

Jesus Through the Scriptures

Growing With Paul Bible Reading Challenge



Read the Bible Monday Through Friday

If you miss a day, use the weekend to catch up. If you fall behind, pick up with the current reading for that week. Mark off the chart on the back as you complete each week's reading. By the end of the year, you'll have read through eight of Paul's letters a total of five times!



Monte Vista
church of Christ

Track Your Weekly Progress

Throughout the Year

- 1 1 Thessalonians 1
- 2 1 Thessalonians 2
- 3 1 Thessalonians 3
- 4 1 Thessalonians 4
- 5 1 Thessalonians 5
- 6 2 Thessalonians 1
- 7 2 Thessalonians 2
- 8 2 Thessalonians 3
- 9 1 Corinthians 1
- 10 1 Corinthians 2
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- 12 1 Corinthians 4
- 13 1 Corinthians 5
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- 44 Philippians 1
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- 48 Colossians 1
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- 50 Colossians 3
- 51 Colossians 4
- 52 Philemon

1 Thessalonians 1

- The book of 1 Thessalonians is one of thirteen inspired letters written by the Apostle Paul. Luke records the Thessalonian church's beginning in Acts 17:1-9. The background information provided in these verses is critical to understanding the things Paul says in 1 Thessalonians.
- Thessalonica was an important city in the Roman province of Macedonia. It was about a hundred miles southwest of Philippi and had a population of about 200,000 in the first century.
- While most citizens in Thessalonica were Gentile, there was also a sizeable Jewish population. Upon arriving in the city on his second preaching journey, Paul first found a Jewish synagogue. He preached in this synagogue for three Sabbaths (Acts 17:2-3). As a result, many Jews and Gentiles were converted.
- These new Christians would immediately face Jewish persecution, and Paul would be forced to leave Thessalonica (Acts 17:5-10). The apostle is believed to have written this letter sometime between A.D. 51-52 while preaching in Corinth.
- The letter begins with Paul expressing great joy. He was ecstatic that these Christians continued to be faithful to Jesus despite experiencing intense persecution (1 Thessalonians 1:1-6). These saints were motivated by faith, love, and hope in the Lord (1 Thessalonians 1:3).
- Their faithfulness was well known by the brethren throughout the region (1 Thessalonians 1:7). They had become an example to many believers.
- In the final verses of the chapter, we learn that authentic discipleship involves being evangelistic (1 Thessalonians 1:8), completely turning away from sinful practices (1 Thessalonians 1:9), and eagerly anticipating the second coming of Jesus (1 Thessalonians 1:10).

1 Thessalonians 2

- In this chapter, Paul spends a great deal of time discussing his conduct with laboring with the Thessalonians (1 Thessalonians 2:1-12). He mentions how he boldly proclaimed the gospel to them, even though he had recently experienced persecution in Philippi (1 Thessalonians 2:1-2; Acts 16:22-40).
- He mentions how he and his spiritual co-workers had come to them with pure motives (1 Thessalonians 2:3). Their chief desire was to please God, not men (1 Thessalonians 2:4). They were not like the false teachers who seek flattery, money, and personal glory (1 Thessalonians 2:4-6).
- Paul and his fellow preachers were very kind and nurturing to the Thessalonians (1 Thessalonians 2:7). They were willing to sacrifice for them out of love (1 Thessalonians 2:8). While they had the right to receive money for their preaching, they decided to work with their hands to provide for their needs so that they wouldn't be a burden (1 Thessalonians 2:9). They labored with integrity and love so that the Thessalonians would have godly examples to imitate (1 Thessalonians 2:10-12).
- Paul commended this church for receiving the word of God and patiently enduring persecution (1 Thessalonians 2:13-16). Paul regretted leaving them (notice how he mentions a visit that Satan hindered), but he rejoiced over the news that they were still serving Jesus (1 Thessalonians 2:17-20).
- This chapter teaches us a few very important things about Paul's character. He truly loved his brethren, cared about their spiritual welfare, and was always mindful of how his conduct could impact their lives.

1 Thessalonians 3

- This chapter begins with Paul mentioning what took place on his second missionary journey. While in Athens, Paul sent Timothy to check on the newly converted Thessalonians (1 Thessalonians 3:1-2). Due to experiencing persecution, Paul was greatly concerned about them turning away from the gospel (1 Thessalonians 3:3-5; Acts 17:5-9).
- While in Corinth, Paul rejoiced to learn from Timothy that the Thessalonians were persevering in the cause of Christ (1 Thessalonians 3:6-7; Acts 18:1-5). These saints had high regard for Paul and longed to see him again.
- The rest of the chapter contains words of encouragement. Paul wanted these disciples to understand that being a Christian is not easy. Since the world doesn't often respect the faith of God's people, Christians must be steadfast and willing to suffer persecution (1 Thessalonians 3:8). Paul would pray for them and eagerly anticipate a day when he could see them again (1 Thessalonians 3:9-13).
- Like in the previous chapter, we are again challenged by Paul's deep love and concern for his brethren. We are moved to ask, "Do I also have deep love and concern for my brethren? Do I care about their spiritual welfare and progress? Am I actively seeking to help them grow in their faith?"

1 Thessalonians 4

- While Paul was encouraged by the Thessalonians' faithfulness to Jesus during persecution, he does have some admonitions for them. Since they lived in a society full of idolatry and sexual immorality, Paul spoke with them about how to "walk" in a manner that pleased God (1 Thessalonians 4:1).
- These saints were to continue excelling in moral purity, love for another, attending to their own business and working with their hands (1 Thessalonians 4:2-12). They were not to be content with their current progress in these matters.
- Paul also wanted to ensure they had a proper understanding of the Lord's return. It appears that many of the Thessalonians were anxious to know what would happen to saints who died before the Lord returned. Would they still be raised? Would they still be able to go to heaven and be with the Lord?
- Paul cleared up any confusion they had about the second coming of Jesus in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. Those who passed away before the Lord's return would be raised from the dead. Jesus also predicted this in John 5:28-29. The Lord will descend from heaven with His mighty angels, and all the saved (both resurrected and alive on the earth) will meet Him in the air. They will then return with Him to heaven and be with Him forever.
- This chapter can be summed up by saying, "If we maintain sexual purity, love one another, and be people of integrity, we can eagerly look forward to the return of Jesus."

1 Thessalonians 5

- Paul continues clearing up any confusion the Thessalonians had about the second coming of Jesus. At some point, he already taught them that the Lord's return would be unexpected (1 Thessalonians 5:1-3). It would be like a "thief in the night" and "labor pains upon a woman with child." Jesus echoes this in Luke 12:39-40.
- Since no one knows when the Lord will return, disciples need to make sure that they are not caught unprepared (1 Thessalonians 5:4-9). They need to be spiritually awake, encouraging, and building up one another (1 Thessalonians 5:10-11).
- Paul instructs the brethren to recognize, esteem, and be at peace with the leaders of the congregation (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13). They were to patiently exhort, warn, comfort, and help one another (1 Thessalonians 5:14). They were to avoid seeking personal vengeance, rejoice in the Lord, always pray, give thanks, and not quench the Spirit, especially in the matter of the gift of prophecy (1 Thessalonians 5:15-20). They were to hold fast to those things which were good and abstain from every form of evil (1 Thessalonians 5:21-22).
- Like in many of his letters, Paul closes this book with some final exhortations and salutations (1 Thessalonians 5:23-28).
- This chapter should motivate us to do more than merely believe in the second coming of Jesus. We should also be actively working, serving, praying, and preparing for this grand event!

2 Thessalonians 1

- Like the first letter to the Thessalonians, this second one was written during Paul's second preaching journey (A.D 50-51). The first letter was likely written during Paul's eighteen-month stay in Corinth. This second letter was penned soon afterward. Most scholars consider 1st and 2nd Thessalonians among the earliest written books in the New Testament.
- The letter begins with a warm salutation (2 Thessalonians 1:1-2). Paul, Silas, and Timothy were the preachers who helped plant this church in Macedonia (Acts 17:1-15). Paul was thankful for their constant growth in faith, love, and patience, even amid persecution (2 Thessalonians 1:3-4).
- Paul wanted these brethren to realize that the Lord would vindicate them when He comes again (2 Thessalonians 1:6-10). The second coming of Jesus will be an occasion of "relief" for God's people and "retribution" on the wicked. Those who have rejected the gospel will experience eternal judgment and separation from God!
- The promise of the Lord's return should motivate Christians to pray and stay focused (2 Thessalonians 1:11-12). Disciples must strive to be counted worthy of their calling, be active in their faith, and live in a way that reflects the glory of Jesus.
- It is not enough to believe in the second coming of the Lord. We must also be eager and diligently preparing for it.

2 Thessalonians 2

- The second coming of Jesus was a subject that tripped up many of the Thessalonian brethren. Many believed false reports that the Lord had already returned, and they missed it. Paul assured them that wasn't the case (2 Thessalonians 2:1-2).
- The return of the Lord would not occur before the time of apostasy (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4). Paul also refers to this in 1 Timothy 4:1-5. There would come a time when some brethren would rebel against God, promote erroneous teaching, and lead some away from the truth.
- The arrogant and blasphemous "man of lawlessness" is not identified by Paul. He has been the subject of much discussion and debate. Some suggestions for his identity include the high priest, gnostics, a pope, Hitler, Stalin, and a U.S. president. The fact is, we don't know!
- While we do not know exactly who the "man of lawlessness" was, Paul says he was already at work but was restrained somehow (2 Thessalonians 2:5-7). Maybe the preaching of the gospel was restraining and limiting his influence. He would eventually be "revealed" by the proclamation of God's truth (2 Thessalonians 2:8). Those who allowed themselves to be deceived and did not love the truth would spiritually perish (2 Thessalonians 2:8-10). God would allow them to continue down their destructive path (2 Thessalonians 2:11-12). These things also occur today!
- While many would fall away, Paul was thankful for the faithful brethren in Thessalonica (2 Thessalonians 2:13-17). These saints had answered the call of the gospel and stood firm in the apostles' traditions.
- This chapter urges us to understand that it matters what we believe and teach. God wants us to hold fast to the true gospel and avoid being among those led astray.

2 Thessalonians 3

- The final chapter of this letter begins with a request for prayers. Paul wanted his brethren to pray that God would be glorified through his preaching and that the gospel would be spread rapidly around the world (2 Thessalonians 3:1).
- Paul also requested that they pray that they “be rescued from perverse and evil men” (2 Thessalonians 3:2). While these men were persecuting God’s people, Paul knew that the Lord was watching over and would protect them (2 Thessalonians 3:2-3). Opponents of the gospel are workers of “the evil one.” Even today, Satan continues to use his workers to hinder the work of God!
- While the gospel had initially converted the Thessalonians, Paul urged them to continue in the faith (2 Thessalonians 3:4-5). Christians must persevere, grow, bear fruit, and remain faithful to the Lord.
- Unfortunately, many in Thessalonica were not growing and remaining faithful to the apostles’ teachings. Many were lazy and living undisciplined lives (2 Thessalonians 3:6-8). This was not the example Paul and his co-workers gave them (2 Thessalonians 3:9). Those unwilling to work and earn a living don’t deserve to eat (2 Thessalonians 3:10). Their idleness doesn’t glorify God and often results in them becoming meddlers and busybodies (2 Thessalonians 3:11). God demands that His people get a job, work hard, be responsible, and persevere in doing what is right (2 Thessalonians 3:12-13).
- Paul urged the brethren to admonish and discipline those not living by the gospel (2 Thessalonians 3:14-15). Church discipline is an act of love. The purpose of it is to urge erring Christians to repent and turn from their sins (1 Corinthians 5:5).
- Since many false letters were being circulated at this time, Paul assured these saints that he was signing it with his hand (2 Thessalonians 3:16-17). This was an authentic letter from the inspired apostle and must be read to all the brethren.

1 Corinthians 1

- The book of Acts provides details of Paul's work in the city of Corinth (Acts 18:1-17). Rebuilt by Julius Caesar in 44 BC, Corinth became one of the most important commercial cities in the Roman Empire. It was also a center of all kinds of gross immorality. It housed the temple of Aphrodite. As many as 1000 prostitutes worked in this temple. The term "Corinthian" became synonymous with drunkenness and immoral debauchery.
- Paul visited the city on his second missionary journey. There he met and worked in the tent-making business with Priscilla and Aquilla. He also preached the gospel in the synagogue and converted many (including the leader of the synagogue).
- The local church that was planted in Corinth was a troubled one. The letter of 1 Corinthians highlights many of their problems. Look at this letter as sort of a spiritual email. In each chapter, Paul talks about a problem in the church and the scriptural solution to it.
- Paul doesn't begin the letter by blasting the brethren (1 Corinthians 1:1-9). He identifies them as a church of God and saints who had called on the name of the Lord. He expresses thanksgiving for God's grace, their gifts, and their fellowship with Jesus.
- Beginning in verse 10, Paul points out one of their many spiritual problems. They were a deeply divided church (1 Corinthians 1:10-16). Their division was tied to pride and bragging about the men who had baptized them. They were spiritually immature and guilty of exalting preachers above the Lord.
- Paul was not sent just to baptize them but to preach the gospel and point them to Jesus (1 Corinthians 1:17). While the message of a crucified Savior was foolish to the world, to those being saved is the power of God (1 Corinthians 1:18). The message of the cross is full of paradoxes that reveal the power and wisdom of God (1 Corinthians 1:19-31). It is a message that should compel us to boast in the Lord for our salvation, not ourselves.
- What practical lessons are found in this chapter? First, the Corinthians were still God's people even though they had many problems. Second, Christians should exalt Jesus and not men. Third, while the gospel message is silly to the world's sophisticated, it contains God's wisdom and must be believed and obeyed.

1 Corinthians 2

- This chapter begins with Paul describing his preaching among the Corinthians. He did not come to them with excellent speech or human wisdom. Instead, he came to them preaching about the crucified Savior (1 Corinthians 2:1-2). Verse 3 is probably a reference to what is found in Acts 18:9-11.
- Paul's miracles confirmed that his message came from God (1 Corinthians 2:4-5). Jesus promised that the preaching of the gospel would be accompanied by miraculous signs (Mark 16:15-20). The miracles were supernatural evidence to the Corinthians that heaven was the source of Paul's preaching.
- In the final section of the chapter, Paul powerfully describes the gospel that he and his co-workers preached. It was a message that contained the wisdom of God and did not originate from men (1 Corinthians 2:6-7). The rulers of this world did not understand it. If they had, they would not have crucified God's Son (1 Corinthians 2:8-9).
- The gospel was revealed by the Holy Spirit (who knows the mind of God) to the apostles and prophets (1 Corinthians 2:10-13). This is in harmony with what the Lord promised in John 16:12-15.
- The natural man considers the gospel message foolish, but the spiritual man accepts it, can discern properly, and has the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:14-16).
- What practical lessons can be taken away from this chapter? First, the gospel can be trusted because it was revealed by the Holy Spirit and confirmed with miraculous signs. Second, those who trust it become spiritually minded people who stand out in the world.

1 Corinthians 3

- At the root of the division among the Corinthians was spiritual immaturity (1 Corinthians 3:1-3). They were spiritual babes and infants. This was manifested in their jealousy, strife, and devouring of one another (1 Corinthians 3:3).
- Their carnal thinking was also manifested in their exaltation of preachers. Paul and his co-workers were only servants and planters of the word. God was the One who saved and caused the growth (1 Corinthians 3:4-7).
- All Christians are part of the same field (1 Corinthians 3:8-9). They are fellow workers who should focus on bringing people to Christ. There should never be any competition and exalting ourselves and others!
- Paul labored and planted the church in Corinth (1 Corinthians 3:10). Others would water and build upon the foundation he had laid (1 Corinthians 3:11). The work of God's messengers will be tested with fire (1 Corinthians 3:12-15). Some of those converted will fall away, while others will remain faithful. While the builder might suffer loss, he can still be saved.
- By being divided, the Corinthians were harming the Lord's temple (1 Corinthians 3:16-17). The temple, in this context, refers to the Lord's church. Just as the Lord's presence was in the temple in the Old Testament, it is in the church today. The church is to be holy and blameless. Those who seek to defile it invite God's judgment!
- Instead of continuing in their spiritual immaturity, the Corinthians needed to humble themselves before God. They needed to cease glorifying men, walking in the wisdom of the world, and start seeing all gospel preachers as ministers of the Lord (1 Corinthians 3:18-23).
- This chapter urges us to pursue spiritual growth. Spiritual maturity helps us avoid the pitfalls Satan uses to hinder our kingdom work.

1 Corinthians 4

- In this chapter, Paul continues discussing the divisions that existed in Corinth. The Corinthians were divided over their favorite preachers. Paul wanted them to understand that the proper evaluation of preachers can only be made by the Lord (2 Corinthians 4:1-5). Preachers are ministers (servants) of the Lord. They have been entrusted with the glorious gospel and are expected to be faithful stewards. The Corinthians' judgment of Paul or any preacher was insignificant. He was seeking the Lord's approval, not the approval of men!
- Instead of exalting preachers, the Corinthians needed to focus on not exceeding what was revealed from God (1 Corinthians 4:6). They needed to avoid being arrogant and puffed up towards one another (1 Corinthians 4:7). In 1 Corinthians 4:8, Paul uses sarcasm to rebuke the brethren for their pride.
- In contrast to the arrogant spirit of the Corinthians, Paul describes himself and the other apostles as "last of all" (1 Corinthians 4:8). They had been mocked, persecuted, slandered, and brought low for the cause of Christ (1 Corinthians 4:9-13).
- These harsh, sarcastic words were not written to shame the Corinthians but to admonish them to repent (2 Corinthians 4:14). Paul wanted them to strip themselves of carnal thinking and remember the Christ-like example he gave when he was among them (1 Corinthians 4:15-16).
- Paul had sent Timothy to encourage and remind them of the things he taught in all the churches (1 Corinthians 4:17). Some didn't believe that Paul would ever revisit them (1 Corinthians 4:18). Paul promised that he would soon demonstrate his miraculous power as an apostle (1 Corinthians 4:19-20). His delay gave them time to repent so that he wouldn't have to come to them with a "rod" (1 Corinthians 4:21).
- What practical lessons can be learned from this chapter? First, there is no room for arrogance and competition in the kingdom of God. Second, preachers are to be viewed as ministers of the Lord (not men to be exalted above the Lord). Third, Christians should follow godly apostolic examples.

1 Corinthians 5

- In addition to the division, another problem among the Corinthians was tolerating sexual immorality. Evidently, the wicked practices in Corinth had found their way into the church. They had a brother in their fellowship who was involved in sexual immorality with his father's wife (1 Corinthians 5:1). This kind of immorality would not ever be accepted by the pagan people in their society!
- Instead of being apathetic about this brother's sin, Paul urged the Corinthians to discipline him in love (1 Corinthians 5:2-4). Failing to hold him accountable for his sin could contaminate the church and influence others to sin.
- They needed to pull back their fellowship from this brother (1 Corinthians 5:5-13). This required no longer associating with him. This would send the message that they disapproved of his evil, and hopefully, he would be brought to repentance. Paul gave similar instructions to the Thessalonians in 2 Thessalonians 3:14-15). Christians need real love to hold one another accountable to righteous and godly living.
- What lessons can be learned from this chapter? First, sin is serious to God. Second, churches trying to please the Lord will practice discipline on behalf of sinful brethren. Third, church discipline is an act of love designed to prick the heart of the erring and bring them to repentance.

1 Corinthians 6

- In addition to tolerating sexual immorality, another problem in the Corinthian church was lawsuits. Brethren were suing and dragging one another before pagan courts (1 Corinthians 6:1). If Christians are qualified to judge the world and angels, then they should be able to settle their trivial disputes with one another (1 Corinthians 6:2-3).
- Instead of seeking justice from the world, God’s people should seek out someone wise in the church to help them settle problems (1 Corinthians 6:4-5). It was better for them to suffer injustice at the hands of their brethren than to take the matter before the pagans (1 Corinthians 6:6-8). It seemed that these brethren were even using these lawsuits as a tool to be greedy and defraud one another.
- Closely tied to the previous context, in 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, Paul gives a list of unrighteous people. This list includes fornicators, adulterers, idolaters, thieves, covetous, and those who practice homosexuality. Paul strongly urges the brethren not to be deceived! The people who practice these things will experience eternal judgment from God. The Corinthians used to be unrighteous, but they had been washed and transformed by Jesus when they obeyed the gospel (1 Corinthians 6:11).
- Paul closes this section by giving some lengthy teaching about the sin of fornication. In 1 Corinthians 6:12, Paul quotes those who opposed his teaching. Evidently, some of the Corinthians were persuaded that “all things are lawful” meant that fornication was okay. They seemed to believe that what they did in their bodies would not impact their souls.
- Paul responds to their erroneous thinking with three powerful points about the physical body. First, the body is for the Lord (1 Corinthians 6:13-14). Second, God did not make the body is not for fornication (1 Corinthians 6:15-18). Third, the body is the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).
- What practical lessons can we take away from this chapter? We need to be quick to work out any problems and disputes. We must avoid being deceived by the moral standard of our current culture. We must avoid all forms of sexual immorality and use our bodies to glorify God.

1 Corinthians 7

- This chapter begins a new section in which Paul will answer various spiritual questions from the Corinthians. Some of their questions concerned marriage, divorce, and sexual intimacy. Maybe some believed that abstaining from marriage and sex in marriage would make them holier than others.
- Due to some present distress (probably persecution), Paul said, “it is good for a man not to touch a woman” (1 Corinthians 7:1). However, it was better to marry than participate in fornication (1 Corinthians 7:2). Marriage is created by God and sex within marriage is holy (Hebrews 13:4).
- Married people should not abstain from one another (1 Corinthians 7:3-7). Abstinence in marriage doesn’t lead to a holier life. Instead, it gives an opportunity to Satan!
- The unmarried and widows are advised to remain in their present situation (1 Corinthians 7:8-9). Again, this is a recommendation because of the “present distress” (1 Corinthians 7:26). If they struggled with self-control, they needed to marry and avoid fornication.
- Paul reminds those married to Christians of the Lord’s teaching in Matthew 19:1-12. God wants marriage to be a lifelong relationship (1 Corinthians 7:10). God doesn’t want couples to divorce! If someone’s spouse leaves, they must remain unmarried or be reconciled (1 Corinthians 7:11).
- The issue of Christians being married to non-Christians is one that the Lord never addressed in His earthly ministry (1 Corinthians 7:12). Paul instructs them under inspiration to be faithful and committed to their unbelieving spouse (1 Corinthians 7:12-16). God only allows for divorce if a person’s spouse is unfaithful (Matthew 19:9). This applies to believers and non-believers. Verse 15 is not providing another exception for divorce and remarriage. Paul is simply saying that a Christian will not be held accountable to marital duties if their unbelieving spouse departs. A believer is not responsible for maintaining a marriage that the unbeliever doesn’t wish to continue. This text is not contradicting Matthew 19:9!
- The next section calls for Christians to be holy in whatever situation they were called (1 Corinthians 7:17-24). It didn’t matter if they were circumcised, uncircumcised, slave, free, married, or unmarried. Every disciple needed to glorify God in their situation.
- The final section is addressed to virgins and widows. Due to the present distress, it probably wasn’t a good time for them to marry (1 Corinthians 7:25-27). But it wasn’t a sin if they did marry (1 Corinthians 7:28). Paul warned that things would be difficult during this time (1 Corinthians 7:29-31). Paul was trying to help them avoid being overwhelmed with too many concerns.
- There were advantages to being single (1 Corinthians 7:32-34). Those who don’t have the gift of celibacy need to get married (1 Corinthians 7:35-36). Those who had the gift (like Paul) would be spared the suffering married people would have during this time of distress (1 Corinthians 7:37-38).
- Paul tells the widows they were bound to their husbands while alive. Once they died, they could marry someone free to marry (1 Corinthians 7:39). Due to the present distress, it would probably be better if they remained single (1 Corinthians 7:40).
- What practical lessons can we take away from this chapter? First, one doesn’t have to get married to be saved. Paul was unmarried and was a faithful servant of God! Second, marriage does help one avoid

sexual immorality. Third, married people must be committed to the relationship until death separates them.

1 Corinthians 8

- This chapter begins a section where Paul speaks about meats offered as sacrifices to idols (1 Corinthians 8:1). Could a Christian enter an idol's temple and participate in the feast? Could a Christian eat meats sacrificed to idols that were sold in the marketplace?
- Paul is likely quoting the Corinthians when he says, "we know that we all have knowledge" (1 Corinthians 8:1). If not, this statement would contradict what he says in 1 Corinthians 8:7. Some Corinthians seemed to have argued that it was okay to eat meats sacrificed to idols because everyone knew that there was no real god behind the idol that was worshipped. This was an arrogant way of thinking! The brethren needed to act in love and consider that not every Christian has the same level of spiritual maturity (1 Corinthians 8:2-3).
- While it is true that there is only one true God (1 Corinthians 8:4-6), not all Christians in the church understood that idolatry had no objective reality (1 Corinthians 8:7). Since many of them had spent a number of years involved in pagan worship, when some ate meats that had been sacrificed to idols, it was worship.
- There was nothing inherently sinful about these meats, but those that were spiritually mature needed to beware of using their liberty to become a stumbling block to those who needed time to grow (1 Corinthians 8:8-9). A strong brother (who knows an idol is nothing) might cause a weak brother to violate his conscience (1 Corinthians 8:10). This would cause both brothers to sin against the Lord who had died for them (1 Corinthians 8:11-12). Therefore, Paul resolved that he would no longer eat meat if doing so caused his brother to stumble (1 Corinthians 8:13).
- What practical lesson can be taken away from this chapter? Christians need to consider one another. Strong and spiritually mature saints must be willing to give up certain liberties if it helps the weak members grow.

1 Corinthians 9

- Paul practiced what he preached. In the previous chapter, he advised the spiritually strong Corinthians to forego certain liberties for the good of the weak. Paul didn't just suggest that; he also did it! As an apostle and preacher, he gave up his right to be financially supported for his work (1 Corinthians 9:1-6). He worked as a tentmaker while preaching the gospel in Corinth (Acts 18:1-5).
- In 1 Corinthians 9:7-14, Paul offers a powerful argument to prove that a preacher has a right to receive support for his work. The soldier receives support while at war. The planter eats the produce from the vineyard. The shepherd receives milk from the flock. Priests were able to eat sacrifices at the altar. Even the Law taught that "You shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing" (Deuteronomy 25:4). Like any other laborer, Paul deserved to be compensated for his preaching.
- One of the things that made Paul an effective preacher was his willingness to adapt to his audiences. He respected the customs of both Jews and Gentiles (1 Corinthians 9:19-23). This helps us understand Paul's actions in Acts 16:1-3 and Acts 21:26.
- Paul compares Christian's self-denial to gain heaven to an athlete competing in the Olympic games (1 Corinthians 9:24-27). Like the runner in the games, the disciple must have self-control, discipline, focus, and endurance. Like a boxer, the disciple must "buffet" his own body and bring it under subjection. If he doesn't, he will be spiritually disqualified and forfeit his reward.
- What practical lessons can be taken away from this chapter? First, there is scriptural authority to pay preachers for their work. Second, Christians need to be conscious of their influence when doing evangelism. Third, Christians need to live disciplined lives and avoid apostasy.

1 Corinthians 10

- Paul warns those who believed they were so strong that they could not fall. He tells them to be careful not to follow in the footsteps of the children of Israel. God blessed them tremendously, but they constantly fell into sin (1 Corinthians 10:1-6). They practiced idolatry, sexual immorality, and grumbling (1 Corinthians 10:7-10). God's judgment upon them is recorded for our learning and to help us avoid practicing similar sins (1 Corinthians 10:11). Those who considered themselves strong needed to "take heed that he does not fall" (1 Corinthians 10:12).
- While temptations we face are common to men, God will help us (1 Corinthians 10:13). He will faithfully watch over us, not allow us to be tempted beyond what we can bear, and always provide us a path to escape.
- The Corinthians needed to be wise and "flee idolatry" (1 Corinthians 10:14-15). They needed to avoid entering the pagan temples and participating in the feasts. Paul emphasizes this point by mentioning their worship when partaking of the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 10:16-17). Partaking of the Lord's Supper is a time of spiritual fellowship for believers. They share in remembering the body and the blood of the Lord. Paul also reminds them of the fellowship between God and those who partake of the sacrifices made on the altar under the old covenant (1 Corinthians 10:18).
- While Paul understood that an idol was nothing, it was not right for Christians to partake from both the table of the Lord and the table of idols (1 Corinthians 10:18-22). A person cannot maintain fellowship with God and Satan simultaneously!
- Christians must seek to edify their brethren (1 Corinthians 10:23-24). There was nothing wrong with eating the meats that were sold in the marketplace (1 Corinthians 10:25-26). The whole created earth belongs to God and is, therefore, to be used by God's children.
- Christians should also avoid giving any impression that they are involved in idolatry. If someone invites them to participate in a pagan practice, they should abstain and show concern for one another's conscience (1 Corinthians 10:25-30). Whatever they do needs to be to the glory of God (1 Corinthians 10:31). Saints should conduct themselves honorable and be willing to forego the use of certain liberties to win souls for Christ (1 Corinthians 11:32-33). They should imitate Paul, who imitated Christ (1 Corinthians 11:1).

1 Corinthians 11

- In this section, Paul begins talking about how Christians are to conduct themselves in the public worship assembly. He mainly discusses women's role in the assembly (1 Corinthians 11:2-16).
- While the Corinthians did respect the traditions handed down to them by Paul, there was a problem they needed to correct (1 Corinthians 11:2). The controversy surrounded women coming to worship without the veil. Some were even prophesying in the assembly without the veil.
- Paul deals with this problem by reminding the brethren of God's divine order in creation (1 Corinthians 11:3). God also has order in worship (1 Corinthians 11:4-5). In this context, Paul addresses prophesying and praying when they come together.
- It seems there were cultural implications for Christian women to have their heads uncovered in the assembly (1 Corinthians 11:6, 16). Paul says it was "disgraceful" and equivalent to having their heads shaved like the city's temple prostitutes.
- In the Corinthian society, it appears that a woman wearing the veil was a visible sign that she accepted God's order for creation. It was a visible sign that she accepted God's will of submission (1 Corinthians 11:7-16). This doesn't mean that men are superior to women. God made both, and they have equal importance (1 Corinthians 11:11-12). But in the beginning, God's order involved Him making man first, and then the woman to be his helpmate (Genesis 2:7-18; 1 Timothy 2:11-15). Paul also strongly argues against men striving to look like women and women striving to look like men (1 Corinthians 11:14-15). Even nature teaches us that men and women are to look different!
- The second item of public worship that the Corinthians needed instruction on was the Lord's Supper. These saints were partaking of this meal in an unworthy manner. They had created divisions and began treating the Lord's Supper as a common meal (1 Corinthians 11:17-21). Paul commanded them not to come together for this purpose but to eat and drink at home (1 Corinthians 11:22).
- Jesus instituted His supper on the night of His betrayal (1 Corinthians 11:23). He also gave specific instructions for how disciples are to partake of it (1 Corinthians 11:24-28). Disciples are to focus their minds on the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord. Those who properly fail to concentrate during the Lord's Supper dishonor God and invite His judgment (1 Corinthians 11:29-30).
- The chapter concludes with Paul admonishing the brethren to partake of the Lord's Supper together and eat common meals at home (1 Corinthians 11:31-34).
- What practical lessons can be taken away from this chapter? First, we must respect God's order for the physical and spiritual family. Second, we must avoid mindlessly going through the motions when partaking in the Lord's Supper. Third, the Lord has directed His Supper to be eaten in the assembly of believers on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 11:18).

1 Corinthians 12

- 1 Corinthians 12-14 is a section about how miraculous spiritual gifts were to be properly exercised in the public worship assembly. During this time, the Holy Spirit had given various miraculous gifts to Christians in Corinth (1 Corinthians 12:1-6). These gifts were to be used in works of service and edification.
- There are nine different gifts listed in the chapter (1 Corinthians 11:7-10). There were miraculous gifts of wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, miracles (maybe a reference to casting out demons), prophecy, discerning spirits, tongue speaking, and interpretation of tongues.
- The Holy Spirit distributed these gifts according to His will (1 Corinthians 12:11). When a disciple exercised their gift properly, they contributed to the spiritual body's well-being (1 Corinthians 12:12-14). Just like with the human body, the spiritual body of Christ is made up of many members (1 Corinthians 12:15-25). Every member of the spiritual body has something valuable to contribute. There should be no competition and division in the body. The members should work together to help the body function properly.
- Christians are individual members of the Lord's body, and their service (or lack thereof) impacts one another (1 Corinthians 12:26-27).
- In the final section, Paul provides another list of gifts in the church (1 Corinthians 12:28-30). Most of these gifts are miraculous, but some are not. Since the Corinthians were divided and competing over their gifts, Paul vowed to show them something more valuable to pursue (1 Corinthians 12:31).
- What practical lessons can be taken away from this chapter? First, while miraculous gifts in the church have ceased, disciples have been given non-miraculous gifts to help build up the Lord's body. Paul lists many of these gifts in Romans 12:4-8. Second, when disciples don't properly use their gifts from the Lord, the body suffers. Third, disciples must avoid envying and competing over gifts. Instead, they must be thankful for their gifts and use them to the Lord's glory!

1 Corinthians 13

- The Corinthians were dividing and competing over their miraculous spiritual gifts. They had failed to realize that every gift contributed to the building up of the body of Christ. In this chapter, Paul will encourage these saints to pursue something more significant than miraculous gifts – which is love.
- Without love, miraculous gifts are worthless (1 Corinthians 13:1-2). Even benevolence and being a martyr for the Lord are useless without love (1 Corinthians 13:3).
- What is love? Paul defines it in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7. Love is not quick-tempered, jealous, or arrogant. Love does not go around with a chip on its shoulder. Love does not behave dishonorably and rejoice in sin. Love is not selfish, rude, or mean. Instead, love is patient, optimistic, and rejoices in the truth and successes of others.
- There was coming a day when the miraculous gifts were going to cease (1 Corinthians 13:8). They were going to be done away with when the “perfect” comes (1 Corinthians 13:9-10). The “perfect” is a reference to revelation from God. During the time of the first century, the church was in a childhood period, and Christians were receiving partial revelation from the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 13:9). Soon, those “parts” would be assembled, and God’s revelation to men would be “perfect.” It would be complete and preserved for us in the Bible.
- Once God’s will was fully revealed, the miraculous gifts that confirmed it would no longer be necessary (1 Corinthians 13:11-12; Mark 16:16-20). Faith, hope, and love would endure throughout the Christian period.
- Love is superior to faith, hope, and miraculous gifts because it will endure throughout eternity (1 Corinthians 13:13).
- Let us continuously pursue love and make sure that it is the motivation behind every act of service we perform in the kingdom of God.

1 Corinthians 14

- This chapter concludes the section about miraculous gifts. While these Christians should have pursued love before anything else, they also needed to pursue prophecy before tongue speaking.
- Prophecy edified the whole church, but not everyone could understand the tongue speaker (1 Corinthians 14:1-5). Biblical tongue speaking involved a disciple being able to miraculously speak in an actual human language that he had never been formally taught (Acts 2:1-11). What benefit would the church receive if no one could understand the speaker (1 Corinthians 14:6-11)?
- It seems that many Corinthians desired the gift of tongue speaking out of pride. They wanted to boast about the gift instead of seeking to edify their brethren. Paul urges the tongue speakers to pray that they also may be able to interpret so that the church can understand and be built up (1 Corinthians 14:12-17). Paul could speak in tongues, but he also desired others to know what he was saying (1 Corinthians 14:18-19). He wanted the hearers to understand God's will!
- Paul rebukes these brethren and urges them to stop acting like children (1 Corinthians 14:20). He is frustrated with their immaturity and competing over gifts.
- These brethren needed to be humble and use their gifts in an orderly manner in the worship assembly. Tongue speaking was a sign to unbelievers, and prophecy was a sign to believers (1 Corinthians 14:21-22). If visitors came in among them and heard a bunch speaking in foreign languages without an interpreter (and perhaps several at the same time), they would think the congregation was full of crazy people (1 Corinthians 14:23). But if they exercised the gift in an orderly manner, the unbelievers might be convicted and acknowledge that God was among them (1 Corinthians 14:24-25).
- In the rest of the chapter, Paul regulates the use of miraculous gifts in the public assembly (1 Corinthians 26-40). He gives specific instructions to tongue speakers, interpreters, prophets, and women in worship. These instructions came from the Lord (1 Corinthians 14:37). They would help these saints edify one another and worship God in an orderly manner that glorifies Him.
- What practical lessons can we take away? First, we need to come to the worship assemblies with the goals of worshipping God His way and edifying one another. Second, we must avoid being immature and competing with one another over gifts. Third, we need to be mindful of how our behavior in worship impacts visitors who are unbelievers.

1 Corinthians 15

- This chapter addresses the resurrection. One must understand how most first-century Greeks viewed the physical body to understand why Paul is speaking with the Corinthians about the resurrection. To the Greeks, the body was inherently evil and needed to be destroyed to experience spiritual life. One needed to escape the flesh to experience immortality. This explains why the Athenians listened until he started speaking about the resurrection (Acts 17:32). Some Christians in Corinth were still holding to the pagan concept of the body and the afterlife.
- The chapter begins with Paul appealing to the historicity of the resurrection of Jesus (1 Corinthians 15:1-11). Jesus died, was buried, raised, and seen by many eyewitnesses. These facts serve as key foundation stones to the Christian faith. They verify and back up the claims of Jesus (Romans 1:4).
- If what the pagans believed about there being no resurrection was true, then Christ was not raised (1 Corinthians 15:12-13). The consequences of Christ not being raised would be disastrous! The preaching of the gospel would be vain, faith in Christ would be worthless, the apostles would be false witnesses, and we would still be in our sins (1 Corinthians 15:14-17). Those who died in Christ would also be lost, and Christians would be the most pitiful people on the planet (1 Corinthians 15:18-19).
- Since Christ has been raised, that guarantees that one day all people will be raised (1 Corinthians 15:20-22). When the Lord returns, the dead will be raised, death will be abolished, and He will deliver the kingdom to the Father (1 Corinthians 15:23-28).
- Denial of the resurrection leads to rebellion and sinful living against God (1 Corinthians 15:29-34). Why should a person live righteously and suffer for Christ if there is no resurrection?
- In 1 Corinthians 15:35-49, Paul answers two questions (1 Corinthians 15:35). How are the dead raised (1 Corinthians 15:36-37)? With what body do they come (1 Corinthians 15:38-49)?
- When the resurrection occurs, God's people will be raised, changed, and clothed in immortality. They will be victorious over death and never again experience its sting (1 Corinthians 15:50-57).
- The coming day of resurrection should motivate us to "be steadfast, immovable, and always abounding in the work of the Lord" (1 Corinthians 15:58).

1 Corinthians 16

- This chapter begins with instructions about raising funds for needy brethren in Jerusalem. This contribution is mentioned in many of Paul's letters.
- The instructions for raising these funds were clear and also given to the churches of Galatia (1 Corinthians 16:1-4). The church was to take up a collection (individuals were to give as they prospered) in their assembly on the first day of the week. The collection would be taken to Jerusalem by Paul and messengers chosen by the churches involved.
- In 1 Corinthians 16:5-9, Paul gives his travel plans. He intended to leave Ephesus, pass through Macedonia, and come to Corinth, where he would stay for the winter. He also hoped that the Corinthians would financially assist him on his journey. However, before beginning his trip, he would remain in Ephesus until Pentecost because of an evangelistic opportunity.
- 1 Corinthians 16:10-12 provide comment concerning Timothy and Apollos. Paul had sent Timothy to the Corinthians prior to writing this letter. He wanted them to welcome Timothy because he was a faithful worker for the Lord. Paul also wanted Apollos to come to them, but he was not able to at the moment.
- There are five admonitions given in 1 Corinthians 16:13-14. In 1 Corinthians 15:15-18, Paul expresses thanksgiving for other kingdom workers. He also urges the church to "acknowledge" their service.
- The chapter concludes with Paul sending greetings from various churches in Asia (1 Corinthians 16:19-24). He mentions Aquila and Prisca. This godly couple was allowing a local church to meet in their house. The word "anathema" refers to those who are delivered up for God's judgment. The word "Maranatha" is an Aramaic term that means "Our Lord, come!" These words appeal to the Lord to come in judgment against those who do not love Jesus and to bring salvation to those who do. In the final verse, Paul expresses his love for these brethren (1 Corinthians 16:24).
- What practical lessons can we take away? First, the giving we offer in worship contributes to the needs of God's people. Second, Paul had many disciples who helped him in his work. Many of which we know little about, but they were highly esteemed by the apostle. Third, judgment is coming for those who don't love the Lord.

2 Corinthians 1

- This letter was written shortly after Paul wrote 1 Corinthians (roughly a year later). Most scholars date the letter about a decade before Paul would be put to death (around 55 or 56 A.D.). Paul likely wrote the letter from Macedonia during the timeframe mentioned in Acts 20:2-3.
- This is one of the more personal and intimate letters of Paul. One of the primary purposes of it was to admonish the Corinthians to clean up their act before Paul shortly came to visit them. Paul also wants to answer the charges made against him by his critics. Some were trying to undermine Paul's authority as an apostle. Some even promoted that he wasn't a legitimate apostle because he wasn't one of the twelve and suffered too much. Paul spends a good chunk of the letter urging the Corinthian brethren to keep their promise to contribute to the needs of the saints in Jerusalem.
- In 2 Corinthians 1:1-2, Paul begins the letter with his standard greeting. He makes a point to identify him as "an apostle of Jesus Christ." He then speaks about how God comforted him during his suffering while spreading the gospel (2 Corinthians 1:3-7). This equipped him to be able to comfort others.
- Paul also references his sufferings in Asia (2 Corinthians 1:8-11). The situation was so bad that he almost gave up hope. Paul realized that difficult times were opportunities to demonstrate trust and hope in God.
- 2 Corinthians 1:12 begins a critical section of the letter that will continue through chapter 7. Paul gives the brethren his intended travel plans to see them (2 Corinthians 1:12-16). Since these plans were different than what Paul previously told them, his critics accused him of being untrustworthy and fickle. Paul assures the brethren his change of plans did not have anything sinister behind them. He wasn't untrustworthy. While his travel plans may have changed, the gospel was still the word of God and faithful (2 Corinthians 1:18-20).
- Through the gospel, the Corinthians had been established, anointed, sealed, and given the earnest of the Holy Spirit (2 Corinthians 1:21-22). Paul delayed his visit to Corinth because he wanted to give them more time to fix their problems (2 Corinthians 1:23-24). He didn't want his visit to be a painful one!
- What practical lessons can we take away? First, trials and suffering can equip us to comfort others who go through similar experiences. Second, sometimes life happens, and plans change. God is still faithful even in those moments. Third, sometimes people need to be given time to evaluate and fix their problems. Paul is being patient with the Corinthians.

2 Corinthians 2

- In this chapter, Paul continues discussing why he delayed his visit to Corinth. He wanted to give the Corinthians more time to fix their problems so that he wouldn't have to experience sorrow (2 Corinthians 2:1-4). Paul sincerely loved these brethren, and it pained him that they were experiencing so many problems.
- The incident under consideration in 2 Corinthians 2:5-11 seems to be tied to the sinful brother mentioned in 1 Corinthians 5. It appears that the church listened to Paul and disciplined the brother. He was purged from the church and handed over to Satan. This discipline caused him to repent and desire to be back in fellowship with the church. Paul instructs the church to forgive, comfort, and reaffirm their love for him. He no longer was to be them as a "Gentile and tax-collector" (Matthew 18:17). The failure to forgive this brother could provide an opportunity for the devil to turn this brother away from God completely (2 Corinthians 2:11).
- Paul knew that his first letter might not have been received well by the Corinthians. His concern caused him to leave Troas early (despite a door opportunity) when Titus didn't arrive with a report (2 Corinthians 2:12-13). He journeyed on to Macedonia and continued to wait on Titus anxiously.
- Eventually, Titus catches up with Paul and gives him great news (2 Corinthians 2:14-17). The Corinthians were receptive to the letter and vowed to obey its instructions. In verse 16, he then begins describing his ministry. Unlike false teachers, Paul wasn't "peddling the word of God." Instead, he was speaking the truth from God.
- What practical lessons can we take away? First, God's plan for church works. We need to always trust it! Second, when brethren repent, God expects us to forgive and receive them into fellowship again. Third, we need to take great joy in the obedience of others. Paul had some dark days, but the obedience of the Corinthians lifted his spirits.

2 Corinthians 3

- In this chapter, Paul continues answering the gospel and his ministry. It appears that some in Corinth criticized Paul because he did not bring letters of commendation from others (probably the Jerusalem church) to the church in Corinth. Paul was not about self-commendation (2 Corinthians 3:1). He did not need letters of commendation from other churches to preach the gospel. Those he brought to the Lord with the gospel were his “letters of commendation” (2 Corinthians 3:2-3).
- In 2 Corinthians 3:4-12, Paul contrasts the Old Covenant with the New Covenant. Judaizers were among the Corinthians binding the Old Law on the Gentile converts. Paul speaks against their efforts. He says he and other gospel preachers were “servants of a new covenant.” He says that the Old Covenant was written on tablets of stone, kills, is a ministry of death, came in glory, and passes away. But, the New Covenant was written on tablets of the heart, is of the Spirit, gives life, exceeds in glory and abides.
- The glory of the Old Covenant began as soon as it was instituted. When Moses came down from the mountain, he veiled his glowing face (Exodus 34:29-35). This glow gradually faded away, which foreshadowed the passing away of the Old Covenant (2 Corinthians 3:13).
- Many Jews struggled with understanding the passing away of the Law (2 Corinthians 3:14-15). They struggled with seeing how the Law was a tutor to bring us to Christ, but when we came to Christ, we were no longer under the tutor (2 Corinthians 3:16-18; Galatians 3:24-25). We experienced liberty from sin, spiritual transformation, glory of the Lord, and fellowship with the Spirit.
- What practical lessons can we take away? First, the Old Law is clearly no longer in force. The contrasts given in the chapter are designed to emphasize this point. Second, being a Christian involves stewardship. We also are ministers of a New Covenant. We also must preach the blessings of the New Covenant of Jesus and live as truly transformed people.

2 Corinthians 4

- The beginning of this chapter continues Paul's thoughts about the glory of the New Covenant. The grace Paul received from Christ motivated him not to lose heart (2 Corinthians 4:1). Paul was determined to be faithful to the ministry of the New Covenant (2 Corinthians 4:2). He would not walk in craftiness and handle the word of God deceitfully. He would proclaim the gospel with integrity and a clear conscience before God.
- While Paul preached the gospel, he could not force people to obey it. The gospel is veiled to those with hard hearts who choose to remain in their sins (2 Corinthians 3:3-4).
- In 2 Corinthians 4:5-6, Paul describes the source of the light of the gospel. It is Jesus Christ!
- God uses human messengers (earthen vessels) to share his treasure (the gospel). While disciples preach the gospel, the credit and glory for salvation go to God, not the messengers.
- Being a preacher carried with it persecution for Paul. Paul suffered in various ways in his ministry, but he was determined never to give up (2 Corinthians 4:8-15). He realized that through his suffering, God was glorified. Souls were being convicted by his continual dedication to Christ.
- Paul understood the big picture of life. Despite facing intense persecution, Paul refused to lose heart and quit because he knew that while his outer man was decaying (his body), his inner man (his soul) was being renewed day by day (2 Corinthians 4:16-18). He described his persecutions as "momentary" and "light afflictions." They were worth enduring because he had an eternal reward waiting after this life.
- What practical lessons can we take away? First, we should never take rejection in evangelism personally. When people reject the truth, they reject the glory and spiritual blessings of Christ. Second, following Christ involves suffering and persecution. We may not experience persecution to the degree that Paul did, but forms of it will come our way (2 Timothy 3:12). Third, we must avoid focusing more on the temporary things of this world than we do on the glory that awaits us in eternity.

2 Corinthians 5

- The first ten verses of this chapter connect back to the previous. Paul continues explaining his motivation for enduring sufferings for the cause of Christ. While his earthly house could be destroyed (a reference to him dying physically), there was a house from God awaiting him in heaven (2 Corinthians 5:1). Paul also uses the metaphor “house” to describe his earthly body and how he groaned to be clothed by God in immortality (2 Corinthians 5:2-5). This will occur at the time of the resurrection when the Lord returns (1 Corinthians 15:42-49).
- The promise of future perfect fellowship with God gave Paul courage (2 Corinthians 5:6-8). He knew that perfect fellowship. In this life, Christians walk by faith, but there is a coming a day in which they will be in the actual presence of God.
- Until the day of perfect fellowship with God in heaven comes, God’s people must make it their aim to be pleasing to God. They must prepare to appear before God on Judgment Day and give an account of their lives (2 Corinthians 5:9-10).
- Paul revisits his motivations for preaching the gospel (2 Corinthians 5:11-14). These motivations included the fear of the Lord, love of Christ, love for the lost, and pure motives.
- Paul also lists some core aspects of the gospel message. Jesus died and was raised for all, not a select few like Calvinists suggest (2 Corinthians 5:15). Those who follow Jesus can know, become new creatures, and be reconciled unto God (2 Corinthians 5:16-18).
- The apostles were special ambassadors of God. They were uniquely qualified to testify of Jesus and be His official representatives who appealed to people to be reconciled to God (2 Corinthians 5:19-20).
- What practical lessons can we take away? First, we should avoid making this world our home and eagerly look forward to being at home with the Lord. Second, we should take the coming Judgment Day seriously and allow it to impact our daily conduct. Third, we must urge as many people as possible to be reconciled to God and experience becoming a new creation in Christ.

2 Corinthians 6

- In this chapter, Paul urges the Corinthians to avoid listening to his critics and open their hearts to him. He had proclaimed to them the “ministry of reconciliation” (2 Corinthians 5:18-20), and he exhorted them not to receive the grace of God in vain (2 Corinthians 6:1). Due to the redemptive work of Christ, they were living in the day of salvation (2 Corinthians 6:2).
- Paul and the other apostles did their best to advance the gospel and avoid being stumbling blocks to those who heard it (2 Corinthians 6:3). They endured many hardships that helped validate their ministries and advanced the message of Christ (2 Corinthians 6:4-10). We can read about Paul experiencing many of these hardships throughout Acts.
- Paul had opened his mouth and enlarged his heart to the Corinthians (2 Corinthians 6:11-13). He had not held back his emotions but had spoken openly to them. He had made space in his heart for them and asked that they do the same for him. This is a very personal section of the letter.
- The final section of the chapter is often misunderstood and taken out of context (2 Corinthians 6:14-18). Many suggest that it is talking about Christians being married to unbelievers. It is not. It is harking back to what Paul discusses in 1 Corinthians 8-10 about spiritual fellowship. Paul urges these Christians to avoid thinking they can be in fellowship with Christ and pagan worshippers. He may also be taking a shot at Judaizers who had come among them trying to discredit his preaching. The Corinthians needed to separate themselves from paganism and be children of God (2 Corinthians 6:17-18).
- What practical lessons can we take away? First, God never promises that His people will not suffer in this life. The apostles often suffered in the work of God, and we will as well. Second, Paul truly loved and cared about his brethren (his emotions for them run high throughout the chapter). Third, we must avoid being inconsistent. We must commit ourselves fully to God and avoid being in spiritual fellowship with those disobedient to Him.

2 Corinthians 7

- The first verse connects to the thoughts expressed in the conclusion of the previous (2 Corinthians 7:1). Paul appeals to the Corinthians to avoid defiling their flesh and spirit and live holy before the Lord. Paul also appeals to the Corinthians to receive him in their hearts (2 Corinthians 7:2-4). Again, we see Paul's deep affection for these brethren.
- In 2 Corinthians 7:5-16, Paul rejoices over the news given to him by Titus in Macedonia. Before Titus arrived, Paul was worried about how the Corinthians would have received 1 Corinthians. That letter contained strong rebukes, and the brethren could have been hard-hearted and unreceptive (2 Corinthians 7:5).
- Paul received comfort when Titus arrived and told him that the Corinthians warmly received the letter and still desired to see Paul again (2 Corinthians 7:6-7). They had godly sorrow that led to repentance (2 Corinthians 7:8-12) and seemed to have disciplined the sexually immoral brother mentioned in 1 Corinthians 5.
- Paul had bragged to Titus about the Corinthians, and thankfully they did not disappoint him. They brought Paul joy in their humility and determination to obey Christ (2 Corinthians 7:13-16).
- This chapter concludes the first section of the letter. Paul has defended his travel plans, demonstrated the genuineness of his affection toward the Corinthians, and answered those undermining his influence there.
- What practical lessons can we take away? First, God comforts us in a variety of different ways. Paul was comforted through hearing about the faithfulness of the Corinthians. Second, true repentance involves godly sorrow. It involves grieving over the fact that our sins personally hurt God. Third, despite their problems, Paul did not give up on the Corinthians. He admonished them in love and rejoiced when they corrected their behavior.

2 Corinthians 8

- 2 Corinthians 8-9 discuss the contribution that Paul gathered from Gentile churches to help poor saints in Jerusalem. The Corinthians had previously pledged to be part of this work, and Paul wants them to be faithful to their commitment.
- Paul mentions the Macedonian churches (2 Corinthians 8:1). These were those in Philippi, Berea, and Thessalonica. While facing times of affliction, they participated in helping their needy Jewish brethren (2 Corinthians 8:2-4). The generous spirits could be attributed to their first giving themselves to Christ (2 Corinthians 8:5).
- Paul exhorted Titus to complete what had started in collecting funds from the Corinthians for the needy brethren in Jerusalem (2 Corinthians 8:6). God's blessings upon them should compel them to desire to help others (2 Corinthians 8:7).
- Why did the Corinthians need to feel compelled to involve themselves in this benevolent work? Because Christ first gave Himself for them (2 Corinthians 8:8-9), and that there might be equality (2 Corinthians 8:10-15). The Corinthians were not in need, but their spiritual family members were. Paul wanted them to understand that the situation might one day be reversed.
- The final verses talk about the gathering of the Corinthians' gift. Paul was thankful that Titus volunteered to collect their contribution. A highly respected unnamed brother helped Titus in this work (2 Corinthians 8:16-19). It meant a lot to Paul to display integrity in gathering this money (2 Corinthians 8:20-21). He sent not only Titus and the well-known brother but also another brother who had been tested and found faithful (2 Corinthians 8:22). These brethren could be trusted with the funds (2 Corinthians 8:23). Paul appeals to the Corinthians to show proof of their love by generously giving to the poor saints in Jerusalem (2 Corinthians 8:24).
- What practical lessons can we take away? First, a local church can use its treasury to help needy saints in other places. Second, God can use adversity for the good of His people. God is using the giving of money to the needy saints in Jerusalem to bring unity between Jewish and Gentile believers. Third, when we first give ourselves to the Lord, we will be compelled to fully invest ourselves in His work.

2 Corinthians 9

- This chapter continues and concludes the discussion of the contribution being raised for the needy saints in Jerusalem. Paul boasted to the Macedonia churches about the Corinthians' willingness to involve themselves in this work (2 Corinthians 9:1-2). This inspired the Macedonia churches also to contribute.
- Paul reminds the Corinthians to keep their commitment and not make his boasting about them vain (2 Corinthians 9:3-4). They needed to have their contribution ready for Titus and the two unnamed brethren to pick up (2 Corinthians 9:5). This would demonstrate that their hearts were generous and not covetous.
- The final section provides details concerning giving that pleases God. The giving must be done liberally, with forethought, and cheerfully (2 Corinthians 9:6-7). Sacrificial and cheerful giving results from the disciple trusting God to always supply their needs (2 Corinthians 9:8-11). In addition to contributing to the needs of poor saints, the Corinthians' giving would also produce thanksgiving to God (2 Corinthians 9:12-15). The Christians in Jerusalem would thank God for this gift and their Gentile brethren. God would use their generosity to bring unity, peace, and love among Jewish and Gentile believers.
- What practical lessons can we take away? First, we need to trust God when we give and help others. God will always take care of us! Second, this contribution to the needy saints in Jerusalem is a big deal to Paul. It takes up a huge chunk of this letter. Paul knew it was vital in bringing unity between Jewish and Gentiles Christians. Third, one of the ways in which God takes of His people is through His people.

2 Corinthians 10

- This chapter begins a very personal section of 2 Corinthians. In it, Paul defends his apostleship and strongly urges the Corinthians to straighten up.
- Paul had many critics. Some of them were among the Corinthians. They accused him of being bold in his letters but timid when face to face (2 Corinthians 10:1). Paul urges the Corinthians to fix their problems so that when he arrives, he doesn't have to prove his critics wrong (2 Corinthians 10:2-6). He was prepared to exercise his authority as an apostle and confront those walking disorderly.
- The Lord called Paul an apostle to build up His church (2 Corinthians 10:7-8). Despite what his critics said, Paul warned that he would act the same way when he arrived as he did in his letters (2 Corinthians 10:9-11).
- Unlike his critics, Paul had an extensive spiritual resume he could have boasted (2 Corinthians 10:12-17). He had preached the gospel in places where others had not. He had planted the church in Corinth and was building them in the service of God. Paul had done much in the service of the King and didn't have to boast in the work that others had done. He boasted in the Lord (2 Corinthians 10:17)!
- Paul closes the chapter by reminding the Corinthians that the one who is commended is the one whom the Lord commends, not him who commends himself (2 Corinthians 10:18).
- What practical lessons can we take away? First, Paul focused on seeking the Lord's approval. He didn't concern himself with seeking approval from men. Second, those seeking to discredit Paul also sought to discredit the gospel he preached. Third, boasting in the Lord involves giving God the glory for any fruit we bear in His work.

2 Corinthians 11

- In this chapter, Paul continues responding to his critics' charges. These men were false teachers attempting to lead the Corinthian brethren away from God. They accused him of glorying in his accomplishments and not being a legitimate apostle. If these critics could discredit Paul, they could easily discredit the gospel he preached.
- Paul asks the Corinthians to bear with him in a "little foolishness" (2 Corinthians 11:1). The "foolishness" he speaks is the list of things in which he glories later (2 Corinthians 11:23-33). Paul provides a list of his accomplishments to defend his apostleship. Paul had invested much time in bringing the Corinthians to the Lord. He had "betrothed" them to Christ as a chaste virgin and was jealous that others were trying to steal them away (2 Corinthians 11:2). Like in the case of Eve, Paul feared they were being deceived and corrupted (2 Corinthians 11:3). Since the Corinthians had been willing to bear with false teachers, Paul sarcastically asks them to bear with him as he defends his apostleship and message (2 Corinthians 11:4-6).
- One criticism against Paul was he didn't accept financial support for his preaching like the traveling philosophers of the time. In 2 Corinthians 11:6-12, Paul defends this bogus charge against him. He had hoped that his refusal to accept support would eliminate the accusation of preaching for money, and yet, his enemies found a way to still use this against him. They were workers of Satan who were determined to destroy Paul (2 Corinthians 11:13-15).
- In the final section, Paul begins contrasting himself with enemies. They boasted according to the flesh (a reference to their fleshly ties to Abraham as Jews). Paul could also stoop to their level and boast. He could have boasted in being a Jew, in addition to the sufferings he experienced for Christ (2 Corinthians 11:16-33). Their spiritual resume didn't compare to Paul's!
- What practical lessons can we take away? First, we must beware of false teachers who attempt to lead us away from Christ. False teachers were infiltrating the Corinthians, and they can do the same to us. Second, following Christ involves suffering. Paul suffered in a variety of ways as he served the Lord. Third, Paul cared about the spiritual welfare of his brethren (2 Corinthians 11:28-29). Even while suffering, Paul was more concerned with the spiritual obstacles Satan put before God's people.

2 Corinthians 12

- Paul continues the “boasting” of the previous chapter. In addition to enduring great suffering for the cause of Christ, Paul could have also boasted in the revelations he received from God (2 Corinthians 12:1). Paul (as an apostle) was given visions and revelations.
- He describes a time when he was caught up into the “third heaven” and heard unspeakable words. (2 Corinthians 12:2-6). In this context, he speaks of himself in the third person and wasn't sure if he was in his physical body or outside. The “third heaven” is a reference to “paradise.” This is the part of Hades where the souls of the saved await the return of Jesus and the bodily resurrection.
- These kinds of divine revelations could have made Paul an arrogant man. To keep Paul humble, Paul was given a “thorn in the flesh.” While many speculate about this “thorn,” the text doesn't say what it was. We know it came from Satan, it tormented Paul, and he prayed three times that God would remove it (2 Corinthians 12:7-8). The Lord did not remove this source of suffering. Instead, He used it for good in Paul's life. It kept Paul humble and dependent on God (2 Corinthians 12:9-10).
- In 2 Corinthians 12:11-18, Paul lists some of his credentials as an apostle. These include his ability to perform signs, wonders, and miracles. He also sarcastically apologizes for offending the Corinthians by not accepting their financial support.
- Paul states that his defense was written primarily to help the Corinthians (2 Corinthians 12:19-21). He was afraid to visit the Corinthians soon and find them still engaging in evil practices.
- What practical lessons can we take away? First, God doesn't always answer our prayers with a “yes.” He said “no” to Paul's request to remove his thorn. Second, God can use our suffering for the good of our souls. Paul's suffering kept him humble and close to God. Third, the miracles Paul performed confirmed that he was a true apostle, and the Holy Spirit revealed the gospel he preached (2 Corinthians 12:11-12).

2 Corinthians 13

- This chapter concludes the epistle. It begins with Paul stating this was his third time coming to them (2 Corinthians 13:1). He warns them to clean up their act before he arrives. He wouldn't spare those still practicing sin (2 Corinthians 13:2). The judgment he executed on the wicked would further prove that he was a legitimate apostle (2 Corinthians 13:3-4).
- Before his arrival, the Corinthians needed to examine themselves (2 Corinthians 13:5). They needed to examine whether they were walking according to the standard of Christ. If they did an honest examination, they would know that he and his co-workers were not reprobates (2 Corinthians 13:6). Paul prayed that they could correct their problems so that he would not have to discipline them when he arrived (2 Corinthians 13:7-10).
- In his concluding remarks, Paul bids them farewell and urges them to rejoice, be in peace, stay united, and be comforted (2 Corinthians 13:11). The saints with Paul sent greetings. He also closes with a request for the grace of the Lord, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit to be with them (2 Corinthians 13:12-13).
- What practical lessons can we take away? First, it is often the case that brethren need time to fix their problems. Paul is giving the Corinthians time to correct their mistakes before he exercises discipline. Second, Christians must constantly examine their spiritual status (2 Corinthians 13:5). Third, Paul has balance in his instructions. Throughout the Corinthian letters, he both encourages and admonishes the brethren.

Galatians 1

- The letter to the Galatians is believed to have been written sometime between AD 48-58 (making it one of the earliest books of the New Testament canon). Some scholars even suggest that it is the first inspired letter penned by Paul.
- The letter was written to several churches in Galatia. Luke records Paul planting these churches in Acts 13-14 on his first missionary journey. The letter's main theme is how we are justified by faith in Christ and not in keeping the Old Testament Law.
- Paul begins by identifying himself as an authentic apostle of Christ (Galatians 1:1-5). He was called to the work of an apostle by Jesus, not men! Right away we see that some were questioning Paul's authenticity as an apostle. Remember Paul received this same persecution from critics in Corinth. He also greets the numerous churches in Galatia who were to receive this letter (Galatians 1:2-5).
- Paul wastes no time expressing his frustration with these brethren (Galatians 1:6-9). He was amazed that these brethren were persuaded to believe a false gospel. This perverted gospel involved binding circumcision for the purpose of gaining salvation. Paul makes it clear that there was only one gospel, and those who distort it will be "accursed." The true gospel is a message of salvation by faith in Christ apart from keeping the requirement of the Law.
- The origin of the gospel Paul preached was Christ (Galatians 1:10-12). The gospel was revealed and taught to Paul by the Lord. He did not have to be taught by the other apostles.
- The final section of the chapter deals with Paul's background. In his zeal for Judaism, he persecuted the church and tried to destroy it (Galatians 1:13-14; Acts 8:1-3). On the Damascus road, Christ revealed himself to Paul, converted him, called him to be an apostle, and gave him a special ministry to the Gentiles (Galatians 1:15-16; Acts 9:1-19). He continued being taught by Christ while spending three years in Arabia, after which he returned to Damascus and went up to Jerusalem (Galatians 1:17-19). His radical conversion encouraged many brethren and testified to the power of the gospel (Galatians 1:20-24).
- What practical lessons can we take away? First, we need to avoid believing and preaching counterfeit gospels. False gospels today include "faith only salvation," the "prosperity gospel," and "once saved, always saved." Second, the source of the gospel is Jesus. The apostles merely wrote what was taught and revealed to them by God. Third, if the gospel is powerful enough to convert a persecutor like Paul, it is powerful enough to convert anyone today!

Galatians 2

- The theme of the first chapter is continued in chapter two. Paul continues giving details about his background and the source of the gospel he preached. Many Jews did not like that Paul preached the gospel to Gentiles. They attempted to delegitimize him as an apostle and bind upon Gentile converts aspects of the Law. This matter was settled at the Jerusalem meeting recorded in Acts 15 (Galatians 2:1-2). The conclusion was, "God does not require Gentiles to be circumcised and become Jews to be saved." They could be saved by having faith in Christ.
- Paul talks about Titus (a Gentile) was used as a case study to confirm Gentile salvation without circumcision (Galatians 2:3-10). False brethren tried to compel Titus to be circumcised, but Paul and other gospel preachers in Jerusalem would not permit it. They took a stand against their false gospel!
- Even Peter fell into the trap of not treating the Gentiles Christians fairly. He would eat with them privately but shun them publicly (Galatians 2:11-14). Paul rebuked himself publicly for his divisive actions. This shows us that the early church had to work through issues of prejudice and racism. It wasn't easy for the Jews and Gentiles to unite in the church.
- The final section deals with the consequences of believing one is justified by keeping the Law (Galatians 2:17-21). Jesus would be a minister of sin, the grace of God would be nullified, and the Lord would have died for nothing.
- What practical lessons can we take away? First, keeping the Old Law is not required for salvation. We are saved by faith and trust in Christ. Second, there is no room for racism in the kingdom of God. Paul rebuked Peter because of his racist behavior. Third, authentic disciples live for Christ and not themselves (Galatians 2:20). He dies to sin and allows Christ to live in him.

Galatians 3

- This chapter gets into the meat of the letter. In the previous chapter, Paul spoke of an occasion when he rebuked Peter for his hypocritical and unfair treatment of Gentile Christians (Galatians 2:11-14). While his critics tried to suggest that he wasn't a legitimate apostle, Paul's rebuke of Peter was evidence of his apostleship. He preached the true gospel and didn't back down when he saw other apostles compromising it.
- The chief message of the letter is stated in Galatians 2:15-3:9. We are not justified by keeping the Law of Moses, but by having faith in Christ. The Galatians had allowed false teachers to disturb and deceive them (Galatians 3:1-5). Paul reminded them that the gospel they obeyed did not promote justification by keeping the Law. It was a message of salvation by faith in Christ, confirmed by the miracles he worked among them.
- The Judaizers taught that to inherit promises made to Abraham, a person had to be circumcised and keep the Law. Paul combats this by mentioning how Abraham found favor with God. Abraham was justified by faith and not by keeping the Law (Galatians 3:6-9). People who walk by faith become spiritual "sons" of Abraham.
- The Law was never intended to justify and provide full forgiveness of sins (Galatians 3:10-14). It condemned the person who violated it, but through faith in Jesus, a person receives redemption. Even the Old Testament prophets spoke of justification by faith (Galatians 3:11; Habakkuk 2:4).
- The promise of a blessing to all nations through Abraham's seed was made long before the Law was in force (Galatians 3:15-18). This promise was fully accomplished when Jesus died on the cross for sin.
- The Law was not part of God's original promise to Abraham but was added because of sin (Galatians 2:19-22). The Law identified sin, convicted men of sin, and helped them understand their need for a Savior (Romans 7:7). Once the Savior did His redemptive work, the Law was no longer needed (Galatians 3:23-29). In Christ, all nations can be part of God's family, and the seed promise made to Abraham is fulfilled.
- What practical lessons can we take away? First, we are justified by faith in Christ, not by keeping the Old Law. Second, there is equality in the family of God. All genders, nations, free people, and slaves have equal status in Christ. Third, it is through baptism that one is put into Christ, clothes themselves with Christ, and becomes a child of God (Galatians 3:26-28).

Galatians 4

- Paul continues teaching about the process of spiritual adoption in Christ. He contrasts the inheritance rights of a child and one of full age (Galatians 4:1-7). As long as a child was a minor, he had few more rights than a slave (even though he was destined to be the master of the house once he matured). Paul's point is as long as people were under the Law, they were like slaves and children. They were not held in bondage and were not able to receive adoption. At the right time, Jesus came into the world to redeem men and provide a path for them to become sons of God and heirs. Through Christ, people can call God their Father in a close and intimate way (Galatians 4:6).
- In Galatians 4:8-11, Paul asks a rhetorical question. Why would the Galatians go back to slave status and reject the freedom and inheritance they have in Christ? If they began living under the Old Law, Paul would have taught them the gospel in vain.
- Paul uses his own personal example to beg the Galatians not to abandon their faith in Christ (Galatians 4:12-20). He reminds them how when he first came preaching to them and how well they received him (even though he was dealing with an illness). What had changed? Why were they thinking differently of Paul? Why were they thinking of abandoning the gospel that Paul had taught them? It was because of false teachers! Judaizers were influencing these brethren.
- In the final section, Paul continues his rebuke using an interesting allegory (Galatians 4:21-31). The allegory would have been shocking to a first-century Jewish audience. It connected the religion of the Jews not to Sara (Abraham's real wife) but to Hagar (the slave mother of Ishmael). Paul's point is that those who abide by the New Covenant and live by faith in Christ are the ones who are free. Christians are the real children of promise (like Isaac was). Those trying to bind and live under the Law were still slaves and persecuting God's true children during this time (like Ishmael persecuted Isaac).
- What practical lessons can we take away? First, we have received so many blessings in Christ. We received adoption, spiritual freedom, and the status of heirs. Second, while the Old Testament is not binding upon us, studying it helps us better understand what has been accomplished through Christ. Third, we need to be careful who we listen to and allow to influence us. The Galatians had allowed false teachers to shake their faith and persuade them to doubt the true gospel.

Galatians 5

- This chapter continues Paul's teaching concerning the Old and New Covenants. The Gentile disciples in Galatia were being troubled by Judiazers. Paul reminds them that under the New Covenant, one receives freedom from sin, and being circumcised into Judaism is not necessary to be right with God (Galatians 5:1-3). Those seeking to be justified by the Old Law fall from grace and sever their relationship with God (Galatians 5:4). Righteousness is obtained through faith in Christ and not in keeping the requirements of the Old Covenant (Galatians 5:5-6).
- Paul targets the teachers promoting the false gospel among the Galatians. He says that before being influenced by their erroneous teaching, these Christians were running well (Galatians 5:7). Now they were being hindered! This false teaching they were accepting did not come from God (Galatians 5:8). It posed the threat of corrupting and upsetting the faith of many Christians (Galatians 5:9). Those who advanced this false gospel would experience the judgment of God (Galatians 5:10).
- It appears that some might have been charging Paul with teaching the necessity of circumcision for salvation (Galatians 5:11). Paul combats this charge by mentioning the persecution received from the Jews. Why would the Jews be persecuting him if he was Judiazer?
- Paul uses strong language to express his detest for these false teachers (Galatians 5:12). He warns the Galatians not to use their freedom in Christ as an occasion to live undisciplined lives (Galatians 5:13-15). They were to walk by the Spirit, be led by the Spirit, and bear the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:16-26). This section contrasts the works of the flesh and the works of the Spirit.
- What practical lessons can we take away? First, in Christ, we receive freedom from sin and justification. Second, we need to beware of false teachers. There are many false teachers in the world, and we can recognize them by their fruit (Matthew 7:15-20). Third, we must walk, be led, and bear the fruit of the Spirit. This requires studying the Spirit's revealed word and putting it into action daily. When we apply the word of the Spirit, we will bear righteous fruit.

Galatians 6

- Due to the influence of false teachers, Paul admonishes the Galatians to watch out for themselves and one another. Christians are responsible for looking out for their brethren (Galatians 6:1-2). They are to seek to restore those wandering away from the Lord in a spirit of gentleness and bear one another's burdens. They must avoid pride and thinking they are superior to others (Galatians 6:3-4). They must take accountability for their actions (Galatians 6:5).
- Christians also have spiritual financial obligations (Galatians 6:6-10) They have an obligation to support those who proclaim the gospel and help those in need (especially those in the family of God). In this context, the metaphor of sowing and reaping is used to talk about being generous and using physical blessings to help others.
- The letter concludes with Paul stating that this letter came from him (Galatians 6:11). This verse may indicate that God was dealing with some kind of eye problem. He also emphasizes again that the gospel does not promote one having to be circumcised and become a Jew before becoming a Christian (Galatians 6:12-16). Judaizers wanted to glory in cuts to "private parts," but Paul took satisfaction in the physical abuse he received preaching the true gospel (Galatians 6:17). After beginning the letter calling the Galatians "fools" for allowing false teachers to deceive them, he closes the letter on a positive note. He calls them "brethren" and prays for God's continual grace upon them (Galatians 6:18).
- What practical lessons can we take away? First, we need to take action when we notice a member of the spiritual family practicing sin. The commandment to "restore" is given to every one of us. Second, we need to use our physical blessings to the glory of God. This involves using them to promote the gospel and help those in need. Third, we need to remember who we are. Christians are the "Israel of God" under the New Covenant (Galatians 6:16).

Philippians 1

- Luke provides details for the planting of the church in Philippi in Acts 16:12-40. This church began by a river and was helped by an earthquake. This was probably Paul's favorite church. He had a special relationship with this group. He cared deeply for them, and they felt the same about him. This church also seems to be the only one financially supporting Paul.
- Philippians is generally regarded as one of Paul's "prison epistles." It was likely written while Paul was under house arrest in Rome for two years, waiting for his case to be heard by the Ceasar (Acts 28:30-31). This would place the date for the letter between 60-62 A.D (in the last few years of Paul's life).
- Paul begins the letter by identifying himself as the writer (Philippian 1:1). Timothy is with him. He also mentions how this church is scripturally organized. It consisted of overseers, deacons, and saints.
- After extending a greeting, Paul offers thanksgiving (Philippians 1:3-11). Even though he was suffering in prison, Paul was thankful for the faith and financial support of the Philippians. This is a powerful section that reveals the close relationship that Paul had with these brethren.
- Paul was also full of joy that through his suffering, the gospel was progressing (Philippians 1:12-18). Many Christians were also inspired to suffer for Christ, and Paul was even gaining influence with the whole praetorian guard.
- Paul's entire purpose in life was to serve and glorify Christ (Philippians 1:19-26). His chief desire was to be with Christ! Following Christ has attached with it great responsibilities (Philippians 1:27-30). It requires living godly and being willing to suffer for His cause. It is also worth noting how Paul expected to be released from jail at some point (Philippians 1:20). This verse tells us what happened to Paul after the end of Acts.
- What practical lessons can we take away? First, we should challenge ourselves to see the blessings of our sufferings. Paul could see how the gospel was being advanced through his imprisonment. Second, Paul's use of the word "fellowship" does not refer to eating fried chicken, coffee, and donuts (Philippians 1:5). It refers to the Philippians sharing with him financially in the gospel. That is what we are also doing with the preachers we support. Third, like Paul, our main desire should be living with Christ (Philippians 1:23). We need to avoid making this world our home!

Philippians 2

- This chapter is widely considered one of the greatest chapters in the New Testament. Some even refer to it as “Paul's masterpiece.” The chapter begins with Paul appealing to the Philippians to be humble, unified, and unselfish (Philippians 2:1-4). They needed to serve one another and put the needs of others before their own. These character traits were found in Jesus (Philippians 2:5-11). Jesus was humble and unselfish at the highest level. This can be seen in how He left the glories of heaven, lived as a man, and died on the cross for the sins of the world. Since Jesus humbled Himself, how could any disciple ever be arrogant and selfish towards his brother?
- Christianity is a “doing” religion (Philippians 2:12-13). It is not enough for a disciple to believe in Jesus. He must also obey and strive to walk in His footsteps. This requires being thankful, content, and a righteous example (Philippians 2:14-16).
- In Philippians 2:17-18, Paul rejoiced that the Philippians were continuing in the faith despite his suffering. He mentions his desire to send Timothy to them soon so he could learn about their condition (Philippians 2:19). Timothy was a young preacher who was highly respected and trusted by Paul (Philippians 2:20-23). Paul also mentions again his expectation to be released soon and to be able to visit the Philippians personally (Philippians 2:24).
- Paul also mentions Epaphroditus (Philippians 2:25-30). This was another hard-working and respected friend of Paul's. Epaphroditus was sick (nearly to the point of death) at the time Paul wrote this letter. Paul encouraged the brethren to have high regard for him and show appreciation for the good work he was doing in the kingdom.
- What practical lessons can we take away? First, we must avoid pride and selfishness. We must imitate the humble character of our Master. Second, we need to avoid grumbling (Philippians 2:14). The Philippians had some complainers among them. We avoid this by being content and grateful for the sacrifice of Christ. Third, we must encourage those who sacrifice to build us up in the faith. This would include elders, deacons, preachers, and teachers.

Philippians 3

- This chapter begins with Paul warning the brethren about false teachers (Philippians 3:1). He refers to these troublemakers as “dogs,” “evil workers,” and “of the false circumcision” (Philippians 3:2). These were probably Judaizers. Many of the problems in the New Testament are related to teachers who attempted to bind circumcision and other aspects of the Law of Moses on Gentile Christians. Paul combats their false teaching by saying that those who submit to Christ are of the “true circumcision” (Philippians 3:3). Paul expounds more on this topic in Colossians 2:11-14.
- Judaizers continued to put confidence in the flesh (physical circumcision). Paul could have also done that. Before becoming a Christian, he had an impressive resume as a Jew (Philippians 3:3-6). He gave up those credentials to follow Christ and preach the gospel (Philippians 3:7-8). His main focus was knowing Jesus, sharing in the Lord’s suffering, and attaining the resurrection (Philippians 3:9-11).
- Paul also strived to more spiritual maturity (Philippians 3:12-14). Even though he was an inspired apostle, he wanted to grow in his understanding of Jesus. He didn’t linger in his past sins and accomplishments but pressed forward in faithful service to God.
- The word “perfect” in Paul’s writings refers to spiritual maturity (Philippians 3:15). Those who are striving to spiritually grow commit to following God’s inspired standard that has been revealed to the apostles (Philippians 3:16-17). They imitate the apostles and not those who are worldly and oppose the cross (Philippians 3:18-19). They focus on their spiritual citizenship, the Lord’s return, and the day when their bodies will be spiritually transformed (Philippians 3:20-21).
- What practical lessons can we take away? First, we must never be content with our spiritual progress. Like Paul, we must strive to become “perfect” and grow. Second, we must adhere to the authority of the apostles. Their instructions and approved examples must be followed (Philippians 3:16-17). Third, we must remember that this world is not our home. Our true home is in heaven (Philippians 3:20). Each day, we should eagerly anticipate the return of Jesus and the blessing of being with our Father for eternity.

Philippians 4

- The last chapter begins with words of endearment (Philippians 4:1). Paul anticipates being released from jail and longed to see the Philippians. Until then, he wants them to continue standing firm in the gospel.
- While the Philippian church was involved in many good works, they also had some problems. Some sisters in Christ struggled to get along and work in harmony (Philippians 4:2).
- Paul admonishes these saints always to rejoice, be gentle, avoid being anxious about circumstances beyond their control, and lean on the Lord in prayer (Philippians 4:3-7). Those who pray to God receive peace because they are trusting in the One with all power.
- They were also expected to guard their minds, follow the approved examples of Paul, be content in all circumstances, and put complete trust in Christ (Philippians 4:8-14).
- In Philippians 4:15-19, Paul expresses his gratitude for their financial support. It appears this was the only church supporting Paul at this time. Epaphroditus delivered this support to the apostle. Paul refers to their giving as a “fragrant aroma and acceptable sacrifice” (Philippians 4:18). The final verses contain standard greetings that Paul gives when closing many of his epistles (Philippians 4:20-21).
- What practical lessons can we take away? First, unity in the church requires work (Philippians 4:2-3). Christians won’t always get along. On these days, Christians must remind themselves that “the of God is what matters most.” Second, we must strive to have balanced prayers (Philippians 4:6). Our prayers should contain adoration for God, thanksgiving, and supplications. Third, we must learn to be content in all circumstances (Philippians 4:11-12). Whether we have much or little, we need to avoid greed and find contentment with our blessings in Christ.

Colossians 1

- Colossians is another “prison epistle.” It was likely during Paul’s first Roman imprisonment (not long after Ephesians). It was written to help the brethren combat false teaching and grow in their knowledge of Jesus. It sets the record straight about the deity of Jesus and the responsibilities that disciples have to Him. The chapter begins with a greeting and prayer of thanksgiving for the Colossians (Colossians 1:1-5). Paul also makes it clear that by this time (63 A.D), the gospel had been preached in all the world. Jesus predicted this would happen prior to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. (Matthew 24:14; Colossians 1:6, 23). This seemed to have been planted by Epaphras (Colossians 1:7). He is described as a faithful brother and worker with Paul (Colossians 1:7-8). He had been keeping Paul updated on the spiritual condition of the Colossians.
- Paul’s desire for these brethren was their spiritual growth (Colossians 1:9-12). Spiritual growth produces fruit and a better understanding of Jesus.
- Beginning in verse 13, Paul begins tackling doctrinal issues in this church. Judaizers were troubling them, and Paul combats their false teaching. He helps them better understand Jesus, His kingship, preeminence, and deity (Colossians 1:13-18). This is a wonderful section that helps us better understand the identity of Jesus.
- Jesus was fully God and man while on earth, and His physical body and blood were offered for man’s redemption (Colossians 1:19-22).
- Paul also informs these saints of his current situation (Colossians 1:24). He was suffering in Roman imprisonment and sought their prayers and encouragement. Many Jews were hostile towards Paul’s preaching because it was a message of God’s grace being extended to Gentiles (Colossians 1:25-27). In Christ, every person’s spiritual needs can be completely satisfied (Colossians 1:28-29)!
- What practical lessons can we take away? First, we must avoid becoming stagnant in our faith. God expects us to be constantly growing in Christ. Second, Paul wasn’t the only preacher planting churches throughout the Roman Empire. Disciples like Epaphras were also busy spreading the gospel. His evangelistic passion is worthy of our imitation. Third, the supreme Christ is all we need! We are spiritually complete in Christ.

Colossians 2

- In this chapter, Paul addresses more of the false teachings troubling these brethren. Paul was deeply concerned that false teachers were trying to destroy their faith (Colossians 2:1). He wanted them to become fortified and have full assurance in the faith (Colossians 2:2-3). Paul was happy with their spiritual progress but desired that they continue growing (Colossians 2:4-5).
- The Colossians had received the truth and needed to continue walking and being built up in it (Colossians 2:6-7). They needed to resist those trying to pull them away from Christ through philosophy, traditions, and binding the requirements of the Old Law (Colossians 2:8). They needed to stay with Jesus and continue submitting to His authority Colossians 2:9).
- While Judiazers tried to bind the Law's requirement of circumcision on Gentile converts, Paul speaks of the spiritual circumcision performed by God when these people were baptized into Christ (Colossians 2:11-13). Circumcision performed under the Law involved removing the foreskin. When someone is baptized, God removes and forgives their sins!
- In Colossians 2:14-22, we are given more details about what was being promoted by the false teachers. They attempted to blend Judaism and Christianity - binding circumcision and the observance of feast days on Gentiles (Colossians 2:15-17). They also promoted the worship of angels and ascetic practices (Colossians 1:18-22). The Colossians needed to reject these teachings and realize they were complete in Christ (Colossians 1:23). None of these false teachings made a man holier and were in harmony with the gospel.
- What practical lessons can we take away? First, we need to beware of false teachers. They are just as active today as when Paul wrote this letter. Second, baptism is a work of God (Colossians 2:12). At the point of baptism, God performs a spiritual operation and cuts off our sins. Third, Jesus has all the power and authority. He is the Creator, Sustainer, Redeemer, firstborn from the dead, and head of the church.

Colossians 3

- This chapter begins the practical section of Colossians. Completeness in Christ should compel disciples to live a certain way.
- Disciples are to constantly allow spiritual thoughts to flow through their minds (Colossians 3:1-4). Setting our minds on things above means more than just thinking about spiritual things – we must keep thinking about them.
- Disciples are to put to death the old man (Colossians 3:5-9). This is the person who rebelled against God and lived a life that was destined to receive God’s wrath. It is the person who used their bodies to commit acts of immorality, idolatry, greed, and other sinful acts.
- Disciples are to put on the new man (Colossians 3:10-11). The new man is the complete opposite of the old. He strives to be holy, humble, patient, forgiving, and kind (Colossians 3:12-13). He clothes himself in love and thanksgiving, and surrenders completely to the authority of Christ (Colossians 3:14-17). He displays integrity and godliness in his relationships (Colossians 3:18-25). He fulfills his obligations to his family, employer, and God.
- What practical lessons can we take away? First, following Christ involves a lifestyle change. It is not enough to be baptized. We must live godly and transformed lives. Second, we must do everything by the authority of Jesus (Colossians 3:17). This doesn’t involve the things we do in our worship but also the things we do in our daily lives. Third, it matters how we behave in our relationships. God has expectations for how we conduct ourselves in every relationship we possess.

Colossians 4

- The previous chapter concluded with God's expectations for servants towards their masters (Colossians 3:22-25). This chapter begins with God's expectations for masters towards their slaves (Colossians 4:1). While a form of slavery was legal in the first-century Roman world, disciples who owned slaves were expected by the Lord to be just and fair. They were to follow Christ in how they treated their slaves.
- There are other things that should be part of the new man's life in Christ. He should be prayerful (Colossians 4:2). Paul requested prayers from the brethren concerning his evangelistic work (Colossians 4:3-4). Disciples must also be conscious of their conduct towards outsiders (Colossians 4:5-6). They are to be wise, gracious in their speech, and always looking to make the most of opportunities to win souls for Christ.
- In the final section, Paul mentions several of his co-workers in the cause of the gospel. This letter was going to be delivered by Tychicus and Onesimus (Colossians 4:7-9). Tychicus is mentioned five times in the New Testament (Acts 20:4; Ephesians 6:21; Colossians 4:7; 2 Timothy 4:12; Titus 3:12). Onesimus is the runaway slave mentioned in the book of Philemon. Other kingdom workers in this section include Aristarchus, Mark, Jesus (also called Justus), Epaphras, Luke, and Demas (Colossians 4:10-14). Demas would later desert Paul because he loved the world (2 Timothy 4:10). Paul also sent a greeting to the brethren in Laodicea (Colossians 4:15). These brethren would later be identified as "lukewarm" by Jesus (Revelation 3:14-22). The letter coming from Laodicea is probably the book of Ephesians.
- Archippus is also mentioned in Philemon 2 (Colossians 4:17). He is encouraged to fulfill his ministry. Someone with Paul likely penned this letter, but he authenticates it with his signature (Colossians 4:18). Notice how Paul was clearly in prison at this time.
- What practical lessons can we take away? First, we need to be praying for evangelistic opportunities. Paul didn't just pray for sick people and endurance through suffering. He constantly prayed for open doors to spread the gospel (Colossians 4:3-4). Second, Paul didn't work alone. Many people helped Paul and immersed themselves in kingdom work. Third, in the time of Paul, brethren circulated inspired letters (Colossians 4:16). They read them in the public assemblies, copied them, and passed them among the churches.

Philemon

- This is an often neglected New Testament letter. It is one more of the personal letters penned by Paul. It was likely written during Paul's first Roman imprisonment (Philemon 1). Besides Paul, two other people are mentioned in this letter (Philemon and Onesimus). These men are closely connected. Onesimus was Philemon's slave. He may have run away from Philemon, stolen from him, and been converted by Paul. After converting him, Paul may have urged Onesimus to return to Philemon with this letter.
- The key theme in this letter is "relationships." While Philemon and Onesimus had a master and slave relationship, they were also brothers in Christ. Paul wants Philemon to forgive Onesimus and treat him as a brother. They may have had different statuses by the world's standards, but now they were part of the same spiritual family.
- The letter begins with a greeting (Philemon 1-3). Notice how a church is meeting in Philemon's house. Philemon seems to be a good man who has influence in the church.
- Before making his appeal on behalf of Onesimus, Paul commends Philemon (Philemon 4-7). He avoids telling Philemon what to do concerning Onesimus. Instead, he expresses confidence in Philemon (Philemon 8-9). He hopes Philemon will forgive Onesimus's wrongdoings and receive him as a brother in Christ (Philemon 10-16). If Philemon had stolen anything, Paul offered to repay it (Philemon 17-18). Paul is optimistic that Philemon will do what is right (Philemon 19-21). He also anticipated being released soon (Philemon 22). Other disciples with Paul at this time included Ephaphras, Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke (Philemon 23-25).
- What practical lessons can we take away? First, while we have different statuses, we are one in Christ. We are all children of God, whom God equally loves. Second, we need to be optimistic about our brethren. Paul has a positive view of Philemon. He trusted that he was going to do right by Onesimus. Third, relationships in the body of Christ matter to God. They require work to maintain. We must be willing to seek forgiveness, forgive, and be reconciled.