

PREACHING THROUGH GALATIANS, EPHESIANS, PHILIPPIANS, COLOSSIANS

These are letters written by the Apostle Paul under various circumstances to Christian friends in Asia Minor and Greece. Galatians is a teaching epistle, written to the churches in the province of Galatia (See Acts 13:1 — 16:5), where certain Jewish Christians were troubling the church by teaching that one could not be a Christian without keeping the Old Testament ritual laws.

Ephesians, Colossians, (and Philemon) are companion letters, written at the same time and sent together, from Paul in Rome to Christians in the province of Asia. Ephesians (See Acts 19 and 20:17-38 for Paul's labors at Ephesus) speaks of the divine character and unity of the Lord's church. Colossians (to the church at Colosse) warns against false teaching. Philemon is a personal letter sent to a Christian at Colosse.

Philippians is written to the church at Philippi (See Acts 16:6-40 and I Corinthians 8:1-5), to thank them for a gift sent to Paul in prison by Epaphroditus, one of their number.

ANALYSIS OF THE EPISTLES

Galatians	1:1—2:21	The Gospel as preached by Paul came by revelation.
	3:1—5:12	Christian faith and grace are enough; the Law is done away.
	5:13—6:18	The Gospel lays upon the Christian some practical duties.
Ephesians	1:1—2:10	Greeting, thanksgiving, and prayer for the readers.
	2:11—3:21	The conversion of the Gentiles is the Apostle's great aim.
	4:1-16	God's plan for His one Church.
	4:17—6:9	Practical obligations of believers to one another and to God.
	6:10-23	Concerning the Christian warfare—concluding greetings.

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Philippians	1:1-26	Paul reports on his own condition.
	1:27—2:30	He encourages and exhorts the Philip- pians; plans for them.
	3:1-21	Contrasts true and false teachers.
	4:1-23	The basis of Christian optimism.
Colossians	1:1—3:4	Christ is sufficient, without other ob- jects of worship.
	3:5—4:6	Christian faith demands a consistent life.
	4:7-18	Personal matters.

Sermon Outlines Provided:

- “No Hasty Arrival” (Gal. 4:4-11, 19, 20)
- “A Gift of God: Freedom” (Gal. 5:13-24)
- “A Killer Killed” (Eph. 2:13-19)
- “The Church Christ Founded” (Eph. 4:1-16)
- “The Christian Warfare” (Eph. 6:10-13)
- “Thanks for You” (Phil. 1:1-11)
- “God Exalted Him” (Phil. 2:1-11)
- “The Missions Program of First Church” (Phil. 4:10-19)
- “Epaphras’ Prayers” (Col. 4:12, 13)

QUESTIONS OVER GALATIANS, EPHESIANS, PHILIPPIANS, COLOSSIANS

1. Paul says “It is no longer I that live, but” who lives in him? (Gal. 2:20)
2. How does Paul say we put on Christ? (3:27)
3. List the fruit of the Spirit. (5:22, 23)
4. What is the body of Christ? (Eph. 1:22, 23)
5. Husbands are told to love their wives in what way? (5:25-28)
6. What is the sword of the Spirit? (6:17)
7. Paul says that to live is Christ but to die is what? (Phil. 1:21)
8. What statement in Philippians 3 shows that Paul was still growing as a Christian? (3:12-14)
9. Paul had learned to have what attitude whether in plenty of poverty? (4:11, 12)
10. Name the faithful minister from Colosse who was with Paul in Rome. (Col. 1:7)
11. Covetousness is said to be what? (3:5)

PREACHING THROUGH GALATIANS

NO HASTY ARRIVAL

(Galatians 4:4-11, 19, 20)

INTRODUCTION — Christmas, so long anticipated, is soon over. What will we be saying at the day's end? When the last grandchild has departed, and the lights have been turned off on the tree? "That's over again?"

But the coming of God among men is not over; it is just begun.

I. CHRIST CAME IN THE *FULNESS OF TIME*.

A. Paul wrote of Israel's national childhood, while God was preparing.

— The nation's history, all prophecy, all Scripture is involved.

B. But consider the leisurely course of events immediately involved with "Christmas." (They can't be compressed into one "nativity scene" anywhere!)

1. An angel appeared to Zacharias promising the forerunner—more than a year—nearer to two years before the birth of Christ.
2. The angel appeared in promise to Mary almost a year ahead of the event.
3. The tax-related journey to Bethlehem, a matter of probably a week, and taking place some time in the last three months.
4. *While they were there*, "the days were fulfilled." Several days at least.
5. No "place" (*topos*) or opportunity (for the birth) in the inn. The inns semi-public shelters. Cf. The accused ones "*opportunity (topos)* to make his defense" (Acts 25:16).
"Avenge not self, give *place (topos)* unto wrath" (Rom. 12:19).
"Neither give *place (topos)* to the devil" (Eph. 4:27).
So, while they had been in Bethlehem for some days, there was no maternity ward in the public guest chamber!
6. Circumcision of Jesus at eight days (Luke 2:21).
7. Presentation and purification in temple at Jerusalem, forty days (Luke 2:22ff.).

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8. Some time after that the Wise-men came, finding Mary and Jesus in house.
 - a. They had made a considerable journey since seeing His star, which indicated the time of His birth (Matt. 2:1-12).
 - b. Herod's destruction of infants up to the age of two is significant.
9. Departure immediately thereafter to Egypt.

II. CHRIST COMES (FORMED IN YOU) IN THE FULNESS OF TIME.

- A. Don't be too hasty in singing.

“O holy child of Bethlehem, Descend to us, we pray.
Cast out our sin and enter in; Be born in us today.”
- B. Not every believer was baptized after hearing the first sermon (Cf. Saul of Tarsus).
- C. After one's birth *into* Christ (the figure is used both ways), there is infancy.
 1. Paul charged the Galatians with immaturity.

(or with premature birth, almost like an abortion.)

 - a. Part of the immaturity was overemphasis on “days, and months, and times, and years” — these were integral parts of the legal system.
 - b. For comparison, I found that the “sunrise service” faithful were not always present at other times.
- D. Until Christ be formed in you — “Yet not I, but Christ liveth in me” (Gal. 2:20).

(Mary is unknown but for Him. She is Mother of Jesus.)

Take time to be holy; the world rushes on;
Spend much time in secret with Jesus alone.
By looking to Jesus, like Him thou shalt be.
Thy friends in thy conduct His likeness shall see.
Take time to be holy, be calm in thy soul
Each thought and each motive beneath His control.
Thus led by His Spirit to fountains of love,
Thou *soon* shalt be fitted for service above.

CONCLUSION — Celestial service? Perhaps not, but it is eminently worth whatever time it takes! Service soon?

PREACHING THROUGH GALATIANS

A GIFT OF GOD: FREEDOM

(Galatians 5:13-24)

INTRODUCTION — The month of February is an important one in the memories of American liberties. Washington—who led in the establishment of independence. Lincoln—so much nearer to most of us—who preserved and extended freedom. The honoring of their memories will do the nation good.

I. YE HAVE BEEN CALLED FOR FREEDOM.

- A. Paul spoke of freedom from the Law of Moses, yet he laid down a principle that applies in every field.
— The tendency of the Gospel is toward freedom, personally, economically, politically, morally, religiously.
— American institutions have religious beginnings.
- B. Freedom is not a ten-cent-store plaything, but is hard-won and hard kept.

Edwin Markham's "Man Test."

When in the dim beginning of the years,
God mixed in man the rapture and the tears
And scattered through his brain the starry stuff,
He said, "Behold! Yet this is not enough,
For I must test his spirit to make sure
That he can dare the Vision and endure.
I will leave man to make the fateful guess,
Will leave him torn between the No and Yes;
Leave him unresting till he rests in Me,
Drawn upward by the choice that makes him free;
Leave him in tragic loneliness to choose,
With all in life to win or all to lose.

- C. Freedom given when God breathed into the man the breath of life and made him a living soul.
1. All about is choice-less nature moving in its ordered ways.
 2. Man blunders like a drunkard through history because he must choose.
 3. In Christ is the divine beacon Light that can end the blundering, but He must be freely followed.
 4. We must hold and cherish the freedom we have in Him. It is a gift.

II. USE NOT YOUR FREEDOM FOR AN OCCASION TO THE FLESH.

- A. Is this handing you a thing with one hand and taking it back with the other?
- B. The better things you buy (autos, glassware, silver) have instructions with them.
- C. The lust of the flesh destroys freedom—you can't have your cake and eat it.
 - 1. Fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness.
—A girl who once attended Sunday School with us decided to be "free." Dark stories circulated; no longer free to chose companions. The circle in which she was welcome narrowed and worsened.
 - 2. Enmities, strife, jealousies, wraths, factions, divisions, parties.
—A man in the church is hurt, by action of the congregation, and leaves. The wound becomes deeper and more lasting. Now he "can't come back."
 - 3. Drunkenness, revellings, and such like.
—A brilliant young imbibor, shut out of athletics, makes debating team; then is shut out there, because he would be "free," and can't be dependable.

III. THROUGH LOVE BE SERVANTS ONE TO ANOTHER. — A surprising way to freedom.

- A. Love—"Looking out for the other fellow's interests, and enjoying doing it."
- B. Remember Joseph, who was free in, and from, an Egyptian prison, because of service to fellow prisoners.
- C. Abraham Lincoln the symbol of American freedom—
for others.
 - "If I ever get a chance to hit that, I'll hit it hard."
 - "This nation cannot longer exist half slave and half free."

CONCLUSION — A greater than Lincoln is here.

- Was Christ ever driven to any deed against His will?
- Yet, I "came not to be served, but to serve" (Matt. 20:28).
- "For freedom hath Christ set us free" (Gal. 5:1).

PREACHING THROUGH EPHESIANS

A KILLER KILLED

(Ephesians 2:13-19)

INTRODUCTION — “Having slain the enmity thereby.”

Man’s great enemy is enmity—the conflict that tears the world apart and destroys peace, which is wholeness—oneness.

- A. The conflict of man’s will against God.
- B. The conflict of selfish interests, man versus man.
- C. The conflict of conscience and lust. The difference between “ought to,” and “do.”

This is what Jesus killed by dying on the cross.

I. HE BROKE DOWN THE MIDDLE WALL OF PARTITION.

- A. The barrier between Jew and Gentile—
— It was most evident in traditional animosities.
- B. Illustrated in the wall between the court of the Gentiles and the inner court of the Temple. The wall bore an inscription warning of death for intrusion.
- C. The wall of the Law, which stood between Jew and Gentile—
 - 1. Between God and man—that sin might be exceeding sinful.
 - 2. Between man and self—to condemn the wrong shamefully done.
- D. Jesus fulfilled and went beyond the Law.
 - 1. He replaced form with reality.
 - 2. He offered the last sacrifice under the Law.

II. HE RECONCILED MEN, BOTH JEW AND GENTILE, TO GOD (II Cor. 5:18, 19).

- A. “And this is the judgment, that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their works were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, and cometh not to the light, lest his works should be reprov’d (John 3:19, 20).
- B. Illustration—Adam hid; Jacob fled; the injurer holds the grudge.

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Peter said, "Lord, depart from me, for I am a sinful man" (Luke 5:8).

C. We come together as we are reconciled to Him.

D. Reconciliation is "through His body on the tree."

1. There is that which humbles the observer of Christ and the cross. "Why should He love me so?"
2. "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me" (John 12:32).

III. PREACHED PEACE TO THEM THAT ARE AFAR OFF, AND PEACE TO THEM THAT ARE NIGH.

A. Afar off—the Gentiles.

1. Neither knowing nor caring about God.
2. Far from both the spiritual and moral qualities of faith.

But see the Samaritan woman and the thief on the cross.

B. Them that are nigh—the Jews—they are often hardest to reach.

1. So near and yet so far.
2. These include Nicodemus, the believing priest, and the apostles.

IV. PROVIDED ACCESS TO THE FATHER.

(Illustration—Tad Lincoln and his friend see Tad's father, the President, while "important" people wait.)

A. The broken relationship of Eden restored at Calvary.

B. "Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name" will be done.

CONCLUSION — "Reaching up to God, Reaching out to man,
Reaching down to the depths of shame.
The Cross of Christ, it reaches me,
O glory to His name."

PREACHING THROUGH EPHESIANS
THE CHURCH CHRIST FOUNDED
(Ephesians 4:1-16)

INTRODUCTION —

Here as elsewhere, Paul answered practical problems with doctrinal teaching. "At Ephesus" (1:1) could be "at your town."

Thesis: The church is the continuing body of Christ, doing the continuing work of Christ.

I. THE WORK IS CENTRAL.

Fulfillment of purpose; "Walk worthily of the calling."

A. Christ's purpose—To do the will of Him that sent.

That they may have eternal life. That they might have life, and have it more abundantly.

Christ's program—Matthew 4:23; 9:35.

B. The church's purpose the same; described in Commission—Not self-saving nor self-serving.

1. To make disciples, baptizing, and teaching the way of Christ.

2. Immediate purposes and side issues must not confuse (Examine every item of "church work.")

C. The tools of accomplishment are at every point divinely provided—God has given.

Hence to be respected, not leaving out what is given, nor demanding more.

Keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. (Remember Demetrius and Alexander?) "Till we *attain* unto the unity of the faith" (4:13).

II. THE GIVEN UNITIES MAKE DISUNITY

IMPOSSIBLE (Repeated emphasis on the *one*.) Cf. T. Campbell, *Declaration and Address*, Proposition 1.

A. One body.

Its birth predicted, divinely provided, proclaimed—
Luke 2; Matt. 2; Acts 2.

I Corinthians 12:12, 23, identifies the Church with Christ.

Ephesians 1:22, 23; Colossians 1:18 declares headship.

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- B. One Spirit, one hope.
- C. One Lord, the head of the church—brooks no competition.
Observe the care to make human agencies *plural* and subservient.
- D. One faith, *the* faith, delivered—this is the creed (Not “I believe” but “Christ is.”)
 - 1. Answers the question whether the church produced the Word.
 - 2. The revealed faith is Christo-centric, factual.
 - 3. The Gospel is the message, for unbeliever and believer.
 - 4. None other to be brooked (Galatians 1; II John 8, 9).
- E. One baptism
 - 1. The ordinances, Christo-centric, dramatic of the Gospel.
 - 2. Initiating, teaching (Rom. 6).
 - 3. Relating to gospel (cf. I Pet. 3:21).
- F. One God and Father of *all*.
 - 1. He permeates the whole.
 - 2. He permeates every one who makes up the whole. (Then what of those whom He permeates?)

III. THE GIVEN VARIETIES MAKE UNITY POSSIBLE

This is New Testament polity. — The necessary flexibility.

- A. He gave some officers—Some temporary, gifted tasks. Some permanent, trained workers. See the task and the worker.
- B. He gave a responsibility, the edifying of saints to do the work. Christ directs, each member *supplies*.
- C. He gave the means of growth—teaching love, and knowledge of Christ (II Pet. 3:17, 18).

CONCLUSION — John writes thirty years later to the same church (Rev. 2:1-6).

- A. You have left your first *love*.
- B. Repent and do the first works. — Restoration was needed!

THE CHRISTIAN WARFARE

(Ephesians 6:10-13)

INTRODUCTION — There is a certain attractiveness in a struggle.

- A. Let a fight start on a school ground or anyplace else, and the crowd gathers.
 - 1. In the strain of proving one's worth against that of another, is a challenge which is interesting to all.
 - 2. Often it takes real combat to bring it out.
- B. So in Christ.
 - 1. We are challenged to bring our best into the service.
 - 2. There is no lack for competition, if we will but see it, and the competition is such as to challenge our best.

I. OUR WARFARE IS NOT AGAINST FLESH AND BLOOD.

- A. After one experience in Eden, Satan found that the physical embodiment was too easily combatted physically, and the snakes have been suffering ever since.
- B. Often we wish it were simple as flesh and blood warfare, even as the soldiers in recent wars wished they could see and get their hands on the enemy that was shelling and bombing them from some place out of sight.
- C. Yet there is little or nothing to be gained spiritually from physical conflict. Jesus used it twice, but in neither case was there any spiritual good to the sufferer; only immediate relief of material evils.

II. OUR WARFARE IS "AGAINST."

It is an aggressive warfare.

- A. It was thus that Paul saw it.
 - 1. He never waited for another to bring the battle to him, but went and kept going to carry the Gospel into new fields.
 - 2. His very defenses were aggressive gospel sermons.
- B. Illustration—The small man in the football line wins if he can "crack the other fellow before he cracks you."

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- C. Illustration—The desert tribes in World War I were impossible to capture because they wouldn't dig in; they were always attacking.
- D. So the church is seen storming the very stronghold of hell in aggressive warfare (II Cor. 10:4).

III. THE FOE.

A. Principalities—first things.

1. "The stone that was set at nought of the builders has been made the head of the corner."
2. Christ has an uncompromising warfare against anything that would come first in the life of man. In Ephesus it was idols, the State, lustful pleasure.

B. Powers.

Influences, appetites, habits, desires, or anything that exerts a power over the life of the individual.

C. The rulers of the darkness of this world.

1. Here we have the forces embodied.
2. We may speak of gambling, liquor, and vice.

D. Spiritual wickedness—high places—evil spirits on high.

A man may war alone against material things, but where the warfare is, as it is here, against powers on which he cannot lay his hands, he needs a spiritual ally on his own side. Holy Spirit to combat evil spirit; Christ to conquer Satan.

CONCLUSION — The victory—

See it in the book of Revelation.

A. Theme of desperate conflict.

B. Ultimate victory to the Lamb and those that are His.

C. Song of triumph

—"Worthy is the Lamb!" (Rev. 5:12, 13).

PREACHING THROUGH PHILIPPIANS

THANKS FOR YOU

(Philippians 1:1-11)

INTRODUCTION — Take a Thanksgiving trip via Trans-History Dreamliner (cost only attentive imagination, no congestion, no pollution) to Philippi, on a day in A.D. 64.

The church is gathered. Expectancy. Epaphroditus is back from Rome, wan from his recent illness. He has a letter from Paul.

Look around and you see some friends. Lydia, nearing retirement now. The girl who once told fortunes now has her own treasure, a family. The jailer who can tell you about the two big cleanups after the earthquake—his baptism and the cleanup of the buildings.

Hear the letter.

I. "I THANK MY GOD UPON EVERY REMEMBRANCE OF YOU."

Note the object of thanks.

- A. We sent Paul money, but he doesn't say, "I thank God for your money."
- B. We heard that Paul was in danger of his life and it was spared, but he doesn't say, "I thank God for the preservation of my life."
- C. We hear that his ministry in Rome is meeting with success, but he says, *you*.
- D. After all, mankind is the climax of God's creation; why stop with lesser things?

The magic word *you* is a word of tender or turbulent meaning, depending on context and tone.

II. FOR YOUR FELLOWSHIP IN THE GOSPEL FROM THE FIRST DAY.

- A. Remember that first day: Lydia by the river, the demoniac girl, the jailer. See Acts 16.
- B. Fellowship—what strange fellowship that was!
 - 1. It had little of "Blest be the tie . . . fellowship of kindred minds."

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They weren't kindred minds at first. They *lacked* what he *had*.

2. "Ye all are *partakers* of my grace."
Paul had spread a feast and they, hungry, had partaken.
3. Later "When I departed from Macedonia, no church *communicated* with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only" (4:15).
He lacked what they *had*—money. They weren't alike, and the matching up of their strengths and weaknesses was fellowship.
4. The basis was the Christ, who supplies to all alike.
— In the gospel.

III. "HE WHO HAS BEGUN A GOOD WORK IN YOU WILL PERFORM IT" — *Growing*.

- A. "With the bishops and deacons . . ." Was the jailer now a bishop?
- B. "Now we live, if you stand fast in the Lord" (I Thess 3:8).
- C. Love may abound more and more—approve the excellent (Phil. 1:9-11).
 1. Paul was hard to please!
 2. But compare 3:13-15—"I count not myself to have apprehended." He had not yet pleased himself.

IV. UNTIL THE DAY OF JESUS CHRIST.

- A. Philippi provided a good testimonial to Paul's ministry. He had reason to be thankful for them; but the accounts were not complete.
- B. "What is our hope, our joy, our crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye at the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?" (I Thess. 2:19).
— Then the measure of his labors will be evident.

CONCLUSION — Other thankworthy items have faded.

Money is spent; life and health are finally surrendered. *You* remain. Thank God for you!

PREACHING THROUGH PHILIPPIANS

GOD EXALTED HIM

(Philippians 2:1-11)

INTRODUCTION — Read Psalm 2.

Here is the conflict between God's way and man's way. "My thoughts are not your thoughts; neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord" (Isaiah 55:8).

I. THE STORY OF THE CRUCIFIXION AND RESURRECTION—ON GOD VERSUS MAN.

- A. "He came unto his own and his own received Him not" (John 1:11).
- B. "Show us the Father" (John 14:7)—Jesus did and they killed Him.
- C. Christ crucified because He crossed their ideas on:
 - 1. The nature of righteousness.
 - 2. The nature of greatness.
 - 3. The center—God—and not self.
- D. Even the church is permeated with man's rebellion.

II. MAN WINS A TEMPORARY VICTORY IN THE CRUCIFIXION.

- A. He taught love, and hate triumphed.
- B. He taught service, and the law of the jungle proved more strong.
- C. He taught the importance of God's will, and man's will dominated.
- D. He claimed to be the Son of God with power, and He lay in the grave.

—In the present world, all this seems to be true.

III. GOD HIGHLY EXALTED HIM—God wins a permanent victory in the resurrection.

- A. The very deeds of Christ's enemies assured their defeat.
 - 1. Killing Him, they made possible the glory of resurrection.
 - 2. Desiring to destroy His influence, they made possible world evangelism.
 - 3. Attempting to make removal of His body from the grave impossible, they proved resurrection.

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- B. No joy in the resurrection for His enemies.
1. Judas had already gone to his own place.
 2. The soldiers fled in terror, and then jeopardized their lives with a lie.
 3. The priests invented an excuse, confused and confounded by resurrection.
— They continue to fight against Him, but it is like trying to keep the grass from growing.
(Annas and Caiaphas are mentioned in Acts 4.)
 4. The Jewish nation finds no comfort in it.
 - a. Those who refuse His Lordship try to deny the resurrection.
 - b. The Jews, with promises and threats of Deuteronomy 28, have reaped the threats—why?
- C. Christ will not be bound—
1. By the grave—“it was not possible that He should be holden of it” (Acts 2:24).
 2. By the church—(a picture shows Jesus chained to steps of a church building).
He will escape, even if it destroys that church.
 3. By special times and seasons.
Significant that many celebrate the death and ignore the weekly observance of the resurrection.

IV. EVERY KNEE SHALL BOW, AND EVERY TONGUE SHALL CONFESS.

“Sit thou on my right hand until I make thy foes thy footstool” (Acts 2:35).

- A. The resurrection becomes a threat and a danger to those who oppose.
- B. His will shall be done; He shall be glorified as Lord.
1. It promises complete frustration to opposers.
 2. It promises complete victory for those who follow Him.

Read Philipines 3:18-21.

CONCLUSION — Christ our King lives, with unlimited power either to save or to judge.

THE MISSIONS PROGRAM OF FIRST CHURCH

(Philippians 4:10-19)

INTRODUCTION — Speak on Missions Sunday as representative of missions committee.

A. Purpose—To educate, promote, disburse.

Make materials and speakers available to whole church.

B. The “first church” is at Philippi, the first in Europe.

—It was not called missions, but fellowship, or communication.

I. PHILIPPI HAD RECEIVED THE GOSPEL FROM OTHERS.

A. Second missionary journey—“Come over into Macedonia” (Acts 16:9).

Conversion of Lydia, the jailer, and others.

—a Gentile church.

B. Circumstances put them under obligation to those who sent gospel.

1. The Jewish Christian (Rom. 15:26).

2. Paul himself (II Cor. 8:5).

3. To the Lord.

C. Circumstances also put them under obligation to those who had not heard (Rom. 1:14, 15). (The package doesn't belong to the messenger, but to the addressee.)

D. They established a direct connection for a substantial expression of faith. (How many letters of this kind could Paul have written without crippling his work in Rome? Don't expect major reply for a minor gift).

II. PHILIPPI SENT A BENEVOLENT GIFT OF GRATITUDE IN RELIEF TO JERUSALEM (II Cor. 8, 9).

A. It did not pass over the material needs of the Jewish Christians.

B. We have opportunity to help the needy in age, as orphans, etc.

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III. PHILIPPI GAVE EARLY AND SUBSTANTIALLY TO EVANGELISM NEAR AT HAND (4:15, 16).

- A. They didn't have much gospel to give; it was new to them.
- B. They didn't have much money to give; they were poor and persecuted.
- C. Compare our own labors through local fellowship.

IV. THEY GAVE MONEY AND MANPOWER (EPAPHRODITUS) TO EVANGELISM FARTHER AWAY.

- A. The rent had to be paid on Paul's dwelling in Rome; contacts had to be maintained with Christians in the community.
- B. Lockland church sends its own members to overseas mission fields.

V. PHILIPPI GAVE HELP AND COMFORT TO AN AGED PREACHER IN NEED—PERSONAL ANGLE.
(Pensions and ministerial relief.)

- A. "Fellowship with my affliction"—an expression of gratitude and affection.
- B. Removes a handicap concerning future evangelism; younger preachers are encouraged.

VI. PHILIPPI WAS MOST BLESSED IN THEIR GIVING.

- A. Like Christ, they emptied themselves and God filled them.

"Whosoever will save his life shall lose it, and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it"
(Matt. 16:25).

- B. "For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now . . ." (Phil. 1:5).

It was a fellowship that included Paul, the saints in Judea, and Christ himself.

CONCLUSION — Most blessed is the giver of the Gospel.

But you can't give what you don't have.

PREACHING THROUGH COLOSSIANS

EPAPHRAS' PRAYERS

(Colossians 4:12, 13)

INTRODUCTION —

- A. "I pray daily for you," said a mother to her troubled neighbor. "I didn't know that, Mamma," said her little daughter afterward. "What time each day do you pray for her?" "O, I don't really say prayers," said Mama. "It's just to make her feel better, thinking I care."
- B. Our text reports a man's praying for his friends; but it is a report by someone other than himself.
- C. Epaphras is known to us only by three references in two letters of Paul, written from prison in Rome to friends in Colosse: Philemon 23 expresses greetings from "Epaphras, my fellow-prisoner in Christ." Colossians 1:7 speaks of "Epaphras our dear fellowservant, who is for you a faithful minister of Christ." Was Epaphras helping Paul on behalf of the church in Colosse?
Colossians 4:12, 13 — our text. Paul testified that Epaphras prayed for the home folk!

I. FOR WHOM DID EPAPHRAS PRAY?

- A. He prayed for others.
 - 1. Surely he prayed for himself also, but he was not consumed with self-pity or self-interest for his station as a prisoner along with Paul.
 - 2. Like Jesus (Matt. 9:36), he was moved with compassion for the needy.
- B. He prayed for the home congregation.
 - 1. As one of them, he was naturally concerned about them.
 - 2. Their doctrinal troubles (noted in Colossians) stirred, rather than stilled his interest.
- C. He prayed for neighboring congregations (v. 13).
 - 1. Laodicea, twenty miles from Colosse, had the "lukewarm" church (Rev. 3:14-22).
 - 2. Hierapolis ("priest town") is otherwise not known to us.

PREACHING THROUGH THE BIBLE

II. HOW DID EPAPHRAS PRAY? (v. 12).

- A. He prayed in a manner clearly observed by Paul.
 - 1. Probably they engaged in sessions of praying together, and with others.
 - 2. Times of personal prayer observed by his friend.
 - 3. How much do our friends know of our prayer habits, and how do they know?
- B. He prayed "always."
 - 1. He did not give up on prayer (I Thess. 5:17).
 - 2. The habit of prayer was established.
- C. He prayed "laboring fervently for you."
 - 1. This was no mere habitual recitation of words.
 - 2. It speaks the urgency of genuine concern.
 - 3. It reflects something approaching the fervency of Jesus in Gethsemane.
 - 4. Our own prayers would accomplish more if we worked harder at praying.

III. FOR WHAT DID EPAPHRAS PRAY? (v. 12).

- A. He prayed concerning their relationship to God.
 - 1. A natural concern for their health and material well-being is not ruled out (Compare III John 2).
 - 2. In talking to God about them, he was most concerned with the things of God.
 - 3. On their behalf he sought first "the kingdom of God and his righteousness" (Matt. 6:33).
- B. He prayed with awareness of their problems.
 - 1. The doctrinal confusions at Colosse were known to him as well as to Paul.
 - 2. His prayers were not limited to their correction; it was not simply, "Lord straighten them up."
 - 3. His plea for their growth and maturity: "Lord, build them up!"
 - 4. It is an excellent example of Christian prayer for the church, here and elsewhere.

CONCLUSION — We don't know much about Epaphras; but the little we do know centers in his praying for his friends. Would that we might be thus known!