



21 LETTERS FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

OPENING THE
EPISTLES OF THE
NEW TESTAMENT

A. E. Horton

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for the
21st CENTURY

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PLEASE READ THIS

The articles dealing with the various epistles are simple summaries. They have been made as short as possible. The writer has tried to show the subject and the spirit of each letter, but it is not according to the purpose of this book to try to explain everything in all the letters. These summaries will, it is hoped, help the reader to understand the epistles, so that he may then study them for himself, with lasting pleasure.

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INTRODUCTION

The first four books of the New Testament are called Gospels. The word gospel means “good news”. The Gospels contain the good news of the coming of a Saviour, of His life and works among men, of His death for us, and of His resurrection from the dead.

The fifth book of the New Testament is called the Acts of the Apostles. These names of the New Testament books were given to them by men. The words in the books themselves as they were first written are inspired by God, and therefore have no mistakes in them. But the names of the books are not inspired. Probably a better name for Acts would be “The Acts of the Holy Spirit”, or “The Doings of Christ after His resurrection, working through the Holy Spirit”. The book of Acts tells us how the Church began with the coming of the Holy Spirit and how the early believers worked to tell others about Christ’s resurrection from the dead.

The last book of the New Testament is called the Revelation. In some English Bibles it is called “The Revelation of St. John the Divine”. But this name, too, is not right. It should be “The Revelation of Jesus Christ”, as it is in the first verse of the first chapter. The book of Revelation tells us something of the glory which our Lord Jesus Christ now has in heaven and tells us also of things which are still to come. It tells us that the Lord Jesus will someday be revealed to men

on the earth and that He will come in glory to punish His enemies and to set up His kingdom on the earth. It also tells us of the final judgment of the wicked, and of the glories of heaven.

Between the fifth book and the last book of the New Testament, there are twenty-one books, some long and some short. These books are called epistles, that is to say, letters. They are letters which were written to Christians, mostly by the apostles, and most of them by the apostle Paul. These letters were written for various reasons. Some of them, like Romans, were written in order to teach Christians the facts of salvation and life in Christ. Others, like 1 Corinthians, were written in order to warn Christians who were doing wrong and to show them the right way to act. Others, like Colossians, were written to warn the Christians against people who were teaching wrong things. It is important to read each of these letters carefully until you see why each one was written. Then you should read them carefully again, remembering the reason for writing each one. Only in this way is it possible to understand the teaching of these letters.

It is most important for Christians to have a good understanding of these epistles, or letters. They speak of many things which we need to know. They tell us just how we are saved and why. They tell us of the goodness and kindness of our God. They tell us of the glory and greatness of our Lord Jesus Christ. They tell us about the Holy Spirit and the wonderful things He wants to do in our lives. And they warn us about false teachers. This is very important in these days when many people are teaching wrong things. These false teachers get many people to listen to them and to accept what they say, just because there are so few people who know and understand the epistles of the New Testament. False teachers cannot deceive Christians who study the epistles carefully. That is the reason why this book has been written, to help you understand what the writers of the letters of the New Testament wanted to say.

You should not read this book by itself. Begin by reading each epistle before you read its description here. If possible, read the epistle

through several times. Then read about it in this book, looking at the places to which it refers. Then read the epistle again and see if you understand it better. We would like to see Christians everywhere finding for themselves the wonderful spiritual riches which are to be found in these letters of the New Testament.

Whether you are doing these lessons from a Course Book or directly from the website, you can send in your answers to us using the Exam Form on the website menu.

ROMANS

The letter to the Romans was written by the apostle Paul, probably while he was in Greece, as we read in Acts 20:2,3. We know that, at that time, he went with money from the believers of Greece and Macedonia, to take it to the believers in the land of the Jews. Those believers were poor and in need. See Acts 24:17 and also 2 Corinthians chapters 8 and 9. You find him mentioning this in Romans 15:25,26. We see there that he was just about to start on his journey to Jerusalem with the gifts for the believers there.

At that time there was a church, or assembly, of Christians in Rome. But Paul had not yet seen them. We do not know how they first heard the gospel, but Paul had not yet preached in Rome. We know this because in Romans 1:13 he told them how he had often wanted to visit them but had not been able. He said he wanted to have some fruit among them, just as he had among other Gentiles. He meant that he wanted to do some work among them, teaching them so that they would be helped by him. In Acts 19:21 also, he spoke of going to Jerusalem, and after that of going to see Rome. So it is clear that he had not yet been there.

However, he had heard of the Roman Christians, of their good life and service for the Lord, and he had prayed much for them, 1:8,9. Since he had not yet been able to visit them, he wrote this letter to teach

them about the gospel which God had given him to preach among the nations. Some of the Christians in Rome had been born Jews. So this letter shows how the gospel agrees with God's promises in the Old Testament.

The subject of Romans is Justification, or, How men are made righteous in the sight of God. Since God is righteous, and since men are born sinners, how is it possible for any man to be righteous in God's sight so that God can accept and bless him? It is very important for every Christian to know this letter thoroughly.

We may outline Romans like this:

1. Introduction, 1:1-17
 - a. The writer, 1:1-6
 - b. The people to whom he wrote, 1:7
 - c. His longing for them, 1:8-15
 - d. The subject of which he was going to write, 1:16,17
2. Why people need righteousness, 1:18 - 3:20
 - a. People have gone astray, 1:18-32
 - b. All people are guilty before God, 2:1 - 3:20
No one can be justified by condemning others,
2:1-10
Jews are as guilty as Gentiles, 2:11 - 3:20
3. How people are given righteousness, 3:21 - 4:25
 - a. The way in which it is given, 3:21-31
 - b. How it was given to Abraham, 4:1-25
4. The things which come with this righteousness, 5:1 - 8:39
 - a. Satisfaction, 5:1-11
 - b. God's kindness shown to be greater than our sin, 5:12-21
 - c. Holiness, 6:1- 8:17
 - d. Glory, 8:18-30
 - e. Safety or security, 8:31-39
5. The Jews rejected this righteousness, chapters 9 to 11
 - a. The failure of the Jews, 9:1-33
 - b. God's righteousness is through Christ, 10:1-21

- c. God's purpose of blessing, 11:1-36
- 6. How people should act who have this righteousness, 12:1 - 15:13
- 7. Conclusion, 15:14 - 16:25

Introduction, 1:1-17

In verses 16 and 17 of the introduction, Paul explained what he had in mind to write about. God has revealed a righteousness which He gives to men who believe in Christ. That righteousness makes it possible for Him to bless them. Now we should note carefully what we shall see also later. When God speaks in this book of giving people righteousness, it does not mean that God gives sinful people the power to live good lives, and then later on saves them because they do good things. It means that God gives men righteousness in His sight, even though they themselves have not done right. He gives them a righteous standing before Him, as we say. He looks upon them and blesses them just as if they had never sinned at all. That is what is meant by justification. God blots out the sins of believers and forgets them. He will never remember them any more. See 4:6-8, where there is a good explanation of what justification is. Of course, God does give Christians the power to do right too, but this comes after He has first given them salvation as a free gift.

Why people need righteousness, 1:18 - 3:20

From 1:18 to 3:20, we see why people need to have righteousness given to them as a free gift. It is because people are not righteous in themselves. They are evil, and everything they do is evil. No man can win God's salvation by doing righteous things. That is what Paul taught in this part of his letter.

In 1:18-32, he showed that men have gone astray. Once, their ancestors knew God, 1:21, but they became proud and began to worship idols and images and forgot what God was like, 1:21-23. The result was bad behavior, for when men forget God, sin increases among

them, 1:24-32.

All men are sinners, and no man can justify himself (make himself righteous in God's sight) by talking about the sins of others, 2:1-10. This is a good thing to remember. There are many people who seem to think that God will forgive their sins if they talk about other people's sins! The Jews thought that they would not be considered sinners because God had given them the Law, but even they were guilty before God, 2:11 - 3:20. It is not just having or hearing God's Law which makes men righteous, but obeying it. And since no one has obeyed it, not even the Jews who had it, no one is righteous, and no one can save himself. Read carefully 3:9-20, and see how all men are condemned before God. It is necessary for every man to understand how evil he is in God's sight so that he can understand the wonderful kindness of God in giving men salvation as a free gift.

How people are given righteousness, 3:21 - 4:25

We did not have any righteousness through our own doings, but God gives it to us as a free gift when we trust in Christ, 3:21-24. Since all have sinned and failed, all must be justified by God in this way. This is possible through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. God sent Him to be the One to bring God and men together. He died for sinners, shedding His blood to pay for their sins. And so, when we trust in the Lord Jesus, God blots out our sins and then says to us, "You are now righteous in My sight." So He can save us and bless us. This is not the result of our own works in keeping God's Law. It is a blessing which God gives to all who believe. Just as all men, whether Jew or Gentile, are sinners, so all men, both Jew and Gentile, are offered this gift of righteousness through Christ. Paul explained this in 3:27-30.

In Chapter 4 he shows how Abraham was justified, or declared righteous, in this way, not as a result of any good works which he did, but just because he trusted in God's promise to him. He was justified in this way while he was still uncircumcised, that is, while he was still like a Gentile. He is an example for all of us who believe in Christ, 4:25.

The things which come with this righteousness,

5:1 - 8:39

Beginning with 5:1 we see some of the things which come to us when we are justified, or declared righteous, by God.

First, there is satisfaction, 5:1-11. We have peace with God. We are no longer His enemies, but His children, and He is our Father. We look forward to sharing His glory in heaven, 5:2. We can rejoice even in hard things, knowing that these are sent to us to teach us and to help us. We have no fear for the future, trusting in His love for us. We have seen His love in the death of His Son for us, 5:5-10. And we rejoice in knowing God Himself through Christ, 5:11.

God's kindness to us has been shown to be greater than all our sin, 5:12-21. God's kindness has undone all that sin did to us. And it has done a great deal more for us. God has saved us in spite of our sins. Where sin was great, there God's kindness has been seen to be greater, 5:20.

Now some people might say, "Well, since God's grace is great where sin is great, we will just go on sinning, and that will make God's grace even greater." Some people say that, if we are really justified by faith alone, it does not make any difference how we act afterward. This is wrong, as Paul shows in 6:1 to 8:17.

In chapter 6 Paul shows that, when one trusts in Christ and is baptized, he accepts Christ's death as his own death. It is as if he died when Christ died, and rose again when Christ rose. Therefore, the believer should act like one who has died to sin and who now lives for God, just as Christ once died for our sin but now lives to do God's will in other ways, 6:1-14. Then, too, to believe in Christ is an act of submission or obedience to Christ, 6:15-17. That act makes one a servant of Christ. Therefore, we should do righteous, or good, deeds, not in order to be saved, but just because we have yielded to Christ and have been saved.

In chapter 7 Paul shows that God works through the Law to bring a person under conviction of sin, and how that person then struggles to be free from sin, and fails until he trusts in Christ. In 8:1-17 he shows that those who have been born of God and have His Holy Spirit have been made free, and that they will show this by doing God's will. Any man who lives in sin and does bad things shows that he does not know God at all. God not only justifies those who trust in Christ, but He gives them a new heart, and thus they will now want to do His will.

There is a time coming when God's glory will be seen. He will deliver all the creation from its slavery to death and corruption, and us too. Meanwhile, the Holy Spirit is helping us in all our weaknesses. Though we are still in this world, we know that God sees us as if we were already with Him in heaven. All of this is in 8:18-30.

Finally, we are absolutely secure. God is for us, and no one can do us any harm at all. God has justified us, and no one can ever again make us to be guilty before Him. No one can condemn us. Read 8:31-39 and see if it does not make you feel like singing!

The Jews rejected this righteousness

chapters 9 - 11

Chapters 9 to 11 show that most of the Jews rejected the righteousness which God gives men in Christ, though some did accept it.

In chapter 9 Paul writes of the failure of the Jews. He felt very sad when he thought how the Jews, to whom the Word of God first came, did not believe it, 9:1-5. Not all of them rejected it, for God found some people even among the Jews, 9:6-29. Though most of the Jews had gone aside, God had chosen some people, both Jews and Gentiles, to be His own, and these had obeyed the gospel. The Jewish people have failed because they tried to make themselves righteous by their own works, 9:30-33.

But God's righteousness is in Christ, 10:1-21. He who has Christ is made righteous before God by faith in Him, apart from works, 10:1-13. People must hear the gospel in order to believe it, 10:14,15. But

the Jews had heard it, and had not obeyed it, 10:16-21.

God has not entirely rejected the Jews, as some people think. He has kept some of them for Himself and has saved these through faith in Christ, not by any works of theirs. But the rest of the Jews are like people who cannot see, 11:1-10. The Jews' rejecting Christ has resulted in the blessing going to the Gentiles. The Gentiles should not despise the Jews because of this but should be careful to do God's will by trusting in Christ, 11:11-24. God still wants to bless the Jews. He will do it when Christ returns to save the Jewish nation. God cannot break His promises which He made to the forefathers of the Jews, 11:25-29. And He wants to bless the Jews now if they will repent and turn to Christ. He has called them disobedient in order that they may obey the gospel and find mercy, 11:30-32. Paul closes this part with a song of praise to God for the marvellous wisdom shown in His ways of working among men, 11:33-36.

How people should act who have this righteousness,

12:1 - 15:13

Chapter 12 verse 1 to chapter 15 verse 13 shows how we should act since God has thus justified us in Christ.

First, we should yield ourselves wholly to the God who has saved us, to do His will.

We should no longer be like the people of the world who do not yet know Him, 12:1,2.

We should be active in serving Him, 12:3-8.

We should love one another, 12:9-16.

We should be kind to all men, even when men are not kind to us, 12:17-21.

We should obey governments, 13:1-7.

We should show love to all men, not harming any man, and not owing anything to others, 13:8-10.

And we should do all this remembering that our time here on earth is short, 13:11-14.

Chapter 14 tells us how we should act when a fellow-believer does not yet know all he should know about Christ. We should be patient and understanding and kind with him, and seek to help him. This we find also in the first part of chapter 15.

Conclusion, 15:14 - 16:25

Paul then closes his letter, speaking of his work, 15:14-21, and of how he hopes soon to visit them, 15:22-29. He also asked for their prayers as he went to Jerusalem, 15:30-33. Chapter 16 is taken up mainly with greetings. In this chapter he commended to them a sister whose name was Phoebe. Possibly she was the one who was going to Rome and who carried this letter with her.

LETTERS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

TEST 1 Romans

Choose the correct answer.

1. Paul probably wrote the letter to the Romans while he was in
 - a. Jerusalem.
 - b. Samaria.
 - c. Greece.
2. The main subject of Romans is
 - a. condemnation.
 - b. justification.
 - c. sanctification.
3. God has revealed a righteousness which He gives to men who
 - a. do good works.
 - b. give a lot of money.
 - c. believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.
4. When men forget God
 - a. sin increases among them.
 - b. they become wise.
 - c. they find true peace.
5. Abraham is an example for all who
 - a. are Jewish.
 - b. are religious.
 - c. believe in Christ.

Enter TRUE or FALSE after each statement.

6. God's mercy is greater than all our sin.
7. The Christian should do good deeds in order to be saved.
8. The Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness.
9. Every Jew has rejected the Gospel.
10. All Christians should be active in serving God.

WHAT DO YOU SAY?

Are you righteous in the sight of God? If so, how does it affect your life?

1 CORINTHIANS

The church of believers in the city of Corinth was started by Paul on his second missionary journey. See Acts 18. He wrote this letter to them while he was in Ephesus on his third missionary journey. See 16:8 and Acts 19.

Some people from the household of a person named Chloe, from Corinth had visited Paul in Ephesus. They told him of things which had been happening in Corinth, and Paul felt very concerned. See 1:11. Then, too, the believers in Corinth had sent a letter to him, asking him some questions. See 7:1. Possibly the letter asking him questions was brought by those people who came to him from Chloe's house. Paul wrote to the Christians in Corinth to help them where they were wrong, and to answer their questions. This letter is important, for it shows us how we should behave, and how we should act when we come together.

An easy way to think of this letter is to remember how it came to be written. We can then divide it into two main parts, like this:

1. About reports from Corinth, chapters 1-6
 2. About questions from Corinth, chapters 7-15
- Chapter 16 is the conclusion of the letter.

The first part of this letter, on reports from Corinth, can be outlined

like this:

1. Introduction, 1:1-9
2. Against divisions among believers, 1:10 - 4:21
 - a. Their Master is One, 1:10-16
 - b. The Message preached to them, 1:17 - 2:16
 - c. The messengers who preached to them, 3:1 - 4:21
3. The need for discipline among believers, 5:1 - 6:20
 - a. Sin in the church, 5:1-13
 - b. Judging of believers, 6:1-8
 - c. Our attitude toward impurity, 6:9-20

We can outline the second part of the letter according to the questions which the Christians in Corinth asked Paul. These questions are:

1. About marriage, chapter 7
2. About eating things offered to idols, 8:1 - 11:1
 - a. We should deny ourselves for the sake of others, 8:1-13
 - b. We should deny ourselves for the gospel's sake, 9:1-23
 - c. We should be careful not to put ourselves into danger, 10:1-22
 - d. How we should act, 10:23 - 11:1
3. About worship and the Lord's Supper, 11:2-34
4. About spiritual gifts, chapters 12 to 14
 - a. How the gifts are given, 12:1-31
 - b. How the gifts should be used, 13:1-13
 - c. How we should work for each other, 14:1-40
5. About the resurrection, chapter 15
 - a. How Christ rose, 15:1-28
 - b. How we shall rise, 15:29-58
6. Conclusion, chapter 16

Introduction, 1:1-9

In his introduction, you will notice that Paul put the name of Sosthenes with his own. Sosthenes was with Paul when he wrote, and he agreed with all Paul said. But Paul is the writer of the letter. You will find

that Paul often included the names of others in this way. See 2 Corinthians 1:1; 1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:1; Philemon 1.

Paul felt concerned because he had been told that the Christians in Corinth were acting as if they were not all one in Christ. They were thinking of themselves as if they were separate groups, following different teachers. This was very serious. In his introduction, he addressed his letter not only to the believers in Corinth but to all believers everywhere, 1:2. And in 1:4-9 he thanked God for the fact that they had all been called into one fellowship, fellowship with Christ, and had been given gifts by God to help them in that fellowship. All of this introduction is to prepare them for what he wants to say in his letter. It is like a summary of the whole letter. This very often happens in the introductions to New Testament epistles. It is an interesting thing to notice and to study.

Against divisions among believers, 1:10 - 4:21

The Corinthians were looking at their various teachers as if they were teaching different ideas. Some believers thought that they liked best what Paul taught. Some thought they liked best what Cephas (Peter) taught, and so on.

So Paul first reminded them that their Master is One. His Name alone had been given to them, and so they should be one, 1:10. They were Christians, not Paulists nor Apollosites nor Peterites. Christ alone had been crucified for them, 1:13, and He was the One whom they had confessed when they were baptized, 1:13-16. So what a foolish thing it was for them to divide themselves in that way! And what a foolish thing it is for us to forget that we who trust in Christ for salvation are all one in Him!

They were acting like that because of pride. They thought that they were being wise to have these different ideas. So Paul next showed them that the message of the gospel condemns man's wisdom, 1:17 - 2:5. Men of the world say that the gospel is foolishness. But that shows their own foolishness, because when people believe, God saves them through the message which men say is foolish, 1:17-25. Most of those

whom God saves are people whom the world calls foolish, weak, and worthless. This again shows how foolish the people of the world are, who think themselves to be so wise, 1:26-29. And when men are saved, they have nothing to boast about, for it is God who has done it all, 1:30,31. Christ alone is our wisdom.

When Paul went to Corinth the first time, he did not rely on human wisdom in his preaching, but on God's power. He did not want men just to be convinced in their minds. He wanted them to be converted by God in their hearts, 2:1-5.

But the gospel is not foolish. It tells of God's wisdom. But God's wisdom is a wisdom which the people of the world cannot know through human wisdom. It is a wisdom which is made known only by God's Spirit, to those who are spiritual men, that is, to people who have been born again and who are controlled by the Holy Spirit. All of this is in 2:6-16.

He then showed them that the messengers who preached the gospel to them were not following different ideas. When the believers were dividing themselves over these men, they were carnal, and not spiritual. And so they were making it impossible for themselves to understand the true wisdom, 3:1-4. The preachers of God's Word all do God's work, and each one will someday have his work tried by God, 3:5-17. They are all servants of God and of His people, and each one must be careful what he says and how he works, so as to please Him. They cannot say just what they like, but must say what God wants them to. Paul wrote about this in chapter 4, pointing to himself as an example of devotion to the Lord. He wanted them to learn from him and Apollos that all who work for God are simply His servants, 4:14-16. It is good if we also are examples to others, but we must be very sure our example is a good one before we point to ourselves as Paul did! And we must do it without pride and only to help others.

The need for discipline among believers, 5:1 - 6:20

The second thing the apostle had heard about the Corinthians was

that they were allowing sin among them. A man had taken his father's wife (probably his step-mother), and the believers had not done anything about it! It is a very serious thing when Christians allow people living in open sin to remain in church-fellowship. So he rebuked them in chapters 5 and 6 and told them to put that man away from among them, 5:3-5. He also showed them that they should be free from uncleanness, 5:6-8, and that they should not even eat with any one who calls himself a Christian and lives an immoral life, 5:9-13. All of this teaching is for us today too.

In chapter 6 he showed them how believers should deal with the sins of their fellow-believers. He showed them that they should not go to law with one another, but that they should rather suffer wrong, 6:1-7. But they were doing wrong, which was very bad, seeing that the Lord had saved them, 6:8-11. And in 6:12-20 he showed them that immorality is absolutely out of place for the believer. God has bought us; we belong to Him, and that includes our bodies as well as our souls. The Spirit of God dwells in believers, and so they should keep their bodies holy.

Now Paul begins to answer their questions.

About marriage, chapter 7

The first one is about marriage. Since the Lord may come at any time, should a man marry at all, or should he live for the Lord alone? Should a believer marry an unsaved person? Paul answered by showing them that, while it may indeed be good for a person to live unmarried so as to be able to serve the Lord better, it is not the Lord's will for every one to do so. There is no law against a believer being married, and for most of them it is better because of temptations to sin. Marriage should be broken only by death. Believers should marry only believers. When a person married to an unbeliever is saved, he should not break the marriage. He might be the means of leading the other to the Lord. If a Christian ever does leave the one to whom he is married, he should stay unmarried or else go back to the one he left. This chap-

ter has some things which are very difficult to understand, but it has very helpful teaching for us, too.

About things offered to idols, 8:1 - 11:1

The second question was about food offered to idols. Some thought it was all right to eat it because the idol was really nothing anyway and so could not affect the food, 8:4. Others thought that it would be sin to eat it. The answer to their question takes up chapters 8, 9, and 10.

Paul showed them first that they should think of others. They might think that it was not wrong to eat such food, but perhaps their brethren did not agree with them. They should not eat it if their eating it might lead another to do what he thought to be wrong. If a man does anything which he thinks is wrong, he would be sinning. So if I am not careful what I do, someone may do a thing which he thinks to be wrong, just because he saw me do it. And so I would be leading him to sin, 8:5-13.

In chapter 9, Paul shows how he himself did not do everything he had a right to do. He denied himself for the sake of the testimony. He did not have a wife, as he could have done, and as the other apostles did, including Peter, 9:5. This was so he could be more free to travel with the gospel. He did not live from the gifts of the Christians as he had a right to do, but worked for his living, 9:6-15. He denied himself so that no one would say that he preached the gospel for pay. He wanted people to know that the gospel was true and not to think that it was just a means of getting a living. He did everything he could to help the gospel go ahead and to save men, 9:19-23. He wanted them to imitate him, and not to eat things offered to idols or to do anything else which could hinder the gospel. This is good for us also to remember. In verses 23 to 27 he reminded them that they were looking forward to receiving a reward for their service when the Lord comes. So they should act carefully and deny themselves now so as to win the reward which the Lord wants to give them then.

In chapter 10, he goes further and warns them of the danger to

themselves if they eat things offered to idols.. They may make themselves become like the Israelites, who became worshippers of idols, and displeased the Lord, and so were punished, 10:1-13. The Corinthians thought that they knew enough to eat those things. But Paul said that they would really be putting themselves into danger, v.12. If a Christian puts himself into danger, he cannot expect the Lord to keep him. Paul also showed them that it is very wrong to sit at the Lord's table and then to eat things offered to idols. Those things are not really given to the idols, but to demons. It is the demons of Satan who are actually behind idol-worship, 10:14-22. In a case one does not know whether meat has been offered to idols or not, he may eat it just as meat, without asking any questions, 10:25-27. But if he is told that it has been offered to idols, he should not eat it, so as not to hinder any one from coming to the Lord and so as not to make a brother do wrong, 10:28-32.

About worship and the Lord's Supper, 11:2-34

The third question was about gathering for worship. The Christians told Paul how they remembered him in all things and that they tried to keep his instructions to them. But, evidently, some were saying that it was not necessary for a woman to cover her head when the Christians came together, and they wanted to know about it. He told them that women should have their heads covered to show that they are under the authority of their men. This does not mean that women are to be like the slaves of their men. It simply means that the man is the head of the family, just as Christ is the Head of the Church, 11:2-16.

Then Paul spoke about the Lord's sSupper, 11:17-34. They were not taking it in an orderly way, and he rebuked them, 11:17-22. Then he told them that it was revealed to him by the Lord Jesus Himself, and that it is like a picture in which we show the death of the Lord Jesus until He comes again, 11:23-26. It is a very holy thing, and carelessness can result in judgment, 11:27-32. They should, therefore, be careful when they take the Lord's Supper. They should first examine their

hearts before the Lord, and then be reverent, so that they would not bring judgment on themselves by taking the Lord's Supper in a wrong way. It is not a thing to be done lightly.

About spiritual gifts, chapters 12 -14

The fourth question was about spiritual gifts, that is, about the abilities which the Holy Spirit gives to believers so that they may help each other. Some seemed to think that speaking with tongues was the most important gift. Paul wrote to show them that it is the least important gift. He showed them that the most important gift is the one which can give most help to the Lord's people. This subject takes up chapters 12, 13, and 14.

In chapter 12, he showed them how the gifts have been given. Each member of the body of Christ has some gift given to him by God for the help of others. All do not have the same work to do. Each one has his own work, just as each part of the human body has its own work to do. But all are given by one God, for serving one Lord. All are necessary, and no one should look down on the work which God has given someone else to do. Neither should one look down on the work which God has given him to do. Each one should find out what God wants him to do and should be happy and faithful in doing what God has fitted him to do in the Church.

In chapter 13, Paul showed with what attitude the gifts should be used. We should all serve one another in love. Love is unselfish service of others. No matter what our work may be, we should do it to serve others, not ourselves. Love is absolutely necessary, 13:1-3. If we do not have it in our work, we are good for nothing. He showed in verses 4 to 7 how love behaves. We should study these verses carefully and examine ourselves by them. In verses 8 to 13, he showed that love is greater than all things, since it will last forever, after other gifts have gone. Even now, it is the greatest thing in our life and service.

In chapter 14, Paul showed how we should work for each other. Whether we are teachers, evangelists, pastors (shepherds), or whatever we may be, the purpose of all we do should be to help others. There

Paul shows that prophecy (speaking under God's inspiration) was the best gift. It was the one most helpful to other believers. In the New Testament, prophecy is combined with teaching. We do not have prophets today, but we do have teachers to teach the Word of God. Those who can teach and help others in Christ have the most important work in the Church today. Whatever we do, we should always ask ourselves, "How will what we are doing help our fellow-believers to know Christ better and to walk with Him?" So the first thought is that we should seek to help our fellow-Christians, 14:1-19. The second one is that we should be careful to be a good testimony to unbelievers, 14:20-25. A noisy and irreverent meeting will not help them at all and may even turn them away from Christ. The final thought is that we should be careful that our meetings do not show disorder or confusion, 14:26-40. Disorder is not of God, and it will not help anyone.

About the resurrection, chapter 15

This was probably another question which the believers had asked Paul. Some people were saying that the dead would not rise again, 15:12. Paul showed them how Christ rose from the dead, that His resurrection was mentioned to them in the gospel, and that He had been seen alive by many witnesses, 15:1-11. If Christ rose from the dead, then it was clear that the dead do rise again, 15:12. And if the dead do not rise, then Christ could not have risen, 15:13. But that would mean that the gospel was false and that we had believed an empty story, 15:14. It would mean that the apostle had preached what was false, 15:15, that believers were still unsaved, 15:17, and that those believers who had died had just perished, 15:18. It would mean that we have no hope and that we are just suffering loss in trusting Christ and forsaking the world, 15:19.

However, Christ has risen from the dead. That shows that the dead do rise again, 15:20. Men die because of Adam's sin, but they will be made alive again because of Christ's death and resurrection, 15:21,22. Christ rose first, then Christians will rise at His coming, and at last He

will do away with death altogether, 15:23-28. If the dead did not rise again, we might just as well stop trying to live for Christ. False teachings like this can only lead to bad living, 15:29-34.

In verses 35 to 54, Paul showed how the saved dead will rise again. We now have bodies like Adam's body, bodies fitted for life in this world, bodies which can die and become corrupt. But we shall rise again with bodies like that of Christ, bodies fitted for life in heaven, bodies which can never die nor become corrupt. We cannot enter heaven with these bodies of flesh and blood, which can become corrupt. So we must have incorruptible bodies, and God will give them to us when Christ comes. That will be the time of victory, 15:55-57. And since we know that there is such a resurrection before us, we should be constantly serving the Lord now. We know that then we shall reap the reward of our service here. We know that death does not end everything for us, 15:58.

Conclusion, chapter 16

Chapter 16 is the conclusion of the letter. In it, Paul told the Christians about taking up a collection for the believers in Jerusalem, 16:1-4. See Acts 24:17. He also spoke about visiting them soon, 16:5-9. He told them what to do about Timothy, who would be seeing them before he would, 16:10,11. He exhorted them to stand firm, 16:13, and to serve one another in love, 16:14. He closed with other exhortations, 16:15-18, and with greetings, 16:19-24.

Note 16:21-24. Most of Paul's letters were written down by others as he spoke the words. See Romans 16:22. This was possibly because of Paul's poor eyesight. See Galatians 4:15. But in some of his letters, Paul himself wrote the final words, as he does here. See also Galatians 6:11-18; Colossians 4:18; 2 Thessalonians 3:17.

TEST 2 1 Corinthians

Choose the correct answer.

1. When Paul heard what was happening in Corinth he was
 - a. concerned.
 - b. happy.
 - c. encouraged.
2. Men of the world say that the Gospel is
 - a. holy.
 - b. foolish.
 - c. wise.
3. When Paul preached in Corinth he relied on
 - a. human wisdom.
 - b. eloquence.
 - c. God's power.
4. When the believers in Corinth divided themselves over the messengers of the Gospel they were
 - a. carnal.
 - b. loyal.
 - c. spiritual.
5. Paul pointed to himself as an example of
 - a. wisdom.
 - b. greatness.
 - c. devotion to the Lord.

Enter TRUE or FALSE after each statement.

6. The believers in Corinth did not permit open sin in the church fellowship.
7. A believer should only marry another believer.
8. As an apostle Paul never worked for a living.
9. Spiritual gifts and natural abilities are the same thing.
10. When Christ comes God will give incorruptible bodies to the believers.

WHAT DO YOU SAY?

1 Corinthians has been called 'a treasure trove of practical Christian teaching'.
What has been of particular help to you?

2 CORINTHIANS

Paul was still in Ephesus when he wrote this second letter to the Christians in Corinth. He spent two years in Ephesus. See Acts P19:10. Titus had come to Paul from Corinth, 7:6. He told Paul that most of the Corinthians had obeyed his letter, 7:15, but that some were opposing him. Some of these were Jewish Christians, 11:22, who boasted that they also were apostles, even more than Paul. There were some also who did not like Paul's condemnation of immorality, and would not repent, 12:21.

Paul's enemies were saying many things against him. They said he did not keep his promises. He had said that he would come and visit them, but he had not, 1:17. They said that he praised himself, 3:1. They said that he was beside himself, that is, that he was mad, 5:13. They said that he was bold in writing to them when he was away, but that he was weak and of no account when he was with them. They said that he would not have acted like that if he had really been an apostle, 10:1. They talked about his weak body, 10:10. They said that he did not take money from the Corinthian Christians for his living, and that this showed that he knew he was not really an apostle, 11:7; 12:13. They said that he had just pretended to be an apostle and had caught them by deceit, 12:16.

So Paul wrote this letter to defend his ministry. He knew that the men who spoke like that were deceivers. He knew that they just wanted the believers to follow them and to make much of them. He knew that

he had the Word of God, and so he wanted to save the believers from wrong teaching. It is good for us to remember that anyone who talks much against the Lord's servants is not to be trusted.

Paul's letter does not show an unkind spirit like his enemies did. He wrote in love, 1:23; 2:4,13, with a desire to serve other Christians, 1:24; 4:5, in all sincerity and honesty, 1:12; 2:17; 5:9,11; 7:2; 12:19, and seeking God's glory above all, 1:11; 4:15; 9:11. In his letter, he speaks much of how he had suffered for the Lord, 1:3-11; 4:7-15; 6:4-10; 11:23-33; 12:7-10.

This letter is not as easy as some to divide into parts, but we will outline it like this:

1. The opening greeting, 1:1,2
2. The ministry [that is, service], 1:3 - 7:16
 - a. Suffering, 1:3-11
 - b. Sincere, 1:12 - 2:17
 - c. Spiritual, 3:1-18
 - d. Steadfast, 4:1 - 6:10
 - e. Sanctifying (making holy), 6:11 - 7:3
 - f. Solaced (comforted), 7:4-16
3. The collection for believers in need, chapters 8, 9
 - a. Examples of giving, 8:1-9
 - b. How they should give, 8:10-24
 - c. Their example to others, 9:1-5
 - d. Result of giving, 9:6-15
4. Their boasting and his, 10:1 - 12:21
 - a. Their falsehoods answered, 10:1 - 11:15
 - b. His own apostleship proved, 11:16 - 12:21
5. Warning, 13:1-10
6. Conclusion, 13:11-14

After greeting the Christians in 1:1,2, Paul went on to speak of his service.

The ministry, 1:3 - 7:16

First, He thanked God for His comfort. Paul had suffered much for Christ. But God had comforted him in all his sufferings. God's purpose was that Paul might be able to comfort other suffering Christians in the same way in which God comforted or encouraged him, 1:3-7. While in Asia (where Ephesus was), he had seen so much trouble that he thought he could not live through it. But God had sent that trouble upon him so that he might learn to trust in God and not in himself. Paul wanted the Corinthians to pray for him, and so to help him to keep trusting in God and to experience His deliverance, 1:8-11. It is good to remember that, when hard things come on us, God allows them to come so that we may learn to trust in Him and to know His comfort.

From 1:12 to 2:17, Paul spoke of his sincerity. He had acted in all honesty toward the Corinthians, 1:12-14. In his promise to come to them, he had not spoken with two minds, just as in preaching to them he had not given them an uncertain message, 1:15-22. He always preached about Christ, who makes all of God's promises to be sure to His people. His own promise to them had been like that. The real reason why he had not gone to see them was that he was afraid that they were not yet ready for his visit. He was afraid that they were not yet behaving as they should and that he might have to punish them. This he did not want to do, 1:23 - 2:4. The apostles had authority from the Lord to punish wrong-doers in a way that individuals do not have today. Most of the Corinthians had obeyed Paul's word and had punished the wrong-doer among them. Now that he was repentant, they should forgive him and not continue to treat him as a wrong-doer, 2:5-11. When a Christian does wrong and is disciplined by his fellows, it is only in order that he might repent. When he does repent, he should be forgiven immediately and received as a brother. Though Paul had not gone to them, he was so anxious about them that he could hardly rest, 2:12,13. But, in it all, God was using him to make Christ known in every place. For Paul did not handle the Word of God in a wrong way, as some of his enemies in Corinth were doing, but always spoke in sincerity in the sight of God, 2:14-17.

His service was a spiritual service, 3:1-18. It was the service of the new covenant, which is in the power of the Holy Spirit. It was not the service of the old covenant, which was powerless to save. So it was much better than the old service. The power of this new service was seen in the Corinthians, for they had been converted by the Spirit under his work, 3:1-3. Their being Christians was like a letter which proved the reality of his apostleship, just as the tablets of stone which Moses brought down from Sinai showed that he had been speaking with God.

Paul had confidence in serving God because God gave him the ability. He did not have any confidence in himself, 3:4-6. His service of the new covenant was much more glorious than that of the old. The old covenant, which was that of the Law written on stones (see Exodus 24:12; 31:18; 32:15,16), was a service of death. It brought condemnation, and it was only a temporary thing, 3:7-11. The Law told men to do right, but as men could not do it, the Law could only condemn them. God had something better in mind. He intended to save men by grace, through faith in Christ. That was the service of the Spirit which Paul had, to tell the good news of this salvation. This service gave men righteousness in God's sight, as we saw also in Romans. It was a lasting service, and therefore it was much more glorious than the old. The shining of Moses' face when he came down from the mountain soon passed away, Exodus 34:29-35. That was like a picture of the Law passing away, to be replaced by the good news of Christ. This service of the gospel remained.

Now since he had such a glorious service, Paul was bold in preaching. He preached plainly, without shame. He was proud of the glad message. The Jews could not see the glory of that message. It was just as if the veil which Moses had put on to hide the glory of his face were now on their hearts, so that they were blind. They could not see that the glory of the Law had now passed away. But if they would only turn to the Lord, the veil would be taken away from their hearts, and they would be able to see, 3:12-16. We who can see the glory of the Lord in the gospel are being made like Him from day to day, so that others may see His glory in us, 3:17,18.

In view of the kind of service he had received, Paul was not moved from doing right. And he was not moved by the things which he had to suffer, 4:1 - 6:10. He was consistent in all he did, 4:1-6. He always acted in a right way. And if people could not see the glory of the gospel which he preached, it was not because of any fault on his part, 4:1,2. It was only because Satan had put a veil over their minds, so that they might not be able to see, 4:3,4. Paul did not preach about himself, like some of his enemies. He talked about Christ, and he was like a slave of his fellow-believers, so as to bring glory to Christ, 4:5,6.

He had this wonderful service in a weak human body and had to suffer many things. But the suffering was only to bring him to the end of himself, that is, to the place where he would no longer trust in himself, so that the beauty of Christ might be seen in his life. And so he stood fast, not moved by his sufferings. He did not make much of the things which he could see, which will soon pass away, but looked for the unseen future things, which will last forever, 4:7-18. He knew that though death might come to him now, God had an eternal home for him with the Lord. And so he tried always to please the Lord. He knew that some day he would have to give an account to Him of all his work, 5:1-10. He lived for God alone, since he judged that Christ had died for him in order that he might not live any longer for himself, but for Him. The same should be true of all who belong to Christ. God had given Paul the service of bringing men to Himself, and Paul gave himself to that service, 5:11-21. In all his sufferings, he tried to behave in such a way as to convince men of the reality of his service for God, 6:1-10.

Paul loved the Corinthians, and wanted them to love him, 6:11-13. And he pleaded with them to be holy; to have no fellowship with evil, or with evil men, 6:14 - 7:3.

Though he wrote thus to them, he had been comforted and rejoiced at the obedience and love to him shown by the Corinthian Christians, 7:4-7. He had wondered if his other letter had been too stern in places. But now he was glad that it made them repent of their wrong-doing, 7:8-12. He rejoiced even more when he saw how Titus had rejoiced to

see their obedience, 7:13-16.

The collection for believers in need, chapters 8 and 9

In chapters 8 and 9, Paul mentioned the offering to be taken up for poor Christians. He wanted the Corinthian Christians to have it ready when he came.

First, he gave them some examples of giving, 8:1-9. The churches of Macedonia had already given much, almost more than they were able, 8:1-8. He wanted the Corinthians to imitate them. And there was another Example also, that of Christ. He was rich, but He made Himself poor in order to help us. He gave Himself. We ought to help our brethren like that, 8:9.

The Corinthians had begun to collect the money, but he wanted them to go on and complete the offering, 8:10,11. They could now help others, and then later on, if they are in need, it will be their turn to be helped, 8:13-15. So Paul sent some of the brethren to them to help them in getting their offering together, 8:16-24.

Paul had also spoken of them as an example to others, 9:1-5. He had boasted to the churches of Macedonia about those in Achaia (where Corinth was). Now he wanted to make sure that they would not fail in this offering. If they did, both he and they might be ashamed when he came to them with Christians from Macedonia.

God loves those who give liberally, and He will see that they have plenty, both for their own needs and so that they may give even more, 9:6-11. The service of giving brings glory to God and makes those who receive the gift love the givers, 9:12-14. We can see how it works when we think what God has given for us and how we now love Him, 9:15.

Their boasting and Paul's, 10:1 - 12:21

In chapters 10 to 12, Paul spoke of those who were boasting so much about themselves. He spoke again of his own service but apologized for talking about himself. He did not like to do it, but he felt he must show how empty the boasting of his enemies really was.

He answered their falsehoods against him in 10:1 to 11:15. His enemies said that he was weak when among them, but bold when away from them. Those who talked like that would find him bold when he came to them. He did not depend on human strength, but on God's power. And God gave him power to overcome everything which opposed Christ. And so he would be able to punish those who were disobedient, 10:1-6. They were not judging him according to the facts, 10:7-12. He had authority over them which his enemies did not have. His enemies had not led them to Christ, but he had. His enemies were trying to make a place for themselves in a church which Paul had started, 10:13-16. But people who want to boast should boast about the Lord, not about themselves. To praise ourselves is just empty talk. What really matters is to be praised by the Lord, 10:17,18.

Paul then appealed to them, 11:1-12, and accused his enemies, 11:13-15. He spoke of himself because he was afraid that the false apostles would lead them astray from Christ, 11:1-4. He himself was as great as those who boasted that they were such big apostles, 11:5,6. He had not taken money from the Corinthians simply because he did not want to be a burden to them, 11:7-9. And he did not want people to say that he was preaching for money as his enemies were, 11:10-12. Those men were simply deceivers, pretending to be servants of Christ, but they were really servants of Satan, 11:13-15.

Then Paul proved his own apostleship, 11:16 - 12:21, but first he apologized again for talking about himself. He wrote about himself only because some people were believing the false teachers, 11:16-20. He had been born a Jew, just like his enemies, 11:22. He was more of a servant of Christ than they were, for he had suffered much more for Him, 11:23-33. Not only had he suffered, but he had visions such as they had never had. Indeed, he had been made to see such glorious things that God had sent him some bodily weakness in order to keep him humble. This was so that he might keep on depending on God for his strength, 12:1-10. He had shown the reality of his apostleship by the patience with which he had worked among the Corinthians and by

the miracles which he had done while among them, 12:11,12. He had not taken money from them, but that was in order to help them. For that reason he would not take money from them even when he came again to them, 12:13-15. But some said that it was because he wanted to deceive them that he had not taken money from them. Had either he or Titus or the other brother wronged them in any way, as deceivers do, 12:16-18? He was still afraid that he may have to punish some of them for their hardness and sin, and that made him feel sad, 12:20,21.

Warning, 13:1-10

Chapter 13:1-10 is a warning to them. If Paul does have to punish some disobedient ones, he will not show mercy to them. His severity to them will prove whether he is an apostle or not, 13:1-3. The power with which he was able to do this is the same power which raised Christ from the dead, that is, the power of God. It was to be seen in them, unless they were really people of whom God did not approve (reprobates). But he wanted them to know that God did not disapprove of him, 13:4-6. God's power was in him. He was writing this letter to them to warn them to repent of their wrong-doing so that he might not have to deal harshly with them when he came to them, 13:7-10.

Conclusion, 13:11-14

The letter concludes with exhortations, greetings, and a prayer for God's blessing on them, 13:11-14.

* * * * *

History tells us that the Corinthian Christians obeyed Paul's letters, putting right the things which were wrong, and that for many years afterward they were a good example to other churches.

TEST 3 2 Corinthians

Choose the correct answer.

1. Paul wrote this letter to defend
 - a. his pride.
 - b. his ministry.
 - c. his friends.

2. God sent trouble upon Paul
 - a. to punish him.
 - b. to discipline him.
 - c. so that he might learn to trust Him.

3. Paul had not yet visited the church in Corinth because
 - a. they weren't ready for his visit.
 - b. he didn't really want to go.
 - c. he was too busy.

4. When a believer repents of a sin
 - a. he should be forgiven immediately.
 - b. he should be forgiven after a year.
 - c. he still should not be forgiven.

5. Paul had confidence in serving God because
 - a. people praised him.
 - b. he earned a lot of money.
 - c. God gave him the ability.

Enter TRUE or FALSE after each statement.

6. The law was replaced by the good news of Christ.
7. The Jews could see the glory of the Gospel.
8. Paul tried always to please the Lord.
9. The Bible says that God blesses the cheerful giver.
10. God sent Paul some bodily weakness to keep him humble.

WHAT DO YOU SAY?

What is the evidence that a person is a 'new creation' in Christ? (2 Cor 5.17)

GALATIANS

Rome and Corinth were cities in which there were assemblies of believers. Galatia was a country. Paul and Barnabas had preached in that country on Paul's first missionary journey, in the cities of Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe. See Acts 13 and 14.

Paul always taught that men of any nation would be saved by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, not by their own works. But some Jewish Christians taught that Gentile believers could not be saved unless they were first circumcised (that is, unless they became Jews), and kept the Law of Moses (see Acts 15:1,5). That teaching destroyed the gospel of grace. For God does not save men today because they are Jews or because they are Gentiles, but just because they are sinners, and because He is kind. He saves them through their trusting in Christ, who died for them and rose again from the dead.

Now those Jewish teachers had come to Galatia. They had begun to teach the Gentile believers there, and some of the believers were beginning to believe what they taught. Those teachers were always opposing Paul. They went around after him in many places where Paul preached, and they tried to lead the believers astray. They said many things against Paul. They told the Galatians that Paul was not really an apostle. They said that he had not been one of Christ's disciples like Peter. They said that he had not even been taught by disciples like

Peter. They probably said that Peter did not teach or believe as Paul did, but that he told people to obey the Law of Moses in order to be saved. So Paul wrote this letter to warn the Christians in Galatia and to keep them from going astray. No one can find blessing by his own works, and such teaching could only cause the Galatians (or anyone else) to suffer loss. Christians cannot even live righteous lives by trying to keep the Law of Moses in their own strength.

Galatians can be outlined like this:

1. Paul's greeting to the Galatians, 1:1-5
2. Paul's gospel revealed to him by God, 1:6-24
 - a. There is no other gospel, 1:6-9
 - b. His gospel had not been taught him by man, but by the Lord, 1:10-24
3. Paul's gospel the same gospel which Peter and the other apostles believed, 2:1-21
 - a. Paul's conference with the apostles, 2:1-10
 - b. Paul's rebuke of Peter, 2:11-21
4. God's blessing to men is through faith, 3:1-29
 - a. This is proved by their own case, 3:1-5
 - b. It is proved by God's promise to Abraham, 3:6-29
5. The bondage of the Law and the freedom of grace, 4:1 - 6:10
 - a. The Law was elementary (like what is taught to children), 4:1-20
 - b. The Law has no place in grace, 4:21-5:26
 - c. How Christians should act, 6:1-10
6. Conclusion , 6:11-18
 - a. True and false apostles, 6:11-14
 - b. The important thing, 6:15-17
 - c. Blessing, 6:18

Paul's greeting to the Galatians, 1:1-5

In his greeting, Paul speaks of his being an apostle through the

working of the Lord Jesus Christ, 1:1. Paul's authority was real. He mentioned it because of those who were denying his authority. He also showed that he was not alone in what he was writing, 1:2. The brethren who were with him agreed with him. And he reminded the Christians that Christ died for us to save us out of the world: out of its evil and out of its bondage to Law, 1:4.

Paul's gospel revealed to him by God, 1:6-24

He then showed that the gospel which he preached was not something made up by men, 1:6-24.

There was no other gospel except the gospel of Christ, which had been revealed to him by God. The Galatians were not accepting another gospel, but a false teaching. In doing that, they were leaving God Himself, who had called them to trust in Christ, 1:6,7. Anyone who preaches a message different from the gospel which God gave to Paul comes under a curse, 1:8,9. That is because he is a spiritual murderer, leading men to eternal death.

Paul could speak like that because he was not trying to please men in his preaching, as his enemies said, but God, 1:10. He had not received his gospel from men, but from Christ Himself, 1:11,12. The Galatians had heard what he had been before. He had been a zealous Jew, hating Christ and persecuting Christians, 1:13,14. But God had revealed Christ to him, and that was why he now preached Him, 1:15,16. He had not first gone to talk with other apostles, 1:16,17. He did visit Peter in Jerusalem later on and was with him for fifteen days. But he did not see the other apostles nor visit the Jewish churches, 1:18-24. They only heard of him and thanked God for his conversion. This is all to prove that the gospel he preached was God's Word and not man's.

Paul's gospel the same as that which Peter
and the other apostles believed, 2:1-21

In chapter 2, however, Paul showed that the gospel he preached

was the same as that which the other apostles believed. This was shown by the result of his conference with the other apostles, when he visited Jerusalem a long time afterward. They had agreed that his message was indeed God's message to the Gentiles, 2:1-10. This is the visit we read about in Acts 15.

Not only so, but Paul had once even rebuked Peter when Peter did what was contrary to the gospel, 2:11-21. Peter had come to Antioch, and at first he ate with believers who were not Jews. Under the Law, a Jew could not eat with Gentiles (see Acts 11:2,3). But according to the gospel, the difference between Jew and Gentile was finished. Then some Jewish Christians had come to Antioch from Jerusalem (where James was). Peter had been afraid and had stopped eating with the Gentile Christians. This was wrong, and Paul rebuked him for it. He reminded him that they had been saved just as the Gentiles were. They had confessed that they were sinners and had trusted in Christ alone to save them. Their righteousness had not come through keeping the Law, but through Christ's death for them on the cross. This showed that Peter really believed the same gospel that Paul preached.

God's blessing to men is through faith, 3:1-29

God's blessing comes to men through their faith in Christ, not through the works of keeping the Law. That was the way in which the Galatians themselves had been blessed. They had begun in the Spirit, trusting in God's work. But now they wanted to make themselves perfect in the flesh, that is, by their own works in keeping the Law, 3:1-5. These two things do not go together.

The promise made by God to Abraham brought blessing by faith, not through works, 3:6-29. Abraham's faith was counted by God like righteousness, 3:6. In the same way today, people are the children of Abraham when they trust in Christ. They are blessed, just as Abraham was, when they believe. They do not have to be circumcised and to become Jews first, 3:7. God's promise to Abraham in Genesis 12:3 had in mind this blessing which was to come on Gentiles who would trust

in Christ, 3:8,9. Anyone who wants to be saved by keeping the Law can only be cursed. That is because no one can keep the Law perfectly, 3:10. The only way to keep the Law is to keep it without ever sinning at all, and no one ever did that except the Lord Jesus. God has promised life to those who have faith in Christ, 3:11. Trying to be saved by keeping the Law is not faith, but works, 3:12. Faith trusts in Christ. The man who works for salvation is trusting in himself. Christ died for us, and so took on Himself the curse which was on us because we had broken God's Law. As a result, God's blessing can now come on people who trust in Christ alone. God gives them His Holy Spirit to live in them, and so they are saved, 3:13,14.

God's promise to Abraham was not changed by the Law. God cannot break or change His promises, 3:15. The promise was really made by God to Christ, 3:16. The Law came later, but it could not do away with the promise which came first, 3:17. If God had meant to bless men by their keeping His Law, the blessing would not be any longer through God's free promise, 3:18. When God promises to do a thing, He does it because He is faithful. But if it comes through our works, then we can only have it if we are faithful. When we trust in Christ for salvation, we depend on His faithfulness, not on our own. The Law was added to show what sin is. This was so that men might know that they are sinners, and so be ready for the blessing which was to come in Christ, 3:19-22. Thus the Law's purpose was to lead men to Christ. And we who have been brought to Christ are no longer under the Law. Even though we were born as Gentiles, we are now like Abraham's children. The promise of blessing which was made to Abraham is now ours in Christ, 3:23-29.

The bondage of the Law and the freedom of grace,

4:1 - 6:10

The Law brings bondage, but grace makes men free. The Law was intended for the Jews who lived before Christ came, while they were still like children, and like slaves, 4:1-5. Christ came to redeem

them. He came to bring them out from the Law, and to make them like grown-up sons of God. We Gentile Christians are now also sons of God through Christ, 4:6,7. What a foolish thing if now that God looks on us as grown-up people, we go back to the things which belonged to the Jews when they were still like children, 4:8-11! Then Paul reminds them of their first love for him and pleads with them not to be led astray by teachers who are seeking their own profit, 4:12-20.

The Law has no place in this age of grace, 4:21 - 5:26. The children of the gospel-promise are free-born, as Isaac was, 4:19-28. But those who make much of the Law are in bondage. They always trouble those who are free, as those false teachers in Galatia were doing, 4:29. Those who follow the Law are of the flesh, or old nature, for they trust in themselves. They are against those who trust in Christ alone. But we should no longer trust in works of the Law and should not accept those who say that we must keep the Law in order to be saved, 4:30.

We should hold fast the liberty which we have in Christ, 5:1. If we try to be saved by the Law, then we must keep the whole Law, not just a part of it. If we try to do that, then Christ cannot help us, 5:2,3. And those who do try to do that have left the idea of grace. Grace means God's saving us when we do not deserve it. The man who tries to keep the Law for salvation is trying to deserve being saved. Believers have been made righteous by their faith, not by their works, and so they are waiting in the Spirit for the blessing which will come when Christ returns, 5:4,5. In Christ, the important thing is faith, which does good works because of love for God, not in order to be saved by them, 5:6. So Paul warned them again of the danger they were in and showed that the false teachers were not teaching the truth, 5:7-12.

From verse 13 to the end of chapter 5, there is a very important truth. We have been called to liberty. We are free from the Law. That means that, being saved by faith alone in Christ, we can never again

be condemned or lost. But we should not just do evil because that is true, 5:13. We should rather love one another, and that means that we should serve and be kind to one another, 5:14,15.

But someone might say, "If I do not keep the Law, how am I going to live a righteous life?" Paul's answer is, "By depending on the Holy Spirit who lives in you." If we walk in dependence on Him, we will not do evil things, 5:16. A Christian has two natures. He has the old nature, the flesh; and he also has a new nature, the Spirit. The old nature is opposed to the Spirit, and the Spirit is opposed to the old nature, 5:17. If we let the Spirit control us, the Law will have nothing to say against us, 5:18. The old nature always wants to do evil things, 5:19-21. The Spirit always does good things, 5:22,23. If we belong to Christ, then we should look upon the old sinful nature as if it had died when Christ died, and we should have nothing more to do with it, 5:24. We should trust in the Holy Spirit's working in us from day to day, and we should not be proud and quarrelsome, 5:25,26. This passage should be carefully studied, for it gives us the secret of living like Christians.

Chapter 6:1-10 tells us how believers should seek to help any one who does wrong, 6:1-3, and that they should be careful of their own doings, seeking to please God. They must some day give an account to Him of what they do, 6:4,5. It also tells us to remember those who teach us God's Word, and to help them with our gifts, 6:6. If we use what we have for ourselves alone, we will get nothing out of it, but if we use it for God, we shall have a reward, 6:7,8. That means our money, but of course it means other things too. We should always do good to all men, for some day we shall be rewarded for it, 6:9,10. Our salvation is a free gift, but there is also a reward which God wants to give us if we serve Him well in this life.

Conclusion, 6:11-18

Paul warned them again against the false teachers, 6:11-14. He himself gloried in Christ alone, 6:14.

The really important thing is not whether one is a Jew or a Gentile, but whether one has been born again, 6:15,16. Paul had suffered much for Christ, and the marks of it were in his body. That was much better than the mark of circumcision. Therefore, no one should trouble him any more about circumcision, 6:17.

The letter closes with a blessing on the Galatians, 6:18.

EPHESIANS

Five of Paul's letters were written while he was in prison in Rome. The first time he was a prisoner there he wrote four letters, all about the same time. These were Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and the letter to Philemon. Then he was let go for a time. Later he was again put in prison, and then he wrote the second letter to Timothy, just a little while before he was killed.

The letters to the Ephesians and to the Colossians are very much alike, as they were written about the same time. But there is a difference too. In Ephesians, the apostle wrote about how all believers in Christ are now one in Him. In Colossians, he wrote about the greatness and sufficiency of Christ Himself. In Ephesians, Paul wrote about the Church, and thought of believers as being in Christ. In Colossians, he wrote about the Lord, and thought of Christ as being in the believers.

This letter to the Ephesians divides easily into two parts:

1. The unity of the believers in Christ, chapters 1-3
2. How that unity should rule our behavior, chapters 4-6

In the first part, we have teaching about the facts. In the second part, we have teaching about our acts. Right teaching should always lead to right doings. False teaching will always lead to bad deeds.

The first part of this letter can be outlined thus:

1. Greeting, 1:1,2
2. The unity of believers in Christ, 1:3-23
 - a. God's blessing on His people, 1:3-10
 - b. God's purpose for the Jews who believed, 1:11,12
 - c. Gentile believers have received the same blessing as the Jewish Christians, 1:13,14
 - d. Paul prays for them as fellow-believers, 1:15-23
3. Jews and Gentiles have been made one, chapter 2
 - a. By God's work upon us, 2:1-10
 - b. By Christ's work for us, 2:11-17
 - c. By the Holy Spirit's work in us, 2:18-22
4. How this union has been made known, chapter 3
 - a. The explanation of it, 3:1-13
 - b. His prayer for them because of it, 3:14-19
 - c. His praise to God, 3:20,21

The second part of this letter can be outlined thus:

1. This unity should be realized by us in practice, 4:1-16
 - a. The call to keep the unity, 4:1-3
 - b. The unity which is to be kept, 4:4-6
 - c. The differences of service, 4:7-11
 - d. The oneness of purpose, 4:12-16
2. This unity calls for a certain kind of behavior, 4:17 - 6:9
 - a. Our attitude in general, 4:17-24
 - b. Our acts in detail, 4:25 - 6:9
3. The opposition to us, 6:10-20
 - a. Our help, 6:10,11
 - b. Our enemies, 6:12
 - c. Our armor, 6:13-20
4. Conclusion , 6:21-24

Now let us think of the first part of the letter.

The unity of believers in Christ, 1:3-23

After greeting the believers in verses 1 and 2, Paul gave praise to God for His blessing on His people, 1:3-10. This blessing has to do with spiritual things, and it has everything, 1:3. It was intended for us by God before He made the world, 1:4,5. Its purpose is to bring praise to God, 1:6. It has come to us through the work of Christ, which shows the greatness of God's grace to us, 1:7,8. It has been shown to us now, 1:9, but it will be shown more in the time to come, 1:10, when Christ will be revealed as Lord of all things.

This blessing was first revealed to Paul and to the other apostles, as we see in chapter 3. God had before chosen them to this blessing, and His purpose was that their being saved should bring glory to Him. The Jews had looked forward for many years to the coming of their Messiah, the Christ. And now He had come, and those of them who had believed in Him had all this blessing in Him, 1:11,12.

But God had shown them that the blessing was not for the Jews only. Gentiles had heard the gospel and had believed it. And when they believed, they received the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit was the earnest (that is, the pledge or assurance) of the inheritance which belonged to Jewish believers. And when God gave that pledge to Gentile believers too, He had shown that He was now making no difference between men in saving them, 1:13,14. Jew and Gentile are now one in Christ. See how God showed this in Acts 10:44-47; 11:15-18; 15:8,9.

Therefore, Paul prayed for the believers in Ephesus, 1:15-23. He wanted them to know what a glorious salvation they had. He wanted them to know how much God loves His people ("saints" are all those who believe in Christ and are saved and set apart for God). He also wanted them to know how great God's power to keep them is.

Jews and Gentiles have been made one, chapter 2

In chapter 2, he showed how it is that Jew and Gentile have been made one in Christ.

First, it is because of God's work upon them, 2:1-10. The Gentiles were once, dead in sin, 2:1. Indeed, both Jews and Gentiles once lived in sin. They obeyed Satan and so were under God's wrath, 2:2,3. But God had mercy on them. It was all His doing in kindness, and the praise was all His, 2:4-8. It was not of their own works at all, so no man has anything to boast about, 2:9. God did all the work. But His purpose is that we, being saved by His grace, should now do righteous works. He has already showed us in His Word what these are, 2:10.

Then, too, we have been made one because of Christ's work for us, 2:11-17. We Gentiles had no part in the inheritance of the Jews. They were chosen by God to be His people on earth, and we were like foreigners. They had hope in the coming of the Savior, but we did not know anything about Him. They could call God their God, for He had made Himself known to them. But we did not know Him, 2:11,12. Then Christ came and died for sinners, shedding His blood for them. He has brought Gentiles near to God. He has broken down the wall which once divided Jews and Gentiles. And then He preached peace with God, both to us Gentiles who were far away from Him and to the Jews who were near to Him, 2:13-17. Both are now saved in just the same way.

And we have been made one by the working of the Spirit in us, 2:13-22. Because of what Christ has done for us, both Jew and Gentile can now come to God. It is the Holy Spirit who brings us both to Him, 2:18. Therefore, Gentile believers are no longer foreigners, but belong to God in the same way as believers from among the Jews, 2:19. We are all being built together like a house in which God lives, 2:20-22. God's house is not a building of brick or stone. God lives in His people by His Holy Spirit.

How this union has been made known, chapter 3

In chapter 3, we see how this unity was made known. It had been especially revealed to the apostle Paul, 3:1-4. Believers of other ages

had not known about it, 3:5. They thought that Gentiles must first become Jews in order to be blessed, 3:6. But God had revealed to Paul that the riches of Christ were to be given to all men, 3:7,8. God's desire was that all men might know this happy fellowship and that the angels might see it and worship Him, 3:9-13.

And so Paul prayed for the believers, that they also may be made able to understand the glorious things which belong to them in Christ, 3:14-19. He closed the chapter with praise to God, 3:20,21.

This unity should be realized by us in practice, 4:1-16

Paul had explained the unity of believers in Christ, and now he showed them how they should try to realize this unity in practice.

That can only be done if believers refuse to be proud. If they are humble in themselves and gentle toward other believers, 4:1-3. Pride causes more trouble among Christians than anything else does.

We see what this unity is in 4:4-6. All believers belong to the same body (the body of Christ), they have the same Spirit living in them, and they are all going to the same place, 4:4. They all have the same Lord, the same faith in Him, and the same baptism which confesses that faith, 4:5. Some will say that we do not all have the same baptism today. But when Paul wrote this letter, they did not have different kinds of baptism. And even today, we who love the Lord Jesus all confess Him when we are baptized in His name. All believers have the same God. He is the Father of them all. He is over them all, works through them all, and lives in them all, 4:6.

However, not all have the same work to do. Christ has given each one his own work (as we saw also in 1 Corinthians 12), 4:7-11. But the different kinds of service are all for the same purpose. They are meant to bring Christians to know Christ in experience and to realize their oneness in Him. They should keep us from being led away by false teachings. This they should do by leading us to set our thoughts on our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom we receive all our strength and blessing, 4:12-16.

This unity calls for a certain kind of behavior,

4:17 - 6:9

Unity with Christ also demands a certain kind of behavior in our lives from day to day.

Those who do not believe do evil things because they do not know the truth. But we do know the truth in Christ, and we have been taught by Him to reject the old things of our days of sin and to follow the new things in Christ, 4:17-24.

Therefore we should do what is true and honest, 4:25-28.

We should be gracious and kind to one another, seeking to help one another by the things we say, 4:29-32.

We should love one another, 5:1,2.

We should live pure lives, 5:3-14.

We should be devoted to the Lord, always serving Him and always filled with His Spirit, 5:15-20.

We should be like servants, obeying one another, 5:21 - 6:9.

Wives should obey their husbands, as the Church obeys Christ, 5:22-24.

Husbands must remember to love their wives and to be kind to them, 5:25-33.

Children should obey their parents, 6:1-4.

Fathers must remember not to be harsh and unkind to their children, 6:4.

Servants should obey their masters, 6:5-8.

The masters must remember not to be too hard on their servants, 6:9.

The opposition to us, 6:10-20

We have enemies who always try to divide us, 6:10-20. Therefore, we must find our strength in God, 6:10,11. Our enemies are the evil spirits which serve Satan, 6:12. We must wear armor, as soldiers used to do when Paul wrote, 6:13-20. We must put on righteous behavior,

6:14, and make the gospel known, 6:15, and keep on trusting in God, 6:16, trusting in His salvation and in His Word, 6:17. And we must pray always, not only for ourselves, but for others as well, 6:18-20.

Conclusion, 6:21-24

Paul closed his letter with a word about Tychicus, with greetings and with a blessing, 6:21-24.

TEST 4 Galatians - Ephesians

Choose the correct answer.

1. Some Jewish Christians taught that Gentile believers could only be saved if they
 - a. were first baptized.
 - b. did good works.
 - c. were first circumcised.
2. False teachers told the Galatians that Paul was not really
 - a. an apostle.
 - b. a believer.
 - c. a Jew.
3. Paul received his Gospel
 - a. from the other apostles.
 - b. from the Jewish teachers.
 - c. from Christ Himself.
4. God has promised life to those who
 - a. keep the law.
 - b. have faith in Christ.
 - c. trust in their own good works.
5. The grace of God
 - a. makes us free.
 - b. brings bondage.
 - c. was intended for the Jews.

Enter TRUE or FALSE after each statement.

6. All of Paul's letters were written from prison in Rome.
7. God now makes no difference between men in saving them.
8. God now lives in His people through His Holy Spirit.
9. God revealed to Paul that the riches of Christ were to be given only to the Gentiles.
10. Pride rarely causes trouble among Christians.

WHAT DO YOU SAY?

What is the gospel that Paul preached? (Gal 1:11)

PHILIPPIANS

The letter to the believers in Philippi is another of the letters written by the apostle Paul while he was in prison in Rome. The church in Philippi had been started by the apostle Paul on his second missionary journey. See Acts 16. The Christians there had always shown a warm love for Paul. After he left Philippi and went to Thessalonica (see Acts 17:1), the Philippians sent him gifts of money to help him in his work. See 4:16. They probably sent him gifts at other times also. And while he was in Rome, they sent one of the men, called Epaphroditus, to go to him with another gift. He wrote this letter to go back with Epaphroditus in order to thank them for their gift. See 4:18; 2:25-30.

Possibly, Epaphroditus told Paul that there was some trouble in Philippi. The believers were not all agreeing well together. There was a quarrel between two of the women (see 4:2,3), and some of the others may have been taking sides. So you will find three times in this letter that Paul asks them to be of one mind, that is, to agree together. See 1:27; 2:1,2; 4:2.

Then, too, some of the Jewish teachers, about whom we read when looking at Galatians, seem to have been trying to deceive the believers in Philippi. So this letter has a warning against them. See chapter 3.

This letter is not as easy to divide as some of the others, but we

may outline it like this:

1. Greeting, 1:1,2
2. Their fellowship in the gospel, 1:3-26
 - a. His joy in them and his prayer for them, 1:3-11
 - b. How the gospel went forward in Rome, 1:12-18
 - c. Paul's desire and hope, 1:19-26
3. How they should act worthy of the gospel, 1:27 - 2:18
 - a. Defending the gospel together, 1:27-30
 - b. Being of one mind in unselfishness, 2:1-4
 - c. Christ the great Example of unselfishness, 2:5-11
 - d. These things to be worked out in quietness, 2:12-18
4. About those going to them, 2:19-30
 - a. Timothy, 2:19-24
 - b. Epaphroditus, 2:25-30
5. About Jewish teachers, 3:1 - 4:1
 - a. Those who are really God's people, 3:2,3
 - b. Paul's example of devotion to Christ, 3:4-14
 - c. They should copy him in this, 3:15 - 4:1
6. Other exhortations, 4:2-9
 - a. Euodia and Syntyche, 4:2,3
 - b. Joy and trust in the Lord, 4:4-7
 - c. The things about which they should think, 4:8
 - d. Paul's good example in all things, 4:9
7. About their gift to him, 4:10-20
8. Conclusion, 4:21-23

Their fellowship in the gospel, 1:3-26

After greeting the Philippian believers in verses 1 and 2, Paul wrote of their fellowship in the gospel. He wrote of how they had helped him in the work of the gospel and how he looked forward to helping them again, 1:3-26.

He thanked God whenever he remembered them. And he prayed that, in their love, they might also have more and more knowledge of

the things of God and that they may be more and more able to tell the difference between the things which are right and those which are wrong. Love must always go with such knowledge. Without it, love can make many mistakes. And Paul wanted them to be free from faults and full of righteous acts, which are made possible by the Lord Jesus, 1:3-11.

He then told them how the gospel had gone forward in Rome as a result of what had happened to him, 1:12-18. Some might have thought that Paul's being in prison had hindered the gospel. But the gospel had just been carried into other places. People in the king's palace had heard about the gospel through Paul's being a prisoner there, 1:13. Some of them had trusted in Christ. See 4:22. Not only so, but most of the believers had become bold in preaching the gospel, 1:14-17. Some were preaching because of their love for Paul. They knew that his wish was that the gospel should be made known. Others were preaching thinking that it would make Paul feel badly. These were believers who did not love Paul and who did not agree with him about some things. It is a sad thing when people preach the gospel with wrong thoughts in their hearts. However, Paul was not a man who thought much about himself as some of us do. He thought about Christ. And he knew that, as long as Christ was being preached, God could use the message and bring glory to Him. That was what mattered to Paul, 1:18.

He then wrote of his desire and hope, 1:19-26. At the time he wrote, he did not know whether he would be condemned to die or whether he might be let go again. But whatever happened to him, he wanted Christ to be exalted through him, whether it would be in his living or in his dying, 1:20. To have that happen to him is what he meant by "salvation" in 1:19. He did not mean the salvation of his soul, but seeing his desire come true in Christ being praised. It was hard for him to choose which he would rather have, whether to live or to die. If he lived, that would be to live in and for Christ. If he died, it would be better for him, 1:21. If he lived, he could serve the Lord more. And if he died, he would go to be with the Lord, and that would be much

better than living on the earth. But even then he did not think only of himself, but of the Philippians. If he lived, he could be a help to them. Therefore, he hoped to be set free so as to be able to help them more, 1:22-26. In all this, he was an example to them of unselfishness and devotion to Christ, though he did not yet say so.

How they should act worthy of the gospel, 1:27 - 2:18

Next, he showed how they should act in a way which would be worthy of the gospel. The gospel calls for a certain kind of behavior from those who accept it.

In the first place, whether he came to them or not, he wanted to hear about them that they were all defending the gospel with one mind and not being frightened by their enemies. They were being troubled by the enemies of the gospel just as Paul had been. Their not being afraid would prove the reality of their salvation, just as the opposition showed that their enemies were lost, 1:27-30. One of the proofs of eternal life is that a believer is not moved away from the Lord when he sees trouble.

In 2:1-4, Paul again mentioned the need for them to agree together as one. This would complete his joy in them, of which he wrote in 1:4. We have seen in Ephesians that all believers in Christ are one. But it does us no good to know that we are one if we are going to quarrel with one another just as if we were not. However, we can only agree together if we are willing to be humble and to give honor to others, 2:3,4. Selfishness always makes a person look down on others, and so causes trouble. True love is unselfish and is helpful to others.

Our Lord Jesus is the great Example of unselfishness, and we should imitate Him, 2:5-11. He did not think of Himself. He did not seek a high place for Himself. He humbled Himself from the highest place in heaven right down to the lowest place on earth. He died on the cross for us because the Father wanted Him to do so. And because of His humble obedience, God has given Him the highest place and commands all men to obey Him. This proves that what the Lord Jesus

Himself said is true, “He who humbles himself shall be exalted.”

These things they themselves must work out in obedience and in quietness, 2:12-18. Paul did not mean that they are to work so as to be saved from hell. As we have seen, the gospel is the good news that men are saved by Christ’s work, not by their own. Paul meant that they should be careful and diligent to be humble and to live together in peace. (Compare the use of “salvation” in 1:19.) They should be blameless and gentle, living so as to be like lights in this dark world, so that people might see the truth of the gospel. Then, in the day when Christ comes, Paul would be able to rejoice that his work among them was not a waste of time.

About those going to them, 2:19-30

Timothy would be going soon to help them, 2:19-24. Paul had wanted someone to go, but only Timothy had a really unselfish heart for others. Others were thinking only of themselves, not of Christ. What a sad thing this must have been for Paul to see! Epaphroditus would be going at once to them, 2:25-30. He had been taken ill while taking their gift to Paul and had almost died. And now he wanted to get back to the Philippians, who had heard of his illness. He wanted them to see him alive and well again. Paul asked them to receive Epaphroditus with honor on account of his service.

About Jewish teachers, 3:1- 4:1

In chapter 3, Paul warned them about the Jewish teachers. Some people think that probably Paul intended to close his letter soon after he wrote verse 1, and that something reminded him of those false teachers, so that he started again a little later at verse 2.

As we have seen, those teachers taught the Gentiles that in order to be saved they should be circumcised and keep the Law of Moses. Paul said that the truly circumcised people (that is, those who really belong to God) are those who are controlled by the Holy Spirit. They are the people who rejoice in Christ and who do not trust in what they

are by birth or what they themselves do, 3:2,3. To trust in the flesh is to trust in oneself.

Paul had as much to trust in himself as those Jewish teachers did, 3:4-6. He also had been born a Jew. He had been circumcised. And he had kept the Law as well as he could. But all those things he had rejected when he came to know Christ. Those things had been “gain” to him, that is, he could boast about them, as the Jewish teachers did. But now he no longer trusted either in his birth or in his own good works. He trusted in Christ alone and wanted to know Him more and more and to know His power in his life, 3:7-14.

In this, Paul was an example which he wanted them to copy, 3:15 - 4:11. They should not copy people who say that they belong to Christ but whose behavior shows that they are really enemies. Such men follow the things of earth, but our place as Christians is in Heaven, and that is where our thoughts should be. Our Savior will soon come from there for us, and He will make us to be like Him in every way. So we should stand firm, with our hearts set on Him alone.

Other exhortations, 4:2-9

He then told them of other things they should do, 4:2-9. Two Christian women should stop disagreeing and should agree together, 4:2,3.

The believers should rejoice in the Lord, should be gentle to all people, and should trust in God, praying always to Him, 4:4-7.

They should give their minds to things which are good, 4:8. If we set our thoughts on evil things, evil thoughts can make our lives evil.

Paul himself had always been a good example to them, and if they would do as they had been shown by him, the God of peace would be with them, 4:9. What a lovely thing if we can tell others to do as we do and then God will be with them. But we need to be careful that it is true before we say it. And we need to be sure that we can say it without being proud. We must be occupied with Christ as Paul was before we can do that.

About their gift to him, 4:10-20

Paul was glad and thanked the Lord for their care for him. But he was not just thinking of his own need, for God had taught him to be contented whether he had things or lacked them, 4:11-13. He recalled how they had helped him from the first, 4:14-16. He did not make much of the actual money, but was glad that they will have a reward from God for their giving, 4:17. This gift had supplied all his need and was pleasing to God, 4:18. And if they were lacking anything as a result, God would supply their needs too, 4:19.

He closed his letter to them with greetings from the believers in Rome, with a blessing, 4:21-23.

COLOSSIANS

This is another of the letters written by the apostle Paul while he was a prisoner in Rome. The church of believers at Colossae was probably not one of the churches started by Paul. From 1:7, it would seem that it was Epaphras who had first preached the gospel to them and had taught them the things of Christ. Epaphras had gone to Rome and had visited Paul. While there, he told Paul of the faith of the Christians in Colossae and of the way they loved all other believers in Christ. Paul's heart was filled with joy to hear this of them. But Paul was also told that there were false teachers in Colossae who were trying to lead the believers away from the truth. So Paul wrote this letter to the Colossian Christians to help them. He reminded them of the gospel which they had heard from Epaphras, which was the same gospel that he himself preached, 1:7,23.

Those false teachers seem to have been Jews who called themselves Christians. Like other Jewish teachers, they were trying to teach the Gentile Christians that they should be circumcised and keep the Law of Moses. They especially made much of the Old Testament laws which told people that they should not eat certain things. They also taught that people should treat their bodies harshly in order to make themselves more holy. They taught that the body was a bad thing and that it ought to be hated. That is a great mistake, for the Bible tells us that our bodies are holy and that we should keep them holy for Christ.

See 1 Corinthians 6:13,19.

But that was not all. Those teachers also taught that Christ was not the only one through whom men come to God. They taught that there were others also, angels, by whom men must come to Him. They taught that those angels ought to be worshiped. That denied the work and honor which God has given to Christ alone. In reading this letter, it would seem that probably those teachers taught that Christ Himself was not really God, but was only one of the great angels created by God. If that is so, then we can see that they were wrong in two ways. They said that Christ was not really God, and they taught that others beside the Lord Jesus Christ had a part in the work of saving men. And they said that these others also should be worshiped, or “venerated”. Both of these false teachings are in the world today. Therefore, we should study this letter to the Colossians very carefully. It shows us how wrong such leaders are. In this way, those teachers will not be able to deceive us.

In Ephesians, we read about the oneness of the Church. In Colossians, we read about the great Head of the Church, our Lord Jesus Christ. We read that He is Lord of all things. We read that He alone saves us and that He saves us perfectly. We may outline this letter thus:

1. Greeting, 1:1,2
2. Paul’s thanks and prayer for the Colossian Christians, 1:3-14
3. Christ is greater than all things, 1:15-23
 - a. He alone is Head over all created things, 1:15-17
 - b. He alone is Head over all the saved, 1:18-23
4. All things are in Christ alone, 1:24 - 3:4
 - a. Christ is God’s secret, whom God wants people to know, 1:24-29
 - b. All wisdom and knowledge are in Him, 2:1-7
 - c. All Deity is in Him, 2:8,9
 - d. All we need we have in Him, 2:10 - 3:4
5. How we should live since we have died and risen with Christ, 3:5 - 4:6

- a. Putting away everything evil, 3:5-11
 - b. Setting our hearts on what is good, 3:12-17
 - c. Acting rightly according to our position in life, 3:18 - 4:1
 - d. Praying to God, 4:2-4
 - e. Acting carefully before unbelievers, 4:5,6
6. Conclusion, 4:7-18

Paul's thanks and prayer for the Colossian Christians,

1:3-14

After his greeting to them in 1:1,2, Paul told them how he always gave thanks to God for them, 1:3-8. Epaphras had told him about their faith and love, 1:8, and he was joyful to know that they had a place in heaven, 1:5. They had heard about this in the gospel, which Epaphras had preached to them, 1:5-7. And so Paul prayed for them always, that they may know God's will and do it in the strength which He gives, 1:9-11. One thing he was thinking about here is that they may know the place which God wanted them to give to Christ, as we see in the rest of the letter. He prayed that they may always give thanks to God. When God saved them, He took them out of Satan's power and put them into the kingdom of His Son whom He loves, 1:12,13.

Christ is greater than all things, 1:15-23

Now having mentioned God's Son, Paul showed how great the Son is. God cannot be seen, except in the Son, 1:15 (compare John 14:9). God is what the Lord Jesus Christ is.

The Son is the Firstborn of all creation. That does not mean that He was the first one created, for, as Paul shows, Christ is the Firstborn because He is the One who created everything. According to the Law, the firstborn son is the heir and head over everything which belongs to his father. See also Psalm 89:27, where "firstborn" could not mean "first-created". That verse says it means "higher than the kings of the earth". Christ is the Supreme Lord of all things that have been created. The reason is that He is the One who made all things, including the

angels, 1:16 (compare John 1:3). All the things were made for Him. He always existed before all things ("He is", compare John 8:58). And He holds all things together even now by His power, 1:17. As the Word of God, He does all God's work in creation. Thus, all the honor due to God is due to Him. Compare John 5:23.

And He alone is also the Head over all the saved, 1:18-23. He is the One who started the Church. He rose first from the dead. And so He should have the first, or highest, place in all things, 1:18. When He became Man, all the fullness of God was in Him in dying for us and in saving us, 1:19,20. His work in salvation also is thus the work of God. And the Colossians, who had once been God's enemies in evil works, were now His people because of what Christ alone had done for them, 1:21,22. This would be proved by their going on believing what they had heard about Christ from the first. That was the gospel which Paul preached, which gave Christ the highest place in everything, 1:23.

All things are in Christ alone, 1:24 - 3:4

Paul then showed them not only that Christ is the Head over all things but that all things are to be found in Him alone, 1:23 - 3:4.

In the first place, Christ alone is God's great secret. God had not made Him known in other ages, but now He wants all men to know Him. And Paul worked hard to bring men to know Him. He knew that, if they had Him, they would have everything, 1:24-29.

All wisdom and knowledge are in Christ, and Paul was working (he means by prayer, since they had not yet seen him) so that they might have one mind in knowing Christ, 2:1-5. Those false teachers said that they had the true knowledge, which others did not have. But Paul said that true wisdom and knowledge is in knowing and honoring Christ. Any teaching which does not give Christ alone the highest place is not truly wise. We should not be deceived by people who say that Christ is not as great as God says He is. Since all wisdom is in Him, our whole minds should be occupied with Him. He is the One whom we received when we believed, and so He is the One we should live in

and live for now, 2:6,7.

All deity is in Christ too, 2:8,9. He is a Man now in heaven, but it is God in all His fullness who lives in that human body. Therefore, we should not be led astray by teachers who follow the false ideas of men and say that Christ is not God.

All that we need we have when we have Christ, 2:10-15. Since everything is in God, and since Christ is God, we need nothing more than what we have in Him, 2:10. Those teachers were saying that Gentiles should be circumcised. Paul says, "You were circumcised in your spirits when you accepted Christ in baptism, and you do not need to have your bodies circumcised." The spiritual circumcision, which is the true one, is when we reject the works of evil and come to Christ as our Savior, 2:11,12. We were dead, but God made us to live in Christ, 2:13. And Christ took out of our way the Law which condemned us, when He paid all the penalty of sin for us on the cross, 2:14. He overcame Satan and all his powers when He died on the cross and rose again, 2:15.

Therefore we are not any longer under that old Law, 2:16 - 3:4. No one has a right to tell us that we must keep the Sabbath or any other of the Old Testament holy days. No one has a right to insist that we must not eat certain things, 2:16,17. All those old rules were like shadows of things which were to come. But we now have the reality in Christ. No one should lead us to worship angels, as those teachers were trying to get the believers to do, 2:18,19. They did not find that in the Old Testament. It came out of their own imaginations. If we worship angels, or any others beside Christ, we will lose the reward which God wants to give to us for serving Him. And we will be following the foolish ideas of men alone. Christ is our Head, and all blessing comes to us through Him, and through Him alone. Those men who were teaching that they should treat the body harshly, saying that they could make themselves better by refusing to eat some things, were following the ideas of the world. They thought that they were being humble in doing such things. But Paul said that to act like that is really just the pride of the flesh, 2:20-23. We died with Christ and so should not follow such

childish ideas, thinking to make ourselves holy by punishing our bodies. We should be thinking of the things which are in heaven. We rose with Christ. Christ is our Life. He is in heaven, and some day we too shall be seen there with Him in glory, 3:1-4.

How we should live since we have died and risen
with Christ, 3:5 - 4:6

The fact that we are not bound by the Old Testament laws does not mean that we ought to do things which are evil. All evil things we used to do we should now treat as things to be killed, and should have nothing more to do with them, 3:5-11.

We should put on goodness as if it were a garment to wear, 3:12-17. We should live in kindness, in love, and in peace with one another. We should always be thinking about the Word, which speaks of Christ. We should always be talking to one another about Him and singing about Him in our songs. And we should do all we do in His Name (that is, as His servants), giving thanks to God.

Each one has his own place in life, and we should act rightly, according to it. Wives, husbands, children, fathers, servants, and masters all have their own duties, in which they should serve the Lord Jesus Christ, 3:18 - 4:1.

We should always be praying for ourselves and for others, 4:2-4.

We should act carefully before those who are not believers. This is very important. We are witnesses for the Lord Jesus, and our witness is not in what we say only, but in what we do as well. We should remember that our time on earth is short and should use every means of helping people to know Christ. That means that we should always remember that the things we do before them, and the way we speak to them, can either win men for Christ or can turn them against Him, 4:5,6.

Conclusion, 4:7-18

Paul closes his letter with words concerning some of his friends, 4:7-17, and with a final greeting, 4:18. Tychicus was the one who went to them with this letter, 4:7,8. Onesimus, who went with him, was a slave who had run away from his master in Colossae. He had been converted in Rome, and was now going back, 4:9 (compare Philemon 10,12). You will find some of the others also mentioned in other places in the New Testament. Paul wanted this letter to be read before all the believers, both in Colossae and in Laodicea, which was another town not far away, 4:16. He wanted them all to be saved from the wrong teaching about Christ.

TEST 5 Philippians - Colossians

Choose the correct answer.

1. As a result of what happened to Paul in Rome the Gospel
 - a. was hindered.
 - b. went forward.
 - c. was not permitted.

2. True love
 - a. is unselfish.
 - b. is selfish.
 - c. is proud.

3. The greatest example of unselfishness is
 - a. the Lord Jesus.
 - b. Paul.
 - c. Peter.

4. Paul asked the Philippians to receive Epaphroditus with honour on account of
 - a. his riches.
 - b. his intelligence.
 - c. his service.

5. Paul said that truly circumcised people are those who
 - a. have been baptized.
 - b. keep the law of Moses.
 - c. are controlled by the Holy Spirit.

Enter TRUE or FALSE after each statement.

6. False teachers said that others besides the Lord Jesus had a part in the salvation of men.
7. The Lord Jesus is the Firstborn because He is the first created being.
8. God in all His fullness lives in the Lord Jesus Christ.
9. The Christian should still keep the Sabbath.
10. Christians are witnesses for the Lord Jesus in all that they say and do.

WHAT DO YOU SAY?

How is it possible to 'rejoice in the Lord always'? (Phil 4.4)

1 THESSALONIANS

The church in Thessalonica was started by Paul and Silas on Paul's second missionary journey. See Acts 17:1-10. After they had been put in prison in Philippi, and had been let go again, Acts 16:19-40, they went on to Thessalonica, and Paul preached Christ to the people in the Jewish synagogue there. Some Jews and a large number of Gentiles believed in Christ. But the Jews who did not believe started a riot, and Paul and Silas had to leave Thessalonica after too short a time there. They had not had enough time to teach the new believers as much as they wanted to. The Jews persecuted the believers also. See Acts 17:6.

After Paul had left Thessalonica, he felt anxious for the Christians there. He feared that they might be tempted to give up their faith in Christ. Paul went on to Athens, but he felt so anxious about the Christians in Thessalonica that he sent Timothy back to them to see how they were getting on, 3:2.

Timothy came back from Thessalonica and found Paul in Corinth, Acts 18:1,5. He told him that the Christians were standing firm, 3:6. However, some of the believers had died since Paul left, and the rest were wondering what would happen to their dead friends when Christ returned.

Then, too, the Jews in Thessalonica were telling the Christians that

Paul was a deceiver. They said that he was just trying to get people to make much of him. They said that he was really preaching for the money he could get out of it. They may have heard that he had received gifts from the Christians in Philippi while he was at Thessalonica. See Philippians 4:16.

So Paul wrote this letter to the believers to remind them how they had accepted the gospel, to remind them of his own good life when among them, to tell them of the reality of his love for them, and to teach them more about the coming of the Lord Jesus. You will notice that the coming of Christ for His people is mentioned in every chapter of this letter. See 1:10; 2:19; 3:13; 4:13-18; 5:1-3,23.

We may outline the letter in this way:

1. Greeting, 1:1
2. Paul gave thanks for the Christians at Thessalonica, 1:2 - 2:16
 - a. He thanked God for the reality of their conversion, 1:2-10
 - b. He reminded them how he behaved among them, 2:1-12
 - c. He thanked God for the way they received His mes-sage, 2:13-16
3. Paul had been anxious about them, 2:17 - 3:13
 - a. He had tried hard to return and help them, 2:17-20
 - b. Finally he sent Timothy to them, 3:1-5
 - c. Timothy's good news of them had comforted Paul, 3:6-10
 - d. He prayed God's blessing on them, 3:11-13
4. How they should behave, 4:1-12
 - a. In purity, 4:1-8
 - b. In love, 4:9,10
 - c. In working, 4:11,12
5. About the Lord's coming, 4:13 - 5:24
 - a. What will happen when He comes, 4:13-18
 - b. When His coming will take place, 5:1-3
 - c. How we should act while we wait for Him, 5:4-22
 - d. He prays God's blessing on them, 5:23,24
6. Conclusion, 5:25-28

Paul gave thanks for the Christians at Thessalonica,

1:2 - 2:16

After greeting them in 1:1, Paul thanked God for the reality of the conversion of the Christians in Thessalonica, 1:2-10. They had showed that their faith was real by the way they had acted, 1:3. Paul knew that they had been chosen of God. He knew it by two things. First, he knew it because of the power which God had given to him when he preached the gospel to them, and by the way he had lived among them, 1:5. Second, he knew it by the way they had turned to the true God, leaving their idols, 1:6-10. Their conversion had been so whole-hearted that other believers everywhere had heard about it and were wondering and talking about it.

He then reminded them of the way he had behaved while with them, 2:1-12. This was to answer the false things which his enemies were saying against him. Though Paul and Silas had been so badly treated in Philippi, they had not been afraid to preach the gospel to those in Thessalonica. That was because their message was true. They were not teaching men to do evil things, 2:3. They were not pretending. And they were not trying to please men, but God, 2:4. They did not try to flatter men and did not want men's things, 2:5. Paul had cared for the Christians as a mother cares for her children, 2:8. He had worked to earn his own living, so as not to take money from them, 2:9. His doings had been right in all things. He had taught the Thessalonians both by what he said and by what he did, 2:10-12. His life showed that he was not a deceiver. It was necessary to remind them about this. He feared lest his enemies should make them think that he was a deceiver and lest they might turn their hearts away from Christ too.

Paul thanked God always for the way in which the Thessalonians had received God's message, 2:13-16. They did not accept it as a human message, but as God's Word, which it is, 2:13. They accepted it even though it meant that they would be persecuted by their own

people, just as the Christians in Judea had been persecuted by the Jews there. The Jews were always opposing God's messengers, and God was about to punish them, 2:14-16.

Paul had been anxious about them, 2:17 - 3:13

He told them how, in thinking about the persecution he knew they would be seeing, he had been very anxious about them.

He knew that they did not yet know as much about Christ as they should, and he feared that they might become discouraged. So he had tried hard to go back to them to help them. But Satan had hindered him, 2:17-20. He rejoiced in them, and he would have been broken-hearted had they turned away from Christ.

Finally, when he reached Athens, he became so anxious that he sent Timothy back to them to see how they were doing, 3:1-5. Timothy had returned to tell him that the believers were standing firm and were still trusting in Christ and loving Paul. Paul's heart was filled with joy when he heard it, 3:6-10.

So he prayed that God might yet make it possible for him to see them again. He prayed that they might love one another very much and that Christ might find them living holy lives when He comes, 3:11-13.

How they should behave, 4:1-12

They should live pure lives, 4:1-8. Each man should have his own wife. No one should wrong his brother by taking his brother's wife. God will punish those who do such things. God has called us to holiness, not to sin. If any should refuse to stop sinning, he would be insulting God.

They should love one another more and more, 4:9,10.

They should live quietly. They should not be lazy, but should work and earn their own living. Otherwise their lives would not give a good witness before those who do not believe, 4:11,12.

About the Lord's coming, 4:13 - 5:24

Paul wrote especially about the Lord's coming in 4:13 - 5:11 and showed them what will happen when He comes, 4:13-18. Those who have died in Christ will not miss anything when the Lord comes. They will rise from the dead first. Then believers who are still alive will be changed so as to be like Christ. Then all will go up together to meet the Lord in the air. This is still the hope of those who trust in Christ.

As to the time of His coming, 5:1-3, there is no way of knowing this. The Day of the Lord (the day of God's judgment on the world, which will follow the Lord's coming for His people) will come without any warning, as a thief comes in the darkness of the night. The world is in darkness, and that day will take them by surprise. Just when they think that all is quiet, destruction will come on them suddenly. We may be able to see signs of the Day of the Lord being near, but we still cannot say when it will be.

But we believers are not in darkness. We are in God's light. The Day of the Lord should not take us by surprise. We know about it and should live as those who know it is coming. The Day of the Lord is not meant to bring God's anger on us who trust in Christ. God has chosen us for salvation. So we should be warning one another to be always ready, 5:4-11. Believers should honor those who teach them, 5:12,13. Those who teach should warn those who are not acting rightly and should help those who are weak, 5:14. No one of us should do wrong to those who do wrong to us, 5:15. We should always be joyful, always praying, always giving thanks, 5:16-18. We should not resist the working of the Spirit. We should not make light of what He says. We should try everything we hear before we accept it. We should hold what is good and should refuse everything evil, 5:19-22.

Paul closes this part with a prayer that God would make them holy in every way, and that the Lord Jesus might find them with nothing for which they can be blamed when He comes, 5:23,24.

Conclusion, 5:25-28

Paul closed the letter in 5:25-28 with greetings, a command to read the letter before all the believers, and a blessing.

2 THESSALONIANS

Paul's second letter to the Thessalonians was written not long after he wrote the first one. It was written to encourage the believers there, who were still being persecuted, and to warn them about some things which were wrong. The minds of the believers in Thessalonica were very much occupied with the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. We remember how Paul wrote in his first letter that it was not possible to say when the Day of the Lord would come. It seems that some had been teaching the Thessalonians that the Day of the Lord had already come, 2:2 (Revised Version). They may have meant that the Day of judgment had already come and that the Lord Jesus had not yet come for them. They may have thought this because of the things which they were suffering. Or they may have meant that the Lord was going to appear right away. This teaching was being given as if it were a revelation from the Lord ("spirit", in 2:2, that is, the spirit of prophecy). And a letter, which was said to have been written by Paul, had been shown. Some of the Thessalonians had stopped working. It was as if they thought, "Since the Day of the Lord is already here, why should we bother to earn our living anymore?" This was a bad testimony to the world and was harmful to the believers themselves. See 3:11,12. So Paul wrote to explain things to them and to warn them.

We may outline this letter thus:

1. Greeting, 1:1,2
2. They were standing firm in persecution, 1:3-12
 - a. They were growing in grace, 1:3,4
 - b. The coming Day of judgment, 1:5-10
 - c. Paul prayed for them, 1:11,12
3. They should hold firmly what they had been taught, chapter 2
 - a. They should not be disturbed by a different teaching, 2:1,2
 - b. The things which must happen before the Day of the Lord comes, 2:3-12
 - c. God has called believers to salvation, 2:13-15
 - d. Paul's prayer for them, 2:16,17
4. Prayer and confidence, 3:1-5
5. They should stand firm in working, 3:6-15
6. Closing prayers and greeting, 3:16-18

They were standing firm in persecution, 1:3-12

In his first letter, Paul had thanked God for their faith, love, and hope. In this one he thanked God that they were growing in these. And he talked happily about them in other churches, because of the way they were going on in spite of the hard things which they were seeing, 1:3,4.

The persecution and their standing firm were like evidences of the judgment of God which was still to come, 1:5-10. They were suffering for the kingdom of God. God was giving them strength to stand firm, which showed that they belonged to Him. The world was making them suffer, which showed its evil nature. God's righteousness makes it necessary that He should cause the evil persecutors to suffer, and that He should give rest to those who are being persecuted for His sake. This will be seen when the Lord Jesus comes again with great power and glory. Then those who do not know God, who do not obey His Word, will be punished with eternal destruction from before Him. But His saints (those who have trusted in Him) will be saved by Him, and will rejoice to see His glory. All of this

has to do with the Day of the Lord. Paul's words here are to encourage the believers, because of the teaching he refers to in 2:12.

He closed chapter 1 with the prayer that God would purify them and make them holy, to His glory, 1:11,12.

They should hold firmly what they had been taught, 2:1-17

In chapter 2, Paul told them again about the Day of the Lord.

They should not be troubled by anyone who tried to tell them that the Day of the Lord had already come, 2:1,2.

Before that day comes, several things must happen, 2:3-12. There will first come the falling away (that is, men's final rejection of God and of His gospel), and then the Man of Sin will be revealed, 2:3. This is the evil man about whom we read so much in the Scripture. He is called "the Beast" in the book of the Revelation. He will call himself God and will demand that all men worship him, 2:4. See Revelation 13:8. Paul had already taught them this while he was with them, 2:5. Lawlessness was already working among men, but there was one who was keeping it back from working completely, 2:6,7. He did not tell us who that hinderer is. Many believers think it is the Holy Spirit in the Church. When the hinderer is taken away, then the Man of Sin will appear. He will show all kinds of miracles by the power of Satan, 2:9. See Revelation 13:12-14. The effect of his appearing and his miracles will be to deceive those who refuse to believe the gospel. They would not love the truth, so God will send them the lie so that they may believe that and go on to judgment, 2:10-12. But the Man of Sin will finally be destroyed by the Lord when He comes in glory, 2:8. See Revelation 19:19-21. That is when the Day of the Lord begins, when Christ appears in power to judge His enemies and to set up His kingdom on the earth.

But God has called believers to salvation, not to judgment, 2:13-15. So their sufferings did not mean that the Day of the Lord had come. Therefore, they should hold what they had already been taught and should not be disturbed by anyone who said that the day of God's judgment on the world had already come.

He closed this part with a prayer that they may be encouraged and made strong to do and to say what is good, 2:16,17.

Prayer and confidence, 3:1-5

In these verses, Paul first asked that they may pray for him in his trials, 3:1,2. Then he spoke of his confidence in the Lord to keep them in their trials, 3:3, and of his confidence in their obedience, 3:4. And he prayed that God might teach them to love as He loves and to be patient (or to stand firm) as Christ did in His life, 3:5.

They should stand firm in working, 3:6-15

Finally, he warned them that they should not be idle, but busy in working, 3:6-15. He exhorted them to have nothing to do with anyone who does not behave in an orderly way, 3:6. He himself had shown them how to behave. He had not acted disorderly, but had worked hard to earn his own living while among them. As an apostle, he had the right to ask them to support him, but he had wanted to be an example to them in working, 3:7-9. And he had taught them that a person who refused to work should not be given anything to eat, 3:10. Some of the Thessalonians were not working at all but were just meddling in other people's affairs, 3:11. Such people should act quietly and should work and eat food which they themselves had bought. They should not just let others support them, 3:12.

Christians should always do good deeds and not get tired of them, 3:13. If any man refused to obey Paul's command in this letter, he would be behaving disorderly. Other Christians should not have any company with him. They should try to make him feel ashamed of himself, 3:14. And yet they should not treat him like an enemy, but as a brother who should be warned, 3:15. All the teaching in this section is necessary for us today too.

He closed this letter with prayers and agreeing, 3:16-18.

TEST 6 1 & 2 Thessalonians

Choose the correct answer.

1. Paul and Silas started the church in Thessalonica on Paul's
 - a. first missionary journey.
 - b. second missionary journey.
 - c. third missionary journey.
2. After Paul left Thessalonica he went on to
 - a. Jerusalem.
 - b. Athens.
 - c. Rome.
3. Jews in Thessalonica told the Christians that Paul was
 - a. a deceiver.
 - b. an apostle.
 - c. a prophet.
4. The coming of Christ for His church is mentioned
 - a. only once in this letter.
 - b. only twice in this letter.
 - c. in every chapter.
5. Paul thanked God for the way in which the Thessalonians
 - a. honoured him.
 - b. received God's message.
 - c. gave him money.

Enter TRUE or FALSE after each statement.

6. As Christians the Day of the Lord will take us by surprise.
7. We should warn one another to be ready for the Lord's coming.
8. The Christians in Thessalonica were suffering for the kingdom of God.
9. The Man of Sin will call himself God and demand that all worship him.
10. God has called believers to salvation, not to judgment.

WHAT DO YOU SAY?

Who will go when the Lord comes? Explain your answer.

1 TIMOTHY

In the book of Acts, we are told of Paul's history only up to the time when he was first in prison in Rome. After the things we read about in Acts, Paul was let go out of prison. While he was free, he wrote this letter to Timothy.

Timothy was a young man who had been led to the Lord by Paul, 1:2. He became Paul's companion in the work of the Lord, and we read of him often as being with Paul on his journeys and in his work, Acts 16:1-3. Paul often sent him to help other believers. He was a man who really loved the Lord and His people and served them unselfishly. See for example Philippians 2:19-22. He seems to have been naturally a bit timid, 1 Corinthians 16:10. He needed to be told to be strong in the Lord, 2 Timothy 2:1.

After Paul was let go from prison, he came again to Ephesus and found that some of the teachers were teaching some things which did not help the believers. There was also some false teaching, and some were being deceived by it. So Paul asked Timothy to stay in Ephesus while he himself went on to Macedonia. He asked Timothy to warn those who were teaching things which were not helpful. And he asked him to warn the believers against the false teachings of others. After a time, Paul wrote this letter and sent it to Timothy so that Timothy might know how to act in caring for the church. See 1:3,4; 3:14,15. This letter

is very helpful to us all. And it is especially helpful to any man who gives all his time to serving the Lord and to helping His people.

Timothy was to warn the believers against teaching which had to do with stories not found in the Scriptures, 1:4. Some were also teaching the rules of the Law as if they applied to Christians, 1:7-11. They said that Christians should not eat some kinds of food and that it was wrong for them to marry, 4:1-4. It is probable that they taught, like the false teachers in Colossae, that the body was unclean and that it should be treated harshly, as if it were an enemy. From 2 Timothy 3:1-9, it seems that there were also teachers who were saying that a Christian could live an evil life and that there was nothing wrong about it. There was much of that dirty, false teaching in those days, just as there is today.

1 Timothy can be outlined like this:

1. Greeting, 1:1,2
2. Teachers and their teaching, 1:3-20
 - a. The command to them, 1:3-5
 - b. The mistake of some of them, 1:6,7
 - c. The right use of the Law, 1:8-11
 - d. How Paul was made a servant of Christ, 1:12-17
 - e. The command to Timothy, 1:18-20
3. Public prayer and worship, chapter 2
 - a. For whom we should pray and why, 2:1-7
 - b. The place of men and women in public worship, 2:8-15
4. Bishops and deacons, chapter 3
 - a. The character of bishops, 3:1-8
 - b. The character of deacons, 3:9-13
 - c. The reason for the teaching, 3:14-16
5. False teachers and true, chapter 4
 - a. The false teachers and their teaching, 4:1-5
 - b. The work of the true teacher, 4:6-16
6. Widows and elders, chapter 5
 - a. Timothy's attitude toward the believers, 5:1,2
 - b. Concerning widows, 5:3-16

- c. Treatment of elders, 5:17-20
- d. General instructions, 5:21-25
- 7. Servants and riches, 6:1-19
 - a. The attitude of servants, 6:1,2
 - b. The mistake of those who teach differently, 6:3-5
 - c. True gain and the deceitfulness of riches, 6:6-10
 - d. The fight of the believer, 6:11-16
 - e. The right way for the rich, 6:17-19
- 8. Closing exhortation, 6:20,21

Teachers and their teaching, 1:3-20

After his greeting to Timothy in 1:1,2, Paul reminded him how he had asked him to stay in Ephesus. He reminded him that he asked him to warn some men not to teach things which were not in the Scriptures, things which could only cause trouble. Such teaching never does God's work, 1:3,4. The aim of the command is that the teacher should show love. As we have seen, love is unselfish care for others. Love should come from a heart which is clean, from a conscience which does not know of having done anything wrong, and from a real faith, 1:5.

Some had left the pure heart, the good conscience, and the real faith. As a result, they had begun to talk nonsense. They did not know what they were talking about, 1:6,7. There are many so-called "teachers" like that today!

The Law is good if it is used in the right way, 1:8-11. Law is not made for righteous people. If all people were righteous, there would not be any law forbidding them to do evil. It is only because some people want to steal that there is a Law saying, "Thou shalt not steal." Paul always taught that Christians are not under the Law of Moses. Those who trust in Christ have been made righteous before God, and the Law can no longer condemn them. Not only so, but God has given them a new heart, and they now want to do His will, Romans 8:5-9; Galatians 5:18. Of course, if people call themselves Christians and live evil lives, then the Law can only condemn them. The right way to use the Law is

in condemning those who sin. It is not meant for true Christians, who live good lives by the power of the Holy Spirit.

This is according to the gospel which God had revealed to Paul. Thinking of how the gospel had been given to him makes Paul thank the Lord for the way He had saved him and had made him to be His servant, 1:12-17. Paul had been a very sinful man. He had not been an evil-living man, but he had hated Christ, 1:13. But the Lord Jesus had saved him so that others might see how great His mercy is, and thus trust in Him, 1:16.

Paul closed this part with a command to Timothy to defend the truth and to hold faith and a good conscience, 1:18-20. A person has a good conscience when he refuses to do anything for which his conscience might condemn him. A teacher of the Word of God must be careful to do nothing which he knows to be wrong. Some had not been careful and as a result, had left the faith of Christ, 1:19,20. This should be a warning to us.

Public prayer and worship, 2:1-15

The apostle then told Timothy how to teach the believers about public prayer.

First, he told him for whom we should pray and why, 2:1-7. We should pray for all men, 2:1, especially for rulers, 2:2. The Christian is never to oppose those who rule, but to remember them in prayer. He should pray that they may rule in a right way. He should pray that Christians might thus live quietly. The reason is that God wants all men to be saved, 2:4. He wants them to come to know the truth of 2:5,6. That was the truth of which Paul had been made a teacher, 2:7. We should follow Paul's teaching, not that of those who teach other things.

He then spoke of the place of men and women in public worship, 2:8-15. It is the men who should pray in public, 1:8 (see the Revised Version). They should be holy (that is, devoted to the Lord in their lives, and separate from sin). They should pray without any quarrelling among themselves. In those days, men prayed with their hands lifted

up toward heaven. That is why he speaks of “lifting up holy hands”. Women should dress in a neat and modest way. They should adorn themselves with good works, not with rich clothes or special ways of doing up their hair, 2:9,10. A woman is not to teach in public worship, but is to listen quietly, 2:11-15. Some people do not like this part of the Scripture, but we should remember that it is part of God’s Word to us.

Bishops and deacons, chapter 3

Verses 1 to 8 teach about bishops. When the New Testament mentions bishops, it does not mean what many people think of today when they talk of bishops. The bishop is the same as the elder. One church, or assembly, of believers would have many elders, or bishops. Their work is to care for and to teach the church. The word “bishop” means “overseer”. Not every man can be a bishop, or overseer. As leaders of the Lord’s people, bishops, or elders, should be men of very good character. This we can see in these verses, which we should study carefully.

Verses 9 to 13 give teaching about deacons. The word “deacon” means “servant”. The deacon is the servant of the church. His work is to care for the business of the church. He also should be a man of good character and should not be given the place of a deacon until he has been proved, 3:10.

These instructions were given to Timothy so that he and others might know how to behave in God’s house. God’s house is the Church, – not the building, but the group of people who believe in Christ. God lives in them, 1 Corinthians 3:16; Ephesians 2:22. True Christians uphold and support God’s truth, 3:15, which is Christ, 3:16.

False teachers and true, chapter 4

In this chapter, Paul wrote about false teachers, and how Timothy should act in godliness.

The false teachers and their teaching are mentioned, 4:1-5. When Paul spoke of the “last days” in verse 1, it does not mean that he was prophesying only of these days in which we live now. The false teach-

ers were already working then. Their teaching was inspired by demons, 4:1. It was dishonest, 4:2. The teachers had consciences which did not condemn them when they did wrong. They told people that they should not marry and that they should not eat some kinds of food, 4:3. In this age, God does not forbid His people to eat certain things, 4:4,5.

As one who teaches the truth, Timothy should teach believers like this, 4:6. He should refuse to follow fables, but should believe only in God's Word, 4:7. He should follow after godliness (that is, wholehearted devotion to the Lord), 4:7-10. He should not let anyone despise him because he was young, 4:12. Paul explained that by saying that Timothy should act in a good way so that people would honor him. If younger people do not wholly follow the Lord, older people who love the Lord cannot honor them. Timothy should be constantly active in teaching the believers. And he should be careful of his own behavior at all times, 4:13-16. In that way, he would save himself now from evil, and also those who listened to his teaching. The contrast between false teachers and true should be carefully studied in this chapter.

Widows and elders, chapter 5

Paul first told Timothy how to act toward the believers. He mentioned older men and younger men, older women and younger ones, 5:1,2. A teacher of God's Word should show proper respect for others and should live a pure life.

Then he mentioned widows, 5:3-16. In the time of the early Church, it was very hard for widows to live, and there were some for whom the church provided. But if a widow had relatives, children or grandchildren, then these should care for her so that the church would not have the burden, 5:4-8,16. Any believer who refuses to care for a relative who is in need denies the faith. He acts like an unbeliever. A widow who was to be cared for by the church should have a good character, 5:5,6. It would seem that, in verses 9 to 15, he was speaking of some widows who devoted themselves to helping others for the Lord's sake. No one should be put on such a list unless sixty years old, having

had a good character, 5:9,10. Younger widows should marry again, and be good wives and mothers, 5:11-15.

In verses 17 to 20, Paul spoke of the treatment of elders. Those who rule well in the church should have double “honor”, that is to say, double help from the church, 5:17,18. That is especially so if they are active in teaching others the Word of God. An elder should only be accused of wrong -doing if there are two or three witnesses to prove it, 5:19. Those who do wrong should be rebuked in public as a warning to others, 5:20.

General instructions are given in 5:21-25. Timothy was to keep these commands without partiality, 5:21. That is to say, he was not to treat some in a special way because he liked them better than others. He should not approve hastily of any man. He should wait until he was sure what the man is really like. Otherwise, he would be partly responsible for any wrong the man might do, 5:22. He should use a little wine as a medicine for his stomach, 5:23. Some people have quoted this verse to justify themselves for drinking too much. This is very wrong, and is against other Scriptures. See for example Ephesians 5:18. It can be seen at once what some men are really like, for their works are plainly good or bad. Others will sooner or later show by their acts what they really are in their hearts, 5:24,25.

Servants and riches, 6:1-19

Servants should honor their masters, 6:1,2. “Under the yoke” means that these servants were slaves. If they did not give proper honor to their masters, it would cause the testimony to be spoken against. That is true today where Christian people work for others. Christian servants might be tempted to treat their masters with disrespect when their masters also are believers. But they should remember that they are working for their brothers in Christ. They should love them and help them more willingly.

Anyone who taught differently was just a foolish trouble-maker, 6:3-5. Such false teachers thought that being a believer was just a way

to make money, 6:5. But following the Lord happily is itself the true gain, 6:6. We cannot take riches with us when we leave the world, 6:7,8. So we should be content if we have enough to wear and to eat. Seeking for riches will only cause a man to go astray from the faith, as some had already done, 6:9,10. Riches seem to promise happiness, but often they bring only sorrow, as some had found for themselves.

Timothy should avoid such things and follow after the true riches, 6:11-16. This would be a fight, for there are always enemies who seek to turn us away from the faith, 6:12.

The right way for the rich is spoken of in 6:17-19. Those who are rich should not be proud of it, nor trust in their riches. They should trust in God, 6:17. All good things are His gifts. We should trust in the Giver, not in what He gives to us. Those who have wealth should give to those who are in need. They will thus lay up treasures in heaven, 6:18,19. We will leave all our earthly possessions behind when we die. So we should use them now for the Lord, and so get possessions in heaven. That does not mean that we can get eternal life by giving our possessions. Eternal life is a free gift to those who trust in Christ. But rich people who are saved can become even richer by the right use of their money now. If they use it for the Lord, He will someday give them a reward, in addition to the Life which they have through faith in Christ. Even if we are not rich, the same thing is true of us. If we use all we have for ourselves alone, we will leave it all behind. But if we use it for the Lord, we also will win a reward.

Closing exhortation, 6:20,21

Paul closed this letter to Timothy with a strong appeal to him to guard the faith revealed by God. He also told him to have nothing to do with empty talk or with what some people falsely call “science” or “knowledge”, 6:20,21. There has always been a worldly “knowledge” which has opposed the Word of God. We should be on our guard against it even today.

TEST 7 1 Timothy

Choose the correct answer.

1. By nature Timothy was
 - a. proud.
 - b. brave.
 - c. timid.
2. Paul left Timothy in the city of
 - a. Jerusalem.
 - b. Ephesus.
 - c. Rome.
3. Some false teachers were saying that a Christian could
 - a. live an evil life.
 - b. know God's will.
 - c. serve the Lord.
4. A teacher of God's Word should
 - a. have all knowledge.
 - b. show love.
 - c. do miracles.
5. Paul taught that Christians
 - a. are under the law of Moses.
 - b. are not under the law of Moses.
 - c. should trust in their own good works.

Enter TRUE or FALSE after each statement.

6. God wants all men to know the truth.
7. The word bishop means servant.
8. Paul told Timothy that he should believe only in God's Word.
9. Paul taught that the church should provide for all the widows.
10. Seeking for riches on earth will help us in our faith.

WHAT DO YOU SAY?

Why and how should we *guard the faith* even today?

2 TIMOTHY

Paul's second letter to Timothy was written when Paul was in prison in Rome for the second time. He had been arrested again and was being tried. See 4:16. About that time, there had been a big fire in Rome. Some people think that the king, Nero, started the fire. Many houses had been burned. Nero falsely accused the Christians of having started the fire. He caused many of them to be killed in very cruel ways. Probably Paul was arrested as one of the leaders of the Christians. When Paul wrote this letter, many of the Christians were afraid to act as his friends, and they had forsaken him, 1:15; 4:10,11,16. Paul knew that his death was near, 4:6. He knew also that Timothy was naturally timid, and he feared that Timothy, too, might be afraid to go on preaching the Word of God. He knew also that there were some men who had begun to teach things which were not according to the gospel. And he wanted to warn Timothy against those foolish teachings. He knew that God would take care of the gospel which He had revealed to him. But he wanted Timothy also to do his part in defending it, 1:13; 2:2; 3:14; 4:1,2. This letter is the last letter which Paul wrote before he was killed.

We may outline 2 Timothy like this:

1. Greeting, 1:1,2
2. Timothy should not be afraid, 1:3-18
 - a. Paul remembered Timothy's love and faith, 1:3-5

- b. Timothy should go on working without fear, 1:6,7
- c. He should not be ashamed of the gospel, 1:8-10
- d. Paul himself is an example, 1:10-12
- e. Timothy should take care of the Word of God, 1:13,14
- f. Some who had been ashamed, and one who had not, 1:15-18
- 3. Timothy should seek the Lord's approval, chapter 2
 - a. He should be strong and teach the truth, 2:1-3
 - b. He should act so as to win the reward, 2:4-13
 - c. He should avoid wrong words and quarrels, 2:14-26
- 4. Timothy should keep on following the truth which has been revealed, 3:1 - 4:8
 - a. What enemies of the truth will be like, 3:1-9
 - b. Those who follow the truth will be persecuted, 3:10-13
 - c. He who has the truth should not let it go, 3:14-17
 - d. He should teach the truth always, 4:1-5
 - e. Paul has been faithful and now expects the reward, 4:6-8
- 5. Final words, 4:9-22
 - a. Concerning friends and enemies, 4:9-15
 - b. Men's faithlessness and the Lord's help, 4:16-18
 - c. Greetings and conclusion, 4:19-22

Timothy should not be afraid, 1:3-18

After greeting Timothy in 1:1,2, Paul was reminded of Timothy's love for him. He remembered how Timothy wept when parted from him, 1:4. And he remembered Timothy's true faith, and how he had been brought up by a faithful mother, who had a faithful mother also, 1:5.

Timothy should remember and should not become careless about teaching the Word, 1:6. The "gift" means a gift of serving the Lord, as in 1 Corinthians 12:8-11,28. In the beginning, these gifts were sometimes given when elders laid their hands on younger men. Now every believer is given some service by the Holy Spirit who lives in him. A spirit of fear does not come from God. He gives us strength and love

to enable us to serve Him, 1:7.

Therefore, Timothy should not be ashamed of the gospel, 1:8-10. When Christians began to be persecuted, some had been afraid. They had forsaken Paul, lest they themselves should be made to suffer. This had hurt Paul very much indeed. God has saved us with a great salvation, and the glorious gospel is nothing to be ashamed of.

Paul himself was an example for Timothy to follow, 1:10-12. He had been chosen of God as a teacher of the Word, and as a result he was suffering greatly. But he was not ashamed. He knew the One in whom he had believed, and knew that He could keep his soul to the end, even in troubles such as he was going through.

Meanwhile, Timothy should take care of the Word of God, 1:13,14. In those days, the New Testament was not yet complete, and the gospel was being taught by word of mouth by teachers like Timothy. It was therefore especially necessary that Timothy and those like him should be careful to teach only what they had heard from the apostles. Even now, when we have the apostles' teaching in the New Testament, we should be very careful that we teach only the truth which we find there. We should not teach anything which men just make up. The Word of God is not something which we may play with.

Paul closed this chapter with a reference to some who had been ashamed of him, and to one who had not, 1:15-18. All those in Asia had turned against him. They had been afraid to help him after he had been arrested, 1:15. But Onesiphorus had not been ashamed. He had carefully looked for him even when he was in Rome. He had also helped him (and probably Timothy also) in Ephesus, 1:16-18.

Timothy should seek the Lord's approval, chapter 2

In this chapter, Paul reminded Timothy that he should so work that the Lord might approve of him and reward him. We do not serve the Lord for pay, but the Lord does tell us that He wants to give us a reward for serving Him faithfully.

Timothy should be strong in the Lord, 2:1. He should teach the Word to other men, who could pass it on, 2:2. And he should be willing to see hard things for the sake of the gospel, 2:3.

In verses 4 to 13 Paul reminded him of the reward which is to be won. In order to win it, the Lord's servant must seek to please Him in what he does and in the way he does it. Paul gave two examples. First, the Lord Himself endured, and has risen from the dead, 2:8. Second, Paul himself was suffering for the gospel's sake and for the sake of the Lord's people, 2:9,10. Verses 11 to 13 are supposed to be part of a hymn considering faithfulness and unfaithfulness.

In desiring to please the Lord, the Lord's servant must be careful what and how he teaches. He should avoid foolish words which are not according to the gospel which God has revealed, 2:14-18. Such false teachings always produce evil living. He should avoid all evil, 2:19-22. And he should avoid quarrelling about things which do not really matter, 2:23-26. His desire must be to win men for the Lord, not just to win arguments about foolish questions.

Timothy should keep on following the truth
which has been revealed, 3:1 - 4:8

Men will appear who oppose the truth and who follow evil things, 3:1-9. He mentioned the "last days" in verse 1, but in verse 5 he told Timothy to turn away from people like that. So they were already there when he wrote. And there are many people like them these days too, men who live evil lives and who hate the true gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Their foolishness will some day be shown publicly.

Timothy had seen Paul's life and had also seen what Paul had suffered for the gospel, 3:10,11. And so any man who follows Christ with his whole heart must expect to suffer for it. The people of the world do not love the true gospel nor do they really love people who obey it. Evil men and lying teachers are always more pleasing to the world than are those who love the Lord Jesus Christ. This we must know and not be surprised if we have to suffer for Him, 3:12,13.

Even so, Timothy should not let the truth go, 3:14-17. He should remember what the men were like who had taught it to him, 3:14. They were not evil men nor liars. And he should remember the Scriptures which he had known since he was a child, 3:15-17. At the time of Timothy's childhood, of course, they had only the Old Testament. We also should have our minds filled with the Scriptures, especially the New Testament. Then we shall not be moved away from the truth. We should not only study about the Scriptures; we should study the Scriptures themselves. In the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, we have all we need to know in order to be kept in the truth.

Timothy should constantly teach the truth which had been shown to him, 4:1-5. Paul could see the time coming when people would not want to listen to the truth. They would look for teachers who would teach them things they wanted to hear. There are many such teachers today and many people who want to listen to them. But we should keep on teaching the truth, whether people will listen or not. See Ezekiel 2:7.

Again Paul spoke of himself as an example, 4:6-8. He had been faithful. He had not let go of the truth. He had kept the faith. He was about to die, but he knew that the righteous Judge will give him the reward at the last day. As we have seen, salvation is a free gift. It is not given to us because of our own works. But the one who serves Christ faithfully is promised a reward also. We can win this reward only by doing God's will and by holding His Word fast.

Paul's final words, 4:9-22

He mentioned some friends and some enemies in 4:9-15. He evidently felt his loneliness very much and wanted Timothy to come to him as soon as he could.

Men had forsaken him, but the Lord had not. And he knew that the Lord would continue to stand by him to the end, 4:16-18. Evidently, during the first part of his trial, Paul had a chance to preach the gospel clearly, and he had not been afraid to do it even in the king's court. That

is a good example of faithfulness.

He closed with greetings in 4:19-22, and in verse 21 he again asked Timothy to come to him quickly. We do not know whether Timothy was able to get to him in time or whether he never again saw his beloved teacher, who had led him to Christ.

TITUS

Titus, like Timothy, was one of Paul's younger companions in the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. We do not know very much about Tim. We do know that he was one of Paul's converts, for he calls him "my own son" in 1:4. We read of him in 2 Corinthians, where we find that he was sent by the apostle Paul to take letters to Corinth and to help the Corinthians when things were wrong among them. See 2 Corinthians 2:13; 7:6,13,14; 8:6,16,23; 12:18. He was with Paul also when he went to Jerusalem, as we read in Acts 15 and Galatians 2:1. It is clear that Titus was a Gentile. In 2 Timothy 4:10, we find that Titus had left Paul in Rome at the end, but we do not know why. It may have been that he visited him there and that Paul sent him on some errand. That, with what we read in this letter, is all we know about Titus.

This letter was written about the same time as 1 Timothy and is somewhat like that letter. In both of them, the apostle wrote to tell younger men about their work. After Paul had been let go from prison the first time, he seems to have gone on another missionary journey. He came to the island called Crete, and he must have found some groups of Christians there. Some groups may have been formed while he was there. But things were not yet all in order among them. And he did not have time to stay there and put them in order. So he left Titus behind so that he might arrange things in those churches. Soon afterward, he wrote this letter to help Titus to know how he should work.

We may outline this letter like this:

1. Introduction and greeting, 1:1-4
2. About elders and teachers, 1:5-16
 - a. What elders should be like, 1:5-9
 - b. How the Cretans should be warned, 1:10-14
 - c. What some of the false teachers were like, 1:15,16
3. How Titus should teach and guide believers, 2:1 - 3:11
 - a. Older people, 2:1-5
 - b. Younger men, 2:6-8
 - c. Servants, 2:9,10
 - d. The reason for Christian behavior, 2:11-14
(Titus should teach with authority, 2:15.)
 - e. Behavior towards others and the reason for it, 3:1-8
 - f. Titus should avoid things which do not help, 3:9
 - g. Those who make trouble should be rejected, 3:10,11
4. Closing instructions and greetings, 3:12-15

Introduction and greeting, 1:1-4

In his introduction, Paul spoke of his apostleship and mentioned that “the truth is according to godliness”, 1:1-4. This he also spoke about later, as we shall see. The Cretans were inclined to be lazy and to live bad lives. In this letter, Paul noted that a real knowledge of the truth of God will lead men to live good lives, not bad ones. This is an important thing for us to remember for ourselves.

About elders and teachers, 1:5-16

Paul then reminded Titus why he had been left in Crete, and he spoke especially about elders for the various churches, 1:5-9. You will notice here, in verses 5 and 7, that the words “elder” and “bishop” mean the same man. And you will also notice that every church had more than one elder. These men are called elders because they are older men who know the Lord. They are called “bishops”, or “overseers”, because they care for and guide the Christians. Verses 6 to 9 should be

studied carefully, and those who think that they are, or that they should be elders should examine themselves as to whether these things are true about them. Elders should be men of good character, having children who are believers and who obey them. They should also believe the truth and should be able to teach and to help others. While elders were sometimes appointed by the apostles at the first, they are now set apart by the Holy Spirit. They can be known by what they are and by the way they help and care for other believers.

In verses 10 to 14, Paul told how the Cretans needed to be warned. That is why the elders should be able to teach and why Titus should speak firmly to them. Cretans were known to be lazy, and lazy people often get into trouble, 1:12. Many of the Cretans had a tendency to teach things which could not help people. Some of the Cretan Jews (“those of the circumcision”) were the worst in this, 1:10. Some taught for pay, not because they loved the Lord, 1:11. So Titus should rebuke them, 1:13. The “Jewish fables” referred to are fanciful stories which the Jews had made up and added on to the Scriptures. The “commandments of men” are rules which the Jews had added to the Scriptures, 1:14. See Matthew 15:9.

Paul then spoke of what some of the false teachers were like. They were impure in mind, and so they thought that even pure things were wrong. Maybe some of them were saying that marriage was not clean, like those in 1 Timothy 4:3. There are some teachers today who say that too. But it is only because their own minds are not clean. And even some of those very teachers were living bad lives, 1:15,16. A man who says that he knows God, and yet lives a bad life, is saying one thing with his mouth and another thing with his deeds. He has not yet learned that “the truth is according to godliness”.

How Titus should teach and guide believers, 2:1 - 3:11

Older men and women should be taught to live quiet, righteous lives and should be an example to others, 2:2-5. The older women should teach the younger ones to be good wives and mothers, and to

do their duties quietly. If they do not, others may see it and say that the gospel is not true, 2:5.

Younger men also should be men who think quietly and use self-control, 2:6. They should not act foolishly, like young men of the world so often do. Titus himself should be an example to them in this, both in his teaching and in his conduct, 2:7,8.

Servants should obey their masters and should act faithfully and honestly. Thus others, in seeing them, might be drawn to the gospel, 2:9,10.

The reason for Christians living good lives is given in 2:11-14. God's grace has appeared to us. It has brought salvation to us. And it teaches us to refuse all evil, to do what is good, and to wait for the Lord Jesus to come for us as He has promised to do.

Titus should teach these things with authority, as Paul's representative, 2:15.

In 3:1-8, Paul spoke of general behavior of the believers towards others. They should obey rulers, 3:1. They should not be hard, nor speak against any man. They should be gentle to all, 3:2. The reason is that Christians are no better than others. We were just as bad as the worst men. We have not been saved because of anything good which we have done. It is only because of what God has done for us in Christ, 3:3-7. Therefore, we have nothing to be proud of or to boast about. Only proud people look down on others and talk against them. Therefore, we should always do what is good and help others, even those who are still bad, 3:8.

Titus should teach these things. He should avoid foolish talk, which does not help anyone, 3:8,9.

A man who makes trouble should be warned, twice if necessary. Then, if he still refuses to obey, he should be rejected, 3:10,11. Paul was thinking of Christians who cause trouble among other Christians.

Closing instructions and greetings, 3:12-15

The letter closes with instructions about people, 3:12,13, with another word about Christians doing good works (or, as it may mean, working at honest jobs) so as to help others, and with final greetings, 3:15.

PHILEMON

Paul's letter to Philemon was written at the same time that he wrote the letter to the Colossians. It was while Paul was a prisoner in Rome the first time. The letter to the Colossians was sent to the church there. This letter was sent to one of the Christians of the church at Colossae.

The story of the letter is clear when we read the letter itself. Philemon had a slave called Onesimus (in those days, people had not yet realized that slavery was wrong). Onesimus did something wrong (see verse 18), and then was afraid and ran away from Philemon. He went to Rome. There he met Paul who led him to Christ, v.10. Probably he stayed some time with Paul, and served him lovingly. He must have shown how real his new life was, for in Colossians 4:9 Paul called him "the faithful and beloved brother".

Paul could have wished to keep Onesimus in Rome. But since he really belonged to Philemon, he sent him back to Colossae with Tychicus. Tychicus was the one who took the Colossian letter to the church, Colossians 4:7. It may be that Onesimus felt afraid because of the wrong which he had done to Philemon. In those days, masters could do anything they wanted to their slaves. And to run away from a master was a very great crime. The letter to Philemon was written to ask Philemon to forgive Onesimus and to receive him in a kindly way as his

brother in Christ.

The letter is very simple, but it shows us something of Paul's great love for those who belonged to Christ.

1. Greetings, vs. 1-3
2. Paul was glad for Philemon's real love, vs. 4-7
3. He asked him to receive Onesimus with kindness, vs. 8-20
4. He asked him to be ready to receive him if he comes, vs. 21,22
5. Closing greetings, vs. 23-25

Paul was "a prisoner of Christ Jesus", that is, a prisoner because of the Lord's work. Apphia is thought to have been Philemon's wife. Archippus may have been an evangelist living then in Philemon's house. See Colossians 4:17. The church in Philemon's house was the group of believers who used to meet there. In those days there were no church buildings or halls such as we have today. Christians used often to meet in homes, or wherever they could.

The reality of Philemon's faith and love had been told to Paul, vs. 4-7. No doubt, Paul had spoken with others about Onesimus, and they had told him what a good man Philemon was. Possibly even Onesimus, after he had been converted, had been able to remember, and had told Paul. Paul mentioned Philemon's goodness as a reason for his confidence that Philemon would be kind to Onesimus when he came back.

He asked Philemon to be good to Onesimus and to receive him like Paul's son, out of love for Paul himself, vs. 8-10. Onesimus had been unprofitable to Philemon, but was now profitable, v.11. The name Onesimus means "profitable". Paul had wanted to keep Onesimus to help him while he was in prison in Rome. But he would not do so unless Philemon agreed, vs. 12-14. Though Onesimus had done wrong and had run away, it may have been God's way of bringing him to Christ, so that he could come back again to Philemon as a brother in Christ, vs. 15,16. Philemon should receive him as if he were receiving Paul, v.17. And if Onesimus had taken anything from Philemon, Paul himself will pay it, vs. 18,19! From verse 19, we see that Philemon also

was one of Paul's converts. Paul asked Philemon to rest his heart in showing Onesimus this kindness and love, as he had rested the hearts of Christians in Colossae by his help to them, vs. 20, 7.

Paul trusted Philemon to do even more than he asked, and he said that he hoped soon to be free from prison in answer to their prayers, and to come and visit him, vs. 21, 22.

The letter closes with greetings and a blessing, vs. 23-25.

TEST 8 2 Timothy - Titus - Philemon

Choose the correct answer.

1. Paul told Timothy to
 - a. hide from the Romans.
 - b. defend the truth of the Gospel.
 - c. help him to get out of prison.
2. Paul remembered Timothy's
 - a. true faith.
 - b. great courage.
 - c. strong character.
3. One who was not ashamed to help Paul was
 - a. Phygelus.
 - b. Hermogenes.
 - c. Onesiphorus.
4. Anyone who follows Christ must expect to
 - a. suffer for it.
 - b. have success in this world.
 - c. have an easy life.
5. Paul said that he had
 - a. kept the law.
 - b. kept the faith.
 - c. kept the traditions of the Jews.

Enter TRUE or FALSE after each statement.

6. Paul left Titus in Corinth to help the churches there.
7. A real knowledge of the truth of God leads men to live good lives.
8. God saves us because of the good things we have done.
9. Philemon was a believer in the church in Ephesus.
10. The name Onesimus means profitable.

WHAT DO YOU SAY?

In what ways are we like Onesimus?

HEBREWS

We do not know who wrote this letter. Some English Bibles call it “The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews.” But we have already seen that the titles in our English Bibles are not inspired. Most people today think that Paul was not the real writer of this letter. It seems plain that whoever wrote it wrote to believers who, before their conversion, had been Jews, or “Hebrews”. That is where the letter gets its name. But no one knows for sure where these believers were living, as the letter does not tell us.

As we read the letter, we see that the believers were suffering persecution for their faith. They had been persecuted from the beginning, 10:32-34. But quite a time had passed, and the persecution had kept up. It may be that they were not being killed, as some believers were. See 12:4, for example. But their own friends and relatives were probably making fun of them and treating them with contempt. And we all know that it is harder to stand day after day than it is really to die for Christ. Then, too, they had expected the Lord to come quickly and to take them to heaven. But a long time had passed, and He had not come. They were tempted to feel discouraged. See 6:13-15; 10:36,37. Some were being tempted to go back to their old Jewish faith. After all, they may have thought, the things in the Law were given by God. It would not be like Gentiles being tempted to go back to idolatry. When Jews come to Christ, it is often harder for them to leave their old life than it is for Gentiles to leave theirs.

Therefore, the writer sent them this letter, to show them how much better the new things are which have come to them through Christ. The old things were only a picture of what we now have. They were only for a time, until the new should come. The Law could never save people. Salvation has come to us through what Christ has done. Therefore, to leave Him would be leaving the reality. To go back to the old things would be going back to the pictures which could not help any one. Note the number of times you find such words as “better”, 1:4; 7:7,19,22; 8:6; 9:23; 10:34; 11:40; 12:24; “greater”, 9:11; 11:26; and “perfect”, 2:10; 5:9; 7:19; 9:9,11; 10:1; 11:40; 12:23; 13:21, in this letter.

Hebrews is a wonderful letter. If we study it carefully, it will save us from much false teaching. Some passages in Hebrews (like chapter 6) have caused difficulty to some people. But we should remember that the writer mentioned people according to their profession of faith. They said that they were Christians, so he wrote to them like that. But if they turned back from Christ, it would seem to show that they were not really His, 3:14. So they are warned about apostasy (that is, about turning against Christ), lest they come into judgment. You will notice how the writer’s teaching results in warnings, and then these lead to more teaching. See 2:1-4; 3:1; 3:7 - 4:14; 6:1-20; 10:19-39; 12:1-29; 13:10-14.

We may outline the letter like this:

1. Christ as Prophet, chapters 1 to 4
 - a. Greater than the prophets, 1:1-3
 - b. Greater than the angels, 1:4-2:18
 - c. Greater than Moses, 3:1-6
 - d. Warning and exhortation: the rest given to those who obey, 3:7- 4:16
2. Christ as Priest, chapters 5 to 10
 - a. Introduction, 5:1-14
 - b. Warning and exhortation, 6:1-20
 - c. The picture of Melchizedek, 7:1-28
 - d. The better covenant, 8:1 -10:18
 - e. Warning and exhortation, 10:19-39

3. The importance of faith, chapters 11 to 12
 - a. What faith is, 11:1-3
 - b. Examples of faith, 11:4-40
 - c. Exhortation and warning, 12:1-29
4. Closing instructions and greetings, chapter 13

Christ as Prophet, chapters 1 to 4

In the first section, the writer spoke of Christ as Prophet. A prophet is one who speaks for God. God speaks to him and then inspires him to tell God's words to the people. When the writer mentioned Christ in this way, he was speaking of God's message to men. God had spoken finally to us in Christ, 1:2.

Christ is greater than those prophets through whom God spoke in old times, 1:1-3. They were only men, but Christ is the Son of God. All things were made for Him and by Him, 1:2. He is the shining-out of God's glory. He is just what God is. See John 14:9. And He is the One who keeps the whole universe in being, 1:3. He came and made atonement for our sins, and then He went back and sat down at God's right hand. The writer's purpose in telling them this is to show that God's revelation to us in Christ is greater than that of other times. His Messenger is greater. (Note the number of times Christ is called "the Son" in this letter: 1:2,5,8; 3:6; 4:14; 5:5,8; 6:6; 7:3,28; 10:29.)

Then, too, He is greater than the angels, 1:4 - 2:18. The writer mentioned this because the Law, which was given to Moses by God, was given through the work of angels. See Galatians 3:19. Christ is greater than the angels, so His message is greater.

Christ has a greater Name than that of angels. He is called the Son of God, in a way in which no angel was ever called. And God tells the angels to worship Him, 1:4-6. For "firstborn" in verse 6, compare Colossians 1:15, and read what we noted there. And He is called the Lord (Jehovah), the Creator of all things, who lives forever and never changes, 1:10-12. Not only so, but His position is higher than that of angels, for God never told any angel to sit at His right hand as He has

told Christ to do, 1:13,14. This first chapter is important for us to remember. There are some people today who try to tell us that Christ was created and that He was a great angel. Here we see how very much greater than that He really is. He is the Son of God, Himself God, Jehovah, the eternal Creator of all things.

Since He is so much greater than the angels, through whom God gave the Law, His message is of much greater importance, 2:1-4. Those who disobeyed the Law were punished. If we neglect the greater message of Christ, which He Himself first preached, how shall we escape punishment? This is the writer's first warning to them not to turn away from Christ. Christ is God's final and greatest messenger to men. If men reject Him, there can be no salvation for them.

From chapter 2, verse 5, to the end of the chapter, the writer speaks of the Son of God's greater place as Son of Man. Even in His manhood, He is greater than the angels. God never made angels rulers of the world to come, 2:5. God made man a little lower than angels and made him to be ruler of all things. But men are not yet rulers of all things, 2:6-8. But the Son of God was made to be lower than the angels when He became Man, and now we see Him crowned with glory and honor, and so placed above the angels, 2:9.

The Son of God had to be made lower than angels in order to become the Savior of men through suffering for them. Those whom He sanctifies (sets apart for God, or saves) are sons of God, 2:10. He is the Son of God. Thus, the people He saves are like His brothers. So He had to be made like them, in order that He might be able to save them and to help them in their trials, 2:14-18. When He became Man, He suffered the same kind of trials that other men suffer. So now He is able to help those who trust in Him. In these words, the writer started to think of Christ's work as Priest, that is, as our helper before God. But he had not yet left the thought of God's message through Christ, so he went on to speak of the prophet Moses, to whom God gave the Law for Israel.

Christ is greater than Moses, 3:1-6. He was faithful to God, as Moses was, 3:2. But there is a great difference. Moses was only a ser-

vant in God's household, prophesying of things which were still future (that is, of the things of Christ). But Christ is God's Son, who rules over God's household, 3:3-5. The same honor is due to the Son as is due to His Father (see verse 3). We are God's household, over which Christ rules, if we continue trusting in Him to the end, 3:6. If we throw away our trust in Him, it would show that we are not really His. Compare 1 Corinthians 15:2.

From 3:7 to the end of chapter 4, there is a long section of warning and exhortation.

In Psalm 95 are found the words quoted in verses 7 to 11. God warns men not to harden their hearts as those did in the wilderness, who were thus not able to enter into God's rest. Those who did not believe God and so disobeyed Him are a warning to us, 3:12-18. See Numbers 14 for the history mentioned here.

In 4:1-10, the writer explained what he meant when he spoke of God's rest. When God made the world, He finished His work, and rested on the seventh day, 4:4. That is to say, He stopped the work of creating, since His work was done. When He said that those who disobeyed Him should not enter into His rest, it showed that there were some other people who would enjoy that rest, 4:5. Now those who went into the land of Canaan under Joshua ("Jesus" is the Greek form of the Hebrew name "Joshua", which means "Jehovah is Savior") did not find that rest. That is shown, because after a long time had passed, God mentioned another day. That was when He said, "Do not harden your hearts today," 4:7,8. That shows that there is still a Sabbath of rest for the people of God, 4:9. That rest is enjoyed by us who believe, 4:3, when we stop our own works as God stopped His, 4:10. That means that we stop depending on our own works for salvation, and rest in the work which God has finished for us in Christ.

The writer closed this part with an exhortation to them to go on and make sure that they really get into that rest. They should be sure that they do not stop short of believing, as the Israelites did, 4:11. The Word of God is heart-searching, and nothing can be hidden from Him,

4:12,13. The writer also exhorted them to hold fast the faith which they have confessed, because believers have a High Priest in heaven who is able to understand and to sympathize with them in all their trials. Therefore, we may come without fear to Him whenever we are in need, and He will not be slow to help us, 4:14-16. This should keep us from getting discouraged.

Christ as Priest, chapters 5 to 10

This brings the writer to the subject which takes up the larger part of his letter: the subject of Christ as Priest. This subject covers chapters 5 to 10.

What is a priest? A priest is one who comes before God for others. He offers sacrifice for them, enters into the presence of God for them, and prays for them. In this section of the letter, the writer shows that Christ is a greater priest than the priests of the Old Testament. His work as priest is real, where their work was only like a shadow.

He introduces his subject in 5:1-14. He first described the work of a priest in 5:1-3. Then he showed how priests are always appointed by God, and how Christ was appointed, 5:4-6. Christ learned (that is, He experienced) obedience in His sufferings, and so became perfect as a priest, 5:7-10. That means the same as what we find in 2:18. Christ became able to sympathize with us in our trials because He Himself went through the same experiences.

Now the writer has twice mentioned Melchizedek, in verses 6 and 10, quoting Psalm 110:4. He wanted to say more about Melchizedek but feared that the Hebrews may not be able to understand. They have become more like babies than grownups in Christ, 5:11-14. A teacher cannot teach children in the same way as he would teach grown-ups. See 1 Corinthians 3:1,2. As people learn more about Christ, they can be taught more. Many Christians are like babies all their lives and can never be taught the greater things of God's Word. They can understand only very simple things. They never grow up. This is a great pity. Children are easily deceived. See Ephesians 4:14.

He therefore warned and exhorted them in chapter 6. He exhorted them to go on, and not to keep going back to the things of the beginning all the time, 6:1,2. And he warned them of the danger of rejecting Christ, 6:3-8. It is possible for those to whom God has once spoken to turn back and to harden their hearts against Christ so that God can never again speak to them. Indeed, those who harden their hearts against Christ may find that God makes them blind, so that they can never again see the true light. It is thus a fearful thing for any one to profess to know Christ, and then to turn his back on Him as the Hebrews were being tempted to do.

However, while he warned them of the danger, he was sure that they had not turned away from Christ. And he was sure that they would never do so, 6:9-12. He was sure that God would keep them, and he exhorted them to keep on hoping in Christ until the end. They needed faith and patience, and then eventually they would see all God's promises fulfilled.

For God is faithful, 6:13-20. He confirmed His promise to Abraham with an oath. Abraham rested in God's promise, and the promise was finally fulfilled to him. God swore by Himself in order that we also might know that God's promises can be trusted. What He has said He will surely do. The two unchangeable things of verse 18 are God's promise and God's oath. God cannot lie in either one. So our hope in Christ is sure. It is like an anchor which cannot move, and it is one which goes into God's very presence, where our Lord Jesus has gone for us. He is a forerunner. That is to say, He has gone on before us. And we are sure that we shall eventually follow Him there into God's presence. For the meaning of "within the veil", see 9:1-12.

In chapter 7, the writer spoke about Melchizedek as a type, or picture, of Christ. Read the story in Genesis 14:18-20.

First, he showed how Melchizedek is a picture of Christ, in verses 1 to 3. The name Melchizedek means "King of righteousness" in Hebrew. He is called "King of Salem" in Genesis, and Salem means "peace". So Christ is the One who is both King of righteousness and

King of peace. He atones for our sins in righteousness, and He makes peace for us with God. What the writer says about Melchizedek in verse 3 means only that the story of Melchizedek in Genesis says nothing about his father, mother, birth, or death. The writer takes that like a picture of Christ, who, as Son of God, has neither beginning nor end, but exists forever (as we saw in chapter 1).

Then he showed how great Melchizedek was, 7:4-10. Abraham, the highly honored father of the Jews, paid tithes to him, and Melchizedek blessed Abraham, 7:4-7. Levi, the father of the Old Testament priests, had not yet been born. It was as if he were still in Abraham's body when Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek. That, says the writer, is like a picture of Levi himself paying the tithes. In all this, he meant that, since God called Christ "a priest after the order of Melchizedek", it was like saying that Christ is greater than Abraham, and greater than the priests of the Old Covenant.

He then showed that, since God spoke of a priesthood of a different kind from that of the Levites, it meant that He was going to make a different covenant with His people, 7:13-15. Since Christ's priesthood is like Melchizedek's, it has nothing to do with the Law, which spoke of the priests descended from Levi, 7:16,17. That meant that God had set aside the old Law. The reason is that the Law could never make people perfect in God's sight, 7:18,19. That is because the sacrifices of the Law could not cleanse people from sin, as we see in chapter 9. Perfection comes to us as God's free gift in Christ, and so we can draw near to God in Him alone. You will notice that "perfection" is used in Hebrews like "justification" in Romans. It does not mean that God makes His people sinless in this life. It means that He blots out all their sins and forgets them, as we shall see later. God made Christ to be High Priest with an oath, according to Psalm 110:4, Hebrews 7:20,21. This shows that Christ brings us a covenant with God which is better than the old one, 7:22. His priesthood never changes (that is, it is never taken by anyone else) because He lives forever. And so He is able to save His people forever, 7:25-28.

In 7:22, the writer had mentioned the subject of the better covenant which Christ has secured for us, that is, better than the Law of Moses. Now he went on to speak more of that covenant.

Christ's service as priest is a better service than that of the Old Testament priests, 8:1-6. He serves in heaven, which is the true tabernacle, where God's glory really dwells. The tabernacle of the Old Covenant (which we read about in Exodus) was only a picture of things in heaven. But Christ has gone into heaven itself for us.

This new covenant rests on better promises, 8:6-13. The Law told what God wanted men to do, and promised them life if they did it. It could not make men want to do God's will. Under it, men always failed. But in Jeremiah 31:31-34, God spoke of a time when He would put His laws into His people's hearts, and when all of them would know Him. That has now been done. For when a man trusts in Christ and is born again, God gives him a new heart which wants to do God's will. That is what is meant by God's Law being in our hearts. Now all who trust in Christ are given eternal life, and they come to know God. See John 17:3. Finally, under this New Covenant, God promises never again to remember the sins of believers, 8:12. The blood of His Son cleanses us from them all forever. See 1 John 1:7.

Chapters 9 and 10 tell how the sacrifice which Christ offered for us is far better than all the sacrifices of the Old Covenant.

Under the Old Covenant, the way into the Most Holy Place, where God lived, was closed. No one but the high priest could go in, and he only once a year, on the Day of Atonement, 9:1-10. See Leviticus 16. That was because the sacrifices of the Old Covenant could never make the one who offered them to be free from sin, 9:9. But our Lord Jesus has offered one sacrifice for sins forever, and He has entered in once for all into the Holy Place. He has gone into God's very presence in heaven, 9:11,12. His blood can and does cleanse us from all sin, 9:13,14. It gives us a clear conscience, since we know that God has forgiven and forgotten our sins, just as He promised.

Christ's death has brought in the New Covenant, just as the blood (or death) of sacrificed animals brought in the Old, 9:13-22. But the things of the Old Covenant, which were only pictures of things in heaven, could be purified by the blood of animals (which was like a picture of Christ's death). Christ has gone into heaven itself; therefore, He had to offer a better sacrifice for us. This He did when He Himself died for us, 9:23,24. That sacrifice He never repeats like the priests of the Old Testament. That is because His one sacrifice puts away our sins forever, 9:25-28. We are not looking for another sacrifice. We are waiting for our Lord Jesus to come for us, not to judge our sins, but to take us to be with Him forever.

Under the Old Covenant, sins were always being remembered by repeated sacrifices. That was because the blood of animals could not really atone for sins, 10:1-4. God had something quite different in mind, as we see in Psalm 40:6-8. What God wanted was made clear when Christ came, 10:5-9. Christ became man and died for us sinners, and now we who trust in Him are sanctified (or saved) by His death forever, 10:10.

The priests of the Old Covenant stood every day and offered the same kind of sacrifices over and over. Those sacrifices could not take away sin, and therefore the priests' work was never done. But Christ offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, and then He sat down at God's right hand, as God said in Psalm 110:1. His work is finished, 10:11-14. He will never again offer Himself for sin. He will rise up again from His seat only when the time comes for Him to take His kingdom and to reign on the earth. The Holy Spirit spoke about this fact of a finished work of atonement. When He says that God will never more remember the sins of believers, it is like saying that there is no more need for another sacrifice for sins, 10:15-18. The work of atonement is forever finished. See John 19:30.

It is most important for Christians to read chapters 9 and 10 very carefully. There are some people today who would tell us that Christ still offers Himself in their churches to atone for people's sins. This is

a very great error and leads many people astray. Note the words “once” (literally, “once for all”) in 9:12 and 10:10; and “once” in 9:26,27,28; “one sacrifice forever” in 10:12; and “one offering” in 10:14. The meaning is very strong and clear for those who have hearts to believe. It should give us great confidence and joy before God.

This section closes with another passage of exhortation and warning, 10:19-39. Seeing that we now can enter into God’s presence boldly through Jesus’ blood, there are three things which we should do, 10:19-24. We should draw near to God, 10:22, we should hold fast what we have believed, 10:23, and we should think of one another and help one another to love and to do good, 10:24. In all of this, we should not forget to meet together and to exhort one another, remembering that Christ is coming for us, 10:25. Again, the writer warned them of the judgment which will come upon those who willfully reject Christ, 10:26-31. And he again reminded them of the joy they showed at the first, and exhorted them to stand fast until Christ returns, 10:32-39.

The importance of faith, chapters 11 and 12

He closed chapter 10 by saying that “We are of them that believe (have faith) to the saving of the soul.” Now, in chapter 11, he spoke of the importance of having faith, and in chapter 12 he again exhorted them to stand firm in Christ. If the Hebrews forsook Christ, it would be because of lack of faith. In order to stand fast, they needed to believe God and to trust Him.

First, he told what faith is, 11:1-3. It is the assurance in our hearts that things we hope for are really going to be ours. It is the conviction in our minds that things we cannot yet see are real, 11:1 (see the Revised Version). It is by faith that we believe that God made the world, which we can see, out of things which we cannot see, 11:3. You will notice that, in this chapter, faith is spoken about as believing God’s Word concerning things which we cannot yet see. The Hebrews had not yet seen Christ coming for them, nor the things in heaven. If they had faith, they would keep on believing even though they could not yet

see those things.

Some examples of faith in the Old Testament are then mentioned, from Abel's act in offering the sacrifice which God commanded, to Sarah's trusting in God's promise, 11:4-12. Each of these and those in following verses should be carefully studied. All of those who believed God looked for what was still future and trusted God for it. The writer said that it was as if they were looking for the promised blessings of heaven, which is what the Hebrews should continue to do, 11:13-16. He went on with other examples of those who believed God and trusted Him concerning things which they could not yet see, 11:17-38. Some of them suffered terribly because they trusted in God, but they continued to trust Him even to death. God mentioned their faith in His Word, and He praised them for it. But, even so, they did not receive the things which God had in mind. They did not enjoy the experience of the salvation which God had promised in Christ. These better things have now been given to us, 11:39,40. If they endured so much through faith, how much more should we!

Chapter 12 is all exhortation and warning, growing out of the examples of faith in chapter 11.

First, the writer said, we should follow the examples of those who trusted God in old times. And we should also follow the example of the Lord Jesus Christ. He also walked by faith while He was here in this world. He endured, trusting in God to the end, and is now in heaven at God's right hand, 12:1-3. He is our great Example in the life of faith.

Then he reminded them that God Himself had a purpose in allowing them to suffer. He was treating them as His children. He was seeking to train them to trust in Him and to do His will. Remembering that also should help them, 12:4-13. He warned them again against the danger of apostasy, 12:14-17. "Root of bitterness" in verse 15 means anyone who would lead others to leave Christ. See Deuteronomy 29:18. And he reminded them that ours is a far better part than that of those of the Old Covenant, 12:18-29. We come to God without fear

now, and we have received a kingdom which can never be shaken. It will never pass away. Therefore, we should serve God without being moved ourselves. Verse 29 is another reminder that we cannot play with the things of God.

Closing instructions and greetings, chapter 13

Chapter 13 closes the letter with instructions and greetings. General instructions are given in verses 1 to 6, dealing with love, hospitality, sympathy, purity, and freedom from covetousness. He told them to imitate their elders who had followed the Lord, since the Lord would bless them just as He had the elders, 13:7,8. He warned against being bound by Jewish laws about food and told them that we have a food to eat which the Jews cannot eat, 13:8-10. He meant that we benefit by the offering of Jesus for us, and the unsaved know nothing about that. He said that, just as some of the sin-offerings were burned outside the camp of Israel, so Jesus died outside the gate of Jerusalem. This is a picture of His being rejected by the Jews. Believers should still follow Him even though it means that they also would be rejected by their friends, 13:11-14.

We have no permanent city in this world, as the Jews had their Jerusalem. We look for the city of God which has not yet been revealed. The sacrifices which we should offer to God are not animals offered for sin. We should offer sacrifices of worship, that is, praise, confession of His name, 13:15, and giving help to others who are in need, 13:16. Believers should obey their elders in the faith, 13:17.

The writer then asked for prayer, 13:18,19, prayed for them, 13:20,21, and closed with greetings and a blessing, 13:22-25.

TEST 9 Hebrews

Choose the correct answer.

1. God has spoken finally to us
 - a. in Christ.
 - b. through the law.
 - c. through the prophets.
2. In this letter we learn that Christ is really
 - a. a great angel.
 - b. a great man.
 - c. the Lord Jehovah.
3. The Son of God became the Saviour of men through
 - a. His power.
 - b. His wisdom.
 - c. His suffering.
4. The name Joshua means Jehovah is
 - a. Holy.
 - b. Mighty.
 - c. Saviour.
5. The two unchangeable things of chapter 6 verse 18 are
 - a. God's holiness and justice.
 - b. God's promise and oath.
 - c. God's love and promise.

Enter TRUE or FALSE after each statement.

6. This letter shows how Melchizedek is a picture of Christ.
7. The priesthood of Melchizedek is the same as the priesthood of the Levites.
8. The sacrifice of Christ is better than all the sacrifices of the Old Testament.
9. We have faith when we only believe in things that we can see.
10. The 'root of bitterness' could cause others to leave Christ.

WHAT DO YOU SAY?

What was the writer to the Hebrews seeking to show to the recipients of his letter?

JAMES

There were at least three men in the New Testament who were called James. One was John's brother, the son of Zebedee, Matthew 10:2; Tone was the son of Alphaeus, Matthew 10:3; and one was James the brother of our Lord Jesus, Matthew 13:55; Galatians 1:19. These brothers of the Lord were probably children of Joseph and Mary, born after the Lord Himself. While the Lord was still on earth, his brothers did not believe on Him, John 7:3-5. But after He rose from the dead, He appeared to James, 1 Corinthians 15:7. James and his brother Jude then believed on Him, Jude 1. Probably the others did too, but we do not know about them. James became the leader in the church at Jerusalem, Acts 15:13; Galatians 1:18,19; 2:9,12. History tells us that he was called "James the Just" (that is, the Righteous) and that everyone in Jerusalem respected him.

Verse 1 tells us that James wrote to the twelve tribes scattered abroad. That is to say, he wrote to the Jews who were living away from Jerusalem. That means, of course, to Jews who had accepted the Lord Jesus as the Christ. Most of these Jewish Christians were poor and were suffering because of the oppressions of rich men, 1:2; 2:6,7; 5:1-8. Some of them were grumbling and complaining and acting impatiently, 1:4,10-20; 5:7. Some of them also spoke much about "religion," but were not doing good works, 1:26,27; 2:14-26. And some were seeking for wealth on earth rather than for spiritual riches, 4:1-4,13-17. So James wrote to show them how necessary it is for a Christian to act like a Christian, and not just to talk

like one. This letter is valuable for all of us today. For there are still many people who forget that God wants His people to do what is good, and not just to go to meetings and to sing hymns!

We may outline this letter thus:

1. Greeting, 1:1
2. Trials, 1:2-12
 - a. The right attitude, 1:2-4
 - b. How to get wisdom, 1:5-8
 - c. The poor and the rich, 1:9-11
 - d. The result of trial, 1:12
3. Temptation and righteousness, 1:13-27
 - a. Temptation is from our own hearts, not from God, 1:13-18
 - b. We should avoid anger, 1:19,20
 - c. God wants goodness, not just talk, 1:26,27
4. The sin of treating some differently from others, 2:1-13
 - a. Their wrong attitude, 2:1-5
 - b. The rich oppress and oppose, 2:6,7
 - c. Partiality breaks God's laws, 2:8-12
 - d. God will treat us as we treat others, 2:13
5. Faith and works, 2:14-26
 - a. Words alone are useless, 2:14-20
 - b. Examples of faith-works, 2:21-25
 - c. Conclusion, 2:26
6. The tongue, chapter 3
 - a. The responsibility of teaching, 3:1,2
 - b. The power of the tongue, 3:3-6
 - c. The tongue is unruly, 3:7,8
 - d. The tongue is not consistent, 3:9-12
 - e. True wisdom, 3:13-18
7. Quarrels and worldliness, chapter 4
 - a. Where quarrels come from, 4:1-10
 - b. On speaking against one another, 4:11,12
 - c. On making plans apart from God's will, 4:13-17

8. Oppression, 5:1-11
 - a. The rich oppressors, 5:1-6
 - b. The believers who were oppressed, 5:7-11
9. Swearing, 5:12
10. Suffering, sickness, and prayer, 5:13-18
11. Restoring those who stray, 5:19,20

Trials, 1:2-12

After his greeting in 1:1, James began at once to speak of the things he had in mind, and mentioned the trials which they were going through, 1:2-12. You will notice that, in this chapter, James used the word “temptation” in two ways. In this part, he spoke of difficult, or hard, experiences. In 1:13-15, he spoke of temptations to sin.

Trials should cause them joy, not sorrow. That is because trials teach people how to be patient, or to stand firm, 1:2-4. Believers should not get impatient when they see troubles. Otherwise, the troubles will not be able to do their work in their souls. Compare Romans 5:3 and 2 Corinthians 12:9,10.

If we lack wisdom, we can receive it in answer to prayer in faith, 1:5-8. Wisdom does not mean being wise in the way that some people in the world think they are wise. It means fearing God and doing His will. See Job 28:28.

The poor man who is suffering can rejoice that God has made him to be His son, and so has exalted him. But the rich man should remember that he will soon pass away and leave all his riches behind, 1:9-11.

If we go through trials according to God’s will, they will result in our receiving a reward, 1:12. Compare 2 Corinthians 4:17.

Temptations and righteousness, 1:13-27

No man should ever say that it is God who tempts him to sin, 1:13-18. God has nothing to do with sin at all, 1:13. Temptations to sin come from our own evil hearts, 1:14,15. It is good to remember this. Some

people try to excuse themselves for sin by blaming God; others blame Satan. Both are wrong. We should blame ourselves, and know that our evil deeds show that we have evil hearts. God does not change, 1:16,17. He brought us to life, and He will not now tempt us to sin, which is what brought death at first, 1:18.

We should avoid anger, for our anger does not do God's work, 1:19,20. Anger is sin, and sin never does anything for God.

We should reject all evil and obey God's Word, 1:21-25. God does not want men just to listen to His Word. He wants them to obey Him when He speaks. His Word shows us where we are wrong in order that we may put things right by His help.

It is not enough just to think that we are religious. God wants His people to be kind and helpful to others and to avoid the world's evil things. He does not want them just to talk, 1:26,27.

The sin of treating some differently from others, 2:1-13

James then spoke of the sin of giving honor to people just because they are rich. Some of the Jewish believers were showing special favor to rich people who might come to their meetings, 2:1-4. God has chosen the poor rather than the rich, 2:5. Compare 1 Corinthians 1:26,27.

It was the rich people who were oppressing the believers and who were speaking against the Lord Jesus, 2:6,7. Just because a man is rich is therefore no reason for showing him special favor. And just because a man is poor is no reason for looking down on him.

Such partiality breaks God's Law, 2:8-12. He has told us to love our neighbors as we love ourselves, 2:8. To show favor to some and not to others breaks His Law just as much as killing people would, 2:9-12. It means that we love their money but do not love them.

God will treat us as we treat others, 2:13. Compare Matthew 7:1-3. If you are hard on others, God will deal the same way with you. If you are merciful to others, God will deal gently with you. To reject a man just because he is poor is being harsh, not kind.

Faith and works, 2:14-26

He then dealt with the matter of faith and works. Some people have found difficulty in seeing how these words agree with the words of Paul in Romans. Paul told us that a man is justified (declared righteous) by God because of his faith, and not because of his works. James tells us that a man is justified by his works, and not by his faith alone. But there is no contradiction. Paul and James are not speaking of the same things. Paul tells us that a man cannot be saved by his own good works, but only by trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ. James tells us trusting in Christ does not mean just believing about the Lord Jesus Christ. Real faith is a strong belief which makes a man do something about it. It is the same thing which Paul calls "obedience of (or to) faith" in Romans 1:5. Now let us see what James said.

In the first place, he said, words alone are useless, 2:14-20. Merely to say that we believe, when we show no obedience to God, cannot save us, 2:14. It would not help to say to a person who was in need, "May your needs be supplied." That would not show that we really felt sorry for him. If we do feel sorry for him, we will do something to help him. And so a faith which only says, "I believe," and does not do anything about it, is a dead faith. Such a faith cannot help us. If we really believe that Jesus died for us and rose again to save us, then we will accept Him as our Lord. Otherwise our "faith" is an empty thing. See Philippians 2:9-11. Real faith results in salvation. And salvation changes the whole life and produces good works.

He then gave two examples of faith-works, that is, works which were the result and proof of true faith, 2:21-25. Abraham really trusted in God. Therefore, when God told him to offer up his son, he obeyed Him. See Hebrews 11:17. God praised him for his act of obedience, and his faith was proved by it. His faith was shown to be a true faith by what he did, 2:21-24. Rahab also did not only believe in her mind that God was going to give the land Canaan to Israel. She did something about it. She put herself on the side of the Israelites and asked to be saved,

2:24. So one who really believes what God has said will ask God to save him. He will turn his back on the world and will yield to Jesus Christ as Lord. The result of being saved by faith will be a life of obedience to God. See Ephesians 2:8-10, and read Hebrews 11 again.

James' conclusion is that faith without works is dead, 2:26. If you say, "I believe," but are not obeying God, you are just deceiving yourself. People who go to meetings and "worship God" on Sunday morning, and then serve the devil and live for themselves all the rest of the week, are not really believers at all. They are still on the way to hell.

The tongue, chapter 3

In chapter 3, James spoke about the tongue. First, he warned the believers not to be anxious to become teachers or preachers, 3:1,2. The word masters is an old English word which means "teachers". Teaching God's Word is a great responsibility. If we teach wrong things, we shall have to answer to God for it. And all of us say things we should not. No one should become a teacher unless he is called by God. Then, of course, he should obey and trust in Him.

From that thought, he went on to talk about the power of the tongue, 3:3-6. It is a little thing in the body, but it talks great things. And it causes much trouble. It is like a little fire, which can start a very big fire.

It is unruly, that is, no man can make it obey, 3:4-8. We know, of course, that God can control it through Christ. But we need to realize that we cannot make our tongues obey, and so must trust Him to do it.

The tongue is not consistent, that is, it does not always say the same kind of things, 3:9-12. One minute it praises God, and the next minute it curses men. That shows that it is full of deceit.

Behind the tongue, there is the attitude of the heart, 3:13-18. If we have strife or fighting in our hearts, it is bound to come out of our mouths. We should seek the wisdom which God gives. This is beautifully pictured in verse 17. Study this whole passage carefully, and see what your own attitude is. Ask God that it may be like verse 17. (Some-

one has said that, when James wrote this passage on wisdom, he may have been thinking of how the Lord Jesus had lived in their home. He is the true “wisdom which comes from above”.)

Quarrels and worldliness, 4:1-17

Chapter 4 speaks of quarrels and worldliness. Worldliness means following the world’s pleasures and seeking its wealth.

Quarrels always come from selfish desires to possess things we do not own. And they come from being taken up with the things of the world, 4:1-10. If we would pray to God that He would give us what we need according to His will, and then trust in Him, we would never quarrel and fight with one another. Worldliness is like adultery, 4:4. That is because we who trust in Christ are as if we were married to God. The world hates God. So we should have nothing to do with its pleasures and its foolishness. Worldliness is of the devil, 4:7. In these days when so many Christians have fallen in love with the things of the world, we should remember this and should refuse to obey Satan.

We should not speak against one another, 4:11,12. It is not enough not to fight with one another, but we should also not talk about one another in a wrong way.

In all our plans, we should first think what God may want us to do, 4:13-17. Those who try to get rich in this world often make their plans for business without thinking of God’s will for them. This is wrong, for we live only by God’s permission. And we will not live forever down here. Actually, our life on earth is short. So we should live for God and not for ourselves.

Oppression, 5:1-11

Then James spoke of oppression, that is, of some who were causing others to suffer by not doing what was right for them. First, he warned the rich men who were oppressing others, 5:1-6. They were not paying the people who worked for them, but were just trying to get richer and richer. They were thinking only of themselves and only of this life. He

warned them that they would be judged for their evil deeds.

Then he comforted those who were being oppressed, 5:7-11. The Lord is coming, and He will reward those who endure, as he also said in 1:12. The Lord really pities His people who have to suffer now, and when He comes He will show His love to them, as He did to Job when Job's trials were ended.

Swearing, 5:12

Believers should not swear. They should say only "Yes" or "No". James was talking about the way some people swear in conversation, to try to make people believe they are telling the truth. Compare Matthew 5:34-37. We should always speak only what is true so that we may be believed without swearing.

Suffering, sickness, and prayer, 5:13-18

He gave advice to those who are suffering, that they should pray, and to those who are happy, that they should sing praises to God, 5:13. The sick are told what to do in verses 14 and 15. Note that James did not say anything about some man with a gift of healing. He spoke only of praying for the sick. In verse 16, we are told to confess our sins to one another and to pray for one another. This is because sometimes sickness is the result of sin, though it is not always so. Note that the writer did not say that we should confess our sins to a "priest". He only said that, if our consciences trouble us, we should tell our fellow-believers about it, and ask them to pray for us. He then spoke of the great power of prayer, 5:16-18.

Restoring those who stray, 5:19, 20

James closed the letter by showing the good which comes from restoring those who wander from the truth, 5:19,20. When a sinner is converted to Christ, his soul is saved, and his sins are "hid", or "covered". God blots them out and forgets about them. So the work of bringing people to Christ is a very great work indeed.

TEST 10 James

Choose the correct answer.

1. James became the leader of the church in
 - a. Samaria.
 - b. Antioch.
 - c. Jerusalem.
2. Wisdom means
 - a. being wise in the things of the world.
 - b. fearing God and doing His will.
 - c. knowing all things.
3. When we sin we should blame
 - a. ourselves.
 - b. God.
 - c. Satan.
4. God wants us to
 - a. just listen to His Word.
 - b. just read His Word.
 - c. obey His Word.
5. A man is justified by God because of his
 - a. good works.
 - b. knowledge.
 - c. faith.

Enter TRUE or FALSE after each statement.

6. It is a good thing to show special favour to rich people.
7. When we obey God we show true faith.
8. It is a great responsibility to teach God's Word.
9. It is a good thing for a Christian to love the things of this world.
10. The Lord will reward those who endure in the faith.

WHAT DO YOU SAY?

What does James mean when he says 'faith without works is dead'?
Is your faith 'alive'?

1 PETER

This letter was written by the apostle Peter while he was in the city of Babylon. See 5:13. He wrote it to the churches of believers in Asia Minor, as we see in 1:1. In that verse he used the term the strangers scattered, or sojourners of the dispersion (see Revised Version). This usually meant the Jews scattered through the nations, as we saw in James 1:1. But it seems clear that in this letter Peter was writing to Christians who were mostly Gentiles. The places mentioned were places where Paul had preached the gospel. And in 4:3 we see that those to whom Peter wrote had followed Gentile things before their conversion. He called them strangers scattered because their real homeland is now heaven, as we shall see.

Silas was visiting Peter when this letter was written, and he took the letter to the churches. See 5:12, where Silvanus is just another way of writing Silas. You will remember that Silas had been Paul's companion for a long time in his work. See Acts 15:40; 1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:1. and read the story in Acts. Some people think that, when Peter wrote this letter, Paul was either in prison or had already been killed.

Silas probably had told Peter how the Christians in those lands were suffering persecution. Many of them were slaves and were suffering at the hands of cruel masters, 2:18-20. Some of them were being

falsely accused of doing wrong, 3:16, and were being spoken against because they were Christians, 4:14. Peter was concerned lest they should become discouraged. So he wrote to remind them of the glory which is to come to those who know Christ. He knew that if they kept on looking for that glory, they would be filled with joy, and would not get discouraged in their sufferings.

The theme of the letter is thus Suffering and Glory. You will note that suffering is mentioned many times. See 1:6,7; 2:19-21, 23; 3:14,17,18; 4:1,12,13,16,19; 5:10. Glory is mentioned several times too, in 1:7,8,11,21,24; 4:13; 5:1,4,10.

In this letter you will also find Christ referred to as the Great Example of patient suffering, the One whom they and we should imitate. See 1:11; 2:21; 3:18; 4:1.

We may outline this letter thus:

1. Greeting, 1:1,2
2. The coming glory, 1:3-12
 - a. The explanation of the hope, 1:3-5
 - b. The experience of the hope, 1:6-9
 - c. The excellence of the hope, 1:10-12
3. Their conduct in view of the glory, 1:13 - 5:11
 - a. Regarding themselves, 1:13 - 2:10
 - b. Regarding others, 2:11 - 4:6
 - c. Regarding one another, 4:7 - 5:11
4. Conclusion, 5:12-14

Greeting, 1:1,2

As we have noticed, Peter spoke to them in his first words reminding them that they are like foreigners in the lands where they live. They have been chosen by God to be His own, and their home is now in another place. As he went on to show, this home is in heaven, and some day they will be in that land where all is glory. Here again we have, in a few words, a summary of what the writer has in mind to write about. It is good for us, too, to remember that earth is no longer our homeland.

The coming glory, 1:3-12

First, Peter explained to them what their hope is like, 1:3-5. It is a living hope, 1:3. It is not a dead or worthless hope. It has to do with things which are real and which we will some day really see. The proof is in the fact that Christ rose from the dead. That is the ground of our hope. Our inheritance is incorruptible (that is, it will never pass away), undefiled (not stained by sin, as the things of earth are), and does not fade (it will never lose its first joy or its beauty). It is being kept in heaven for believers, 1:4. Meanwhile, the believers themselves are being kept for it by God's power, looking toward a salvation which is all ready to be revealed to them, 1:5.

You will note in the New Testament that salvation is spoken of in three ways. The Lord has already saved us, Titus 3:5. That is to say, He has already forgiven us all our sins, Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 2:13, and has already given us eternal life, 1 John 5:11. Then the Lord is saving us now, in making us more like Christ from day to day, 1 Corinthians 1:18 in the Revised Version; 2 Corinthians 3:18. And, as we see in this verse, we are yet to be saved. This will be when our Lord Jesus comes in glory and changes us to be just like Him in glory (see also Philippians 3:21).

Peter then spoke of the present experience of this hope, 1:6-9. The thought of it gives great joy, even in the midst of trials, 1:6. The reason why hard things are sent is to make faith more perfect. Then, at Christ's coming, believers may have more praise and honor from God, 1:7. They love Christ and rejoice greatly in Him, even though they have not yet seen Him, 1:8. And their faith in Him thus gives them an experience of salvation even now. The believer's home is in heaven, but he already enjoys a bit of heaven even here on the earth.

He showed them how excellent this hope is which they have in Christ, 1:10-12. The prophets who spoke of this salvation in old times were fascinated by it. After the Spirit of God had spoken about it through them, the prophets wanted to know more about it. But they were told that

it was not for them to know more about it then. It was for others who were still to come. This wonderful salvation has now been preached to us! Even the angels marvel when they see this salvation which we have in Christ, and they would like to know more about it.

Their conduct in view of the glory, 1:13 - 5:11

We now come to what takes up most of Peter's letter. He wrote of how they should act seeing that they have such a glorious hope in Christ, 1:13 - 5:11.

First, as regards themselves, 1:13 - 2:10. Seeing that they have such a hope, they should always remember it and should keep on looking for its appearing with all their hearts, 1:13. Girding up the loins of your mind means setting their minds on it. A man with a long cloth must "gird up" the cloth so that he may work well. It is a picture of getting ready to do a thing with all one's might. They should walk in holiness, avoiding evil things, so as to be like God who has called them, 1:14-16. They should remember that God will someday judge their works to see if they have earned the reward which He wants to give them. And they should remember the great price which was given by God to save them, 1:17-21. Such a great price paid for them should make them determine to act now according to God's will. Since they have all been born of God and of His Word, they should love one another very much, 1:22,23. And they should remember the great mercy and honor which God has shown them in making them to be His worshipers. They should live so as to praise Him in all that they do, 2:1-10.

Then he showed how they should act toward others, 2:11 - 4:6. In this part, the great thought is that of testimony to those who are not Christians. Christians should always remember to act so as to be good witnesses for Christ. They should avoid obeying evil desires, for their own sake, and should live good lives so as to draw others to the Lord, 2:11,12. They should obey those who rule the land and should give fitting honor to all men, 2:13-17. Slaves should obey their masters.

They should suffer patiently when punished for things they did not do. In this, they should follow the example set by Christ, 2:18-25. He also suffered for sins He did not commit (our sins), but He did not lose His patience and did not use bad words to those who made Him suffer. Wives should obey their husbands, and should dress carefully, not like women of the world who do not know Christ, 3:1-6. Husbands should treat their wives with love and consideration, 3:7. All believers should live together in love and kindness, and should not think of “getting even” with others, 3:8-12. All of them should do good, and, if in spite of that they still are made to suffer, they should take it quietly. This is so that their enemies may see their good lives and feel ashamed. In all of this, they have an example in Christ, who suffered though He did no wrong, and is now exalted in glory, 3:13-22. They should look on their sufferings not as a reason for sinning but as a reason for being holy, 4:1-6. Here again, Christ is an example for them, for He suffered for our sins, but now lives in holiness.

Finally, he showed how they should act toward one another as believers, 4:7 - 5:11. They should love one another and serve one another, 4:7-10, and seek to glorify God in their speaking, 4:11. They should rejoice when they suffer as Christians, but they should never do wrong so as to have to suffer for evil, 4:12-19. Elders should keep on caring for their fellow-believers, not for pay, but for love. Christ will repay them when He comes, 5:1-4. Believers should serve one another, not all trying to be masters, 5:5,6. They should keep trusting in God, 5:7, and should be on their guard lest Satan move them away from their faith, 5:8,9. Finally, Peter commended them to God, to whom he gave praise, 5:10,11.

He closed the letter in 5:12-14, mentioning Silas, the church in Babylon, and Mark. This was probably the Mark of whom we read in Acts, who also wrote the Gospel of Mark.

2 PETER

The first verse of this letter does not tell us to whom it was sent. But 3:1 would seem to show that it was probably sent to the same places as the first letter. The purpose of it, however, is different. In the first letter, Peter warned the Christians not to be moved away from the faith by the trials they were going through. In his second letter, he warned them not to be deceived by false teachers. See 3:17. The words in 2:1 sound as if those false teachers were going to appear at some future time. However, it is probable that they were already working. We have seen how false teachers have troubled Christians ever since the beginning. We saw the same thing in 2 Timothy 3:1-5. There, Paul wrote of some wrong-doers as if they were still to come, and then said, "From such turn away." Probably such teachers were already there, and also others like them were still to come. We see many such teachers even today. This letter was written only a short time before Peter was killed. See 1:14.

As we read this letter, we see that those false teachers were teaching two things. First, they were teaching that it was quite all right for a Christian to do bad things. See 2:10,13,14,18-22. Then, they were denying that the Lord Jesus would come again. See 3:3,4. It is these two things against which Peter writes. And since the same things are being said by some people today, we should study this letter well.

We can outline the letter thus:

1. Greeting, 1:1,2
2. The truth of the gospel, 1:3-21
 - a. Godliness is the end in view of salvation, 1:3-11
 - b. The coming again of Christ is sure, 1:12-21
3. The ungodliness of false teachers, chapter 2
 - a. Their behavior, 2:1-3
 - b. Judgment and deliverance, 2:4-9
 - c. Their character and punishment, 2:10-22
4. Their denial of the Lord's coming, chapter 3
 - a. Their challenge, 3:1-4
 - b. The certainty of judgment, 3:5-10
 - c. How believers should act, 3:11-18

Greeting, 1:1,2

In his greeting, Peter again used words which show what he had in mind to write about. He wrote to those who have received a faith like his through the righteousness of God. The false teachers were forgetting that God saves men in righteousness and for righteousness. Peter wanted to make that clear from the first.. Then, in verse 2, he prayed that grace and peace may be multiplied to them through the knowledge of God. Those who teach that Christians may live bad lives do not know God at all.

The truth of the gospel, 1:3-21

In the rest of chapter 1, Peter showed the teaching of the gospel concerning the two things those false teachers were saying.

First, he showed that the purpose of God in saving us is to make us godly people, that is, people who love God and who do the things which He loves, 1:3-11. The God who saved us has given us all we need so that we may now live godly lives, by His power. He has saved us out of the wickedness of the world so that we may now be like Him, 1:3,4. Since that is so, we on our part should keep on going forward in

knowledge and in goodness, 1:5-7.

If we keep on growing in godliness, several things will come as a result, 1:8-11. First, our knowledge of Christ will not be an empty thing, 1:8. That is, we will be pleasing to God in our lives, and will bring glory to Him. Second, we will have assurance that we are saved, 1:10. The man who is not doing God's will has no right to say that he belongs to Him. Pleasing God by good works shows that we have eternal life, as we shall see in 1 John. Third, if we keep on going forward, we shall never stumble, 1:10. Christians fall only when they grow careless. Fourth, we shall have a glad welcome when we go to heaven. Then the Lord Jesus will say to us, "You have done well," 1:11 (compare Matthew 25:23). And one thing is said about the one who does not keep going on. He is blind and has forgotten that when God saved him He purified him from his sins, 1:9.

The second thing he showed them is that Christ's coming again is sure, 1:12-21. Since Peter's death was near, he wanted to remind them of these things in writing, 1:12-15. When the apostles spoke of the coming again of Christ in power and glory, they were not just making things up. They themselves had actually seen that glory when they were with Him on the mountain, 1:16-18. See Matthew 17:1-8. That vision was like a picture of the second coming of Christ. Not only so, but there was the Word which God spoke long ago through the prophets, 1:19-21. They would do well to read God's Word because it was worthy of being believed. God had already fulfilled some of the prophecies in Christ's first coming. The rest would surely be fulfilled in His second coming. But the true interpretation of those prophecies could be had only by depending on the Holy Spirit, who gave them at first.

The ungodliness of false teachers, chapter 2

In chapter 2, Peter went on to speak of the ungodliness of the false teachers. As we have seen, he had that in mind when he wrote the first part of chapter 1, but he did not mention it. Now he mentioned it clearly.

He wrote about the behavior of the false teachers in 2:1-3. They would teach many false things, even denying the fact that Christ is God, 2:1. Many would follow their evil doings (as we see them doing today), and their bad lives would cause many people to say that Christianity was not true, 2:2. And they would be working to get money out of those whom they deceived, 2:3. Their end would be to be destroyed and condemned.

In 2:4-9, he showed that God judges ungodly people, and how He delivers His own. There were the angels who sinned when Satan fell. They were judged. The flood destroyed the old world, but Noah was delivered, 2:5 (compare Genesis 6 to 8). Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed, but Lot Was delivered, 2:5-8 (compare Genesis 19:1-25). That shows how God keeps ungodly people for judgment, and keeps and delivers from that judgment those who love Him, 2:9. So He will judge those false teachers, even though they may not know or believe it.

Then he mentioned the character of those false teachers and their final end, 2:10-22. They love unclean things. They despise those who govern the lands. They are proud and self-willed. They do not know what they are talking about, 2:10-12. They shall entirely perish. They love drinking and adultery. They cannot stop sinning. They are covetous, like Balaam, and shall be punished for it, 2:13-16 (see Numbers 22 to 24). They are like things which promise to give help, but cannot really help anyone. They shall dwell in eternal darkness, 2:17. They promise people liberty (that is, liberty to sin). But they are really bringing people into slavery, 2:18,19 (compare John 8:34). And those who follow them bring judgment on themselves and show that they are not really the Lord's, 2:20-22. This chapter is a very strong word against false teachers of this kind. It shows us what God thinks of such wicked men, and it should make us to beware of them.

Their denial of the Lord's coming, chapter 3

Peter next spoke of their denial of the Lord's coming. As we have seen, he had that in mind when he wrote the second part of chapter 1,

but he did not mention it. Now he mentions it clearly. People who love evil things do not like the thought of Christ coming again.

The challenge of the false teachers is referred to in 3:1-4, after an exhortation. Peter first told the believers to hold fast the words of the prophets and apostles, who spoke about the Lord's coming. These scoffers ridiculed the idea that Christ would come again. They said, "If He is going to come, why has He not come already?"

So Peter reminded the believers how God once judged the world, and that He will do it again, 3:5-10. Once He destroyed the world by a flood. That shows that He does do things out of the ordinary when He wishes to. He will finally destroy the world by fire, 3:5-7,10. The reason why the Lord has not yet come for His people is that He does not want to leave people to perish. He wants them to repent and to trust in Christ and to be saved, 3:8,9. Verse 8 means that time means nothing to God. It seems to Christians that they have to wait a long time for Christ, but it does not seem long to God. He lives in eternity. To Him there is no difference between one day and a thousand years.

How should believers act then, 3:11-18? Since they know that all the things they see will finally be destroyed, they should walk in holiness and live godly lives, 3:11. They are looking for a new Heaven and a new earth, where there will be no more sin. Therefore, they should desire that when Christ does come He may find them living in peace, and not sinning, 3:14. They should be patient, remembering the Lord has delayed the day of judging wicked men so as to save more people, 3:15. They should be careful not to be deceived by those wicked men, 3:17. And they should go on growing in grace, becoming more and more like Christ and knowing Him better and better, 3:18. These words are all for us too.

TEST 11 1 & 2 Peter

Choose the correct answer.

1. Peter wrote his first letter while in the city of
 - a. Jerusalem.
 - b. Rome.
 - c. Babylon.
2. The theme of the first letter is
 - a. suffering and grace.
 - b. suffering and glory.
 - c. faithfulness and glory.
3. Our inheritance is incorruptible. This means that
 - a. it will never pass away.
 - b. it is not stained by sin.
 - c. it will never lose its beauty.
4. In the New Testament salvation is spoken of
 - a. in only one way.
 - b. in two ways.
 - c. in three ways.
5. Christians should look on their suffering as a reason for
 - a. sinning.
 - b. sadness.
 - c. being holy.

Enter TRUE or FALSE after each statement.

6. The purpose of God in saving us is to make us godly people.
7. Peter had already seen the glory of the Lord.
8. God judged the angels who sinned when Satan fell.
9. Lot was destroyed along with Sodom and Gomorrah.
10. People who love evil things love the thought of Christ's return.

WHAT DO YOU SAY?

How did Peter encourage believers who were suffering for their faith?
Is this relevant for today?

1 JOHN

This letter was written by the apostle John. He seems to have lived in Ephesus and to have written from there. History tells us that John used to preach and to teach in the churches in that district where Ephesus was.

This letter is very much misunderstood. It is not always explained in a right way. Some people think that it teaches that Christians can be perfect and sinless in this life. But that is because they do not really understand what John wanted to say.

In order that we may understand this letter, we must know why it was written. As we have seen, many false teachers appeared in the time of the early Church. John was thinking of some of those false teachers when he wrote this letter. They were teaching two wrong things. In the first place, they taught that a Christian could do sinful things. Some wicked men teach that way today, as we know. In the second place, they taught a wrong thing about the Lord Jesus Christ. They said that Jesus was a man, but that Christ was a spiritual being who came on Jesus when He was baptized. They said that the Christ remained in Jesus up until He was about to be crucified, and then left Him and went back to heaven. Thus, they said, it was Jesus who died, but Christ did not die. They taught that because they thought that God was too spiritual to have any real contact with the world and with suffering and

death. But their teaching was not the truth which God had revealed through the apostles. Therefore, John wrote this letter to show how wrong they were. He reminded the Christians of the teaching which they heard from the first. And he told them to hold that teaching firmly. He showed them that Eternal Life, which was seen in the Lord Jesus Christ, is a righteous life. Whoever has that Life will live a pure and righteous life on the earth, just as Christ did. Anyone who says that he is a Christian, and who does evil things, is a liar, 2:4. There are many such liars in the world today!

This letter, then, tells us how we may know whether a person is telling the truth when he says, "I have life." Note how many times John said, "Hereby we know": 2:3,5; 3:14,16,19,24; 4:2,6,13; 5:2. Note also the number of times he said "If we say" and the way he spoke of those who lie.

John's first letter was not sent to any one church, but to many, to warn them against false teachings.

It is not easy to outline this letter. We may suggest an outline like this:

1. The thing John wrote about, 1:1-7
 - a. The Life which he saw, 1:1,2
 - b. His reason for writing, 1:3,4
 - c. The message of the Life, 1:5-7
2. The proof of eternal life, 1:8 - 2:29
 - a. Confession of sin, 1:8-10
 - b. Doing righteousness, 2:1-6
 - c. Loving other believers, 2:7-11
(Those to whom he writes, 2:12-14)
 - d. Not loving the world, 2:15-17
 - e. Holding to the truth, 2:18-29
3. The proof that we belong to God, 3:1 - 4:6
 - a. Doing righteousness, 3:1-10
 - b. Loving other believers, 3:10-24
 - c. Holding to the truth, 3:24 - 4:6

4. Importance of love, righteousness, and truth, 4:7 - 5:12
 - a. Love, 4:7-21
 - b. Righteousness, 5:1-5
 - c. Truth, 5:6-12
5. Conclusion, 5:13-21
 - a. John's reason for writing, 5:13-17
 - b. The things which we know, 5:18-21

The thing John wrote about, 1:1-7

He spoke first of how he himself, with other apostles, had seen the Eternal Life when it was manifested, 1:1,2. He was going to tell them about the Life which had been from the beginning, long before those false teachers began to deceive people. The false teachers were teaching out of their own imaginations. But John knew what he was writing about. He had heard, seen, gazed on, and even touched the Life. He was speaking about the Lord Jesus, of course, for He is the Life which has always been with the Father. And He was seen by men when He came into the world. Eternal Life is God's life, for He alone lives forever. Christ is God. When He came into the world it was Eternal Life which came, and which was seen by John. So John was an eye-witness. Christians should heed what he wrote.

John had three reasons for writing, and he mentioned one of them here, 1:3,4. He wanted the believers to have fellowship with him in his fellowship with God. That would cause them to know full joy. In order to have fellowship with God, we must know what His will is and obey it. And only when we have fellowship with Him will we know what real joy is. (The other two reasons why John wrote are given in 2:1 and 5:13.)

Then he told them what the message of the Life was, 1:5-7. As John watched the pure life of the Lord Jesus and listened to His words, he saw that God was Light. That is to say, he saw that God, who had revealed Himself in His Son, is the God of purest righteousness and love. There is no darkness in Him. That is to say, there is nothing evil

in God. John saw that, if we want to have fellowship with God, we must be like Him and must walk in the light of His pure righteousness. If we say we have fellowship with Him (and that is what eternal life is), but walk in darkness and do evil, we are just lying. If we walk in the light and do His will, then the blood of Christ cleanses us from all that would hinder fellowship with Him. These thoughts are deep, but they are very important. We should think much on them until they go down into our very hearts.

The proof of eternal life, 1:8 - 2:29

He then showed how the message of the Life applies to us now. Eternal Life will be seen in the one who has it. Where it cannot be seen, the person does not have it.

In the first place, he who has eternal life and walks in the light will confess his sin and his sins, 1:8-10. Anyone who says that he has not sinned is a liar. The first thing necessary to walking with God is to tell the truth about ourselves. We must confess that we are sinners, and also that our hearts and our acts are sinful.

But that does not mean that we shall do evil on purpose. For John wanted believers to know what Life was so that they should not sin, 2:1-6. (This is his second reason for writing.) If any believer should stumble and sin, then Christ will be his advocate before God. And His death is the atonement for our sins. But we can know that we know God only if we keep His Word, 2:3. This is the second proof of life. If we say that we know Him, but do not obey His Word, then we are telling a lie, 2:4. We show that we love God when we obey Him. That is how we know we are in Him, 2:5. Any man who says that he is in God should live a righteous life, as Christ did when He was on the earth, 2:6.

In the third place, he who has eternal life will love other believers, 2:7-11. This is an old commandment, but it is also new. Those who are in Christ have been made to be new people (that is, "born again"), 2:7,8. Any one who says that he is in the light of God, and hates his brother, is really in darkness. It is the one who loves other believers

who is really in the light, 2:9-11.

Verses 12 to 14 are all by themselves, describing those to whom John was writing, as fathers, young men, and little children. He was not speaking of their ages. The fathers are those who are experienced in the things of Christ. The young men are those who have found how to be strong in Him. And the little children may mean those who have recently trusted Christ, or he may call all believers little children, as he does in other places.

In the fourth place, he who has eternal life will not love the world, 2:15-17. He will not love the world's pleasures or its possessions or its pride. He will not follow after these things and forget God. Pride of life means pride because of our tribe or because of our wealth or because of our wisdom or because of our importance. All of the things mentioned in verse 16 are of the world and are not of God. And if a man loved these things, it would show that he did not really love God at all.

Lastly, he who has eternal life will hold to the truth which God revealed through the apostles, like John, 2:18-29. Many false teachers had gone forth into the world. They had called themselves Christians, but had left those who followed the apostles. That was because they were not really Christians at all, 2:19. True Christians have the Holy Spirit dwelling in their hearts. So they are able to know what is true, 2:20,21. Anyone who said that Jesus and the Christ were really different, as those teachers were doing (and as some teachers do today), was a liar. Anyone who denies the Son does not have the Father either. We can only know the Father in the Son, 2:22,23. Therefore, John exhorted them to hold fast the teaching which they had heard from the first, 2:24,25. This is the teaching which gives them eternal life.

Christians are not dependent on others to teach them, 2:27. This does not mean that God has not given us human teachers, for we know that He has. But if anyone tells us, "You cannot know the truth unless you let us teach you, for we alone know what is right," he is lying. All true Christians have the Holy Spirit to teach them. So they should test everything they hear by God's Word and should accept only what is of Him.

We should hold His truth fast, otherwise we shall be ashamed before Him when He comes, 2:28,29. And one thing we know is that it is only those who do what is right who have really been born of God, 2:29.

The proof that we belong to God, 3:1 - 4:6

Now when John spoke about being born of God, he was reminded what a wonderful thing it is to be a child of God. So he went on to speak of the proof that we really belong to God.

The first proof is that those who are God's do righteousness, 3:1-10. We look forward to the Lord's coming, to make us like Himself. But if the hope of His coming is really ours, then we shall be like Him now. Otherwise, we have no part in that hope, 3:2,3. Sin is lawlessness, that is, not being obedient to God's will. Christ came to save us from sin, 3:4,5. The man who really is in Christ does not live a life of sin, 3:6. The one who has been declared righteous by God will live a righteous life, 3:7. The one who lives a life of sin belongs to the devil, not God, 3:8. Anyone born of God cannot go on sinning, for the new life which is in him will not let him do so, 3:9. That is how we can know who are really God's children, and who are Satan's, 3:10.

The second proof that we are God's is that we love our fellow-believers, 3:10-24. People of the world hate Christians, because their own works are evil and Christians' works are good, 3:12. Therefore, we should not be surprised if evil men hate us, 3:13. The fact that we love our fellow-Christians is a proof that we have passed from death to life. If we hate them, it is because we are still dead, 3:14,15. Love is an attitude which leads us to help our brethren when they are in need. It is not just something to talk about, 3:16-18. Our great Example is Christ, who laid down His life for us. We should love others like that. If we love other believers and serve them, it will give us confidence before God, and power in prayer, 3:19-24.

The third proof that we belong to God is that we hold to the truth which God has revealed through His apostles, 3:24 - 4:6. There are many spirits of evil in the world. These inspire false prophets who

teach false things. Therefore, we should test everything we hear by God's Word, and not believe everything we are told, 4:1. Those who are teaching that Jesus was not the Christ and that Christ had not come as a man are enemies, 4:2,3. True believers will not be led astray by such false teachers. The Holy Spirit keeps them, 4:4 (see John 10:5). Of course, we must keep close to God for this to be true in us. False teachers belong to the world, not to God. They say things which the world likes to hear, and the people of the world follow them, 4:5. John and the other apostles were of God, and all who know God listen to them, not to what other men say, 4:6. That is how we may know those who have God's Spirit, and those who have not. See John 10:26,27. We today have the apostles' words in their writing in the New Testament. It is these which we should "hear", or obey.

Importance of love, righteousness, and truth, 4:7 - 5:12

The next section, which deals with the same things we have already noted, is not easy to describe in a few words. But it speaks again of the importance of love, righteousness, and truth.

First, John spoke again of love, 4:7-21. It is love which shows that we are really born of God. Love comes from Him, and we can see what it is in Christ's death for us, 4:7-10. Since His love for us is so great, we should love one another. If we do, it will show that we are one in Him, 4:11-13. Love is God's very nature. So it is impossible to be in God without showing love, 4:16. The fact that we love other believers will be a ground for our having confidence when we think of the Day of Judgment. That is because, since we are like Him in loving, we know we are His, 4:17. Then too, one who loves will not be afraid of Him. One who loves others is like Him and finds it easier to trust Him, 4:18. Any man who does not love his brother shows that he does not really love God, 4:20,21. Our brothers, of course, are those whom Christ has saved, as He has saved us.

Then he spoke of righteousness, 5:1-5. To love God is to keep His commandments, one of which is to love others, 5:1-3. His commandments

are not difficult to one who believes in the Lord Jesus according to God's Word, 5:4,5. His faith gives him power to obey. That is because the Lord strengthens him as he believes. So the world does not control him.

Finally, he spoke of the truth of Christ, 5:6-12. Jesus Christ is One, and He came both by water (in His baptism) and by blood (in His death). This was to answer those who said that the Divine Christ did not die when the man Jesus died, 5:6. God has testified to His Son, and we should believe His witness rather than the word of men, 5:7-9. The person who believes Him has the witness in himself, 5:10 (see Romans 8:16). He who does not believe God acts as if he said, "God is a liar, and men tell the truth." That is exactly the opposite thing to what is true. God's testimony is that He has already given us eternal life. This life is in His Son. The person who has the Son of God already has eternal life, in Him. He who does not have Him has no life, 5:11,12.

Conclusion, 5:13-21

First, John gave his other reason for writing this letter, 5:13-17. It is because he wanted believers to know that they already have eternal life. He wanted them to know how life works in men. He wanted them to see it working that way in themselves. This will let them know that they really do have life in Christ. This knowledge comes through doing God's will, and that will give us confidence in prayer too. The sin unto death in verse 16 means some sin which is so serious that God will take the sinner away in death. John did not say what sin it is. It may mean that he was thinking of those who denied that Jesus was the Christ. He had already called such people antichrist, 4:3. Salvation is only given to those who give Christ His right place.

He then mentioned the things which we know, 5:18-21. We know that one who is born of God does not live a life of sin, 5:18. We know that we who do God's will in Christ are His, and that the world is lost in sin, 5:19. We know that the Son of God has come, that He has given us hearts to understand, and that we are in Him who is the Truth and the Life. We should beware of everything which is not according to Him, 5:20,21.

2 JOHN

John's second letter was written to a Christian woman, probably a widow, who had grown children. John had met some of her children, who had come to Ephesus where he was. They were still "walking in the truth", v.4. That is, they were walking in righteousness and in love and were holding to the truth about Christ, as we read in John's first letter. Some people say that it is not possible to live for the Lord in cities. That is not true. Some people do get away from the Lord in cities. But it is because they have not been following Him with all their hearts. The Lord can keep His people pure, even in such wicked cities as Ephesus was. John wrote to tell this woman of his joy and to exhort her to continue walking in the truth. The outline is simple:

1. His greeting to her, vs. 1-3
2. His joy in her children's righteousness, v.4
3. His exhortation to continue in the truth, vs. 5,6
4. Warning against false teachers, vs. 7-11
5. Conclusion, vs. 12,13

1. In his greeting, John commended the Christian woman to whom he was writing for her own good life, vs. 1-3. Parents are very responsible for what their children do. This woman's children were walking in the truth because their mother lived a true life. She had brought them up with a good example. This is a lesson for us who have children. John was confident that she would go on in the truth.

2,3. However, after speaking of his reason for writing, v.4, he exhorted her to continue in the truth, keeping the Lord's commandment by walking in love, vs. 5,6.

4. He exhorted her thus because of the false teachers, vs. 7-11. Those teachers, about whom John wrote in his first letter, were trying to lead Christians astray. We also need to be on our guard lest we, too, be led astray. If we let false teachers deceive us, we will lose the reward which the Lord wants to give us for being faithful, v.8. The person who leaves what God has revealed about Christ does not know God. It is the one who holds the truth about Christ who really has God, v.9. If anyone comes to us teaching things which are not according to what God has revealed about Christ in His Word, we should not receive him. And we should not greet him as if he were a Christian, vs. 10,11. It is a serious thing to teach false doctrine. And those who love the Lord should not help such false teachers in any way.

5. In his conclusion, John hoped soon to visit this woman, and he sent greetings from the children of her sister, who were with him in Ephesus, vs. 12,13.

3 JOHN

This letter was written by the apostle John to a Christian man called Gaius, who was one of John's converts (see verse 4). Some traveling preachers of the gospel had come to the town where Gaius lived. Gaius had received them, but a man named Diotrephes was trying to make the believers do only what he wanted them to do. He had refused to receive the preachers. He even put out of the church those who wanted to receive them, v.10. He would not even obey what the apostle John wrote, v.9. So John was going to visit that place, and he would punish Diotrephes with the power which God had given to him. The outline of the letter is:

1. His greeting to Gaius, vs. 1,2
2. Gaius' good behavior, vs. 3-8
3. Diotrephes' evil behavior, vs. 9-11
4. Demetrius' good behavior, v.12
5. Conclusion, vs. 13,14

1. John wanted Gaius to be as healthy in his body as he was in his soul, v.2. One is healthy in his soul when he walks in the truth, that is to say, when he walks in righteousness, in love, and holding the truth revealed about Christ. It is much more important to have a healthy soul than it is to have a healthy body.

2. Gaius was walking in the truth, v.3. A true servant of the Lord

is always glad when he sees people walking in truth, v.4. Gaius was acting in love toward others, vs. 5,6. He had helped the travelling preachers of the Word, and this was a good thing to do, v.6. These preachers did not take any gifts from Gentiles, that is from unbelievers, v.7. So it was the responsibility of real Christians to help them, as Gaius had done, v.8. While it is wrong to help false teachers, those who preach the truth should be helped in every way.

3. John had written to the church, but Diotrephes refused to obey him, v.9. Probably, John had written about those evangelists. Diotrephes may have been a rich man who thought that, because he was rich, therefore other believers should obey him. He was determined that men should do just as he said. And he would not allow anyone to think or to act differently, v.10. Such behavior is sinful. It is not from God but is the result of sinful pride and self-will. So John was determined to deal with Diotrephes. He exhorted Gaius not to do as Diotrephes was doing. Anyone who acted like Diotrephes would be acting as if he had not seen God at all. That is, he would be acting as if he were not really saved, v.11. The man who is born of God does good, and not evil. The Lord Jesus told us that the really great man is not the one who tries to be master of others, but the one who serves others, Matthew 20:26 (minister means “servant”).

4. Demetrius was a believer who had done well, and John praised him, v.12.

5. He closed with the hope that he would soon be able to speak with Gaius face to face, v.14.

JUDE

The writer of this letter called himself a “brother of James”. See the notes on James, where we read about James and his brother Jude, or Judas. Jude is just another way of writing Judas. See Luke 6:16. As Jude was a brother of James, he was also a brother of the Lord Jesus. But in his letter he called himself only James’ brother, but a servant (slave) of Jesus Christ. This was because the Lord Jesus was Son of God, which is more important than His being son of Mary. Human relationships are not the things which bring honor or blessing before God. See Matthew 12:48-50; Luke 11:27,28.

There is nothing in this letter to tell us to whom Jude wrote. Some people think that he wrote to the same Christians to whom James sent his letter.

If you compare this letter with Peter’s second letter, you will see that they are much alike in many things. Some people think that Peter had Jude’s letter in mind when he wrote his second letter. Others think that Jude had Peter’s second letter in mind when he wrote. But we do not know for sure.

Jude began to write about salvation which believers have in Christ. But he was troubled when he thought of some men who called themselves Christians – who were even gathering with other Christians – but who lived evil lives, vs. 3,4. So he finally wrote to warn believers

against those evil men. We may outline his letter thus:

1. His greeting to them, vs. 1,2
2. The subject of which he wrote, vs. 3,4
3. God's judgment on those who do evil, vs. 5-7
4. What the evil men are like, vs. 8-19
5. How believers should act, vs. 20-23
6. Closing praise to God, vs. 24,25

1,2. After his greeting to them in verses 1 and 2, Jude told them how he was moved to write as he did, vs. 3,4. Some men had come in among the believers, who ought not to have been in the church at all. They were evil men, who turned God's grace into lasciviousness. That is to say, they said that, since men are saved by God's grace and not by their own works, therefore they can do as they wish. And so they lived evil lives. They denied the Lord Jesus by the things which they did and said.

3. Jude reminded them how God always judges those who do evil, vs. 5-7. He has judged them in the past, and He will do so in the future. He called the Israelites out of Egypt, but afterward destroyed those who would not believe Him, v.5 (compare Numbers 14:29 and Hebrews 3:17,19). He has judged angels who sinned, and He keeps them in prison waiting for the final judgment, v.6. And He judged the people of Sodom and Gomorrah for living evil lives, destroying their cities by fire, v.7 (compare Genesis 19:24). Remembering these acts of God should make men afraid to do evil. God does not hate evil today any less than He ever did.

4. The writer then told what those evil men were like, vs. 8-19. They defiled the flesh (that is, they did immoral things). They were rebellious (would not obey). And they were impertinent. They talked against those who were important among men and before God. Even the archangel Michael, great as he is, had not done that. He had not dared to speak harshly against Satan, as these men spoke against those who were greater than they, v.9. Satan is a fallen angel and will someday be judged. But God has not yet taken all his dignity away from him.

These men were like Cain, who refused to do God's will. They were like Balaam, who only thought of pay. And they were like Korah, who would not obey God's servant Moses, v.11. See Genesis 4:1-8; Numbers 22:15-17; 16:1-3. Their being among true believers was a blemish. They cared for no one but themselves. They helped no one. And they were going to judgment and eternal night, vs. 12,13. Enoch had spoken about men like these and how God would judge them in His anger, vs. 14,15. They were always complaining, talking of big things, and flattering people so that they would give them what they wanted, v.16. The apostles had warned believers that such evil mockers would come, v.18. They were men who lived according to the desires of the body. And they did not have the Holy Spirit, as real believers do, v.19. Today there are many men like them, who call themselves Christians, but who are really evil men who do not know God at all.

5. He then told them how they should act as Christians, vs. 20-23. First, they should keep on growing in the things of God, praying, and looking for the coming of Christ, vs. 20,21. A person will keep himself in God's love by doing the things which He wishes. Compare John 15:9,10. Those evil men knew nothing of God's love, and so they did not do His will. Then Christians should try to save such men from their own errors, by warning them, vs. 22,23. They should make a difference. Some men are just deceived, and believers should feel sorry for them. But other people are deceivers. They should be warned with fear, hating all their evil deeds.

6. Jude closed his letter with praise to God, vs. 24,25. Even though there are many evil men and evil things in the world, God is able to keep His people so that they will not fall. He is able to keep them always, so that when Christ comes they may be found with no faults. There is no excuse for a child of God to fail when God is on his side like this. All glory and power belong to Him.

With this last word of warning against evil men, the letters of the New Testament close. We have seen in them what a wonderful salvation we have in Christ. We have seen how God saves us by faith in

Christ's work, and not by our own works. We have seen what praise belongs to God and what glory belongs to Christ. We have seen something of God's great plan for eternity, in which we who believe in Christ have such a wonderful part. And we have seen how, even from the first, false teachers and wicked men have served Satan. We have seen how they have tried to lead Christians into false teaching and evil living, just as they are doing today. May we allow His Word to fill our hearts so that we may always be filled with joy and with praise to Him! May we be kept from following things which are not according to His will!

TEST 12 1, 2, & 3 John; Jude

Choose the correct answer.

1. John seems to have written his letters from
 - a. Rome.
 - b. Jerusalem.
 - c. Ephesus.
2. Anyone who says that he is a Christian and does evil things is
 - a. a liar.
 - b. a wise man.
 - c. a prophet.
3. The pure life of the Lord Jesus tells us that God is
 - a. powerful.
 - b. wise.
 - c. light.
4. He who has eternal life will
 - a. have lots of money.
 - b. love other believers.
 - c. never get sick.
5. It is impossible to be in God without
 - a. showing love.
 - b. success in life.
 - c. pride.

Enter TRUE or FALSE after each statement.

6. Anyone who doesn't love his brother shows that he doesn't love God.
7. God can keep His people pure.
8. John praised Diotrephes for his good behaviour.
9. Satan is a fallen angel and will some day be judged.
10. We keep ourselves in God's love by doing His will.

What Do You Say ?

What are some of the dangers to the faith today?