the people in Philippi an example of how they should live.

So, pay close attention to that. Study that passage. Get to know that passage. Enjoy Philippians. It is a breath of fresh air in Paul's Letters. He doesn't seem to be mad about too much in Philippians, which is a good thing. It is kind of like Paul is a nice guy, and he does have joy in him. Which, he has joy in other places, but it is just expressed differently.

Listen for a heart of a disciple-maker too. It is a book written from the persecuted, it's written by Paul in prison, to the persecuted. It is a Roman colony, and, just like Paul was in Roman imprisonment, he is writing to some believers who are facing persecution. Philippians 1, the very beginning of the book, verses 27-30, Paul says, "*It is granted to you to suffer on behalf of Christ.*" That is a weird word to use. "You come to Christ," he says, "here is a free gift, suffering." It is not the most effective evangelism invitation to give in our culture to day. If you come to Christ, I guarantee you that he will give you the gift of suffering, and that is exactly what he is telling them in Philippians 1, and he talks at the end of the strength that is found in Christ. An incredible letter.

Colossians

Primary Information for Starters...

Get to Colossians. Written to a church that a guy by the name of Epaphras had founded, and Paul had never even visited. Epaphras had been led to Christ. He had gone back to Colossae to found this church. Isn't this a great picture? All of these other letters that Paul writes, they are written to churches that he is intimately associated with. Paul hadn't even been to this particular place. Hasn't even been to this church, and he is writing a letter. I am praying that God would raise us up as The Church at Brook Hills, and we would impact churches all around this world indirectly. Not even through us going there, but through us leading someone to Christ who goes there, and, then, leading someone to Christ who goes there. We have things going on around the world that we don't even know about because of the multiplication of the gospel. That is the picture in Colossians. Never visited there.

Paul was encountering Gnostics in Colossae who were denying the deity of Christ. Basically, what a Gnostic would believe, to summarize, is that all matter is evil and that includes our humanity. So, if Christ was a human, then He couldn't have been God and man at the same time. So, it is questioning the Incarnation.

So, what Paul does is he puts it in their face and says, "The primary theme is the sufficiency of Christ. Christ is all and in all," and we are "made full in Him." The supremacy of Christ is all over the book of Colossians. Every major point deals with the sufficiency and supremacy of Christ.

Practical Advice for Study...

I have listed there a portrait of Christ in Colossians. He is the Head of all things, the Lord of creation, the Author of reconciliation, the basis for our hope, the basis for the source of our power. He is our Redeemer and Reconciler. He is the embodiment of God, the fullness of the

Godhead dwelled in Him. He is the Creator and Sustainer of all things, and the all-sufficient Savior. It is an incredible picture of Christ.

As you read, mark some of these key words and notice the practical implications of a life that is sustained by Christ alone. It is not just showing the supremacy of Christ, it is showing how that affects the way we live. The book of Colossians, an incredible portrait of Christ.

1 Thessalonians

Primary Information for Starters...

Then you get to 1 Thessalonians. 1 Thessalonians. Now, if you haven't memorized the books of the New Testament, then, maybe this will help you remember. You have Romans, big long one at the start, one of the most influential books. It is the first of Paul's letters. Then, you have First and Second Corinthians. Then, you have Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians. My Sunday school teacher taught me to "Go Eat Paper Cups." Maybe you have learned something different, but you do whatever you want. However, whenever I think of Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians, it is "Go Eat Paper Cups." So, you have that, and, then, you get to First Thessalonians, and you have "Big T's," medium size "T's," and little "T." Okay? First and Second Thessalonians, First and Second Timothy, and then Titus. This is most likely will not translate into any other languages, but it is just for our sake tonight. Okay? So, that is okay. Probably didn't even translate across this room. Okay. First Thessalonians. "Just go on Dave. Just teach us something. Stop giving us your, you know, 'tips.'" All right.

1 Thessalonians. Written from Corinth to a young church in Thessalonica.

I think of a fourfold purpose here. First of all, to encourage new believers. This is a young church; that is emphasized. When Paul went here, his problems erupted. His host in that city was arrested, and so, Paul is, basically, taken out by secret late at night. He had to leave very abrupt, very abrupt, and he didn't know what was going to happen. He didn't know what was going to happen with that church after he left.

That reminds me, and Johnny will appreciate this, one of the first books that I read about the Church in China was talking about how Communism resulted in all of these American believers being kicked out of the country. The book talked about, this was written by a Chinese house church leader, how the many of the Americans or Westerners who had been kicked out were wondering what is going to happen to the gospel in China now that Communism has come in? How is it going to survive? Once China began to open back up, and you see this swell of underground house churches everywhere, and the church advancing, and you realize, "You know, maybe we are not as necessary as we think we are in the global mission. Maybe the Holy Spirit can do this job without us." We need to get involved in this global mission, not because He needs us, but because He loves us and has given us the grace and the privilege to be a part of it. So, Paul writes to a church that he was wondering what is going to happen to these guys.

Number two, he was encouraging them to answer charges against Paul.

Number Three: to explain the Second Coming of Christ. The Second Coming of Christ is all over this book.

To warn against idleness. See, here is the deal. A lot of people in Thessalonica had heard about the Second Coming of Christ, and they had quit their jobs. They were just hanging around wondering when He is going to come and kind of enjoying life. So, Paul writes a

book and says, "Get a job." That is the whole point of 1 Thessalonians is "Guys get a job. What are you doing?" So, that is why he wrote it.

Key verses that you see listed there.

Practical Advice for Study...

Overall structure. 1 Thessalonians 1:3 gives us maybe a little bit of an outline of some of the themes that are introduced. A work produced by faith, a labor prompted by love, and an endurance inspired by hope.

I would encourage you, go when you read 1 Thessalonians and underline the end of every chapter because every chapter talks about the coming of Christ. It is really neat. Go look at the end of every chapter in 1 Thessalonians, the coming of Christ is mentioned.

At the very beginning of 1 Thessalonians, you see full circle disciple-making on display. I listed it in your notes. We see disciple-making, in the Scripture in the life and ministry of Christ, is Sharing the Word, Showing the Word, Teaching the Word and Serving the World, and you see it back to back to back to back in the very beginning of 1 Thessalonians. Then, in the Joy of Disciple-Making, Paul talks about how the Thessalonians were his crown and his joy. He lived for their sake.

Pay close attention to how he emphasizes "sanctification," which is holiness, and "the coming of the Lord" which we have mentioned.

Notice also this centrality of the Word. I think Paul, throughout this book, and you see these instances where the Word is mentioned, is saying, "Would you just get out the way and let the power of the Word do the work," and that is what the church does. The church says, "Your Word will do the work." We are going to give ourselves to it. We are going to obey it. We are going to preach it, and we are going to trust that Your Word does the work.

2 Thessalonians

Primary Information for Starters...

2 Thessalonians. Written as a follow-up Letter to the first one.

Threefold purpose: to encourage believers who were facing increasing persecution. It is a new faith in a culture that does not embrace that faith. That doesn't make it very easy. To exhort those who were idle to get back to work for the glory of Christ until he comes back, and to edify the believers in their pursuit of holiness. A tie between holiness and the Second Coming of Christ in this book.

Practical Advice for Study...

Note how 18 out of 47 Verses deal in this book with "the Day of the Lord." There were some people in Thessalonica that were saying the "Day of the Lord" had already come. Paul counters that and says, "It is coming, and we need to live in anticipation of it."

Pay close attention to these words: judgment. Judgment is really emphasized. In 1 Thessalonians, you see an emphasis on the Second Coming of Christ. Christ is coming back for the Church. When you get to 2 Thessalonians, you see more of an emphasis that Christ is coming back in judgment on those outside the Church. It is a very humbling picture.

Let this book remind you to live with the expectation that "it might be today." Do we live like that? Do you live like that? The Second Coming of Christ is a forgotten doctrine in the church, in our culture, and what we need to remember is that it is going to inform

everything that we talk about in the second half of what we do tonight. We need to remember that He has promised that He is coming back, and we are a people that live for that day. We long for that day, but I will preach about that later.

1 Timothy

Primary Information for Starters...

1 Timothy. This is the middle sized "T's." 1 Timothy. Written to encourage young Timothy, a young leader in the church, as he leads the "big city church" in Ephesus. This is a book that is written to a guy who is trying to lead a church where most of the people are older than him. I don't understand why that is funny. You are saying I need to memorize 1 Timothy, aren't you? Okay. In all seriousness, he was at a point where at times he wanted to give up. He is trying to lead the church and, especially in some situations where some leaders in the church had done some ungodly things, he is trying to lead, and Paul says, "Don't let them look down on you for your youth. You set an example, the way you live." He is trying to encourage Timothy, and really, the whole book fluctuates between him writing to Timothy and writing to the church, kind of back and forth. It is written primarily to Timothy but has a lot to say about leadership in the church.

God desires for godly leaders to lead His church. Leadership must be godly in the church.

You see the key verses there.

Practical Advice for Study...

One key word that you see, well, you see the overall structure: Guarding the doctrine of the church, guarding the worship of the church, preserving what is important in the church.

Pay close attention to these key words: charge. Charge. There is military language throughout 1 Timothy, and, basically, it is saying you have the gospel, and you have the church, and you have to guard it with all your heart. You have got to make sure you maintain the purity of leadership in the church. Guard it with everything you have. Put a fort around the bunker and make sure that you guard it. Put yourself in Timothy's shoes as you read this letter. I think this is the book that gives us a lot of perspective on leadership in the church. Obviously, there are qualifications that are listed for different offices in the church in 1 Timothy, but it is a book that we need to see as a picture of what our leaders in the church are held to.

2 Timothy

Primary Information for Starters...

Next is 2 Timothy. Paul writes this letter, likely the last letter that he writes while awaiting his trial and death. You heard Johnny mention this. This changes how you read 2 Timothy. If this is the first time you have realized this was Paul's setting for writing this book, I want to encourage you to go back tonight or maybe tomorrow, it might be a little late tonight, and read this book. This is his final imprisonment, and this is not a house arrest picture that we have seen before in Rome. He is in a dirty prison where he is a hated criminal, and he is expressing isolation and loneliness like we haven't seen before. We see Paul.

I think Paul is demonstrating how a Christian martyr should face death in 2 Timothy. He is writing to Timothy. Timothy is no longer leading the church at Ephesus. Tychicus has taken over there. Timothy is traveling on and preaching, and Paul writes this letter, that we have to get tone in it to Timothy, as he faces execution. You see the overall structure because, what is on his mind, is how to lead the church, the successfully ministry in the church.

Practical Advice for Study...

You see this pattern for successful ministry in the church. First of all, reproducing ministry entrusted to faithful men. Paul wants the gospel to continue to be spread through the church and to trust it to more and more. Endure in ministry, study in ministry, and a holy ministry.

Feel the weight of Paul's concern for Timothy and the weight of his concern for the church. You look in 1 Timothy, and you see him talk about how "some have turned aside," "some have made shipwreck," "some had turned aside after Satan," some have been led astray," "some have erred." You get to 2 Timothy, and he says, "All have turned away from me. All forsook me." And his heart is heavy, very heavy in the book of 2 Timothy, but he says in 2 Timothy 4:16, "All forsook me, but the Lord Jesus Christ stood by my side," and it is a reminder to us that no matter how lonely we get in our Christianity, Paul knows that we are never alone. Christ is right there with us. It is a very heavy book. 2 Timothy.

Titus

Primary Information for Starters...

Then you get to Titus, the little "T" at the end. Leader of the church in Crete who had been led to Christ by Paul. You see that in 2 Corinthians.

Fourfold Purpose. He is reminding Titus to appoint elders in the church. He is warning him against false teachers in the church. He is instructing him how to lead different types of people in the church. To instruct Titus how to lead different types of people in the church, and to encourage him regarding the importance of grace in the Church.

That is the primary theme. It is grace. Grace that leads to godliness. How the grace of God and godliness in our lives must go together. That whole grace leads to godliness.

Practical Advice for Study...

You see emphasis on good works, and some people might come to Titus and think, "Wait a minute. If the book is about grace, how can it talk about good works all the time?" That is the beauty of grace. We have grace poured out on us, but that doesn't mean works are nowhere in the picture. We have grace poured out on us so that we might live to His glory. So, that our works might show the grace that has been shown because, don't miss it, God doesn't give us grace and say, "Now go do good works." He gives us grace and says, "I am going to give you grace to do every good work." Everything we do is by His grace. Everything we do in the Christian life is by His grace. So, grace and works do go together in the Scriptures.

Philemon

Primary Information for Starters...

You get to Philemon. You can probably read this book in a shorter amount of time than we are going to talk about it tonight, but it was written to Philemon, a Christian in Colossae that had come to faith in Christ through Paul. Now, listen to this. It is written about Onesimus, a slave of Philemon who had come to faith in Christ through Paul. What had happened was Onesimus had been a slave of Philemon's, and he had stolen something from Philemon and had escaped. Then, in the sovereignty of God, God brings Paul and Onesimus together, and Onesimus comes to faith in Christ.

So, Paul writes a letter to Philemon saying, "I am sending him back to you with what is rightfully yours, and I want to encourage you to treat him in a way that honors Christ." He is begging for forgiveness on behalf of Onesimus. Very, very interesting book in Philemon.

Paul writes to inform Philemon of Onesimus' salvation, asks Philemon to forgive him, and then, he is requesting to come visit Philemon.

Practical Advice for Study...

This is a great picture of Christ as our Redeemer and our Reconciler. Slavery was an accepted institution in the first century. What I want you to see in this book is the effect of the gospel on slavery because the gospel destroys slavery. It unites us as neither slave nor free, neither Jew nor Gentile. We are in Christ. That is the picture here. It wasn't until later that slavery was abolished in this whole picture of that culture, but the gospel, if we let it, and it is only the church that has stopped the gospel in the past from destroying slavery. The gospel strikes at the heart of slavery. No slave/master, employee/employer, no Jew/Gentile in this picture. The gospel reconciles it all.

The gospel transforms our relationships. So, that is the last of Paul's Letters that we have.

THE GENERAL LETTERS...

That leads us to the General Letters. We need to fly through some of this. Nine letters that we not written by Paul. Put a little asterisk there. Ordered (again) basically by length. Titled according, instead of who they are written to, they are titled according to the names of their authors: James, Peter, John, and Jude and author of Hebrews. They are written to more general audiences too. That is why they are called the General Letters. That doesn't mean that they are just kind of this brand out here. They are just written to more general, more broad, even sometimes vague audiences.

Hebrews

Primary Information for Starters...

So, we come first to Hebrews. Who wrote Hebrews? Here is the answer that I will go to my grave saying. I believe with all my heart that only God knows who wrote Hebrews. Only God knows who wrote this book. Did Paul write it? Maybe. Apollos? Maybe. Luke? Maybe. Philip? Mark? Even Priscilla or Aquila? Now, you are getting out there, but maybe. It could have happened. We don't know who wrote the book of Hebrews. We really don't, and if you think you do, you don't. Nobody knows who wrote the book. Now, you can take your chance and one day be found out to be right, and you can hinge your bets on that, but we are really not sure. It is kind of vague about the authorship and who it is written to.

It is written most likely to Jewish Christians who were facing persecution. Jewish Christians who were being tempted to come back into Judaism or being tempted to forsake Christ. You get the picture. Solid Jews coming to faith in Christ, now they are meeting in homes in secret. You don't have the Temple any more. You don't have all the elaborate things, and you look around in a home church and you think, "Are we missing something here? We are supposed to have all these externalities." What the author of Hebrews, whoever that might be, says is, "All the externalities pointed to one person, to Christ, and you have Him in a house church. You have Him wherever you go." You need to see how all that stuff was intended to point to Christ. This is the most Christological book in the New Testament, and for that matter, the whole Bible. The most Christological book. It just gives the picture of the supremacy of Christ and the picture of Christ. The substance of the Old Testament, the shadow of the Old Testament enlightened by the substance of the New Testament in Christ. He is the Prophet, Priest, and King, and he is telling the author, telling the readers of Hebrews, "If you abandon Christ, you abandon God." Christ is the fulfillment of all these things.

So, the message of Hebrews, the primary theme, is the superiority of Jesus Christ.

The message of Hebrews revolves around five exhortations to make sure to continue to follow Christ, not to drift from Christ, not to drift from the mission of Christ.

Practical Advice for Study...

You see the superiority of Christ over and over again. Two key words that point to his supremacy. One is "better" than all those things that you thought were good in the Old Testament traditions, it is "better" in Christ. The second word is "perfect." The only way Christ can be the substance of the shadows in the Old Testament is if he is "perfect." He is our perfect Redeemer. He is our perfect Priest. He is the Perfect One who is able to go into the presence of a holy God and stand on our behalf.

When you come to the book of Hebrews, you will see and study the Old Testament all over the place. All over the place is the Old Testament. I have given some examples there, but they are everywhere.

Things to remember. When you see Paul quoting from the Old Testament, I want to just give you some hints as you are studying and seeing the Old Testament and New Testament come alive in Hebrews. Remember that the author is quoting from the Greek Old Testament, which is sometimes why the translation may seem a little different when you put it into English. It may seem a little different than the exact verse in the Old Testament. It doesn't mean that the author was kind of missing it. They are quoting from the Greek Old Testament, so there are little changes here and there. Not big, not substance changes, but some of the wording. The author argues many times from the lesser to the greater. You see that progression of arguments, and the author views everything in the Old Testament through the lens of Christ as well should we. Views everything in the Old Testament through the lens of Christ. So that is Hebrews.

James

Primary Information for Starters...

Next is James. Likely written by James, the brother of Jesus. James is probably the one that directed the Jerusalem Conference way back in Acts 15. So, he has some strong Jewish roots as well.

It was written to address the practical implications of true faith. In other words, what does Christianity look like in action?

What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, "Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it?... He says, ...Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do.

So, basically, what you have in the book of James is almost short, moral essays of how this faith looks in action.

Practical Advice for Study...

You see the overall structure in your notes.

The Old Testament everywhere. In 108 verses, there are references or allusions to 22 Old Testament Books. It is not that long of a book here in the New Testament, but 22 Old Testament books referenced there, and at least 15 references or allusions to the teachings of Christ. You might even put a little note. There are strong parallels between the book of James and the Sermon on the Mount.

Notice the emphasis on social justice. "*Religion that God our Father looks at as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress.*" (James 1:22) That's true religion. Strong emphasis on social justice. There is definitely a word there for us today.

Compare this book with Romans, and you get really confused because Romans is all about justification by faith not by works, and then James seems to be saying the complete opposite. We talked about how Luther was big on Romans in the Protestant Reformation. He said, one of my favorite quotes from Martin Luther, he got so sick and tired of the Catholicism in his day constantly talking about how we are justified by our works and putting James up over and over again, he said, one of my favorite quotes, "Some days, I just want to throw Jimmy in the stove." Martin Luther desiring to throw Jimmy in the stove.

Paul addresses, here is how I picture these two books. I hope it helps. Paul addresses our standing before God. I believe James is primarily addressing our witness before the world. Whenever we read any part of scripture, we need to read it in the context of all the scripture, the whole of scripture. So, when you come to James, don't throw out everything we have seen in the New Testament up to this point about salvation and justification by faith. Put it together and say we need to show the world the way Christianity looks by the way we live. That is where our faith will be put into action. That is what is being emphasized here.

1 Peter

Primary Information for Starters...

You get to 1 Peter. 1 Peter is written in a context of persecution, very bad persecution. Nero was the new Roman emperor, and, basically, what happened is, this is guy was an evil ruler. At one point, most likely, it was him who set Rome ablaze, and then he blamed it on the Christians. As a result, Christians were being tortured in public all over the place. They were being burned alive. There are stories of Nero taking brothers and sisters who had gone before us and lighting them up on crosses in order to provide light in his gardens by burning them alive. That was happening in Rome, and it was sure to spread out. So, Peter writes this book to encourage the believers amongst the suffering and persecution they are about to go through. You see suffering all over the pages of this book.

It is written to the church in Asia Minor, modern day Turkey that is facing increasing suffering and persecution. I want to put modern day Turkey in there because, just take a side note here, this is an article that was published in the Associated Press this last week. "Slain German Highlights Christian Plight." It is a story from Turkey. Same place that is associated with First Peter. Two thousand years later, this last week, the story of a quiet and deeply religious German missionary ended with the sound of dirt being scattered on his coffin in Eastern Turkey. His violent death is a sign of the plight of Christians in this Muslim country. The article goes on to talk about how few Christians are present in Turkey. There are only about twenty Christians in this particular community. How Turkey is 99.9% Muslim, basically, and this man, a German missionary, and two Turkish Christians were killed this

last week. Their hands and feet bound and their throats slit at a Christian publishing house that distributes Bibles. Five young men were detained and charged with murder. They allegedly said they killed to protect Islam. It goes on to have some quotes from this man's wife. The three kids that are left behind, thirteen, ten and eight years old, and the wife is saying, throughout this article, that she plans to stay there. They asked, "Are you going to leave Turkey now," and she said, "No, this is where God's call is, and we are going to proclaim the gospel in Turkey." We have a German brother and two Turkish brothers. It talks about one of the Turkish Christians whose family came to get his body, but his family is Muslim, and they refused his body to be allowed a Christian burial. So, when they got there, they found the wife of the Turkish Christian who is also a Turkish Christian and she said, "You cannot have his body. He will have a Christian burial." This is a real thing. This is not just a thing that we do tonight. It is real this week in places that we are studying about tonight.

So, what does Peter write to people in that setting? The major theme is the sufficiency of God's grace, which is used in every single chapter. The grace of God is emphasized.

See the key verses in your notes.

The overall structure. There is a call to holy living in the middle of a very difficult world to live out your Christianity.

There are some pretty strong comparisons with Ephesians here. You see some of the parallels in your notes.

You see some of the key words. "Suffering" sixteen different times. Every time Peter talks about Christ, he doesn't talk about how Christ died for us. He talks about how Christ suffered for us. He has shown the identification of Christ with his church.

This book that teaches us how to live out the Christian life in the middle of suffering and persecution. I want to remind you that there are people around the world that read the Bible a lot differently than we do, and our brothers and sisters around the world underline different things than we do in their Bible. This is a book that we need to get into the shoes of those who are hearing it in order to understand the gravity of God's grace in the middle of suffering, and to see suffering. While we don't face persecution in our country like we hear about tonight and we hear about in Turkey, the whole picture for us here is to see suffering as part of a much grander picture. A grander picture that includes the suffering of Christ for the salvation of the world, and a grander picture of our God who, even in our suffering is using that, to make His glory known, the glory of His grace known. That is the message of 1 Peter.

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