

New Testament Foundation 7

Paul's Journey to Rome Part 2

During his time of custody in Rome, Paul wrote letters to the churches. Four of his letters have been preserved in the New Testament and are referred to as the Prison Epistles. This session we studied two: Philemon, a personal letter, and Colossians, a letter to the church that met in his home.

Letter to Philemon - written A.D. 60/61 - Welcome Back Onesimus

As we look at these prison epistles, keep in mind the words of Dr. Luke in Acts 28:30, 31; although Paul was in chains, the gospel was still being preached boldly and without hindrance to all who came to him. One of those who came was a runaway slave named Onesimus. Paul was friends of his master, so wrote this letter of commendation asking Philemon to welcome Onesimus back.

1. Using the first verse of Philemon:
 - In this personal letter how did Paul identify himself?
 - How did he address Philemon?
2. On what basis did Paul say he made his appeal to Philemon? (Philemon 8, 9a)
3. After the introduction and thanksgiving, Paul came to the point of his letter and mentioned Onesimus. What did Paul tell Philemon about his runaway slave? (Philemon 10 - 12)
4. Paul said he would have liked to keep Onesimus with him in Rome. What reason did he give for sending him back? (Philemon 14)
5. For a slave to run away and be caught was punishable by death. How did Paul say he wanted Philemon to receive Onesimus? (Philemon 16, 17)
6. Not wanting anything to stand in the way of reconciliation, Paul offered to pay any outstanding debt that Onesimus owed Philemon. (verse 18) This short letter gives great insight into what Paul was anticipating would happen to him in the near future. According to verse 22, what was Paul expecting?

Letter to the Colossians – A.D. 60/61 - Colossians is about Christ**Background**

7. In addition to writing directly to Philemon, Paul also wrote a letter to the "church that meets in your home." (Philemon 2) In what city was this church? (Col. 1:2a)

8. Using Colossians 4:7-9:
 - Who would carry these two letters from Rome to Philemon and how did Paul describe each person?

 - In addition to carrying these letters, what else did Paul say they would do?

9. In the Colossian letter Paul referred to his apostolic authority and addressed this letter to the believers he called "holy and faithful." (Col. 1:2a) Although he had never visited this church, how did Paul say they were doing spiritually? (Col. 2:5b)

10. Who was the person that brought the Gospel message to them? (Col. 1:7, 8)

This church began during Paul's third missionary journey so at the time of this letter, they were a very young church, only about five years in their faith. Although the church was growing in maturity, the believers lived in a society that practiced *syncretism* (the combining of religious / cult practices). If syncretism were to come into the church it would result in the false belief of "Christ plus." Paul wrote this letter to help these new believers understand faith is in Christ alone; He is sufficient.

Paul the Apostle

11. Paul opened this letter with a beautiful prayer for the Colossians. He asked God to fill them with the knowledge of His will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding, (1:9) that they would live a life worthy of the Lord pleasing Him in every way. Paul prayed that they would bear fruit in every good work and grow in the knowledge of God. He prayed for God's strength so they could endure the hardships of life and prayed for patience. (1:10, 11) What three reasons did he give the Colossians to joyfully give thanks to the Father?

Reason #1 (Col. 1:12) He has qualified us to:

Reason #2 (Col. 1:13a) He has rescued us from:

(Col. 1:13b) He has brought us into:

Reason #3: (Col. 14) In whom (Christ) we have:

Paul continued with a poem of his *Christology* (theology of Christ). In this poem Paul explained Jesus' identity and the nature of His work in the past, present and future.

12. Who is Jesus Christ?

- Col. 1:15a
- Col. 1:15b
- Col. 1:19 & 2:9

13. What is the nature of His work?

- Col. 1:16
- Col. 1:17
- Col. 1:18a
- Col. 1:18b
- Col. 1:20

14. Make a list of words Paul used to describe how God views those who put their faith in Jesus Christ. (Col. 1:22)

15. Paul said that he struggled in prayer for this young church as well as the church in Laodicea. (Col. 2:1) What did Paul say his purpose was in writing this letter? (Col. 2:2, 3)

16. What was his primary concern? (Col. 2:4)

17. Paul warned about being taken captive (by syncretism). How did he describe it? (Col. 2:8)

In Christ, the believer has been set free. Paul said the believer has "died with Christ to the basic principles of this world." (Col. 2:20a) Then he warned them not to submit to its rules. (Col. 2:20b)

Right Living

18. In the final chapters Paul wrote how the believer is to live in Christ. What is the believer to:
- Set one's heart on? (Col. 3:1)
 - Set one's mind on? (Col. 3:2)
19. The believer is to live according to his/her new position in Christ. What did Paul emphasize is not to be a part of the believer's life?
- Col. 3:5
 - Col. 3:8
 - Col. 3:9
20. The believer is being renewed in knowledge and in the image of our Creator. (Col. 3:10) Paul emphasized that in Christ there is no class division among people because Christ is in all. (Col. 3:11) What characteristics of Christ should be reflected in the life of the believer? (Col. 3:12)
21. How is the believer to live in relationship with other believers? (Col. 3:13a)
- How? (Col. 3:13b)

22. What should be the general attitude of the believer? (Col. 3:15, 17)

Paul encouraged the Colossian believers to live together peacefully in their households. The first century Roman household included extended family as well as servants and slaves. Paul did not try to change society but to give instruction to believers on how to live and work within it to reflect their relationship with Christ. Although writing to the first century situation, his words can apply to all believers in every generation.

23. What should the attitude be of the believer toward work? (Col. 3:23)

Paul closed this letter with a reminder to "devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful." (Col. 4:2) In addition to Philemon and Colossians, Paul wrote letters to the churches in Ephesus and Philippi. We begin the next session with Paul's letter to the Ephesians as he continues to write about the believer's position in Christ.