

Defending the Truth

Against False Teachers

2 Thessalonians

"son of perdition"

Jude *"ungodly"*

2 John *"antichrist"*

3 John *"Diotrephes"*

Philemon

The Forum Terrace Church of Christ

Sunday Morning Adult Bible Class Fall 2023

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Writing with Purpose

2 Thessalonians 1:1-12

Shortly after Paul had written his first epistle to the young congregation at Thessalonica, he sent Timothy back with this second letter. The fact that the letter is from “Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy” (1:1a) does not mean they were equally co-authors of the letter. Most likely Paul wrote the letter but its contents were equally the attitudes of his co-workers. Silvanus (Silas) and Timothy were with Paul when the congregation was established.

The letter was addressed “to the church of the Thessalonians” (1:1b). On Paul’s journey with Silvanus and Timothy into Europe, they first established the church at Philippi. Next, they moved on to Thessalonica and the Gospel was met with great success. Then the Jews stirred up the Gentiles and the three evangelists were run out of town. Next, they traveled to Berea where the Word was accepted by fairminded men and women. The Jews soon followed, causing trouble. Paul was forced to move on to Athens leaving Silvanus and Timothy behind. From there he went to Corinth for eighteen months. It is from this city both letters were written to the Thessalonians between late AD 50 and early AD 52.

The motivation behind this second epistle was threefold: 1) express thanksgiving and prayers for them; 2) reassure them of the just judgment coming on the Day of the Lord; and 3) give instructions on church discipline. Apparently, the first letter was not able to deal with all the issues they would face or all the correct teachings they would need.

Purpose of Mutual Relationship With God

2 Thess. 1:1b, 2 “...in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: 2 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

This opening greeting is essentially the same as in the first letter. Yet, the two are not identical. Here Paul adds the word “our.” Along with the apostle Paul both Silvanus and Timothy have a mutual relationship in both God and His Son. This greeting also affirms the Father and the Son are equal.

The purpose of this mutual relationship in God and the Lord Jesus Christ is for all of them to receive the grace and peace which can only come from them. In this greeting Paul combines the common Hebrew greeting “peace” or shalom with a variation of the Greek greeting. Instead of using the Greek word *chairein* meaning “greeting,” he used *charis* which is “grace.” The saints which made up the church at Thessalonica had this blessed relationship in God and Christ through divine unmerited favor. Through God’s grace they were forgiven of the enmity which had existed between them. Now through Christ they are reconciled into a peaceful relationship. This peace is an outcome of God’s grace. The Greek word for “peace” is *eirene*. It represents the wish of Paul that they have health both spiritually and physically with safety and blessings. It is not a wish for them to be free from conflict but to have an inner calm even if the storms about them are raging.

Purpose of Thanksgiving

2 Thess. 1:3 We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is fitting, because your faith grows exceedingly, and the love of every one of you all abounds toward each other, 4 so that we ourselves boast of you among the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your

persecutions and tribulations that you endure,

Paul, along with Timothy and Silvanus, felt a strong obligation to give thanks for the Thessalonians. The word “*bound*” is used in relation to financial obligations. They were paying God with thanks because He answered their prayers with regard to the faith and love of this congregation (1 Th. 13:10-13). When God answers our prayers Christians should feel a sense of indebtedness to offer up a prayer of thanksgiving. Furthermore, it was the “*fitting*” or the proper thing to do.

Three reasons are expressed for this thanksgiving. 1) Paul is thankful for the exceeding growth of their faith. Faith is not to be static. If it does not grow bolder it will grow colder. Their faith is to grow like a plant in spring and to branch out fully. 2) Next, they are thankful for the love they have for one another that is abounding. Like faith, love cannot be static or it will become stagnated. A stream of water will flow and abound in refreshment and life. A pool of water that does not keep moving will become a source of stagnation and death. 3) Finally, gratitude is expressed to God for their endurance. They had the patience to live with the pressure which the troublemakers in Thessalonica were bringing to bear upon them. So proud of their development as Christians, the three evangelist were bragging about them to the other churches. This was done to glorify God and to encourage other congregations to emulate them.

Faithfulness, brotherly love, and patience are all refined under the fires and pressures of persecution. According to Weirsbe “*persecutions*, which means ‘attacks from without,’ or ‘trials’; *tribulations*, which literally means ‘pressures,’ or afflictions that result from the trials; and *trouble* (2 Thes. 1:7), which means ‘to be pressed into a narrow place’” (Wiersbe 193).

Purpose of Persecution

2 Thess. 1:5 which is manifest evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you also suffer;

Why does God use persecutions, tribulations, and trouble to develop faithfulness, love, and endurance in the new converts at Thessalonica? Paul gives two good reasons. First, these demonstrate proof God is just in His dealings with them. What?! How can suffering at the hands of those who do wrong be used by God to bring about what is right? God has often used trials upon the righteous to show Himself righteous. Joseph was tried in Egypt and God was seen to be just in His dealing with Joseph along with his mean-spirited jealous brothers and the same Egyptian society which unjustly treated him. Daniel and his three friends suffered injustice in their trials and troubles. These did not show God to be unjust. Whereas God’s justice was seen during the lives of Joseph and Daniel, Christians may not see the just judgment of God until the end of time. Second, the Thessalonian believers would be worthy to suffer for the kingdom. This attitude was expressed by the apostles who were persecuted in the early days of the church. After leaving the Jewish council they were found “*rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name*” (Acts 5:41). Trials do not earn saints a place in God’s eternal kingdom, rather it does prepare them for it. Just as trials were necessary to prepare the way for Christ to bring salvation to all men, suffering is a indispensable part of the journey of the saint into the eternal kingdom of God. Paul and others with him were well aware of the persecutions they had to endure to bring the Gospel to the lost.

Purpose of God’s Justice

2 Thess. 1:6 since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you, 7 and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, 8 in flaming fire...

Moving from the purpose of persecution, Paul now claims the justice of God has two just reasons.

First, Judgment Day will bring trouble to those troublemakers who troubled the saints. One day God will demonstrate justice in giving trouble to those who caused trouble. This is a reassuring promise to those who have suffered. Furthermore, vengeance belongs to God. Only He is the just Judge who can fairly and adequately repay sinners for their sins (Rom. 12:19). The second purpose of God's just judgments is to repay the troubled saints with rest. Interestingly, the term for "rest" means just the opposite of "trouble." In life the faithful will suffer under the unjust pressures or troubles of the troublemakers. After the Day of Judgment the troublemakers will suffer under the pressures of the trouble repaid to them. While the faithful are repaid with being free from all the pressures they were troubled with in this life.

When will this justice take place? Paul informs us that the day will come for this retribution and rest "when the Lord Jesus is revealed" (1:7a). Three Greek terms are used in the New Testament to refer to the Second Coming of Christ: *parousia*, *epiphany*, and *apocalypsis*. Here Paul uses the term *apocalypsis* for "revealing." It will be the time of the revelation of Jesus to the whole world. When He was first revealed in the flesh the wicked judge Him worthy of death on the cross. When He comes again it will be He would judge them.

The Second Coming is described in three ways. 1) He will come from Heaven. He ascended to Heaven and will return from Heaven (Acts 1:8f). 2) He will come with His angels. 3) He will come in flaming fire. Fire is used with regard to God in various ways in the Bible. Here it can refer both to His glorious appearing and the means of punishment and destruction upon the wicked.

Purpose of the Revelation of Jesus

2 Thess. 1:8b ...taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, 10 when He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe, because our testimony among you was believed.

Two reasons are given for the revelation of Jesus: 1) to reward the disobedient with punishment and 2) reward the saints. The character of the wicked is described as being both ignorant of God and not obeying the Gospel. Some scholars have argued the Gentiles are the ones who "do not know God" while the unbelieving Jews are those who "do not obey the gospel." However, both Jews and Gentiles are shown to be both ignorant and disobedient in the New Testament. In fact, the two descriptions are not targeting different groups of sinners but describing two characteristics of all sinners. God is just in condemning them for their ignorance and disobedience.

The punishment of lost sinners will be banishment from God's presence. This will be for eternity. The word "destruction" does not mean annihilation. To annihilate something would be to destroy it to the point of nonexistence. Yet the "destruction" in the passage is modified with the word "everlasting" meaning "endless duration." Thus showing their existence will not end. The worse part of Hell is not the lake of fire, but the terminal nature of one's banishment from presence of God. In Hell God cannot be found. There will be no hope for the future, no chance to repent, no extension of His mercy, never a prospect He will bestow His grace upon them, and never again will they have an opportunity to enjoy His glory.

The same "Day" Jesus judges the wicked will be the same "Day" the saints are rewarded with their rest. Premillennialists will argue the saints will be given their rest in the rapture and the wicked will be punished after seven years of tribulation.

Two blessings will be given to the saints on that Day: 1) sharing in the glory of Jesus and 2) witnessing the admiration He receives. What a glorious Day it will be when all the saints are gathered to the Lord in the air. When they are crowned with victory by the King of kings Himself. Why are they so blessed? Because they believed the testimony of Jesus in the Gospel message. This perhaps refers to the day they obeyed the Gospel. The sinners did not believe or know Jesus as the Son of God and Lord. They did not obey the Gospel testified to them. Therefore, they in contrast with the saints will not

share in the glory of Christ.

Purpose of Perpetual Prayer

2 Thess. 1:11 Therefore we also pray always for you that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfill all the good pleasure of His goodness and the work of faith with power, 12 that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Because of the Second Coming and the rewards it will bring both to the righteous and unrighteous, Paul is always motivated to pray for them. He had commanded them to “*pray without ceasing*” (1 Th. 5:17) in his first epistle. As Paul had felt an obligation to give thanks for them in the beginning of this chapter, he now must pray for their needs. Samuel believed he would have sinned in not praying for Israel. “*Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you; but I will teach you the good and the right way*” (1 Sam. 12:23).

This prayer contains three requests from God for the Thessalonians. 1) He wanted them to be counted “*worthy of this calling.*” The calling is that of the Gospel for them to be saved. Paul told the Ephesians, “*I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called*” (Eph. 4:1). This calling does not end with baptism. 2) Although it may appear that “*good pleasure*” is speaking of God’s, it is rather referring to the activity of the Thessalonians and doing the good pleasure and goodness He desires of them. The term for “*goodness*” is one of the fruits of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22,23) and is never used of God. 3) He prays these believers will have an active faithfulness filled with energy and zeal.

What is the outcome of this perpetual praying? It is two-fold. They will share in the mutual glory that comes with the name of Christ and wearing His name: Christian. All that Paul requests from them will come, not of their own works but by the unmerited favor of both God and His Son. Notice this chapter begins with grace and ends with grace from both the Father and the Son.

Questions:

True/False:

1. T F Paul, Silvanus and Timothy equally had the same attitude about the Thessalonians and all agreed on the content of the epistle.
2. T F The letter was penned by Paul while he was in Berea.
3. T F Part of the reason this epistle was written was to give the brethren there instructions on choosing elders and deacons.
4. T F The Greek word *charis* means “*grace.*”
5. T F Paul felt that the Thessalonians were not growing enough in their faith, thus was encouraging them with this letter.

Short Answer:

6. What is peace an outcome of, as mentioned in the lesson?

7. The three evangelists were bound to give prayers of thanksgiving for the Thessalonians. What were the three reasons indicated?

8. What Greek terms are used in the New Testament to refer to the Second Coming of Christ and which one did Paul use in this epistle?

9. Expound on the definition of destruction and accurately describe what it means.

10. In the closing of the chapter, there are three reasons that they offered a prayer of supplication for the brethren. What were those reasons?

Application & Discussion:

1. It must have been a great honor for Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy to see the brethren grow as they did and as fast as they did. What are some things you personally have learned with someone you baptized or helped study with?

2. Outside of those mentioned in this lesson, which Biblical figures did God allow to face very difficult tribulations/persecutions, but their faith sustained them?

The First Comes Before the Last

2 Thessalonians 2:1-12

1 Thess. 2:1-12 *Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, 2 not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come. 3 Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, 4 who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. 5 Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things? 6 And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time. 7 For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way. 8 And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming. 9 The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, 10 and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. 11 And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, 12 that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.*

The phrase “*now, brethren*” not only uses one of Paul’s common terms of endearment for the saints at Thessalonica but also is used to introduce a new direction in this epistle.

- **Two Aspects of the Day of Christ**

The topic of the Second Coming has not changed, but Paul is dealing with a new issue with regard to the last events of time. He describes the day of Christ by referring to two events which will occur on that Day. First, “*the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.*” This is equivalent to “*the Day of the Lord*” referenced in the first letter. The Day of Christ is the day of His coming or return. The second event on this Day will be the saints “*gathering together to Him.*” It is when the dead saints resurrect to meet the Lord in the air and when those Christians who are alive will also be gathered to Him in the clouds (1 Thess. 4:17). This “*gathering*” is the same Greek word (*episunagoge*) translated assembly in Hebrews 10:25. Christ is the gathering point for the saved on the Day of His return.

- **Two Requests Concerning False Teaching About the Day of Christ**

Next, Paul makes two requests of them. The term used for “*ask*” could also be translated “*entreat.*” These are not commands from an authority figure, but a friend asking for kind favors from another. Both requests are expressed in the negative. First, he asks them “*not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled.*” The term “*shaken*” refers to the effects of an earthquake (cf. Acts 16:26). The news Christ had already come shook them up. It was emotionally unsettling and disturbed their faith. The word “*soon*” is not in reference to time, but how easily they would allow this teaching to upset them.

Paul warned them of three methods false teachers may use to spread this lie: “*either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us.*” This bogus teaching may have been claimed to be through a Holy Spirit revealed prophecy which should be regarded as false. Perhaps, this false teaching looks to some apostolic message from Paul as its source. It could be that a counterfeit epistle contained this false doctrine about Christ’s return. Whether it be false prophecy, a misinformation about Paul’s preaching or pseudepigrapha they should not be so easily disturbed by it.

It is unclear as to what was being taught about the Second Coming of Christ. This much is clear, some were concerned they may have missed the event: *“as though the day of Christ had come.”* In the previous letter Paul assured them that those who had died would not miss out on the Day of Christ’s return. Here, he does not want them to be troubled by false teachers claiming that the day had already come. In this case the living, instead of dead, saints would have already missed out on it.

Paul’s second request on how they should handle the false teaching about the Second Coming: *“let no one deceive you by any means.”* No matter how the false teaching came packaged, they were not to be deceived or fooled by it. They would not be robbed or cheated out of the great Day of the Lord. Paul gave a similar warning to the churches of Galatia (cf. Gal. 1:6-9). Paul categorically denied this teaching came through these modes from either Timothy, Silvanus or himself.

- **Two Events Before the Day of Christ**

To reassure the saints at Thessalonica Christ had not already come, Paul prophesies concerning two events which must come before that Day. First, there will be a rebellion against the Truth. Verse three states, *“for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first.”* What specific apostasy Paul had in mind is not specified. Whatever it is, it had not taken place at the time this letter was written. The word *“apostasy”* is derived from the Greek word used in this verse: *apostasia*. Paul had given many warnings of an apostasy to begin in the near future (see Acts 20:28-32; 1 Tim. 4:1-3; 2 Tim. 3:1-9).

Before the Day of the Lord would come *“the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition.”* Myriads of views have been put forth as to whom or what this might be. In this study it is prudent for us to look at the context before exploring the possibilities. Unlike much of the Old Testament prophecies which are explained and fulfilled in the Old and New Testaments, New Testament prophecy has no later revelation to definitively explain its fulfillment. Furthermore, prophecies in the Bible are often a mixture of persons and things which are to be taken literally and others as symbolic figures. *“The man of sin”* is sometimes translated the *“man of lawlessness.”* This makes little difference since *“sin is lawlessness”* (1 John 3:4). He is also called *“son of perdition.”* *“Son of”* is an expression in Hebrew meaning that some one or something has the same nature or origin of something else, as a son is like his father. Judas was called *“son of perdition”* (John 17:12). Of course, Judas had come and gone, so Paul is not referencing him. Perhaps, another way saying it would be: *“child of hell.”*

- **Two of Pursuits of the Man of Sin**

This *“son of perdition”* can be identified by two of his pursuits. He *“opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped.”* He is filled with great pride. The word *“God”* does not need to be capitalized for it could refer to pagan gods. This language is used in Daniel eleven to refer to Antiochus IV Epiphanes. In 168 BC he had defiled the Temple when he sacrificed a pig to Zeus. The Roman emperor Octavian *“received the Latin name ‘Augustus’ which is derived from the same root (sebastos) rendered ‘worshiped’ in our passage”* (Weaver 480).

The second act of the *“man of sin”* is noted for *is “that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.”* This is not the literal temple which was destroyed in 70 AD. The term *“temple”* is used both to refer to the body of the believer and the church (1 Cor. 3:16,17; 6:19; 1 Pet. 2:5; 1 Tim. 3:15; Eph. 2:21). He has enthroned himself in the position of God Himself.

- **Two Known Facts**

Paul pauses for a moment to remind the brethren of two facts. He asked them, *“do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things?”* Whatever Paul is talking about he had told them enough facts before in person. Forgetfulness and confusion leads Christians to be shaken and troubled. Constant reminders are essential to growth and steadfastness in faith.

The second thing they should have remembered is *“what is restraining.”* Something or someone is keeping the *“man of sin”* from being revealed. Who or what is this restrainer?

- **Two Events Before the Son of Man is Revealed**

God knows the proper time to reveal the “*man of sin*” for what he or it is. *Before “he may be revealed in his own time...the mystery of lawlessness is already at work.”* “Mystery” is not used to refer to something which is a secret, but is used just as the Gospel has been called a “*mystery*.” It refers to a time when something is revealed. The Good News is not a mysterious teaching because it is being currently made known (cf. Eph. 3:3-5). Whoever or whatever this “*man of sin*” is, the “*mystery of lawlessness*” was already starting as Paul was penning this letter.

Notice the capitalization of the restrainer in verse seven: “*only He who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way.*” Many scholars believe the “*He*” is a reference to the work of the Holy Spirit which is holding back the complete revelation of this “*son of perdition*” (Gen. 6:3; Acts 7:51; John 16:8). Others think the restraining force is the Roman government which God uses as a means to restrain crime and evil and allow the Gospel a chance to spread throughout the world in the first century (Rom. 13:1-8). Another belief is that the preaching of the Gospel by the church is what restrains. When this restraining influence is removed “*then the lawless one will be revealed.*” When this event occurs is determined by who or what represents the restrainer.

- **Two Comings: The Lord’s and the Son of Man’s**

Paul makes a reference to two comings. The Lord will come and so does the lawless one. Obviously, the lawless one must come first “*whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming.*” It might be assumed that this coming of the Lord is in reference to the Day of the Lord the final Day. However, the coming of the Lord may have reference to the Lord coming in Judgment (see Matt. 24:1-34). Comparing this phrase to what Paul wrote in verse seven of the first chapter and the general context of this letter, it would appear Paul is referring to the coming judgment upon the “*lawless one*” which will come at the Second Coming.

Before the coming of the Lord to utterly destroy the “*man of sin*” will be “*the coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan*” (2:9a). Obviously, the “*lawless one*” is not Satan, but he works for him. The working of Satan is through lies and deception. After all, he is the father of lies (John 8:44). This explains the choice of the lawless one’s mode of operation.

- **Two Operations of the Man of Sin**

Because the “*man of sin*” works according to the behavior of his master, Satan, he deceives “*with all power, signs, and lying wonders.*” All three of these can be used to refer to the acts performed by Jesus, His apostles, and the early Christians who had received miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit. However, what they did proved they were speaking the Truth from God. In this way their credentials were authenticated (2 Cor. 12:12). The “*man of sin*” is using “*lying*” or fake miracles. The term “*power*” refers to the cause or source of energy behind the miracle. The purpose of the miracle is that it is a “*sign.*” “*Wonder*” references the effect the miracle has on those who witness it.

The “*son of perdition*” will also operate among his victims “*with all unrighteous deception among those who perish*” (2:10a). Whereas the righteousness of God leads to the Truth which enables them to find life, the lies of the lawless one’s practices bring death and destruction to those who are deceived.

- **Three Causes and Consequences of Following the Man of Sin**

Paul now focuses his attention of those who are deceived into believing and following the deceptions of the “*man of sin.*” Some will be deceived “*because they did not receive the love of the truth.*” This is not teaching Calvinism in that those who receive are only those who God has enabled, because they have personally been elected from the beginning. Many do not develop within their heart a admiration and affection for what is true. These fall easy prey to deceptions. The consequence of not loving the truth is they will not be saved.

Because they do not love the truth “*God will send them strong delusion.*” The motive behind God’s action is “*that they should believe the lie.*” How can the God of Truth and Love do such a thing? God does not force anyone to believe the truth or a lie. However, if they are content to chose lies over

the Truth, God will allow them and use their choice to lead them to further destruction (Rom. 1:25f). Perhaps they will see the consequences of their poor choice and repent (2 Pet. 3:9). Many times God has punished the hard hearts of sinners by giving them over to what they love (Prov. 5:22; Matt. 13:14,15; 1 Kings 22:19-23). God hardened Pharaoh's heart (Ex. 4:21; 7:3; 9:12; 10:1,20,17; 11:10). Yet Pharaoh had hardened his own heart (Ex. 8:15,32; 9:34). In the end God punished him and Egypt.

The final reason those who perishing are deceived is that they *"had pleasure in unrighteousness."* They did not enjoy the Truth, but they sure had fun doing what is wrong. Yet this pleasure is temporary (Heb. 11:25f) in *"that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth"* (2:12a).

Who is the "Son of Perdition"?

In this context the *"son of perdition"* is called *"man of sin"* and *"lawless one."* He is not Satan, but he does work with him (2:9). One of the most common views is the *"son of perdition"* is the pope or papacy. "The preface to the original King James Version of the bible names the pope as the 'Man of Sin'." (Barton 127). Many of the early reformers, such as, Luther, Calvin, and Zwingli held this view. Many New Testament Christians have agreed with this. However, the Catholic pope did not exist until AD 606 and Paul said the *"mystery of lawlessness"* was already at work at the time the letter was written to the Thessalonians. The Catholic popes responded by labeling one of the reformers as the *"son of perdition."* Gaining in popularity is the belief that Mohammed and the Islamic religion represent the *"man of sin."* However, Mohammed was not born until AD 570. Others have suggested one of the Roman Emperors. Nevertheless, these have not continued to exist till the Lord's coming. Trying to connect this with the destruction of Jerusalem has led some to look at some zealot or Pharisee seizing the Temple just before the Roman's destroyed it in 70 AD. Yet, how would this relate to the gentile saints at Thessalonica. Over the years many political figures have been identified as the *"son of perdition."* Napoleon, Hitler, Stalin, etc. have all been popular choices. Notice in the text it is a spiritual rebellion not a political rebellion under consideration. Nonetheless, some still are looking from some world political leader to raise up and take the throne of God. Hal Lindsey has said, "I believe that this very man lives right now somewhere in Europe." Modern premillennialists have marked the sea beast in Revelation 13 as the *"son of perdition."* This is referring to a political entity such as the Roman Empire which has been gone for centuries. One of the most common identifications with the *"son of perdition"* is to call him "the Antichrist." The term is only found in the epistles of John. The apostle specifically identified various aspects of an antichrist which would eliminate him from the list of likely suspects. The term *"antichrist"* is only found five times in the New Testament (1 John 2:18,22; 4:3; 2 John 1:7). The antichrist is not one individual, but many. The antichrist is not yet to come, but many have been at work for centuries. All of them are lairs because they deny the truth about Christ being the Messiah, being the Son of God and coming in the flesh. One final ideal about the *"son of perdition"* is that it is symbolic of the principle of lawlessness. Paul use personification to refer to sin as if it were human. The *"man of sin"* is defined as "an impersonation of the sinful principle spoken of by the apostle Paul in an emphatic manner" (McClintock and Strong 689).

Questions:

Matching:

- | | |
|--|------------------------------------|
| 1. The coming of our Lord Jesus Christ | By spirit, by word or by letter |
| 2. Entreat | Body of the believer or the church |
| 3. False teachers | Day of the Lord |
| 4. Man of lawlessness | Son of perdition |
| 5. Temple | Ask as a friend, not a command |

Fill in the Blanks:

1. Daniel 11 uses similar language to what we find here for the “*son of perdition*,” but Daniel is actually referring to _____ ?
2. The term _____ means a time when something is actually revealed.
3. _____ is the cause or source of energy behind the miracle.
4. _____ teach that those who receive the love of the truth are those who God has enabled, because they have personally been elected from the beginning.
5. God will send a strong _____ to those who do not love the truth.

Application & Discussion:

1. How can you help those who are having pleasure in unrighteousness realize that the fun is only temporary and help turn them to the Truth?

2. Although we may not be able to definitively say who the “man of sin” is, we do know that his master is Satan. What application can you take away from knowing this?

Prayer Requests

2 Thessalonians 2:13-3:5

Prayer of Thanksgiving for the Brethren

2 Thess. 2:13 *But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth, 14 to which He called you by our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

▶ **Because He is Obligated to God**

Paul gives thanks for the brethren at Thessalonica once again (1:3). He tells them these prayers are out of a sense of obligation to show gratitude to God. *“We are bound to give thanks to God always for you”* (2:13a). Paul gives several reasons why he feels the need to give thanks to God. It is not what they have been able to accomplish of themselves, but what God has been doing for them.

▶ **Because They are Loved by God**

Paul describes them as *“brethren beloved by the Lord”* (2:13b). God and Christ have both loved them while they were still sinners (John 3:16; Rom. 5:8). Love is a reoccurring theme throughout both letters, but in particular Paul reminds them of Divine love more than one in this section. When brethren are facing trials it is comforting to be reminded of God’s continual unconditional love.

▶ **Because They are Chosen by God**

The main motive for the continual thanks of the apostles is given. *“Because God from the beginning chose you for salvation”* (2:13c). Love alone does not save man from sins. God must choose those who are to be saved. Not all men who are loved will be saved. The choice is not out of chance or a result of prejudice on the part of God. He is not a respecter of persons (Acts 10:34). He had chosen to save those who are in Christ (Gal. 3:27; Rom. 6:3-5). The term *“beginning”* points to the day they were baptized into Christ.

▶ **Because They are Sanctified by God**

This choice to save those whom God loves in Christ is *“through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth”* (2:13d). This choice could not have happened until they were made holy by the work of the Holy Spirit. How does the Holy Spirit bring sanctification to the lost sinner. Jesus said, *“sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth”* (John. 17:17). Without belief in the truth one can not be made holy by the Holy Spirit revealed Word of Truth. This is the truth rejected by those who are perishing in verse ten of this chapter.

▶ **Because They are Called by God**

Paul tells the Thessalonians they came to be saved because God *“called you by our gospel”* (2:14a). It is not Paul’s or Timothy’s Good News, but the Truth God sent them to preach to the lost of the city. God called them to salvation through the preaching of the Gospel by Paul and others. This Gospel is the Holy Spirit revealed truth. When they believed it, they were made holy, sanctified or set apart to God who planned for all who are in Christ to be saved.

▶ **Because They are Glorified by God**

Many men seek self-glorification in this life through educational, financial, athletic, etc. pursuits. Man due to his sin has no glory (Rom. 3:23). However, when a sinner finds salvation through obedience of the Gospel, he shares in the glory of Christ. This is the ultimate result of being saved: *“for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ”* (2:14b).

Prayer Requests For the Brethren

2 Thess. 2:15 *Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle. 16 Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and our God and Father, who has loved us and given us everlasting consolation and good hope by grace, 17 comfort your hearts and establish you in every good word and work*

◆ **Prayer For Them to Stand Firm on the Truth From God**

With the word *“therefore”* Paul introduce his desire to see these brethren to *“stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught”* (2:15a). This language pictures a guard or soldier who stands his ground while firmly gripping his weapon. He will not be run off from the traditions. The term *“traditions”* has a very negative connotation to many. Often one thinks of the man-made traditions of the Pharisees where were handed down to them from generation to generation (Mark 7:8,9). Yet Paul tells us the source of these traditions: *“whether by word or our epistle”* (2:15). These *“traditions”* are the truths of the Gospel preached or written into the letters by Paul (1 Cor. 11:2). Such are not the traditions from men, but traditions handed down to man from inspired men like Paul.

◆ **Prayer For Them to Have Love From God**

“Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and our God and Father, who has loved us” (2:16a). Again, Paul reminds them of the love of both the Father and the Savior.

◆ **Prayer For Them to Have Consolation From God**

Additionally, Paul is praying that God may give them other blessings coming from both the Son and the Father. In addition to God loving them, Paul adds *“and given us everlasting consolation”* (2:16b). The context shows this never ending and ever enduring comfort or encouragement to be a gift of God’s grace. This is something God is already doing which he desires them to remember.

◆ **Prayer For Them To Have Hope From God**

The third blessing from both God and Jesus is *“good hope by grace”* (2:16c). Hope is good because it comes from God who is both good and faithful to keeps His promises.

◆ **Prayer For Them to Have Comfort From God**

Next, Paul makes the specific requests for God to *“comfort your hearts”* (2:17a). Their hearts may have been hurting from the false teaching that they had missed the second coming.

◆ **Prayer For Them to Be Established From God**

Paul’s final request for the Thessalonians is that God would *“establish you in every good word and work”* (2:17b). They needed to be strong in and made strong by every edifying word and righteous deed done by others and themselves.

Prayer Requests of the Brethren

2 Thess. 3:1 *Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may run swiftly and be glorified, just as it is with you, 2 and that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men; for not all have faith.*

- **The Brethren Should Pray for The Preaching of the Word**

When Paul says *“finally, brethren”* he does not mean the same thing as the preacher who says at the end of his sermon: “in conclusion.” So do not put up your Bibles and grab your song books. Instead, Paul is introducing a new topic for their consideration. He has been praying always for them and now requests these brethren would *“pray for us, that the word of the Lord may run swiftly and be glorified, just as it is with you”* (3:1). In his previous letter Paul already commanded them to *“pray without ceasing”* (1 Thess. 5:17). Now, the apostle asked them to pray for him and his companions. First, they could pray about the continual and universal spreading of the Gospel to the lost. Just as it was well received by them and by the fair-minded Bereans (Acts 17:11), so they should pray that others will be as open to its message of salvation. Paul would request in a letter to the church at Colossae that they pray for God to open doors of opportunity for the reception of the Gospel (Col. 4:2-4). The other aspect of this request is that the Word be honored as others will hear, examine, and obey it.

- **The Brethren Should Pray for the Preacher’s Deliverance From Evil**

Paul knew he needed the prayers of fellow saints to accomplish his God-given duties. His second prayer requests is *“that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men; for not all have faith”* (3:2). They knew all too well the struggles of Paul with the Jews at Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea (Acts 16:25f; 17:6-8,12f). Paul did not have in mind unfaithful brethren, but those who did not believe the Gospel. The character of these men is that they could not be reasoned with and they were openly hostile.

Prayer Requests About the Brethren

2 Thess. 3:3 *But the Lord is faithful, who will establish you and guard you from the evil one. 4 And we have confidence in the Lord concerning you, both that you do and will do the things we command you. 5 Now may the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the patience of Christ.*

- **May They Be Protected**

Even if there are evil men in this world who try to hinder Paul and the brethren *“the Lord is faithful, who will establish you and guard you from the evil one”* (3:3). The opposition to the Gospel is ultimately the Devil. God is able to help the saints fight off Satan. They could put their trust in him because He has been able to defeat the Devil even while being tempted in the flesh (Matt. 4:1-11). With God’s help every Christian can be strong enough to withstand the attacks of the Devil (Eph. 6:10-18) and they will be well protected by God who will not allow any saints to be tempted and tested beyond what they are able to handle (1 Cor. 10:13).

- **May They Be Obedient**

“And we have confidence in the Lord concerning you, both that you do and will do the things we command you” (3:4). Paul is not expressing here confidence in the brethren, but in God who has helped and will continue to assist them. Their continued obedience is to the commandments given by Paul and his companions. This is looking forward to the coming commands concerning church discipline starting in verse six. The term *“command”* is a military term. Jesus *“the captain of our salvation”* has commanded his officers, the apostles and prophets, to relay this command to the saints. To disobey Paul’s command is in reality disobeying the Lord’s. “No one is to issue commands except those who have authority to do so, and when they are received they are to be treated as authoritative commands and not as mere suggestions or requests. Facts are to be believed, promises are to be enjoyed, but commands are to be obeyed (Weaver 558).

- **May They Be Loved**

Once again Paul reminds them they are loved of God. *“Now may the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God”* (3:5a). Perhaps, this could refer to their love for God. The term *“direct”* means to clear

a path or road for easy travel. In this case God can make it easy for them to either understand and receive His love or make it easy for them to love Him. John wrote, *“for this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome”* (1 John 5:3). It is best in this context to understand they are to gain greater acceptance of God’s love for them.

- **May They Be Patient**

In order for the Thessalonian brethren to endure persecution, stand firm on the truth about the Day of the Lord, and to fulfill the difficult commandment to disciplining the unruly, they would need *“the patience of Christ”* (3:5b). Perhaps, instead of *“patience”* the term perseverance of Christ would be best. Christ was able to do the will of the Father even when it meant crucifixion. If all the saints had that kind of perseverance no command or persecution would be able to move them away from the Truth.

Questions:

True or False:

1. T F The term “beginning” in vs. 13 refers to the time before creation itself.
2. T F Through belief in the Truth, one can be made holy by the Holy Spirit.
3. T F A sinner at salvation can now share in the glory of Christ.
4. T F The term “traditions” in vs. 15 actually refers to man-made ideas, that we should be careful of not following.
5. T F Wicked men are men that cannot even be reasoned with and were very hostile.

Short Answer:

1. What other verses, outside of verse 3, shows us that God is faithful and will establish us, even though Satan is always attacking?
2. The apostles, through the work of the Holy Spirit and the authority given them, were able to give *“commands”* to the brethren. Explain *“commands”* as used here.
3. One of the works that the Holy Spirit does today is sanctifying sinners. How does the Holy Spirit do it?

4. Paul requested prayers that the Word of the Lord may run swiftly and be glorified. What are some ways that the Word can be honored, even today?

5. Define what the word "*direct*" means in this context.

Application & Discussion:

1. The "patience of Christ" is more accurately used when we say the "perseverance of Christ." Why?

2. Not all men who are loved by God will be saved, although God wants all to come to repentance. How does knowing this information, help you teach others?

Disciplining the Disorderly

2 Thessalonians 3:6-18

Church discipline has been a neglected subject in many congregations in modern times. It is one of the most abused and unused duties given to the church. Much of this is because of ignorance, confusion, false teaching, the emotional difficulty involved, lack of love and concern for erring brethren, etc.

People usually only think of the extreme action of withdrawing when the subject of church discipline is brought up. Yet, the New Testament speaks of two types of discipline which work together to edify the brethren: instructive discipline and corrective discipline. Paul had already gave instructions in his first epistle warning the unruly. Now he is giving a command for the faithful brethren to correct the disorderly brethren who have not repented.

Exhortation to the Brethren

2 Thess. 3:6 But we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us.

Paul and his companions issue a command. It is not a suggestion. It is an order given by them through the authority which is *"in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."* This command involves the actions of the whole congregation corporately and the compliance of each member individually.

The command given to the faithful saints at Thessalonica is: *"that you withdraw."* The phrase *"withdraw yourselves"* (KJV) means "to remove one's self, withdraw one's self to depart, ...to abstain from familiar (social contact) with one" (Thayer 587). It is from the Greek term *stello* and requires one to keep away from someone or something. This term does not mean or included in any way the idea of excommunicating a soul from the brotherhood or expelling them from the church building or even the membership.

Paul uses three phrases to identify who are to be withdrawn from by the church. The subjects of this command to withdraw is *"from every brother."* This clarifies that non-Christians are never to be the subject of church discipline. Furthermore, no partiality toward any brother or sister in Christ is to be permitted. Every impenitent Christian is subject to church discipline. This includes those who are influential, powerful, rich, a relative, preacher, teacher, elder, etc.

The second identification of the subject of withdrawing is one *"who walks disorderly"* (3:6). The term *"walks"* "is a present participle, indicating a continuous manner of conduct. There is a great deal of difference between an occasional lapse in doing our duty to God and in walking that way consistently." The walk of a Christian is in reference to his conduct in life. The word *"disorderly"* means "out of ranks, (often so for soldiers) irregular, inordinate, deviating from the prescribed order or rule" (Thayer 83). Those guilty are disorderly and if they continue in this they are walking disorderly. When one commits abortion he or she is walking disorderly. Also, those who forsake the assembly are walking disorderly for he disobeys several of God's commands (Heb. 10:25; 1 Cor. 11:24; 16:1,2). After all, those who forsake the assembling of the saints would be AWOL (absent without official leave) which is the same as being "out of rank" or "out of order."

The third descriptive phrase use to identify those who should be withdrawn from are those who are not walking *"according to the tradition which he received from us."* In the previous chapter the saints

were commanded to *“hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle”* (2:15b). These traditions are from the inspired writings or teachings of men like the apostle Paul. Surely, Paul did not intend to refer only to their example of working for their food. All of the inspired traditions must be followed.

Example of the Evangelists

2 Thess. 3:7 For you yourselves know how you ought to follow us, for we were not disorderly among you; 8 nor did we eat anyone’s bread free of charge, but worked with labor and toil night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, 9 not because we do not have authority, but to make ourselves an example of how you should follow us.

In this paragraph Paul reminds them again of the example of hard work set by him and his co-workers when they were in Thessalonica. *“For you yourselves know how you ought to follow us”* (3:7a). Again, he commands them to follow that example using the word *“ought”* which is in other places translated *“must.”* Not only must they listen to their preaching and read the epistles, these brethren are obligated to imitate their example. The term for *“follow”* is from the Greek term from which the English *“mimic”* is derived. Paul requires the saints to mimic his behavior.

Paul describes three aspects of this example. First, *“we were not disorderly among you”* (3:7b). Second, *“nor did we eat anyone’s bread free of charge”* (3:8a). Third, *“but worked with labor and toil night and day”* (3:8c).

Why did Paul, Timothy and Silvanus set this kind of example before the Thessalonians? He gives three reasons. First, *“that we might not be a burden to any of you”* (3:8c). See 1 Thess. 2:9. Next, he explains their reason for not excepting or receiving any money or support from them: *“not because we do not have authority”* (3:9a). They had every right before God to receive support for their laboring in the Gospel. He had received support more than once from the church at Philippi (Phil. 4:16) and while laboring in Corinth (2 Cor. 11:8,9). He taught that a preacher is a laborer who is worthy of his hire (1 Cor. 9:3-14). Finally, Paul explains the reason for their behavior was *“to make ourselves an example of how you should follow us”* (3:9b). Many philosophers and religious hucksters were passing through this great city and living off their listeners and then leaving. Paul wanted to be an example of how they were putting the needs of the people above their own rights and needs. They became an example of those who had a right to be support for their work while some of the brethren were not working but still demanded the right to be supported.

Exhortations to the Busybodies

2 Thess. 3:10 For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat. 11 For we hear that there are some who walk among you in a disorderly manner, not working at all, but are busybodies. 12 Now those who are such we command and exhort through our Lord Jesus Christ that they work in quietness and eat their own bread.

The next set of exhortations are directed toward those who are not busy at working to provide for themselves, but are busy meddling in the business of others. Why were they doing this? Many claim these first century brethren thought the Day of the Lord was coming at any moment and thus stopped working to wait for His Return. However, according to verse two of the previous chapter some were concerned *“as though the day of Christ had come.”* A belief based on misinformation. Why would any of them stop working and wait for an event that is already past? In fact, there is no evidence to link this problem with the views regarding the end of time. No one really knows why this was an issue among the saints at Thessalonica.

According to verse ten this is a problem which Paul had dealt with when working among them. *“For even when we were with you, we commanded you this”* (3:10a). Whatever the reason for the

laziness of these unruly brethren, this is not the first time Paul needed to deal with it.

Paul's previous commandment to the brethren was *"if anyone will not work, neither shall he eat"* (3:10b). God had commanded all men to work for their own maintenance. This is not overlooking those who cannot work due to extreme age, handicaps, sickness, etc. The command is for those who choose not to work. This exhortation seems harsh to in our time where it is assumed that all men are entitled to three square meals a day whether they work or not. When these disorderly brethren find themselves faced with nothing to do and no one to support them they will be forced to go back to work and busy themselves taking care of their own needs and minding their own business. *"The person who labors, labors for himself, for his hungry mouth drives him on"* (Prov. 16:26). So, it is wrong and contrary to plain apostolic teaching for any church to feed lazy men who simply refuse to work.

Paul describes three things this particular class of unfaithful brethren are noted for in verse eleven. First, he said, *"we hear that there are some who walk among you in a disorderly manner"* (3:11a). Some false teachers have tried to limit church discipline in this passage to include only those who are lazy and will not repent. They argue that the Greek word *ataktos* means idleness. However, most lexiconographers define the term to mean "disorderly or unruly. It is "from the very *tasso* which is a military term referring to the act of arranging soldiers in military order in the ranks. When the Greeks wanted to make a word mean the opposite of what it meant originally, they placed the later Alpha as its first letter. Thus, *atakeo* refers to soldiers marching out of order or quitting the ranks, thus being disorderly. The word therefore means 'deviating from the prescribed order or rule'" (Weust 25,26). After Paul tells the Corinthians church to take disciplinary action on the fornicator, he gives a list of other sins that require discipline. The list closes with the Greek term *toioutos* translated *"such a one."* The term reveals that the sins listed are not a complete list of the only sins subject to discipline. Instead these are sins representative of any rebellion against God. The phrase *"and such an one"* is like saying "etc." If those to be disciplined were limited just to those specifically listed it should then be noted the types of sinners who would simply have to be tolerate among the membership of the church: gossipers, liars, homosexuals, abortionists, murderers, etc.

The second description of these disorderly brethren is they are *"not working at all"* (3:11b). They are doing nothing of value to assist in paying for or working for their food.

Finally, these lazy brethren *"are busybodies"* (3:11c). Paul is making a play on words with *"working"* and *"bushbodies."* These men are not totally idle. They are not busy at their business or work to provide for themselves, but they are busy in other people's business or work and expecting others to provide for them.

From the Lord comes two exhortations or commands to these lazy busybodies. First, comes the command *"that they work in quietness"* (3:12b). Second, the Lord wants them to *"eat their own bread"* (3:12c). These commands imply two end results. They will be able to work and provide for themselves instead of mooching off of others and it will keep them too busy to meddle and stir up trouble for others. By following these commands peace will return to the congregation.

Encouragement to the Brethren

2 Thess. 3:13 But as for you, brethren, do not grow weary in doing good. 14 And if anyone does not obey our word in this epistle, note that person and do not keep company with him, that he may be ashamed. 15 Yet do not count him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.

Paul switches his focus from exhortations to the unfaithful to bring encouraging instructions to the faithful saints at Thessalonica. First, he encourages them *"not grow weary in doing good"* (3:13). As Paul encouraged the churches in Galatia *"and let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart"* (Gal. 6:9). Perhaps, they may have become tempted to cease their benevolent work among the needy saints. This is not what Paul is working toward. However, Paul might have reference to the command to discipline the disobedient. This can be a difficult and disheartening process to carry out for many brethren.

The next encouragement is with regard to how they are to treat any brother among them who *“does not obey our word in this epistle”* (3:14a). The inspired words of this letter contained several different commands to be obeyed. One of these charges was for them not to be lazy busybodies. However, church discipline would include any brother who disobeyed any of the commands given by the Lord. Walton Weaver explains, “the instruction also applies to other forms of disobedience. The author is under no obligation to name every subject to which this teaching is to be applied. New Testament writers often take up specific subjects that people are facing and make application of a principle that is applicable to that specific subject without meaning that the teaching does not apply to other matters...One can become ‘disorderly’...in other ways than by not working and looking to others to take care of them. When they do, the instructions for discipline as outlined in this paragraph also apply to them” (Weaver 594).

Paul lists four steps they need to take when disciplining a disobedient brother in Christ. First, they are to *“note that person”* (3:14b). The word *“note”* is from the Greek word *semeioo* which means to observe or notice or mark for avoidance. In order for the brethren to individually know who they are not to keep company, the congregation must identify the person subject for social ostracism. Paul publically marked such brethren in some of his letters even identifying them by name: Hymenaeus, Philetus, and Alexander the coppersmith. Exactly how the disobedient are noted, whether by an announcement or in writing, Paul does not specify.

The word *“keep company”* refers to associating with someone. It is from the Greek word *sunanamignumi*. The base *mignumi* means “to mingle” or “to mix.” The prefix *sun* carried the idea of “with” and *anan* means “up.” Thus, the word literally meant “mix up with” or “to be mixed up with” or “to mix together with.” Paul used the same term when discussing discipline by the church at Corinth. (1 Cor. 5:10). When one does not want a dear friend to keep bad company, they say, “I hope they do not get mixed up with the wrong crowd.” Thus, the brethren were not to get mixed up with an impenitent brother by continuing their social ties with him. This charges faithful brethren not to have a social meal with a disciplined brother. In no way does this term imply the church must throw him out of the church building and keep him from worship services. After all, where can he better be admonished to repent? It does not require the church to withhold from him the opportunity eat the Lord’s Supper.

The purpose behind the brethren noting and disassociating the unfaithful impenitent brother is *“that he may be ashamed”* (3:14). The term *“ashamed”* in the text means “to turn one upon himself, and so produce a feeling of shame, a wholesome shame which involves a change of conduct” (Vine). When the fornicator at Corinth was disciplined the result produced godly sorrow (2 Cor. 2:6,7). Discipline is to destroy the influence of the flesh (1 Cor. 5:5). Disassociation by the brethren is to teach them the seriousness of sin (1 Tim. 1:1,9,20). Withdrawing of oneself from the sinning brother lets him know that he is in the grasp of Satan (1 Cor. 5:5). The purpose of discipline is to save the soul of a lost brother.

Contrary to the beliefs and actions of some, faithful Christians are not to treat the impenitent as our enemy. Paul said, *“yet do not count him as an enemy”* (3:15a). This does not suggest that we should refuse to speak to the person if one happens to meet him on the street. It does not justify acting in an uncivil manner toward him. It does not mean saints would cease to show any kindness and compassion toward him in that they would refuse to help him with trials and afflictions. Christians should still be interested in, and seek his salvation, just as they would a heathen man. Yet in such a way as to leave no doubt regarding our attitude toward his life. What it does mean is to have so social or religious communion with him until he repents. If brethren tell him every time you see him that he should repent, he will some repent, or start avoiding the brethren. An erring brother who is in an impenitent state is his own worst enemy. Brethren need to continue to love him for his soul’s sake. After all, the faithful are even commanded to do good to and love their enemies.

Church discipline does not mean brethren should turn up their noses at the erring, *“but admonish him as a brother”* (3:15). Their association with the erring should be for spiritual reasons, not social. They need to continue to seek opportunities to save this brother (Gal. 6:1). Church discipline is positive peer pressure at its best.

Closing Remarks

2 Thess. 3:16 Now may the Lord of peace Himself give you peace always in every way. The Lord be with you all. 17 The salutation of Paul with my own hand, which is a sign in every epistle; so I write. 18 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

Paul now offers a prayer of supplication for them. Two things are requested for them. First, Paul prays “*may the Lord of peace Himself give you peace*” (3:16a). This peace is not the absence of conflict but the confidence that comes in trusting in the faithful hand of God. It is tranquility of soul in the midst of a raging storm. This peace is the same peace which is an essential part of the Lord’s nature. He is the “Prince of Peace.” This peace is hoped to be with them “*always*” that is, at all times and “*in every way,*” or in every situation. Second, Paul requests “*the Lord be with you all*” (3:16b). Although the apostle could not be with them, the Lord could always bless them with His presence.

In the first century letters identified the author in the introduction. Today, authors sign their letters at the end. Paul is not claiming to have hand written this whole letter. Writers of the first century often would use a secretary to manually pen the letters. Silvanus did this for Peter’s first epistle (1 Pet. 5:12). The book of Romans was penned by Tertius for Paul (Rom. 16:22). Paul’s letters needed to be authenticated. Perhaps these last two verses were in his own hand showing a distinction from the style of the secretary and proving it to be a genuine Pauline letter. According to his warning about false doctrine in false letters in chapter two, Paul may have been so motivated to authenticate all his letters in this way. Thus, defeating the forger’s attempts to mislead brethren.

As in the first epistle Paul concludes with an almost identical benediction: “*The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen*” (3:18). The only difference is the addition of the word “*all.*” At the beginning of the letter (1:3) Paul requests God’s unmerited favor upon them and again as he concludes.

Questions:

List:

1. List the various reasons so many congregation fail to practice church discipline.
2. List the three phrases Paul uses to identify who are to be withdrawn from by the church.
3. List the three aspects of Paul and his fellow-evangelists' example of supporting themselves while at Thessalonica.

True/False:

1. T F It is a proven fact that some of the saints at Thessalonica were not working, because they expected the Lord's Return at any moment.

2. T F Paul's command: "*if anyone will not work, neither shall he eat*" applies to every saint without exception or consideration of their circumstances.
3. T F Church discipline is only to be used on those who are lazy busybodies.

Multiple Choice:

1. Which is NOT one of the steps of church discipline Paul gives the Thessalonians?
 - a. Note that person
 - b. Remove them from the church building
 - c. Admonish him as a brother
 - d. Do not keep company with him
 - e. Do not count him as an enemy
2. The phrase "*not keep company*" means:
 - a. Do not be mixed up together in social event with the disciplined.
 - b. Never attend services with the disciplined.
 - c. Never speak to the disciplined.
 - d. All the above
3. The command by Paul for them to "*withdraw yourselves*" is given to...
 - a. the wicked alien sinners outside the body of Christ
 - b. the faithful Christians
 - c. the sinning saints who refuses to come to repentance
 - d. all the above

Short Answer:

1. What two requests does Paul ask of them in his closing?
2. Why does Paul point out his signing of this letter with his own name?

Application & Discussion:

1. Using the various passages on church discipline list in order the steps of church discipline (Matt. 10:15-17; 1 Cor. 5; 2 Cor. 2:7f; 2 Thess. 3:6-15).
2. What are the various positive results of a congregation taking discipline on a saint who refuses to repent?

Triads of Truth

Jude 1:1-7

One of the first things a reader of the epistle of Jude will notice about his style is not only the use of dynamic and colorful metaphors, but the author's fondness for triads. A triad is a literary device where groups of three things are used to support a single idea. "This device of using triads makes the grasping and remembering of what is said easier" (Hamilton 378).

Introduction

Jude 1:1-5a Jude, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, To those who are called, sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ: 2 Mercy, peace, and love be multiplied to you. 3 Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints. 4 For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ. 5 But I want to remind you, though you once knew this,

- **Authorship Triad**

The author identifies himself using three descriptors. First, he is known as "Jude" (1:1a). The Greek name is "Judas" for the Hebrew name "Judah." Notice the English translations go with "Jude" instead of Judas. Perhaps this is done so as not to associate this writer with the infamous traitor of the Lord Jesus Christ. There are several men known as Judas in the New Testament. He is clearly not the apostle Judas. For that Judas is the son of James (Lk. 6:16). Only one man named Judas is said to have a brother named James, and this is Judas the half-brother of Jesus (Matt. 13:55; Mk. 6:3). Most Jews would have identified themselves as "son of" instead of "*brother of James*" (1:1c). This can reflect on the great popularity of Jude's brother. James was one of the foremost leaders in the early church. Nearly everyone would have known who this James represented (Acts 12:17; 15:19-21; 1 Cor. 15:7). James also wrote an epistle where he also does not identify himself according to his physical relationship with Jesus. In a similar fashion as Jude, James calls himself "*a bondservant of God and our Lord Jesus Christ*" (1:1b). Originally, the half-brothers of Jesus sired by Joseph did not believe Jesus to be the Messiah or the Son of God (Jn. 7:5). Jesus showed Himself to James after the resurrection (1 Cor. 15:7). Perhaps, Jude was with James or James influenced Jude with the evidence he had witnessed. Paul mentions that the brothers of Jesus were traveled about with wives preaching the Gospel (1 Cor. 9:5). By calling themselves slaves of Jesus Jude and James recognize that they have been redeemed and belong to the Master, the Lord Jesus Christ just like every other Christian.

The authenticity of the Jude's authorship was been attested to in the writings of many early Christians, such as, Polycarp (AD 69-155), Athenagorus (133-190), Theophilus of Antioch (died in 181), Origen (185-253), Tertulian (150-222), Clement of Alexandria (155-215), and Eusebius (263-339). The canonicity of the epistle is supported by its inclusion into the Muratorian Canon. It was also accepted by Athanasius (298-373), included in the Bodmer papyrus of the third-century, and sanctioned by the Council of Carthage in 397 and by the Council of Laodicea 364.

- **Recipient Triad**

Jude gives little detail as to the recipients of this short one chapter letter. Some believe it was

written to the Christians with a background in the Old Testament. However, Gentile saints were also encourage to know the Old Testament scriptures (Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 10:1-13). Instead of identifying a particular region or local congregation or individual, Jude merely refers to the recipients of his letter by way of their relationship with God and His Son. First, he alludes to them as *“those who are called”* (1:1d). God had summoned or invited them to a relationship with Him through the Gospel (1 Th. 2:12). They answered the call when they obeyed the Gospel plan of salvation. Second, he identifies them as those who are being *“sanctified by God the Father”* (1:1e). Other manuscripts use the term “beloved” in God. These are either being made holy by God or they are kept in the love of the Father which is the same idea expressed in verse twenty-one. Finally, Jude is writing to those who are currently being *“preserved in Jesus Christ”* (1:1f). Instead of *“in”* it would be better to use *“for”* to express the idea these saints had been called in the past; are being currently kept in God’s love, and are being kept for the future for Christ when He returns. The term *“preserved”* is translated *“reserved”* in verses six and thirteen. Whereas the wicked are reserved for punishment at Christ’s Coming, the faithful are reserved or guarded for the reception of blessings at the Lord’s return.

Additionally, Jude begins to address to whom he is writing with the common term of endearment: *“Beloved.”* He will address them as such twice more in this letter (1:17,20). Referring to them as *“beloved”* is in effect calling them “dear friends.” Jude was very concerned for these brethren and counted them as friends for their obedience to the truth. If all the believers are not dear to each other than someone needs to work on their relationships and learn to practice love for all God’s children.

Based on the life of a Jewish preacher of the Gospel in the first century and the dispersion of Christianity throughout the Roman Empire and beyond, Jude could have been just about anywhere when he wrote this letter, and he would have been sending it off to just about anywhere saints lived and worshiped.

- **Salutation Triad**

Jude’s greeting is a common one found in the ancient world (1:2). Yet, this is the only time the likes of which is used in the New Testament. However, this triad of blessings takes on special meaning when they come from the Trinity to the saints. First, Jude wishes for them an abundance of *“mercy”* or loving-kindness and compassion from God. Next, his desire is for the saints to have *“peace.”* Whether this is peace from God or with Him is of little difference. When one is saved from their sins the enmity between God and man is removed and he is reconciled with God. Christians experience the peace of God when the are at peace with Him. Those who are at peace with God will also receive His *“love.”* This represents far more than an emotion or feeling of God toward his children, but a hard-working demonstration of compassion. Jude also desires this too to *“be multiplied”* to them.

- **Occasion Triad**

The occasion which promoted Jude to write this epistle is given in a triad of reasons. The first occasion for the writing of this brief letter was to call upon the saints to zealously defend their *“common salvation”* which is a result of their obedience to *“the faith”* (1:3). Some commentators had come to believe that Jude wanted to write to them about the blessings of being saved when his plans were abruptly changed to a stern letter warning of the dangers of false teachers. This is perhaps reading too much into the text. Many warnings have been given about defending the faith which is the source of this common salvation. This was his original purpose.

The urgency of his writing is seen in the phrase *“very diligent.”* Jude felt a “necessary” obligation to write.

The term *“exhorting”* is a Greek verb which was used in the army to call the troops together to battle. Jude is saying it is time for Christians to defend the Truth. “Christian life is a battleground, not a playground” (Weirsbe 549).

The exhortation was for them to *“contend earnestly for the faith.”* The term *“faith”* is in reference to the body of beliefs revealed to them by inspired men. From the very beginning at Pentecost when three thousands souls shared in the common salvation they were urged to *“continue steadfastly in the*

apostles' doctrine" (Acts 2:42). The phrase "*contend earnestly*" is from a single term in the Greek. It is used of the ancient athlete who would expend every effort and strain every muscle to win at his sporting event. From it the English word "agonize" is derived. Today, saints content by studying God's Word to understand and defend the faith, praying to God to keep them faithful to the Faith, remaining united in the Faith, and teaching others the Faith.

The "*faith*" is further described by "*once for all delivered to the saints.*" It means that the revelation from God was or will be revealed once and there will be no need of inspired words from God in the future. Just as the sacrifice of Christ was a one time event never needing to be repeated (Heb. 10:10), so the Word has been revealed once for all time to all the saints. Any additional revelations being passed off as inspired messages from God are false.

The term "*delivered*" indicates something that has been given into the stewardship of another for safe keeping and protection (1 Tim. 6:20). As a friend would leave money or valuable possessions with a trusted friend. God has blessed each Christian with the Word of Truth, and it is their duty to faithfully defend the Word of God.

Jude's second purpose in writing was to expose "*certain men*" who are false teachers (1:4). They are dangerous, because they have smuggled themselves into the congregations with their impure motives of attacking the faith of the saints in the Faith. They "*have crept in unnoticed*" until Jude points them out in this letter. They are like the proverbial wolves in sheep's clothing who sneak into the flock. They are "*false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ*" (2 Cor. 11:13).

Some believe this passage teaches God planned to punish these specific individuals from eternity. The Greek term for "*marked out*" is from the verb *prographo* meaning to write down in advance. This means Jude is referencing past scriptures describing how God has planned to deal with these "*certain men.*" The prophets of the Old Testament told of the judgements of God against these false teachers (Is. 44:25; Jer. 50:36). Jesus warned of these false teachers (Matt. 7:15; 24:11,24). The apostle Paul foretold their coming and their ultimate demise in many of his teachings and epistles (Acts 20:28-31; 2 Cor. 11:12-15; Gal. 1:6-9; Phil. 3:2; Col. 2:8,16-19; 1 Tim. 1:3; 6:3; 2 Tim. 3:6). Several warnings and condemnations are mentioned in the writings of John (1 Jn. 2:9-11; 4:1; 2 Jn. 1:7-11). Perhaps, Jude was alluding Peter's prophecy. "*There shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction*" (2 Pet. 2:1). After all, "*long ago*" does not necessitate the passing of extended periods of time. All these passages show that false teachers will come into and trouble the saints, but all those who are guilty of false teaching will be damned according to previous scriptures.

Jude's epistle shares a great deal of similarity with that of the second chapter of Peter's second epistle. In fact, out of the twenty-five verses in Jude nineteen of them have parallels in 2 Peter. Both focus on the dangers and characteristics of false teachers. This similarity is not a mere coincidence. Peter wrote warning of the coming of these false teachers. Jude is following up some years later (somewhere between AD 68-90) indicating that Peter's prophecy had become a reality among the saints.

An unprecedented six times Jude describes false teachers as "*ungodly men.*" "*Ungodly*" is from the Greek word *asebeis* meaning "disdainful of anything holy and disrespectful of the Holy God." They have no reverence or respect for God and His Word. It does not refer in this context to someone who is an atheist. Here it refers to those who are saints. They are attacking the Faith of the faithful from inside the congregation.

These "*ungodly men*" teach doctrines resulting in two false beliefs contrary to the Faith. First, they proclaim lies which "*turn the grace of our God into lewdness.*" Gnostics taught that the spirit is good and the flesh is evil. Thus, God does not care about the sinful indulgences of the flesh for it is the spirit which is good. Therefore, they could be in God's unmerited favor while indulging in "*lewdness.*" The Greek word is elsewhere translated "lasciviousness" or "licentiousness." Paul lists it as one of the works of the flesh (Gal. 5:19). It is defined as "unbridled lust, excess, licentiousness, lasciviousness, wantonness, outrageousness, shamelessness, insolence, wanton (acts or) manners, as filthy words, indecent bodily movements, unchaste handling of males and females, etc." (Thayer 79). These ungodly men teach others that they can live openly in sin without any shame as if they have been awarded a

license to sin by the very grace of God. They live like this without fear of divine retribution. However, Jude has already pointed out the Scriptures abound with warnings that false teachers will be condemned. They will not receive God's unmerited favor, because they have merited for themselves Divine destruction.

The second result of the heresies of these *"ungodly men"* is their teaching denies *"the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ."* This does not mean they are in denial of both the Father and the Son. The names used refer to the same person: the Son of God. Just what they were teaching is not known. A variety of false teachings undermine the Lordship and Deity of Christ. The term *"Lord"* is the Greek word *despotes* showing that Jesus is the one and only Master over his slaves. With Christ as our Master one does not have the right to live and use his flesh according to his own desires but only according to the will of God (1 Cor. 6:19f).

The third purpose for this letter is to put the saints in remembrance of those things which they already had learned (1:5a). Man is forgetful. A great deal of an instructor's time in teaching is in reminding students of things previously taught. Specifically, the saints are to remember a triad of illustrations from the past where Divine destruction came about ungodly men and those who followed after them.

Damnation of False Teachers

Jude 1:5b-7 that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe. 6 And the angels who did not keep their proper domain, but left their own abode, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day; 7 as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities around them in a similar manner to these, having given themselves over to sexual immorality and gone after strange flesh, are set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.

■ **Disbelieving Israelites Destroyed**

Once saved always saved definitely does not apply to those Israelites who were once saved from Egyptian bondage only to be destroyed in the wilderness. There are many occasions where the former slaves rebelled against God. Jude will mention Korah's rebellion in verse eleven. Paul noted several examples of their unbelief in 1 Corinthians 10:1-10. After which he warned the saints at Corinth, *"now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall"* (1 Cor. 10:11,12). Their ultimate example of unbelief came when they believed the report of the ten spies over that of Joshua and Caleb who believed the Lord would keep His promise and deliver Canaan land over to the people. For this lack of trust in God, the entire generation died in the wilderness. *"For who, having heard, rebelled? Indeed, was it not all who came out of Egypt, led by Moses? Now with whom was He angry forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose corpses fell in the wilderness? And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who did not obey? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief"* (Heb. 3:16-19; cf. Num. 14:26-38).

■ **Deserting Angels Detained in Darkness**

The details or source of Jude's discussion about angels is sketching and unknown. This has left many an opportunity to invent fancy fables to fill in the blanks. One of the most widely accepted legends is that the *"sons of God"* in Genesis 6:1f were fallen angels who fell to earth and had sex with the *"daughters of men"* whom they found beautiful. This resulted in a hybrid race of giants who became so wicked that God destroyed the world with the flood of Noah's day. First of all, evil angels would not be called *"sons of God,"* only good angels have been so identified by the Bible. Jesus said that angels do not marry (Mt. 22:30). It was because of man's sin, not evil angels reproducing with humans, which resulted in the Flood. God regretted creating man, not angels, which moved Him to destroy the world. The sons of God were the righteous descendants of Seth who foolishly married the wicked, beautiful

daughters of Cain.

What is known of this illustration is the angels deserted the role or realm which God created for them to serve. As a result they are to be kept chained in darkness till the final day of judgment. Perhaps Jesus speaks of this when He said to the disobedient at Judgment, *"depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels"* (Matt. 25:41). Of course, the chains and perhaps the darkness are metaphors since angels are spiritual beings. God is light and they are without Him in darkness. The bondage represents their limitations placed upon them by God. Jude's point is the angels were created greater than men and man created a little lower than the angels. Nevertheless, God still condemned them for their rebellion. So, God will condemn the false prophets and those who chose to follow them.

■ **Deviant Homosexuals' Destination**

The story of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah and the other cities of the plain (Admah and Zeboim) is found in Genesis 19. These people had *"given themselves over to"* fornication. Sex was an obsession for them. They lived for it and they died because of it. When the angels came to Sodom, Lot sought to protect them, so he took them home. The men of the city came seeking to know them carnally. These sexual perverts were struck blind and yet they still sought for the door to get in at these angels. Jude says they had *"gone after strange false."* The word for *"strange"* means different. Some have argued that men going after men is not different but the same flesh. Others believe different is referring to angels. However, the men of Sodom did not know these were angels, but thought them to be males. Paul's discussion of homosexuals explains their behavior, *"for even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due"* (Rom. 1:26-27). From the beginning of Creation the Creator created woman for man and only they are to become one flesh (Gen. 2:24; Matt. 19:4,5). Men with women is God's natural design for sex. Men with men and women with women is different flesh than God assigned. These cities serve at an example of those who will suffer eternal fire.

Questions:

Short Answer:

1. What are triads? Why do you think Jude may have used so many in this letter?

2. Who is Jude? Who was his brother, James?

List:

1. How does Jude refer to the recipients of this letter?

2. What three blessings does Jude desire for the saints?

3. What are the three reasons for the writing of this epistle?

4. What three illustrations did Jude use to show that God condemns the disobedient?

True/False:

1. T F The "faith" in verse three is in reference to the body of teachings given by the apostles and prophets of Christ.

2. T F The "certain men" who have been "marked out" have been determined by God before creation to be false teachers.

3. T F Nineteen of the verses in Jude find close parallels in 1 Peter 2.

Multiple Choice:

1. What is NOT one of the two results of the doctrines taught by "*ungodly men*"?
 - a. they turn the grace of God into licentiousness
 - b. they claim the Day of the Lord has already come
 - c. they deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ

2. Which is a definition of "lewdness"?
 - a. unbridled lust
 - b. licentiousness
 - c. lasciviousness
 - d. uninhibited acts such as filthy word, indecent bodily movement, unchaste handling of males and females
 - e. all the above

Application & Discussion:

1. What do some scholars teach in regard to fallen angels being the "*sons of God*" in Gen. 6:1f? What are the problems associated with this view?

2. How often does the Old and New Testaments warn against the dangers of false prophets and teachers? Why?

Description of False Teachers

Jude 1:8-16

Dreamers in Their Corruption

Jude 1:8-10 Likewise also these dreamers defile the flesh, reject authority, and speak evil of dignitaries. 9 Yet Michael the archangel, in contending with the devil, when he disputed about the body of Moses, dared not bring against him a reviling accusation, but said, "The Lord rebuke you!" 10 But these speak evil of whatever they do not know; and whatever they know naturally, like brute beasts, in these things they corrupt themselves.

This section begins with Jude describing the nature or characteristics of these false teachers: "Likewise also these dreamers" (1:8a). "Dreamers" is a common term to describe false prophets in the Old Testament (Deut. 13:1-5; Jer. 23:25f). It was not unusual for the Holy Spirit to reveal the Will of God through dreams to His prophets. Joseph both dreamed dreams and interpreted his and those of others. Daniel was known as a wise man who could interpret dreams by the power of God. Peter quotes Joel's prophecy and applied it to the last days - the Christian era. It referred to the saints who would receive dreams from God (Acts 2:17). In Acts 10 Peter himself received a dream which encouraged him to share the Gospel with the first Gentile converts. In contrast, these are dreamers who have used false visions to corrupt themselves and lead others astray from the Truth.

Jude gives a triad of these dreamers destructive ways in verse ten he says of them "in these things they corrupt themselves." First, they "defile the flesh" (1:8b). The term "defile" is used to refer to staining cloth with dye. This is not talking about tattoos, but polluting the flesh with the immoral practices. Next, they "reject authority" (1:8c). This may speak of the Lord's authority being rejected. The final triad of corrupting characteristic of these dreamers is they "speak evil of dignitaries" (1:8d). Here Jude uses the term elsewhere translated "blaspheme" which involves more than just railing against God. Most commentators believe "dignitaries" is in reference to angels as in 2 Peter 2:10. However, it is possible it pertains to the glory of Christ or the authority of the government or even leaders in the church.

In verse nine Jude elaborates on the third characteristic of these corrupted dreamers by relating a story not found in the Bible. In fact, it may be for oral tradition or from the pseudepigraphical Jewish work called the *Assumption of Moses* found by the Catholic church in the fifteen hundreds written in Latin. No matter where Jude obtained this information, it does not prove the letter of Jude to be uninspired or that everything found in this ancient manuscript or oral tradition is true. It only means that the Holy Spirit guided Jude to write down this truth to illustrate a point about how the archangel Michael would not dare to be so presumptuous to rebuke the Devil himself "but said, 'The Lord rebuke you!'" (see Zech. 3:1-5).

When Osama bin Ladin was killed his body was taken to a secret location and buried at sea. No Muslims will be able to make pilgrimages to venerate their fallen hero and rally at his grave site. When Moses died on Mt. Nebo God perhaps sent Michael to bury his body as some unknown location. "So Moses the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord. And He buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, opposite Beth Peor; but no one knows his grave to this day" (Deut. 34:5,6). Satan would not have liked this at all. He would not have a grave site to distract future generations of Jews.

Next, the blasphemies of the false teachers of are referred to as ignorant. They were speaking "whatever they do not know" (1:10a). Much of what comes from false teachers is not from true

knowledge. Whatever they do know is “*naturally, like brute beasts*” (1:10b). Animals do not reason with words and act out of instinct to fulfill their fleshly desires.

Examples of Their Rebellion

Jude 1:11 Woe to them! For they have gone in the way of Cain, have run greedily in the error of Balaam for profit, and perished in the rebellion of Korah.

The word “*woe*” is not the opposite of “*giddy up*.” It is an “*interjection of grief or of denunciation*” (Thayer 461). With this warning Jude list another triad. This time the triad includes three examples of rebellion against God in the New Testament.

❑ **Rebellion of Cain**

First, these corrupted dreamers “*have gone in the way of Cain.*” The story of Cain is found in Genesis 4:1f. The New Testament gives commentary on his conduct in several places. “*By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and through it he being dead still speaks*” (Heb. 11:4). “*For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another, not as Cain who was of the wicked one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his works were evil and his brother's righteous*” (1 John 3:11,12). Rebelling against the will of God he offered up will-worship and stubbornly ignoring God's warning opened the door to sin and murdered his brother.

❑ **Rebellion of Balaam**

Many of these greedy false teachers have “*run greedily in the error of Balaam for profit*” whose story can be found in Numbers 22-25. Other New Testament writers have used him as an infamous example (2 Pet.2:15,16; Rev. 2:14; 1 Cor. 10:8). Balak, the king of Moab feared the Israelite masses. He hired Balaam to curse Israel. Balaam may have known God and about his people but his love of money made him a prophet-for-hire instead of a man of God (Num. 22:18,40).

Since Balaam would not listen to God. He sent an angel to kill him. The donkey upon which he was riding could see the angel and refused to go forward. After receiving repeated beatings from Balaam God caused the dumb creature to speak. The oddest thing about this is not God making a voiceless animal speak human language, but the fact that Balaam did not appear to be too alarmed at this abnormal event. Realizing the danger from which the donkey had saved him, Balaam confessed, “*I have sinned*” (Num. 22:24).

Balaam turned back to earn his gold by continuing to defy God. He was out of his mind. His money madness blinded him for the danger of his love of money (1Tim. 6:10). It took a mute animal to bring him back to his senses at least for the moment. All his attempts to curse Israel failed as God put a blessing for Israel in his mouth for them instead. It was madness for Balaam to still think he might succeed in defying the will of God. Rebelling against the way of God is the insanity of a greedy mind. He later taught Israel to sin by going after the idols and the women of Moab. In the end Balaam was killed while Israel was engaged in a battle with the Midianites (Num. 31:3).

❑ **Rebellion of Korah**

The final example in this triad of rebellion is these false teachers have “*perished in the rebellion of Korah.*” The story of Korah's rebellion is found in Numbers 16. This story is not mentioned elsewhere in the New Testament. He, long with other leaders, “*rose up before Moses with some of the children of Israel, two hundred and fifty leaders of the congregation, representatives of the congregation, men of renown. They gathered together against Moses and Aaron, and said to them, ‘You take too much upon yourselves, for all the congregation is holy, every one of them, and the Lord is among them. Why then do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of the Lord?’*” (Num 16:2-3). Although a cousin of Moses and a Levite he was not chosen to be a priest or leader. His rebellion was against God's pattern for

leadership. Moses said that if the ground opened up and swallowed them it was a sign from God that He had chosen him and his brother, Aaron, to lead the people. Later, some fifteen thousand died of a plague because they followed in the way of Korah and perished.

Metaphors of Their Uselessness

Jude 1:12-13 These are spots in your love feasts, while they feast with you without fear, serving only themselves. They are clouds without water, carried about by the winds; late autumn trees without fruit, twice dead, pulled up by the roots; 13 raging waves of the sea, foaming up their own shame; wandering stars for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever.

◆ **Wrecking Reefs**

First, Jude calls the false teachers "*spots in your love feasts.*" The term "*spots*" is not in most of the best Greek manuscripts. Instead, it is the Greek word for hidden rocks or reefs. Sailors, who do not see the hidden reefs, will wreck their ship. False teachers are hiding among the brethren in their "*love feasts.*" Some hold these to be common meals held in conjunction with the Lord's Supper. However, Paul commanded the meals be eaten at home and only the Lord's Supper be eaten when they come together as the church. Paul said, "*do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God...But if anyone is hungry, let him eat at home, lest you come together for judgment*" (1 Cor. 11:22,34).

◆ **Selfish Shepherds**

At these feasts the false teachers are "*without fear.*" They have no sense of being exposed or meeting with retribution. Their motives for attending these is for "*serving only themselves.*" The Greek word is here translated "*servicing*" and literally means "shepherding." These dreamers are false shepherds (Ezek. 34:8). They are among the flock to fleece them not to feed them.

◆ **Waterless Weather**

Most men have seen dark storm clouds stretching across the horizon with the promise of much needed rain only to have the wind blow them by without releasing a drop. Peter described them as "*wells without water, clouds carried by a tempest*" (2 Pet. 2:17). False teachers make a big promise of benefits for dry, thirsty souls but are all flash, thunder or wind and no rain. "*Whoever falsely boasts of giving is like clouds and wind without rain*" (Prov. 25:14).

◆ **Twice Dead Trees**

"*Late autumn trees without fruit*" is a symbol of the emptiness and barrenness of the teachings of the false teachers. These are "twice dead" in that not only are they barren but have been "*pulled up by the roots.*" "*Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up*" (Mt. 15:13).

◆ **Wild Waves**

The ocean waves ceaselessly crash against the beach. All they bring is seaweed, trash, dead sea creatures, and sea foam. The false teachers can be very dynamic and only bring forth their shameful conduct (Is. 57:20). Despite all the noise they make, they only regurgitate beach litter.

◆ **Shooting Stars**

Finally, the false teachers are "*wandering stars.*" This is not a reference to planets which are fixed in the heaven and therefore can be used as a guide for travelers. Mostly likely it refers to shooting stars which streak across the sky and disappear in "*blackness of darkness forever.*" These men cannot bring guidance to anyone. They are headed for the darkness of eternal hell.

Prophecy of Their Ungodliness

Jude 1:14-15 Now Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men also, saying, "Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints, 15 to execute judgment on all, to convict all who are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have committed in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him."

▶ **Unusual Prophecy**

As the Jews count generations Enoch was *"the seventh from Adam."* Although he *"prophesied about these men also"* this information, like the story above about the body of Moses, is not found in the Bible. Again, Jude may have known this information from the Book of Enoch (1 Enoch 1:9) or from oral tradition. At any rate, being moved by the Holy Spirit this prophecy is included in the New Testament. Perhaps, Enoch who was taken alive to be with God before the flood, originally spoke this in reference to those of his generation. God has Jude use this alluding to the false teachers of these last days.

▶ **Unprecedented Hosts**

Although God has sent angels to punish the wicked in the past, in the end *"the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints."* *"Saints"* can be translated "holy ones" and most like refers to angels (Mt. 25:31; 2 Th. 1:7).

▶ **Universal Judgment**

No one can escape this *"judgment on all."* If the Israelites who were redeemed from Egypt, the angels to abandoned their place, and those of Sodom and Gomorrah could not escape judgment, no one can.

▶ **Ungodly Convicted**

It will be a just judgment *"to convict all who are ungodly among them."* Four times Jude uses the term *"ungodly"* in verse fifteen. These are those who are the false teachers and perhaps those who follow them. The term *"convict"* means "to convince someone of their misdeeds." Judgment will seem just even to the ungodly.

▶ **Ungodly Deeds**

The Judgment will include *"all their ungodly deeds."* All the actions of man will be recorded in the mind of the Almighty Judge. Solomon concluded his book of wisdom: *"for God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil"* (Eccl 12:14).

▶ **Ungodly Walk**

The ungodly are judged for deeds *"they have committed in an ungodly way."* The ungodly deeds are part of the manner in which they live their life.

▶ **Ungodly Talk**

The ungodly will not only be judged by they way they walk, but how they talk. The *"harsh"* words against the Lord could refer to just about anything. The Pharisees called him a glutton and a winebibber. They implied the he was in league with the Devil. Today, many attack His deity accepting Him as merely a prophet of God or just a good teacher.

Motives of Their Mouths

Jude 1:16 These are grumblers, complainers, walking according to their own lusts; and they mouth great swelling words, flattering people to gain advantage.

Jude now continues his discussion with regard to the specifics and the motives in relationship to the ungodly's words. *"These are grumblers, complainers."* To grumble is the same as to murmur or express discontent with their circumstances in life. Life is not fair, thus God is to blame. Such men are faultfinders looking for someone to blame. They are not content with the Lord's will or with the manner of life they are called upon to live. Instead, they are *"walking according to their own lusts."* The Israelites in the wilderness are a prime example of this with their constant murmuring. They wanted water, they wanted meat, and they wanted a new leader to take them back to Egypt. All this was to please their carnal appetites and not place their trust in the leadership of God. Christians are not to complain (Phil. 2:14-16). They are to be thankful to God and trust His care.

In addition to their bellyaching *"they mouth great swelling words."* The speech is overinflated with the hot air from their haughty heads (see 2 Pet. 2:18). The motive behind these words is their hope in *"flattering people to gain advantage."* Like salesmen they use false praise to make the sale of either their doctrine or themselves. Far too many careless souls are buying into their phoney talk. Peter spoke of their attempt to make merchandise of people (2 Pet. 2:3).

Questions:

True/False:

1. T F *"Dreamers"* is a common term to describe false prophets in the Old Testament.
2. T F The story of Michael's argument with the Devil over the body of Moses is discussed at length in the book of Deuteronomy.
3. T F Because of Jude's use of stories not found in the Bible but in psuedipigraphal writings is it not likely that his epistle is inspired by the Holy Spirit.

List:

1. List the triad of the dreamers destructive ways.
2. List the three examples of rebellion against God.

Short Answers:

1. How are the false teachers like brute beasts?
2. How many times does Jude use **"ungodly"** in verse 15? Who is he talking about?

Multiple Choice:

1. The term "woe" means...
 - a. the opposite of "giddy up"
 - b. behold
 - c. an interjection of sorrow or denunciation
 - d. all the above

2. The ungodly speak great swelling words to
 - a. murmur
 - b. to speak the truth
 - c. to flatter people and gain advantage
 - d. all the above

Matching: Draw a line to match the example of uselessness of the false teachers words.

- | | | |
|----|-------------------|--|
| 1. | Wrecking Reefs | pulled up by the roots |
| 2. | Selfish Shepherds | clouds carried by a tempest |
| 3. | Waterless Weather | disappear into the blackness of darkness forever |
| 4. | Twice Dead Trees | spots in your love feasts |
| 5. | Wild Waves | serving only themselves |
| 6. | Shooting Stars | only regurgitate beach litter |

Application & Discussion:

1. If false teachers came in among the saints at the congregation you attend what are some things to look for which would help you identify them?

Defense Against False Teachers

Jude 1:17-25

Be Aware of the Admonitions of the Apostles

Jude 1:17-18a But you, beloved, remember the words which were spoken before by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ: 18 how they told you that there would be mockers in the last time

Although Jude has been using some very harsh rhetoric to describe the nature, motives, and punishment of false teachers, he speaks kindly to his dear friends in Christ at this point: *“but you, beloved.”* With the use of the word *“but”* he is moving on to the next point of his letter. Now Jude wants the saints to learn steps to defend themselves against the false teachers and their errors. He does not call for a passive, hold your ground defense but a proactive stance. First, they need to *“remember the words which were spoken before by the apostles.”* Jude does not include himself as one of them. This indicates that some of these brethren had heard the warning from the lips of the apostles or at least were able to read some of their inspired writings on the subject. Forgetfulness of the apostles’ doctrine is one of the leading factors why so many brethren fall for false doctrines. Satan began tempting Eve by distracting and confusing her memory as to what God had really said. Always be mindful that the ultimate test of a teacher is the inspired words of the apostles and prophets.

The apostles had warned *“mockers”* would come. The same term is used in 2 Peter 3:3. These ridicule the Truth and despise those who follow it. They were to come in the *“last days.”* These days occurred from the time of Pentecost when the saints first were to *“continue steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine”* (Acts 2:42) to the time when Christ comes again to reward the faithful and punish the false teachers and their followers.

Mind The Motives of the Mockers

Jude 1:18b-19 mockers in the last time who would 19 These are sensual persons, who cause divisions, not having the Spirit.

The motives of these *“mockers”* are described next. First, they mock because they desire to *“walk according to their own ungodly lusts.”* The commandments of God have a way of getting in the way of the inappropriate, misguided, and out of control appetites of these men. Second, they mock and lust according to the desires of the flesh, because they are not godly or spiritually minded. Instead, they are carnal-minded. See Paul’s use of the term in 1 Corinthians 2:14-16. They are *“sensual persons”* on the level of brute beasts who only know how to live by fleshly instincts. Next, they have a desire to *“cause divisions.”* False teachers know the value of *“divide and conquer.”* These false shepherds love to enter God’s flock and separate the weak and vulnerable sheep away from the faithful. Finally, they are accused of *“not having the Spirit.”* Although the New King James capitalized the word *“Spirit,”* nonetheless in this context it most likely is not point out to the Holy Spirit. Even so, false teachers do not follow the inspired words of the Holy Spirit or live according to the fruit of the Spirit. *“Spirit”* is used here in contrast to *“sensual.”* These mockers do not have a spiritual bone in their body. In this way they are truly like animals. They may be alive physical, but there is no spiritual life in them.

Strengthen Your Souls in the Savior

Jude 1:20-21 But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, 21 keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.

Again, Jude introduces his next list of defenses against the “mockers” by reminding them they are the “beloved.” A list of four things are imperative safeguards if the saints are to strengthen their souls against the false teachers’ assaults upon their common salvation.

First, they are to build themselves “*up on your most holy faith.*” Faith is not their personal belief in the truth but the faith objectively - the teachings of the inspired apostles and prophets. “Subjective faith depends on objective revelation of truth” (Weirsbe 55). Only inspired doctrines are “*holy*” or pure. They are free from all the man-made contaminants that defile the Truth and render it inert. How do they build themselves up? “*So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified*” (Acts 20:32). Faith comes by hearing the Word of God (Rom. 10:17).

Next, they must be continuously “*praying in the Holy Spirit.*” Not a reference to speaking in tongues, but praying according to the motives and manner revealed by the Holy Spirit in the Faith. Perhaps, it refers to the assistance provided by the Holy Spirit when one prays. “*The Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered*” (Rom. 8:26).

The third way Jude tells them to strengthen themselves against false teaching is by keeping “*yourselves in the love of God.*” This requires obedience to God’s Word. “*As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love*” (Jn. 15:9,10). The language could be alluding to the love God has for them instead of their love for Him.

Finally, they need to be “*looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.*” This requires them to welcome the Return of the Lord with an attitude of great expectation. Salvation is complete for the saints when the final act of mercy comes on Judgment Day when Christ rewards the faithful with eternal life in Heaven. The Christian’s day to day life is infused with a desire and expectation of Christ coming at any moment. Maranatha!

Saving the Souls of the Snared

Jude 1:22-23 And on some have compassion, making a distinction; 23 but others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garment defiled by the flesh.

Now the advice for defending themselves against false teaching goes from self-defense for remaining faithful to reaching out to rescuing fellow-saints who have fallen victim to these mockers and dirty dreamers. Three groups of victims are mentioned and the faithful are told how to go about rescuing them. Jude again returns to his use of triads to make this point. However, the New King James Version does only show two groups instead of three. For this section the English Standard Version will be used. It is perhaps the more accurate translation in this case. By dividing these victims of false teaching into three groups, Jude requires their careful distinction concerning the type of sinner who is being rescued and the exercise of proper discernment on the best way to save them. Treating others differently according to their knowledge, ability, and circumstances is not showing respect of persons, but demonstrating the loving-kindness. So long as it is done without favoritism or compromise of Truth.

The first group are those “*who doubt*” (ESV). This would include the weak and novices of the church. These are often favorite targets of the false teachers. Instead of coming down hard on them and threatening them with immediate church discipline, a more compassionate approach is merited. Perhaps, a causal invitation to sit down and have a private Bible study would be in order.

The second group are those who are in danger of losing their souls because they have chosen to accept the lies they have been told. *“Save others by snatching them out of the fire”* (ESV). Time is of the essence. It involves seizing them by force as if one is pulling a confused or stubborn soul out of a burning house. The angels grabbed the hands of Lot, his wife, and their two virgin daughters and led them out of Sodom putting them on the road to safety. Jude’s brother, James wrote, *“my brethren, if any one among you wanders from the truth and some one brings him back, let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins”* (Js. 5:19,20).

The final group in this triad of sinners in need of rescue from false doctrines, requires the loving brother to make the attempt to rescue them *“hating even the garment stained by the flesh”* (ESV). The term for *“garment”* means the underwear worn under one’s main garment. In the Old Testament clothes suspected of harboring leprosy were to be burned by a priest lest others become contaminated. Sins committed by those influenced by false teachers in indulge in the lusts of the flesh contaminate them like filthy garments (Zech. 3:4). Literally, it means a garment *“stained by bodily function”* (MacArthur 204). The church at Sardis had those *“who have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy”* (Rev. 3:4). All attempts at rescuing others in sin necessitate the use of extreme caution. Just as one tries to retrieve a drowning victim. If they are not careful the victim may pull the rescuer under with him and they both will drown. Paul warned, *“brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted”* (Gal. 6:1).

Declare the Doxology of the Defender

*Jude 1:24-25 Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling,
And to present you faultless
Before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy,
25 To God our Savior,
Who alone is wise,
Be glory and majesty,
Dominion and power,
Both now and forever.
Amen.*

Jude does not close with greetings to and from others. He ends this epistle with a lengthy doxologies. A doxology is common found in the letters of the New Testament. It is a hymn or poem of praise to God for His great glory. He is worthy of all praise because He is able to or powerful enough to protect the saints now and present them in His glory later. He is also worthy of glorification through praise because of who He is or because of His perfect everlasting nature.

■ God is Able

God has the power to protect the saints from falling in regard to the lies of the false teachers? Jude promised God *“is able to keep you from stumbling.”* God can only do His part in maintaining our salvation if Christians will only do their part by earnestly contending for the faith. In this section there are things the saints must do, there are things the faithful saints must do to rescue the fallen, and there is the things God is willing and able to do to protect or keep us from stumbling.

Second, God is powerful enough *“to present you faultless.”* He will be able to make His saints whether they be dead or alive to appear without blame or sin *“before the presence of His glory.”* This in reference to His judgment seat and His throne in Heaven. Jude glorifies the God who will one day bring the faithful into His glory. This day will be accompanied *“with exceeding joy.”*

■ **God is**

Jude begins with the need for the defense of their common salvation and here ends with the glory of *“our Savior.”* These five attribute of God are part of the nature of both the Father and the Son. He God is the only one who is wise. God’s wisdom is seen in His ability in “forming the best plans and using the best means for their execution” (Thayer 582). Next, God *“glory”* or preeminent splendor as King of kings. This is accompanied by His *“majesty.”* Literally, God is “mega” referring to His greatness. No one is greater as no one is wiser. He has “dominion” in that His rule is over all creation for all time. He has *“power”* or authority. He has the right to act and no one has power over Him or refuse His actions.

The saints love Him because He showed His love first by the eternal plan of salvation through the cross and the resurrection. They listen to Him because He is wise. They look to Him for He is beautiful in His glory. They reverence Him for His greatness. They are subject to Him because of His never-ending rule and Kingdom. They obey Him out of respect for His authority.

All of these attributes have been a part of God’s nature from before time going back into timelessness. These are true of God in the past, “now and forever.”

Questions:

List:

1. List passages showing where the apostles predicted that the *“mockers”* or false teachers were to come.
2. List the four motives of these mockers.
3. What are the four ways the saints are to strengthen their souls against the dangers of false doctrine.
4. List the three groups of souls in need of rescue and how the faith are to save them.
5. What two things is God able to do for the saints?

Truth and Love are Siamese Priorities

2 John 1:1-6

Introduction

2 John 1:1a The Elder, To the elect lady and her children,

Next to 3 John, the second epistle of John is the shortest of the general epistles. In the Greek it only has two hundred and forty-five words. The writing would have fit on a standard sheet of paper in the first century. Keeping a letter short was important for both writing and sending of letters was expensive. 2 John was more of a postcard with a quick message. “Most other ancient letters were of this length.”

The theme of 2 John is a warning on how to deal with false teachers. This is the same major theme for the other three epistles in this workbook: 2 Thessalonians, Jude, and 3 John.

This epistle repeats some of the same content as is covered in 1 John as does the third epistle of John. Some have deemed second and third John to be cover letters for the theological document of 1 John. However verse twelve would seem to dispel this theory. John expounds that a longer epistle would not have been necessary, as he anticipates seeing them soon. Whereas 1 John is the epistle of love, the word “truth” occurs five times in this letter and “love” occurs four times as does the term “command.” Several verses in 2 John are almost identical to that of the first letter. There is little doubt that all three epistles were written by the same author. The two minor letters are called “twin sisters” due to their agreement in theme, style, grammar, length, etc.

- **Author**

The author does not identify himself as the apostle John. But in both this and the third letter refers to himself as “*the elder*” (1:1a; 3 Jn. 1:1). The Greek term used here for “elder” is *presbyteros*. It can be used according to its context to refer to several different individuals in the Bible. The term literally means “an old man” and is used to refer to older men in the congregation (1 Tim. 5:1). However, the article “*the*” shows that it is not just a reference to the author’s age. The term is used to identify an official position of leadership in the local congregation (1 Tim. 3:1). Yet, congregations were always overseen by a plurality of elders. “Elder” is used to refer to a public servant among the Greeks or Jews (Mk. 8:31), such as, members of the Sanhedrin (Matthew 16:21; Acts 6:12). A Jewish religious leader, such as a scribe, is called an elder (Mk. 7:3,5). A disciple of one of the apostles was called an elder. The term “elder” has been used to refer to an older man of some significance who merits endearment and veneration as is used today in reference to an “elder” statesman. In this case “the elder” is used by John to refer to himself as the last of the apostles. John was believed to have lived till the end of the first century and to have died a natural death.

Some claim this is a man known as “the elder, John.” However, evidence for such is slight at best. The author did not need to identify himself because his audience knew him by “the elder.”

Several early Christian writers have attributed the epistle to the apostle John. Verse ten is quoted by Cyprian and attributed to John the apostle. 1 John is referred to by Clement of Alexandria as John’s “longer epistle” implying that there was at least one shorter epistle of John. In his work *Against Heresies* Irenaeus quoted from 2 John and gave John as the author. Due to the content and the length of this letter it would be very unlikely a forger would have had a motive for writing a pseudepigrapha.

John was one of the original twelve called to be apostles of Jesus. He, along with his brother,

were named “*sons of thunder*” for their vengeful attitude toward a Samaritan village that rejected Jesus. Later he is known as the apostle whom Jesus loved (Jn. 13:23) and is oft referred to by some as the “apostle of love.” Another apostle, James, was his brother whom Herod Agrippa I killed. They were the sons of Zebedee of Capernaum and worked with Peter and Andrew in their father’s fishing business. John is believed to have been the youngest of the disciples.

- **Date and Location**

The date and location of this epistle is varied. Some believe that John wrote it from Jerusalem a few years before the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70. According to the *Ecclesiastical History* written by Eusebius, John was released from his exile on Patmos and journeyed to Ephesus where he wrote his epistles sometime between AD 85 to 90.

- **Recipient**

In ancient letters the author first identifies himself and then the recipient: “*to the elect lady and her children*” (1:1b). Who is meant by this has been a source of great debate over the centuries. In English names are identified by capitalizing the first letter. In Greek texts of the New Testament all the letters were upper case.

It is quite curious that in 3 John the names of Gaius, Diotrefes, and Demetrius are freely given. Whereas the author and the recipient of this letter is clouded in double anonymity. If the letter was written during a period of persecution it would have been able to pass as just a personal letter between friends. Whoever she was, she was influential and well-known enough for the letter to find its recipient. Furthermore, she had family living at the location from which the letter was written (1:13).

The Greek term for “*lady*” is *kuria*. It means “belonging to the Lord.” In fact, the masculine form *kyrios* means “Lord.” *Kyria* was a common name among the Greeks being the feminine of *Cyrus*. It is equivalent to the Aramaic name *Martha* and *Domna* in Latin. This term is not found elsewhere in the New Testament and women are not referred to as ladies.

Others have speculated that John is referring to the mother of Jesus, Mary or Martha. Some hold that the term “*chosen*” or “*elect*” is the proper name of the “*lady*.” Thus, it should be translated “*Lady Eklekte*.” *Eklekte* was a proper name. “*Chosen*” most likely, means a Christian who has been called by the Gospel into a relationship with God. Rufus was called a “*choice man in the Lord*” (Rom. 16:13).

Quite a few scholars have argued that an individual is not the target of this letter but a local congregation. The “*chosen lady*” is the local congregation at Ephesus. The Greek word for “church” is said to derive from the Greek *kuriake* from which also comes *kuria*. The word “church” is in a feminine form: *ekklesia*. In the New Testament the church is identified as feminine just as a ship is called a “she.” Peter wrote of the local congregation from which he was writing: “*she is Babylon who is elect together with you*” (1 Pet. 5:13). In John’s Revelation the church is portrayed as the Bride of Christ (Rev. 19:7,8; 21:9; 22:17). Paul not only compared the church to the bride of Christ (Eph. 5:22f), but he also called the local congregation at Corinth: “*chaste virgin*” (2 Cor. 11:2). If John is writing to a local church, then the chosen lady’s children would be faithful Christians at Ephesus. John was apt to call Christians “*little children*” in his first epistle (1 John 2:1, 12, 28; 3:7,18; 4:4; 5:21). The chosen sister in verse thirteen would be the congregation where they knew their fellow-Christians. This would demonstrate that the church in the universal sense is not meant in that it has no sister or comparable parallel organization. It is further noted that the addressee of this letter is referred to both in the singular and the plural. In contrast, the letter to Gaius is addressed consistently in the singular.

Wescott said, “no solution of the problem offered by *eklete kuria* is satisfactory.”

Truth & Love

2 John 1:1b-6 whom I love in truth, and not only I, but also all those who have known the truth, 2 because of the truth which abides in us and will be with us forever: 3 Grace, mercy, and peace will be with you from God the Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and

love. 4 I rejoiced greatly that I have found some of your children walking in truth, as we received commandment from the Father. 5 And now I plead with you, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment to you, but that which we have had from the beginning: that we love one another. 6 This is love, that we walk according to His commandments. This is the commandment, that as you have heard from the beginning, you should walk in it.

- **Love In Truth**

John further describes his relationship with the “chosen lady” as “whom I love in truth” (1:1c). This may refer to his sincerity, that is, he truly loves her from a pure heart. Considering how the rest of the context uses the term “truth” and love’s connection to it, it would seem more logical for John to refer to the Truth. He truly loves her because she is in the Truth. Our love for one another is not based on a feeling, but our mutual relationship to the Truth. The saints have all obeyed the Word of Truth.

- **Truth Known Produces Love**

John is not alone in his love for her: “and not only I, but also all those who have known the truth” (1:1d). He is alluding to the fellow saints who have come to know the Truth. Those who have loved and obeyed the Truth will naturally love others who share in that common love and obedience. “Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves Him who begot also loves him who is begotten of Him” (1 Jn. 5:1). In this way love of the brethren and knowledge of the Truth are inseparable. Truth is the foundation of the Christian’s love for other Christians. They love each other not on the basis of personal attraction for each other but because of their mutual attraction for the Truth.

When it comes to the idea of truth, many today are like Pilate who asked Jesus, “what is truth?” (Jn. 18:38). According to recent polls most Americans reject the idea of absolute religious truth. They believe truth is merely relative to an individual’s current circumstances. Relativist will argue “your truth is your truth and my truth is my truth.” John clearly states that Truth can be known and it is not individual, but that others can know the same Truth.

- **Truth Abides in Us Now**

John gives the reason for this knowledge of the truth and consequent love of the fellow-believers: “because of the truth which abides in us” (1:2a). The term “abide” is a favorite of the apostle John. He uses it extensively throughout his gospel. It is from the Greek term *meno* which occurs over forty times in the Gospel of John and twenty more times in his other writings. It can be translated “dwell” or “remain.” John focuses on the disciple’s relationship with Christ who dwells or abides in Him and He in them (Jn. 15:4,7). Jesus is “the way, the truth, and the life” (Jn. 14:6). He has declared that God’s Word, the Bible, is truth (Jn. 17:17).

This passage dispels the common concept that truth is individual and originates from within the individual. Truth cannot be found apart from Jesus and God’s Word. Truth lives in the Christian who knows the Truth. In his first epistle John wrote, “therefore let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also will abide in the Son and in the Father” (1 Jn. 2:24). What is right or wrong is not determined on how one feels about something. Whether one loves another Christian is not determined by how they feel about that individual, but their mutual relationship in Christ and in the Truth.

- **Truth Abides In Us Forever**

The second way John describes the saint’s relationship with the Truth is it “will be with us forever” (1:2b). Truth according to man is ever evolving and changing. They believe that “what is true today in this era of history may not be true for the next generation.” In contrast, Truth comes from an eternal, unchangeable God. Truth does not change. It does not end. In fact, there is no new truth. Even in science they do not discover new truth. They only discover new knowledge, that is, a truth not known to them previously.

- **Truth and Love Bring Blessings**

As is common in the letters of the first century John includes a greeting at the beginning of this epistle. *“Grace, mercy, and peace will be with you from God the Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love”* (1:3).

Three things are desired and expected for the *“chosen lady.”* First, John mentions *“grace”* which is unmerited favor from God. The normal Greek greeting used the salutation *charein*, the New Testament writers substituted in its place the word *charis* translated *“grace.”* Second, truth and love provide *“mercy.”* Whereas grace covers the sins of men; their miseries are covered with mercy. Sinful men deserves to suffer in their sins, but the mercy of God triumphs over pure justice and the judgment sinners have merited (Js. 2:13). Mercy is the expressed action of grace. It is God showing the sinner His much undeserved pity. The third blessing John is confident they will receive is *“peace.”* It is not the absence of conflict. Peace involves an inner security and tranquillity which comes from being reconciled with God. Jesus assured His disciples, *“these things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world”* (Jn. 16:33). Grace is God giving the sinner undeserved blessings. Mercy is God withholding well-deserved punishment. Peace is God restoring a relationship destroyed by our sinful enmity.

It was customary in the greeting to pray or wish a blessing upon the addressee. John instead promises a blessing in that these three benefits from God *“will be with you.”* The verb *“will be”* is in the future tense.

The benefactors of these three blessings of grace, mercy, and peace are *“from God the Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father.”* No one else in all of time and eternity throughout the universe can bless Christians with these. The language used by John *“equates the Son with the Father as coequal, coexistent, and coeternal.”* God as the Father must have a Son. Jesus is not a son as all saints are sons and daughters of God. When Jesus said to the Jews, *“I and My Father are One,”* they sought to stone Him, because He was equating Himself with God (Jn. 10:30-33).

John concludes the greeting by pointing out that grace, mercy, and peace are rooted in truth and love. As the saints abide in the truth and love one another, the Father and the Son will bless them with these benefits. From here, *“truth”* and *“love”* segues into the rest of John’s message.

- **Truth Practiced**

In the movie *A Few Good Men* Tom Cruise’s character wants the truth. Jack Nickleson’s character responded, *“you can’t handle the truth!”* Today, some Christians can be found who are able to handle the truth. Truth is not something just to believe. Truth must be practiced in day to day life. Finding children of God who practice the truth is a cause for great rejoicing. It is an incredible find. The phrase *“I have found”* in verse four is from the Greek word *heureko* which is *“eureka”* in the English language. John also found that Gaius was walking in the truth (3 John 3). Every faithful preacher and teacher of the Truth who has witnessed the growth in and the practice of the commandments of God will say along with John *“I rejoiced greatly”* (1:4a).

These Christians did not just believe the truth, read the truth, study the truth, they lived it in every day life. They were *“walking in truth”* (1:4b). This is not just a one time or even intermittent obedience to some truth. It is an on-going action as one walks forward toward a specific destination.

The only way to walk in the truth is to be obedient to God’s commandments. Note John uses *“we”* and includes himself as one who must obey *“as we received commandment from the Father”* (1:4c). To walk in the truth is the same as walking in the light as opposed to the darkness. *“If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth”* (1 Jn. 1:6). Note, that John had found that some had been faithful. This means others were not. He focuses his attention on the obedient children of God.

- **Truth Commanded: Love One Another**

Walking in truth is a great priority for a Christian. Loving each other is just as important. John makes a personal request for all of the saints to *“love one another”* (1:5). This commandment is not new.

John had heard this command from Jesus Himself (1 Jn. 2:7,8) . *“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another”* (Jn. 13:34). Loving others is not new as far as commandments go (see Lev. 19:18). It was new with regard to the new emphasis the life of Jesus Christ exemplified by how much He loved them. He loved them to death - His death on the cross. To love one another is a commandment to be obeyed not a mere emotion one feels toward another. John wrote, *“and this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also”* (1 Jn. 4:21). “Christian love belongs rather to the sphere of action than of emotion. It is not involuntary, uncontrollable passion, but unselfish service undertaken by deliberate choice.” This love is a act of the will not the emotion. This action, like walking, is a habitual loving of the brethren.

- **Truth, Love, and Obedience**

John is going in circles with his discussion about love, truth, and walking by the commandments. They are to walk in the truth because of God’s commandment. They are to walk in love for this too is God’s commandment. If they walk in the truth, they will love one another. If they love each other, they will *“walk according to His commandments”* (1:6b). The commandment is for them to walk in love. Confusing? Consider one of the great truths commanded for Christian to walk in is to love one another. The more they obey the Truth the more they will have love for each other. Love of Truth produces love for others and obedience to all the commandments. *“For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome”* (1 Jn. 5:3). Jesus said, *“if you love Me, keep My commandments”* (Jn. 14:15). Obedience to the commandments does not conflict with loving others or loving God. Truth, love, and walking in obedience to God’s commands are inseparably intertwined. Love obeys the truth. Obedience loves.

Questions:

1. T F Next to 2 John, the third epistle of John is the shortest of the general epistles.
2. T F The theme of 2 John is a warning on dealing with false teachers.
3. List the various ways the term *“elder”* is used in the Bible.
4. What are the various views as to whom John wrote this letter? Who is this chosen lady?
5. T F Our love for one another is based on a feeling not our mutual relationship to the Truth.
6. Show where John teaches the Truth can be known and is not relative or situational.

7. How does the truth now abide in us? How does it abide in us forever?

8. What three things does John desire for the "chosen lady"?

9. How is the commandment to love one another a new commandment and how, according to John, it is not new?

10. What is the relationship between love, truth, and obedience?

Discussion:

1. List ways you can demonstrate that you are "walking in the truth"?

2. How or in what ways can other Christians be hard to love? How does a Christian learn to love such brethren?

Danger of False Teachers

2 John 1:7-13

Descriptors of False Teachers

2 John 1:7-11 For many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist.

◆ **False Teachers are Many**

John gives five identifiers of a false teacher in verse seven. First, he says there are “*many deceivers*” (1:7a). Those who promote the belief that the antichrist is a single individual who appears in the end times has failed to see that there are many of these deceivers and antichrists who have gone forth into the world since the days of John’s epistles.

◆ **False Teachers are Missionary**

Before His ascension Jesus gave the great commission to the apostles commanding them, “*go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature*” (Mk. 16:15). John tells us that the false teachers also “*have gone out into the world*” (1:7b) for the purpose of propagating their propaganda. From where did they come? “These were formerly members of the Church who had apostatized (1 John 2:19)” (Dummelow 1061). As Paul warned the elders of Ephesus “*from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves*” (Acts 20:30).

◆ **False Teachers Have a Message**

Although no great amount of details are known about the message of these false teachers, John does tell us they “*do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh*” (1:7c). Although some think that this is a denial of the Second Coming, it is most likely the rudimentary doctrine of the Gnostics. Cerinthus proclaimed that Jesus and Christ were two separate beings: one was divine and the other was flesh. He believed Christ’s spirit came at His baptism and left at the cross for God cannot die. According to the Docetic belief matter is evil and the spirit is essentially good. Jesus the man was evil and the spirit of God only appeared or seemed to be a man.

The New Testament teaches that Jesus came in the flesh. This incarnation is what John spoke of in John 1:1,14: “*...the Word was God...and the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.*” Jesus was both fully human and fully God. “The central teachings of our faith hinge on the incarnation: Virgin Birth, vicarious sacrifice, physical resurrection, ascension, second coming, etc.” The only way Jesus could be a substitute for our sins, return to heaven, and one day return for the saints is that He was man and God. Christians can still identify these false teachers today using John’s warning. “*By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God*” (1 Jn. 4:2). “The Jehovah’s Witnesses who claim that Jesus Christ is a created ‘god’. The ‘oneness’ branch of Pentecostalism claims that the Father is the Son. Theological modernism or liberalism deny the full Deity of Jesus Christ.”

The evidence of the incarnation of Christ is well attested to in the New Testament. He had a physical, human body from the time of His birth (Mt. 1:18). He matured and developed just like all human children (Lk. 2:52). He was recognized by others as a man, and He called Himself a man (Jn. 8:40; 1 Jn. 1:1). He was subject to all the needs and emotions of humans. He got thirsty (Jn. 19:28); felt

compassion for others (Mt. 9:36); wept (Jn. 11:35); and knew hunger (Mt. 4:2). He was even tempted just like all men (Heb. 4:15).

The scriptures abundantly validate the belief Jesus was also God. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit in the womb of a virgin named Mary (Lk. 1:31,34). He claimed to be equal with the Father (Jn. 5:18) and referred to Himself as the Son of God (Matt. 26:63,64). The miracles He performed were to authentic His ability to forgive sin and thus equate Him with God (Mk. 2:1-12). He received worship from both men and angels (Mt. 14:33). God in Heaven on three different occasion proclaimed Him to be His Son (Matt. 4; 17; Jn. 20). Paul wrote, "*for in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily*" (Col. 2:9).

◆ **False Teachers Mislead**

Next, John calls those false teachers who deny Jesus coming in the flesh as "*a deceiver.*" The term is translated from the Greek *planos* which means "a wanderer" and is the word from which is derived the English word "planet." It can also be translated here "liars". The tactics of these false teachers is to lie so as to mislead their victims.

◆ **False Teachers Against the Messiah**

John gives one final descriptor of these false teachers. They are also "*an antichrist*" (1:7e). Literally, this means they are against the Messiah. Some believe that this antichrist is the same as Paul's man of sin in the second chapter of 2 Thessalonians. A careful study of the passages will show that the two are not the same (see page 11 for a more detailed discussion).

Defenses Against False Teaching

2 John 1:8-9 Look to yourselves, that we do not lose those things we worked for, but that we may receive a full reward. 9 Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son.

■ **Examine Yourself**

False teachers are dangerous. Therefore John commands "*look to yourselves*" (1:8a). Complacency is the greatest danger for those who face the danger of being led away from the Truth. When working on a computer it is important back up and save your work lest it be lost and one has to start over again. Saints must beware of the false teaching which can corrupt the Truth.

■ **Maintain Your Training**

John gives two reasons for their self-examination. First, "*that we do not lose those things we worked for*" (1:8b). The first person plural pronoun "*we*" identifies John among those who worked hard to train them in the Truth. Paul wrote, "*I am afraid for you, lest I have labored for you in vain*" (Gal. 4:11). The idea of "*lose*" could be expressed by the word "destroy." Accepting false teaching rejects the Truth and destroys the work of others in teaching the Word of God. They should be careful not to "put at risk the efforts of an entire generation of people who stood in the apostolic tradition"

■ **Safeguard Your Reward**

The second reason for their self-examination was to see "*that we may receive a full reward*" (1:8c). The Greek word for "*reward*" is *misthos* which is the wages paid to a workman. They were paid by the day. Since there is no such thing as half a reward for the saint, they must work hard to settle for nothing less than a full reward. Since there is a clear possibility of them losing it all, they should give all they can to safeguard the reward which will have eternal consequences.

■ **Abandon Not the Teaching of Christ**

John makes it clear that there are only two possible attitudes toward the truth. First, "*whoever*

transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God" (1:9a). Those included are "whoever" meaning every and any living soul, whether alien sinner or saint. All must remain true to the truth or being alienated from God and His Son.

The word "*transgresses*" is translated from *proago* meaning "to proceed, go forward: in a bad sense, to go further than is right or proper...to transgress the limits of true doctrine" (Thayer 537). "To walk ahead of those who are going slowly" (BAGD 702). Many false teachers believe that they are doing good by teaching something new and progressive. New and advanced thinking is not always healthy (Acts 17:21). "A progress that leaves God behind and is therefore not progress at all." To progress beyond the Truth is to go beyond the boundaries of one's relationship with God. Paul warned the Corinthians, "*that you may learn in us not to think beyond what is written, that none of you may be puffed up on behalf of one against the other*" (1 Cor. 4:6). John would later caution, "*for I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book*" (Rev. 22:18,19).

Just what does "*doctrine of Christ*" mean? Does it mean the teachings given by Christ or those doctrines about Christ. Due to the doctrine of the antichrist above in verse seven, Jesus did not come in the flesh. Some have therefore concluded this is referring to doctrines about Christ: the incarnation in particular. "The teaching of this particular error was but one specific instance of not abiding in truth." John's letter is about one's relationship to the Truth, Christ, and others saints including both those who remain true to the Truth and those who go beyond it. "The Greek here is capable of being understood subjectively ('the doctrine which Christ taught') or objectively ('the doctrine about Christ') and the question is very difficult to decide" (Roberts 163,164). So in regard to the context of the letter it is the teachings by Christ not just one teaching about Christ. R.C.H. Lenski wrote, "'of Christ' is the subjective genitive: the doctrine Christ taught and still teaches through his apostles" (Lenski 568). "Not the teaching concerning Christ, but the teaching of Christ Himself and of His apostles" (Vincent 559).

■ **Abide in the Teaching of Christ**

The second attitude toward the truth is the only one which will allow the saints to maintain a relationship with God. "*He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son*" (1:9b). Since "*doctrine*" is the same as the teachings of the Gospel in the New Testament efforts to make a distinction between the Gospel and doctrine is illicit. The Gospel is not just several facts about Jesus. "Doctrine in the NT is never synonymous with 'dogma' but means 'teaching.'" The Gospel is all the teachings about the Christ and by Him and His Disciples.

No one can have a relationship with the Son without maintaining a relationship with the Father or vice versa. This relationship is obtained and maintained by a proper attitude toward the truth. "*All should honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him*" (Jn. 5:23). Jesus warned, "*for whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels*" (Mk. 8:38). One is either remaining firm in relationship to the Truth or he is abandoning the Truth and God and the Son. John leaves no other option. This is why the early Christians "*continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers*" (Acts 2:42).

Dealing With False Teachers

2 John 1:10-11 If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him; 11 for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds.

• **False Teachers Are Those Who Teach Differently**

John warns of the coming of the false teachers, "*if anyone comes to you*" (1:10a). The term "*if*" assumes the fact they will come knocking on the door and to peddle their perversion of the Gospel and

in an effort to win disciples.

Next, John gives an additional descriptor of these false teachers: “*does not bring this doctrine*” (1:10b). The teaching of the Truth is the determining indicator in ascertaining whether one is a false teacher or not. This is not someone with questions. Nor is it someone like an Apollos who needs help and correction (Acts 18:24f). As Paul warned, “*but even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed*” (Gal. 1:8,9). This does indeed sound like zero tolerance for error. Notwithstanding, no one is perfectly accurate in his understanding of the Truth. All of us are always learning. In contrast, tolerance is now considered the greatest of loving virtues.

- **False Teachers Are Not to Be Received**

How should these faithful children of God respond to the false teachers who will come? John tells them: “*do not receive him into your house*” (1:10c). To receive one into their home is the idea of showing hospitality. There were no Motel 6s or Holiday Inns in the first century. Those inns which were available were unfit for Christians to stay. W.M. Ramsay tells us that “the ancient inns...were little removed from houses of ill fame...The profession of inn-keeper was dishonorable, and their infamous character is often noted in Roman laws.”¹

Keep in mind that New Testament Christians were commanded to show hospitality to one another and to strangers (Rom. 12:13; 1 Tim. 3:2; 5:10; Tit. 1:8; Heb. 13:2; 1 Pet. 4:8-10). Many early missionary depended upon the hospitality of brethren to assist them, so they could spread the Gospel. Paul’s missionary journeys were greatly aided in this way (Acts 16:15; 17:7; Rom. 16:23; Acts 21:8,16).

Abraham and Lot showed hospitality to strangers and entertained angels without being aware. John wants the Christians to be cautious that they do not support false teachers unaware. John’s point is not to compromise the truth by supporting false teachers through hospitality. Providing them support and a base from which to spread their lies is counterproductive the Great Commission. Deprived of this help, such false teachers will have no assistance and will not be able to lead others astray with the aid of faithful saints.

This is not to be taken as a command forbidding assistance to a saint in need. A brother in trouble is still a brother who needs help even if he does not teach the truth. There is a difference between supporting the brother while he preaches error and showing love to one another. Once I came upon a preacher who did not always teach and practice the truth. He was stranded with a flat tire. I changed the tire but did not give him support for preaching error. Still, hospitality out of love must be discriminate. In this epistle John warns the “*chosen lady*” and her children not to open their home to false teachers. Whereas in 3 John he commends Gaius for showing hospitality and fellowship to faithful teachers of the Gospel while condemning Diotrophes for rejecting genuine preachers of the Truth.

Neither is this a command forbidding Christians from showing hospitality to the lost sinner or to have a Bible study in your home with one who is a member of a denomination or false religion. Jesus ate with sinners (Matt. 9:10-13). Paul additionally cautioned against rash segregation from the lost men and women of the world (1 Cor. 5:9,10). Thus, the saints should not fear inviting a Mormon elder or a Jehovah’s Witness into their home in order to teach them. “There is a difference between hospitality to strangers whom believers can win for Christ, and hospitality to those who are focused on winning believers away from Christ.”

Some homes were used for the congregations in the first century to gather for worship and Bible Study. Not just any brother should indiscriminately be invited to preach anything they want from the pulpit.

- **False Teachers Are Not To Be Greeted**

John adds that when false teachers come they are not to “*greet him*” (1:10d). This greeting is more than just a friendly “hello.” “‘God speed’ is a good translation of the broad idea contained in the word *chairein* (Acts 15:23; 23:26; Js. 1:1).” It is the type of “holy kiss” which shows fellowship and

acceptance. The false teacher's reputation and his acceptance by others will be enhanced and endorsed by such a public display. Do not hug and embrace the wolf in sheep's clothing in front of the flock. One cannot love the flock by bidding Godspeed to their predators. Greeting and showing love through hospitality to the false teacher "does not show love to the rest of the flock. It does not even show love towards the 'deceiver', since it simply confirms him in his error. Above all, it does not express love for God."

- **False Teachers Are Not to Be Fellowshipped**

John gives the reason why false teachers cannot be recipients of their hospitality and greeting: *"for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds"* (1:11). The Greek word for "shares" is *kainonei* and can be translated "fellowships." John's point is that greeting false teachers "means to extend approval, assistance, and full fellowship." To give them a greeting as one would a faithful brother is extending the right hand of fellowship. Feeding and greeting is fellowshiping and funding them. Indirectly a faithful saint could be supporting err. "In the Dead Sea Scrolls, one who provided for an apostate from the community was regarded as an apostate sympathizer and was expelled from the community, as the apostate was." Jesus said concerning the Pharisees, *"let them alone. They are blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch"* (Mt. 15:14). Paul warned, *"and have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them"* (Eph. 5:11). As unloving as it may sound false teachers are to be subjected by the church to social ostracism. *"Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them"* (Rom. 16:17).

Some find John and Paul's teaching against false teachers to be unloving. However, love of the Truth is the true motivation behind this treatment of these deceivers. Intolerance to err is the only way to walk in Truth and love one another. "Polycarp a disciple of John the apostle, wrote that John once left a bathhouse when he heard that the heretic Cerinthus was inside." Apparently, John practiced what he preached.

Concluding Remarks

2 John 1:12-13 Having many things to write to you, I did not wish to do so with paper and ink; but I hope to come to you and speak face to face, that our joy may be full. 13 The children of your elect sister greet you. Amen.

John concludes this short letter with: *"having many things to write to you"* (1:12a). Note, the "you" is plural in the Greek text. This letter was not just to the *"chosen lady."* Some have held that this letter along with 3 John was a cover letter for 1 John. Plummer said, "This verse is almost conclusive against the supposition that the Second Epistle was sent as a companion letter to the First" (Plummer 3).

"I did not wish to do so with paper and ink" (1:12b) and yet John did write this short letter. Why? Perhaps, the need for this message from the apostle was so urgent or he was delayed in traveling that it became necessary. Although letters were truly "snail mail" in the first century, travel for an aged man may have been slower. He apparently was not too old to travel. His hope was to visit them soon. This letter would have to do till his arrival. Until then they would obey the contents of this correspondence and prepare to receive him.

Keep in mind that in the first century paper was expensive. Ink as made from water, charcoal or soot, and gum resin.

Letters were inferior to a personal visit. A letter cannot express facial emotions and cannot receive immediate feedback. Therefore John expressed to them his *"hope to come to you and speak face to face"* (1:12c). Most of us to communicate better in person than through writing.

John expresses another reason for visiting them: *"that our joy may be full"* (1:12d). In the Greek *"full"* means "filled full." They were to have a full reward through obedience and now they were to have a full joy through his visit and further teaching. Joy comes when old friends reunite.

Most ancient letters including New Testament epistle ended with a greeting. *"The children of your elect sister greet you. Amen"* (1:13). The term *"elect"* means the same as in the beginning of the letter. It implies that the *"sister"* is excellent or due honor. "One minuscule of the 11th century (cod. 465) identifies the 'elect sister' as the church of Ephesus."

Questions:

1. List the five identifiers of a false teacher given by John in verse seven.
2. Who is the antichrist is he the same as Paul's "son of perdition" in 2 Thessalonians chapter two?
3. Why should the saints examine themselves?
4. What two reasons does John give for the need to examine self?
5. How does one abandon the teaching of Christ?
6. What does the *"doctrine of Christ"* mean?
7. What are the benefits of abiding in the doctrine of Christ? Explain the benefit.
8. What does it mean to not receive a false teacher?

9. What are Christians instructed not to greet a false teacher?

10. Why did John write such a short letter?

Application & Discussion:

1. How are some brethren being "progressive" with the doctrines of the Bible today?

2. Discuss the difference between aiding a false teacher and teaching the lost and those brethren in error?

Gaius

3 John 1:1-8

John's third letter is the shortest book in the New Testament. It is composed of about only two hundred fourteen words in the Greek manuscripts. Brief as it may be this epistle has much to say about the apostle John's character judgments about three men: Gaius, Diotrephes, and Demetrius. The purpose of the letter was to encourage Gaius to continue to show hospitality to the preaching brethren who were passing through despite Diotrephes' rejection of John and others sent by him. Demetrius was instead a brother worthy of acceptance and emulation.

Encouragement for Gaius

3 John 1:1-4 The Elder, To the beloved Gaius, whom I love in truth: 2 Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers. 3 For I rejoiced greatly when brethren came and testified of the truth that is in you, just as you walk in the truth. 4 I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.

Love For Gaius

As in his previous letter John labels himself as *"the Elder"* (1:1a). He is old and the last of the apostles. This title alone is needed to identify himself to his friend Gaius.

The letter is a personal correspondence to a saint named *"Gaius."* Several other men are named Gaius in the New Testament (Acts 19:29; 20:40; Rom. 16:23; 1 Cor. 1:14). This Gaius is not to be identified with any of them. After all, the name was very common in the Roman Empire at this time.

In contrast to Diotrephes who loved to be first, John loves Gaius. By calling him *"beloved"* four times in this short letter, John is clearly demonstrating a much closer relation to Gaius than merely greeting him with a *"dear Gaius"* which would not come close to capturing the love John is expressing. The phrase *"whom I love in truth"* was used in John's second letter to the *"chosen lady."* It does not merely express a sincerity of love for Gaius, instead it focuses on the common relationship both men have by believing and practicing the Truth. John loves him because they both love the Truth.

Prayer For Gaius

The next part of John's greeting to Gaius is expressed in a common wish found in letters of the first century. John prays that Gaius is blessed by God with three blessings. First, that he *"may prosper in all things"* (1:2a). This is not a desire for his financial or material prosperity, it is a general desire to see him possess advantageous conditions in day to day life. Second, John desires Gaius to *"be in health"* (1:2b). This does not imply that he had been in poor health since this was a very common part of the greetings of the letters in the first century. John's final desire for his beloved brother was the continued prosperity of his soul (1:2c). Spiritual health is more important to faithful saints than physical soundness. The soul is made sound by exercising it unto godliness (1 Tim. 4:6,7); by hungering and thirsting after righteousness (Matt. 5:6); being able to grow and eat meat and not just the milk of the Word (Heb. 5:12f); by keeping oneself clean from the defilements of this wicked world (Js. 1:27); and by finding rest for our souls in Jesus (Matt. 11:28-30).

Rejoicing Over Gaius

As in the previous letter John here says, *“I rejoiced greatly”* (1:3a). He had receive good news about Gaius when visited from other brethren who had come to John *“and testified of the truth that”* (1:3b) was in him. This was the greatest of joy the apostle could receive. Notice, Gaius was walking in the truth. He believed, practiced, and supported the truth in his everyday life.

Some have taken Gaius to be a convert of John, because he refers to him in verse four as one of his children. However, it is more likely that this is a fatherly feeling toward a younger brother whom he had had an influence. John was apt to use *“children”* to refer to the saints to whom he was writing. John speaks as an elder brother and apostle who had been a spiritual father to many.

Encouragement from Gaius

3 John 1:5-8 Beloved, you do faithfully whatever you do for the brethren and for strangers, 6 who have borne witness of your love before the church. If you send them forward on their journey in a manner worthy of God, you will do well, 7 because they went forth for His name’s sake, taking nothing from the Gentiles. 8 We therefore ought to receive such, that we may become fellow workers for the truth.

- **Hospitality is to Be Maintained**

In verses nine and ten it is learned that Diotrephes was turning brethren away. He may have also been pressuring Gaius to fall in line and do the same. John encourages Gaius to continue faithfully receiving and doing whatever he could to assist the brethren sent to him. *“Beloved, you do faithfully whatever you do for the brethren and for strangers”* (1:5). Some of these brethren Gaius knew. Some of them were strangers to him in that he had not known these brethren. Hospitality is from the Greek word *philoxenos* meaning literally, “love of strangers.”

- **Hospitality is a Demonstration of Love**

John says these same brethren whom Gaius loved enough to welcome and assist *“have borne witness of your love before the church”* (1:6a). When they came to the congregation where John was they gave a report of their activities. They were able to testify that at least one brother in the congregation where Diotrephes was rejecting brethren was a man named Gaius who received them. Throughout the centuries Gaius’ act of love has been preserved as a monument to his hospitality. There is no telling how many other men and women have been encouraged to demonstrate their love by receiving and helping preachers of the Gospel.

- **Hospitality is To Be Done In a God-Like Fashion**

John continues to describe the encouraging efforts of Gaius: *“If you send them forward on their journey in a manner worthy of God, you will do well”* (1:6). Places where brethren could find shelter and rest in the ancient world was lacking. A MacDonald’s or Starbucks could not be found on every other street corner. They were dependent upon such men as Gaius who would give them a place to rest, feed them, and even send them out with the necessary supplies to complete the journey to their next location. Gaius was *“distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality”* (Rom. 12:13). He did as Titus was so instructed: *“send Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their journey with haste, that they may lack nothing”* (Tit. 3:13). The phrase *“a manner worthy of God”* in verse six “means ‘worthy of God, as befits God.’ We are never more ‘godlike’ than when we are sacrificing to serve others” (Weirsbe 543). His kindness toward others was akin to the kind of kindness God Himself would bestow.

- **Hospitality Is Given For Good Reasons**

John gives several good reasons why Gaius should continue to show hospitality to these brethren. The first reason he needs to assist them is *“because they went forth for His name’s sake”* (1:7a). They were not mere tourist passing by on vacation or on a business trip. These brethren are on a mission to teach the Gospel in the name of Christ. They are on the road and in need of a warm

welcome from him, because they are carrying out the Great Commission (Matt. 28:18-20; Mark. 16:15). The second reason Gaius would receive these workers for the Lord is that the Gentiles will not be called upon to assist them. It was the habit of Paul to be supported by himself or brethren or churches and not charge and beg support from the lost souls he was trying to reach with the Gospel (Acts 20:34; 1 Thess. 2:6-9). The Gentiles were very familiar with the itinerant philosophers who would travel from town to town taking whatever they could from those to whom they were peddling their new doctrines. Even some false teachers among the brethren were *“teaching things which they ought not, for the sake of dishonest gain”* (Tit. 1:11b). Likewise, these itinerant preachers were *“taking nothing from the Gentiles”* (1:7b). Since the Gentiles or lost souls are not going to be called upon for hospitality it is fitting that the saints *“ought to receive such”* brethren (1:7c). Hospitality is a commandment to all the saints. Paul commanded Timothy to appoint qualified men to serve as elders and these men must be *“given to hospitality”* (1 Tim. 3:2). He also told him that a widow indeed was one who practiced hospitality (1 Tim. 5:10). *“Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some have unwittingly entertained angels”* (Heb.13:2). *“Be hospitable to one another without grumbling”* (1 Pet. 4:9). The final reason Gaius and other Christians are commanded to show hospitality is *“that we may become fellow workers for the truth”* (1:8). This is the opposite point made by John in his second letter. No one was to assist a false teacher lest they fellowship in spreading the false teacher’s lies against the Truth (2 Jn. 1:10,11). Gaius is fellowshipping in the spreading of the Truth because he helped those to were faithful teachers of the Word. Because Gaius loved the brethren enough to bless them with his hospitality, he was blessed by God in return. Helpers of those who do the work in the Kingdom of God will receive the same reward as those doing the teaching and preaching. Jesus said to His disciples, *“he who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet’s reward. And he who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man’s reward”* (Mt. 12:41).

Questions:

1. Who are the three men discussed in this letter? Why?
2. What was John's prayer for Gaius?
3. Why did John rejoice over Gaius?
4. Why was hospitality so important in the first century?
5. For whom in the New Testament is it required that they show hospitality? Why?

5. How did Gaius demonstrate his love before the church?

6. How is showing hospitality God-like?

7. List the several good reasons Gaius was to show hospitality to faithful teachers?

Application & Discussion:

1. How can we today support the Truth by aiding the preachers and teachers of the Gospel?

Diotrephes and Demetrius

3 John 1:9-14

Egotistical Diotrephes

3 John 1:9-10 I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to have the preeminence among them, does not receive us. 10 Therefore, if I come, I will call to mind his deeds which he does, prating against us with malicious words. And not content with that, he himself does not receive the brethren, and forbids those who wish to, putting them out of the church.

◆ Rejected John's Message

John told Gaius he *"wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, ... does not receive us"* (1:9). This letter was not in reference to 2 John for it was written to *"the chosen lady."* It was not likely an allusion to John's first epistle. Whatever the correspondence it has been long lost. This is not to say it is one of the lost books of the Bible. There are no lost books of the Bible. All that man needs to know has been revealed to him through the twenty-seven books of the New Testament. The Bible is complete and there is nothing missing (Jude 1:3; 2 Pet. 1:3). Diotrephes may have seized the letter and destroyed it before it could reach the ears of the members of the congregation.

◆ Revered First Place

The reason Diotrephes refused the authority of the apostle John was that he loved *"to have the preeminence among them"* (1:9b). *"Preeminence"* is from the Greek word *phiroptos* describing a person with selfish ambition and is self-centered. The term is used one other time in the New Testament to refer to the preeminence of Christ in the church (Col. 1:18). Even in the local church there is no room for any one else to have first-place which belongs only to Jesus Christ.

It is unknown whether Diotrephes was a preacher or an elder or simply an influential leader in the congregation. His attitude and ambition made him very poor leadership material. Paul wrote that an elder must not be a novice *"lest being puffed up (conceited, NASV) he fall into the condemnation of the devil"* (1 Tim. 3:6). *"Not self-willed"* was a qualification of a man who could be appointed to the office of an elder (Tit. 1:7). In addition to Paul's qualifications, Peter warns that a shepherd of the local flock was not to *"lord it over"* them (1 Pet. 5:2f).

Diotrephes had a misplaced love of self. Love is not arrogant or rude. It does not brag on itself or insist on having its own way (1 Cor. 13:4,5). No man should *"think more highly than he ought to thing"* (Rom. 12:3). He should not be *"wise in his own estimation"* (Rom. 12:16).

◆ Reminded of His Evil Deeds

When John says, *"if I come"* (1:10a) he is telling Gaius of his intentions and not the possibility of his coming. So it is more of a questions of when he will come. And when he does he *"will call to mind his deeds which he does"* (1:10b). Although John does not accuse Diotrephes of false teaching, his example of rejecting teachers of the truth must be stopped and exposed before the congregation. This way others will learn not to do the same (1 Tim. 5:19f). If Diotrephes had not been dealt with John will when he arrives.

◆ **Rattled on With Malicious Words**

The first of four accusations against Diotrephes by John is this evil man is “*prating against us with malicious words*” (1:10c). “The Greek word, *phluaron*, literally means ‘to talk nonsense’” (151). One of the most effective ways of destroying the opposition’s influence is through character assassination. Diotrephes was using slander and gossip to malign the reputation of John and those allied with the Truth.

◆ **Refused John’s Ministers**

Diotrephes is “*not content with*” just attacking and rejecting John, “*he himself does not receive the brethren*” (1:10d). Why? We are not told. Perhaps, it was a doctrinal issue or a Jewish Christian versus a Hellenist Christian prejudice or merely because they were associated with John and threatened Diotrephes control over the congregation.

◆ **Restricted Others From Doing Good**

Not only does Diotrephes not receive the brethren he “*forbids those who wish to*” (1:10e). Perhaps, he had commanded and tried to hinder even Gaius from showing hospitality.

◆ **Removed Church Members**

When Diotrephes could not influence others of the congregation from showing hospitality, he was “*putting them out of the church*” (1:10f). It was his way or no way. Those who got in his way were sent on their way. This may have been him merely keeping them from attending if the church met in his home. Or he was using church discipline to punish those who refuse to fall in line with his demands. Congregational discipline was never intended to be used as a political tool to maintain control over the membership. Instead, it was designed to protect the members for the influence of sinners and restore the erring (Matt. 18:15-17; 1 Cor. 5; 2 Th. 3:6-15).

Exemplary Demetrius

3 John 1:11-12 Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good. He who does good is of God, but he who does evil has not seen God. 12 Demetrius has a good testimony from all, and from the truth itself. And we also bear witness, and you know that our testimony is true.

■ **Good Example**

No doubt John had the bad example of Diotrephes in mind when he commanded Gaius “*beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good*” (1:11a). The Greek word “*imitate*” is the same from which we derive “mimic.” Human’s learn by imitating others. However, if they follow the wrong example they will do evil, not good. Some do what is right and some do what is wrong. Christians must make a righteous judgement as to which is which.

■ **Good is of God**

John gives two reasons why good is worthy to be mimicked and not evil. First, “*he who does good is of God*” (1:11b). All good originates from God (Js. 1:17). All good men and women originate from God. Diotrephes does not do good and is not of God.

■ **Good is Like God**

The second reason good is to be mimicked is “*he who does evil has not seen God*” (1:11c). To see God as He really is, is to know Him. To know Him is to do what He does and obey what He says (1 Jn. 4:8, 16).

■ **Good Testimony**

Like the name Gaius, Demetrius’ name was very common at the time of this letter. He is most likely not the same man named in Acts 19:24. He may have been the one sent by John and perhaps was

the bearer of this correspondence to Gaius. Gaius seems not to know him or his reputation and thus John must introduce him and vouch for his character.

Consider the threefold testimony of Demetrius' excellence. He had a good report about his character "*from all*" (1:12a). His reputation as a good man even came "*from the truth itself*" (1:12b). This was the most critical witness to Demetrius' character. He should be received by Gaius because he believed, practiced, and upheld the Truth. Gaius knew that the witness of John and others at John's congregation gave a trustworthy witness concerning Demetrius' integrity "*and we also bear witness, and you know that our testimony is true*" (1:12c).

Farewell Greeting

3 John 1:13-14 I had many things to write, but I do not wish to write to you with pen and ink; 14 but I hope to see you shortly, and we shall speak face to face. Peace to you. Our friends greet you. Greet the friends by name.

▶ **John's Desire to Teach More**

John "*had many things to write, but I do not wish to write to you with pen and ink*" (1:13). The letter was long enough to fit on a standard sheet of paper. This is very similar to what he said in his second letter.

▶ **John's Desire to See Gaius**

Next, John gives the reason why he did not want to write a more extensive letter: "*I hope to see you shortly, and we shall speak face to face*" (1:14b). Communication is often more effective face to face or as the literal Greek reads "mouth to mouth."

▶ **John's Desire for Gaius to Have Peace**

John ends with a quick benediction "*peace to you*" (1:14b) "wishing wholeness and completeness of life to believers (Hebrew, shalom)" (Walls 251).

▶ **John's Desire to Greet**

Paul would often end his letters with a long list of greetings to and from the saints. John does not have the space on the page so he says, "*our friends greet you. Greet the friends by name*" (1:14c). He makes sure that Gaius does not just give the brethren or the assembly a mere "hello from John." He wants him to greet them personally and intimately by name. All of God's children should be friends one of another. Jesus was a friend to Lazarus (Jn. 11:11) and he called the disciples His friends (Jn. 15:14,15).

Questions:

1. T F One of John's letters is part of the "Lost Books of the Bible."
2. Why did Diotrephes rejected John?
3. T F Diotrephes was known by Gaius and John to be a powerful elder in the church?
4. List four accusations John levels against Diotrephes?

5. What were John's plans for Diotrephes?

6. Who was Gaius to imitate? Why?

7. List the threefold testimony of Demetrius' excellence.

8. How was Gaius to greet John's friends? Why?

9. Why do you think John's letter to Gaius was so short?

Application & Discussion:

1. What is the best way to deal with a man like Diotrephes in a congregation where you attend?

Introduction & Gratitude and Advice for Philemon

Philemon 1-9

The epistle to Philemon is not a doctrinal discourse sent to a congregation, but a very personal and private letter from one old friend to another Christian. It is Paul's shortest epistle. Even Ernest Renan calls this Pauline epistle "that little masterpiece."

The letter was going to Colossae. Paul wrote his epistles to the Colossians and to Philmon at the same time and sent with the same courier. Paul had sent "*Tychicus, a beloved brother, faithful minister, and fellow servant in the Lord, will tell you all the news about me. I am sending him to you for this very purpose, that he may know your circumstances and comfort your hearts, with Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you*" (Col. 4:7-9). Furthermore, Archippus was at Colossae (4:17) and with Philemon (1:2). Paul had most likely never visited Colossae (Col. 2:1). But sent two letters with Tychicus, one to the congregation and the other to Philemon in whose house the congregation met. Furthermore, five co-laborers of Paul sent greetings to Philemon out of six who sent them in his letter to the Colossians.

The letter was one of those Paul wrote during his first imprisonment in Rome. At this time he also wrote Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians. Since the letter was written while Paul was in prison and sent along with Tychicus and Onesimus it was most likely written around 62 AD.

The theme of this letter is simple. Philemon is to forgive and receive back Onesimus his runaway slave whom Paul had converted in Rome.

1 Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus,

Authorship

Unlike modern letters, the author did not sign his name at the end, but in a more practical fashion introduced himself at the beginning of the letter. Paul calls himself a prisoner instead of a "servant" or "an apostle" of the Lord. Perhaps this is because of the nature of the letter. He wishes for Philemon to do the right thing because of the type of man he is and not because Paul the apostle told him what he must do. No less than three times does Paul name himself as the author (vv. 1,9,19).

Despite the fact that it has not a doctrinal discourse and it is very short, no real objections have been raised as to the authenticity of this book's authorship and place in the New Testament canon.

1b and Timothy our brother,

Co-Greetings

Obviously, Philemon and Timothy knew one another as brothers. Timothy was with Paul at this time in Rome. During Paul's second imprisonment Timothy was at Ephesus where Paul had left him after his first Roman incarceration.

Although Timothy may have written down the letter being dictated by Paul, he is not the co-author with Paul. It is not uncommon to see Timothy listed after Paul's in the apostle's epistles (see 2 Cor. 1:1; Col. 1:1).

1c To Philemon our beloved friend and fellow laborer, 2 to the beloved Apphia, Archippus our fellow soldier, and to the church in your house:

Recipients

This letter is filled with terms of endearment such as “*beloved friend*.” Philemon is known to Paul as a co-worker. Whether this was referring to actual time and effort spent with each other or by Philemon sending or providing assistance to Paul is not known. Paul seems to have known him for some time and had a hand in converting him according to this letter. This may have taken place while Paul was working at Ephesus for over three years. Ephesus was some one hundred miles to the west and the major city of Asia Minor.

It is believed that Apphia is Philemon’s wife and Archippus his son. Onesimus would have to be received back into the whole household especially since the wives normally instructed the household slaves. Archippus was addressed at the end of the letter to the Colossians where Paul encouraged Archippus to “*take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord that you may fulfill it*” (Col. 4:17). This seems to indicate that he may have been preaching at Colossae. Here Paul refers to him as “*our fellow soldier*” showing a connection to both the apostle and Philemon.

Greetings are sent to the congregation which met in his home. This would have been the same as the church of God at Colossae since Archippus and Onesimus would be members of it (Col. 4:7-9;17). Although many congregations of the first and second century met in homes this does not mandate that this is the only acceptable place for congregation to meet. The original church at Jerusalem met on Solomon’s Porch attached to the Temple. A building used by a congregation other than a home is alluded to in James 2:2,3.

3 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Greeting

This greeting by Paul is used in thirteen of his epistles. “*Grace*” is the unmerited favor which all Christians have received and continue to receive. Because of our reconciliation to God through the Gospel of grace and the result tranquility the saints enjoy “*peace*.” God the Father and the Son are joint sources of both grace and peace.

Paul’s Gratitude for Philemon

4 I thank my God, making mention of you always in my prayers,

✓ **“You are Constantly in My Prayers”**

Paul was always praying for congregations and fellow Christians. He also solicited their prayers. There is something disarming and uplifting when learning one is on the prayer list of another, especially an apostle’s prayer list.

5 hearing of your love and faith which you have toward the Lord Jesus and toward all the saints,

✓ **“I heard of Your Good Reputation of Love and Faith”**

Paul is addressing a saint who has love and faith toward God and naturally this reflects in his attitude toward others. *Agape* is a type of love which is selfless and thoughtful. It motivates the lover to seek the best for the object of his love no matter how either feel about the matter. This love for “all” saints would have to include Onesimus because *agape* is indiscriminate.

6 that the sharing of your faith may become effective by the acknowledgment of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus.

✓ **“You Have a Powerful Sharing in Good Deeds”**

The phrase *“sharing of your faith”* is from the Greek word *koinonia* often translated fellowship. This is not talking about Philemon holding potluck suppers and arranging church outings to the chariot races for the saints at Colossae. Fellowship involves more than activity in Christ based on our joint relationship with Him. The fellowship is to be “effective” or powerful. Powerful enough to bring about every good thing Philemon is capable of. This would mean he would have fellowship with a bad slave turned brother.

The acknowledgment is not just intellectual information found by reading the Bible or meditating on the message preached. Philemon was to know these good things because he has experienced them in his Christian life. He already knows how to love and fellowship with the saints. He knows about forgiving one another.

7 For we have great joy and consolation in your love, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed by you, brother.

✓ **“You Have Refreshed the Saints Hearts”**

Philemon’s great love for the saints has result in refreshments. Not donuts and coffee for the saints when they meet in his home. The Greek term for *“refreshed”* is the same word used by Christ when He calls us unto him to find *“rest”* for our souls (Matt. 11:28). It is “a military term that speaks of an army resting from a march” (MacArthur 215). His love refreshed the hearts of others. The term for heart can be translated “bowels” which were the seat of emotions.

Perhaps, brother, Philemon’s love can refresh Paul and Onesimus’ hearts by receiving the rebellious slave back as a brother.

Accepting a Sinner as a Saint

Having previously mentioned his gratitude for Philemon’s character and conduct, Paul is now making an appeal for Philemon to accept the runaway slave Onesimus back into his home and employment. He gives the slave owner several good reasons for accepting this former sinner back as a saint.

8 Therefore, though I might be very bold in Christ to command you what is fitting,

■ **Because it is the Fitting Thing to Do**

When Paul began this letter he did not call himself an apostle. This verse may explain why. Paul could have pulled rank and used his heavy hand of delegated Divine authority to make Philemon do the right things. However, Paul used restraint and wisdom so Philemon could willingly submit doing what is proper in this situation. As in verse 14 where he wants Philemon to do this good deed voluntarily and not due to compulsion. God wants our heartfelt willing obedience to His Will without holding a grudge in our hearts that has been forced to bend.

9 yet for love’s sake I rather appeal to you—being such a one as Paul, the aged, and now also a prisoner of Jesus Christ—

■ **Because of Love’s Sake**

True obedience comes from love. Christians are to do what is right out of love for the Lord. *“For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome”* (1 Jn. 5:3). Paul has already established that Philemon loves the Lord and the saints in verse seven. Jesus told His disciples, *“If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love”* (Jn. 15:10). Furthermore, receiving Onesimus back is the right thing to do out of love for a fellow brother in Christ. Jesus went on to tell His disciples, *“This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this,*

than to lay down one's life for his friends... These things I command you, that you love one another" (Jn. 15:12,13,17). Paul might have been appealing to Philemon out of his love for him. Which ever way the reader takes this phrase "for love's sake" it is scripturally correct.

Paul's appeal is based on two personal conditions. First of all, he is now a old man. Perhaps, he is sixty years of age now. This would indeed be old for a man who lived a rugged hard life as did this apostle to the Gentiles. Although some have translated this *ambassador* instead of *old man* there is no real reason to do so other than the fact that the Greek terms are very close in spelling. The second basis of his appeal to Philemon is his current status as a "*prisoner of Jesus Christ.*" True, it as Paul who appealed to Caesar and was now under house arrest by the Roman authorities. However, it was for the Lord and preaching His Gospel that Paul ended up in chains in the first place. Paul does not use the liberty of using his apostolic authority but chose rather to point out his age and imprisonment to help motivate Philemon. Out of loving sympathy for Paul's situation he needs to give heed to Paul's coming request.

Questions:

1. T F Paul's letter to Philemon has been attacked by scholars who suggest that it does not belong in the New Testament canon.
2. Philemon lived at
 - a. Ephesus
 - b. Colossae
 - c. Rome
 - d. Jerusalem
3. T F Paul likely wrote Philemon while under house arrest at Rome between 60 and 62 AD.
4. How does Paul introduce himself in this letter? Why?
5. Who were the recipients of this letter?
6. How is Archippus referred to in this letter and in the one to the Colossians?
7. T F In the New Testament the only place where congregations met were in homes of Christians.
8. Who is the source of our grace and peace?
9. Find other passages showing the Paul constantly prayer for churches or individual Christians.

10. What is agape love?
11. What is koinonia?
12. Why did Paul not just command Philemon to accept Onesimus back?
13. What might "*love's sake*" involve?
14. Upon what to personal conditions of Paul was he appealing to Philemon?

Application & Discussion:

1. Was Paul pro-slavery? Explain.
2. What sort of things can Christians do today to refresh the hearts of fellow-saints?

Accepting a Sinner as a Saint - Part One

Philemon 10-17

Accepting a Sinner as a Saint

10 I appeal to you for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten while in my chains,

■ **Because He is Paul's Spiritual Son**

In the Greek it is interesting to note that Onesimus' name appears last in this verse. Paul was trying to set the stage and prepare Philemon's heart before he mentioned the runaway slave. Although the aged Paul was chained up as a prisoner in Rome he was still able to beget a spiritual son through the Gospel. Paul is making an appeal on behalf of his own son in the faith. Onesimus was just as much a son to Paul as was Timothy and Titus. Through conversion Onesimus went from sinner to kinship. *"For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus"* (Gal. 3:26-28).

Paul was acting well within the Roman law concerning runaway slaves. "If a slave ran away, the master would register the name and description with the officials and the slave would be on the 'wanted' list. Any free citizen who found a runaway slave could assume custody and even intercede with the owner" (Wiersbe 270).

11 who once was unprofitable to you, but now is profitable to you and to me.

■ **Because He is Useful**

The meaning of Onesimus' name is "useful." Many slaves are so named. Perhaps a master would rename his slave in hope that he would live up to his name. Paul is now making a play on words to make his argument. Onesimus ran away and became useless to Philemon, but now he has become useful. Conversion has taken a sinful useless slave and made him useful. This transformation would be repeated again and again as many slaves were saved by the Gospel and became better servants to their masters.

Note that Onesimus is not only useful or profitable to Paul but to Philemon. Paul will explain this in verse thirteen.

Paul could have used his own former life as a persecuting Pharisee who attacked Christ and His church. Yet through God's mercy he became useful to the Lord and His Saints by transforming into Paul the apostle. And with the help of Barnabas even the other apostles were able to receive him. While in their past sinful condition all saints were once nothing but unprofitable.

12 I am sending him back. You therefore receive him, that is, my own heart,

■ **Because He is Paul's Heart**

Under Roman law a runaway slave was to be sent back to his master. The master had the right to punish the slave even to the point of requesting the court's permission that he be put to death. Most likely he would have him beaten and sold because the slave could no longer be trusted.

Sending Onesimus back was very heart-wrenching for the apostle Paul. Not that he was certain that Philemon would reject him, but because the slave had endeared himself to Paul's heart. Whereas

Tony Bennet used to sing that he left his heart in San Francisco, Paul laments that he is about to send a part of his heart back to Colossae.

13 whom I wished to keep with me, that on your behalf he might minister to me in my chains for the gospel.

■ **Because He is Valuable to Paul's Ministry**

Part of the reason it was hard for Paul to part with Onesimus was the service that he had rendered to Paul. He did this for the sake of the gospel. What exactly he did to help Paul in his mission to further the gospel while Paul was under house arrest is not told.

14 But without your consent I wanted to do nothing, that your good deed might not be by compulsion, as it were, but voluntary.

■ **Because It a Good Deed to be Done Willingly**

Although Paul knew that Philemon would be happy for the help Onesimus had given Paul he was not about to be presumptuous and keep his slave for himself. Yet, not a his own slave, but as a fellow-minister. Paul never wanted to use manipulation as a means of procuring gifts from another. As Paul wrote to the Corinthians concerning giving, "So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Cor. 9:7). Christians should not resort to coercion to compel Christians to commit.

It is not liking that the good deed Paul is referring to is Philemon sending Onesimus back to minister to Paul. It is not likely that he is suggesting Onesimus' emancipation by his master. The good deed to accept him back not as a sinful, useless, runaway slave, but as a useful brother in Christ.

15a For perhaps he departed for a while for this purpose,

■ **Because It is the Providence of God**

Just how did Onesimus ended up in Rome and in the presence of Paul who was under house arrest with a Roman guard? Colossae was some eleven hundred miles from Rome. Paul suggests to Philemon that it may have been God who used the situation to give Paul the opportunity to teach this slave the Gospel.

Since the time of the early Christians writers a parallel has been drawn between Joseph and Onesimus. Both became slaves. Both ministered to others who were in chains. Both were used by God to become useful to others - their brothers. The contrast is Joseph's brothers sinned against him by selling him into slavery, yet Onesimus sinned against his master by running away from Philemon. Joseph believe God used his situation to help save the lives of his brothers. Joseph told them, "but now, do not therefore be grieved or angry with yourselves because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life...so now it was not you who sent me here, but God;" (Gen. 45:5,8). After Jacob died Joseph again reassured his brothers saying, "but as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive" (Gen. 50:20). God has always demonstrated His ability to take bad and bring good from it. "And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose" (Rom. 8:28).

15b that you might receive him forever,

■ **Because You Can Have Him Back For Eternity**

God's purpose behind is providential workings: eternal life for both Onesimus and Philemon. Now that Onesimus is a Christian, both he and Philemon have the same destiny - eternity with God in Heaven. Whatever their differences, as Christians, they will need to work out their difference on earth, so as not

to hinder their joint journey to heaven. Our heavenly reward tends to help put our earthly relationships into a better perspective.

16a no longer as a slave but more than a slave—a beloved brother,

■ **Because He is Now Your Brother**

In his letter to the Colossians Paul refers to Onesimus as “*a faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you*” (Col. 4:9). Conversion did not wash away slavery or the duties Onesimus had toward Philemon. It did change how they were to view one another. No longer did Onesimus view Philemon as a master whom he was forced to serve but as a fellow-servant of the Lord and Master Jesus Christ whom they both served. No longer was Philemon to treat Onesimus as just another household slave or possession or employee, but as a brother to whom he was to serve and submit to in love.

16b especially to me but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord.

■ **Because He Will Be a Double Blessing**

Paul has impressed upon Philemon how much he has appreciated his new son in the faith and how profitable their temporary arrangement has been for the sake of the Gospel. Now in wishes to impress upon Philemon that when he receives his slave/brother back he will be blessed in the flesh which is temporary and in the Lord with is for eternity. John MacArthur said it well, Philemon “was doubly blessed. He received Onesimus’s physical service as a slave, and his spiritual service as a fellow believer in Christ” (223).

17 If then you count me as a partner, receive him as you would me.

■ **Because He is a Fellow-Partner**

If Paul is a partner with Philemon and Onesimus is a partner with Paul than Philemon should be able to accept Onesimus as a partner. This partnership is not a business arrangement but all three are partners in the work of the kingdom. In this way there is no difference between Philemon working with an apostle or working with a slave.

The word “*receive*” in Philemon 17 means “to receive into one’s family circle.” This indicates the relationship is more intimate than that of mere business partners but of brothers adopted by the same father into the same family. In a few months the scene at Colossae in front of Philemon’s home would be akin to that of the father receiving home again the prodigal son.

Questions:

1. What was Paul's relationship to Onesimus?

2. What is the meaning of Onesimus' name?

3. How and when did Paul become useful to the Lord?

4. What could a master do to a runaway slave?
5. Should Paul have sent Onesimus back?
6. Why was it so hard for Paul to send Onesimus back?
7. T F Christians should not resort to coercion to compel Christians to commit.
8. Are we told how Paul and Onesimus met?
9. Compare and contrast Joseph and Onesimus?
10. What does Romans 8:28 have to do with this situation between Onesimus, Paul, and Philemon?
11. What would God's purpose have been in allowing Onesimus to be away from Philemon and come back?
12. Could Onesimus be a slave and a brother to Philemon at the same time?
13. How could Onesimus be a double blessing to Philemon?

14. What does partnership with Paul have to do with Philemon accepting Onesimus?

Application & Discussion:

1. Explain who these points would help us as Christians to forgive and receive a brother back who has sinned against us.

2. How and why should Christians play the role of reconciler when two brothers are at odds?

3. List men and women who were reconcilers or peace makers between two estranged parties in the Bible.

Accepting a Sinner as a Saint & Confidence in a Brother

Philemon 18-25

Paul requested Philemon to forgive and take back his runaway slave. In the last lesson he gave several compelling reasons why he should listen to Paul's request. 1) It is the fitting thing to do; 2) for love's sake; 3) he is Paul's spiritual son; 4) he is now useful; 5) he is a part of Paul's heart; 6) He has been of great profit to Paul's ministry; and 7) such good deeds should be done willingly.

Accepting a Sinner as a Saint

18 But if he has wronged you or owes anything, put that on my account. 19a I, Paul, am writing with my own hand. I will repay

■ **Because Restitution Will Be Made**

Did Onesimus steal from Philemon in order to finance his long journey to Rome? Or did he merely rob Philemon of many hours of work? The average slave cost 500 denarii. Some very skilled slaves could fetch as much as fifty thousand. If Onesimus was a skilled in running business for Philemon his sudden departure may have not only cost Philemon his business but all the other slaves their livelihood and future security. Philemon may have already purchased a replacement for Onesimus.

Just as a horse thief can not be baptized washing away his sins and keeping the horse he stole, no employee can rob and employer and expect to escape all accountability. Repentance involves restitution (Lk. 19:1-9). Paul's willingness to repay any of Philemon's losses indicate that Philemon had a right to expect to receive repayment. Obedience to the Gospel is not a reason to cancel or refuse to right a wrong.

Paul uses an accounting term showing how serious he is about repayment. By writing with his own hand Paul is giving Philemon a legally binding promissory note. Philemon was to forgive when Paul made restitution for a slave who was not in a position to repay. "Paul offered to pay the price to bring about that reconciliation. That is the same role Jesus plays in the relationship between the sinner and God...Never are we more like God than when we forgive. Never are we more like Christ than when we pay someone else's debt" (MacArthur 224).

19b —not to mention to you that you owe me even your own self besides.

■ **Because All Saints Are Debtors**

Philemon would never cash in on Paul's IOU. As soon as the debt of Onesimus was put on Paul's account it was cancelled because of Philemon's indebtedness to the apostle. Philemon was also a son of Paul. All Christians have received unpayable spiritual benefits from the labors of others who have asked nothing in return. Surely Philemon could forgive Onesimus of his temporal, earthly debt since he has been forgiven so much. Indeed, this situation reminds us of Jesus' parable of the Unjust Servant who was forgiven much by the master but could not forgive another servant of a very meager debt.

20 Yes, brother, let me have joy from you in the Lord; refresh my heart in the Lord.

■ **Because It Will Refresh Paul's Heart**

Again Paul resorts to a play on the name of Onesimus. The word here for "have joy" is from the Greek word *oninemi*. "In the Lord" show these to be spiritual benefits. As Philemon has refreshed others Paul now hopes to be refreshed by him when he accepts Onesimus.

Confidence in a Brother

21a Having confidence in your obedience,

◆ **Confidence in His Obedience**

Just what gave Paul such confidence in Philemon accepting Onesimus? Philemon's reputation showed him to be trustworthy. He loved other brother so he will love Onesimus. He was partners in the Gospel with Paul so he will be a partner with Onesimus.

21b I write to you, knowing that you will do even more than I say.

◆ **Confidence in His Abounding**

God does not expect us to just do the minimal of what is requested of us. To do just what we have to is to be an unprofitable servant. Jesus said, "when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, 'We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do'" (Lk. 17:10). Paul told the Corinthians, "therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Cor. 15:58). What did Paul expect more out of Philemon? The freedom of the slave Onesimus. Not necessarily, Paul did not teach master to release their slaves but treat them properly. This required Christians slaves to obey their master and honor even those who were not Christians. However, he did encourage Christians to seek their freedom if possible. "Were you called while a slave? Do not be concerned about it; but if you can be made free, rather use it. For he who is called in the Lord while a slave is the Lord's freedman. Likewise he who is called while free is Christ's slave. You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of men" (1 Cor. 7:21-23).

22a But, meanwhile, also prepare a guest room for me,

◆ **Confidence in His Hospitality**

So confident that he would be released from Roman bonds Paul told Philemon to prepare for his visit to Colossae. Paul told the church at Philippi that he hoped to visit them soon (Phil. 2:24). It is very interesting to note that the term for "guest room" is the same term used for "rented house" in Acts 28:30.

When Paul showed up in Colossae and visited the home of Philemon would he find Onesimus? Philemon is warned that Paul is coming and will know first hand of his obedience.

22b for I trust that through your prayers I shall be granted to you.

◆ **Confidence In His Prayers**

The terms "your" and "you" are plural. Indicating that not only Philemon and his household but the congregation which met at his house were praying for his release. This is reminiscent of the church of Jerusalem praying for Peter's release from Herod (Acts 12). Although their prayers were made over a thousand miles away from Paul, he trusted that God would answer. Paul counted on the power of prayer from righteous men and women like Philemon, Apphia, Archippus, etc. "The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much" (Js. 5:16). The term "granted" here is the idea of receiving a gift. Paul did not see his emancipation from his Roman chains as a mere personal triumph but as a chance to be a blessing to others like Philemon.

Greetings

23 Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, greets you, 24 as do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke, my fellow laborers.

All five men who are sending their greetings to the household of Philemon also sent greetings in the Colossian letter. Epaphras was called a *“fellow prisoner”* of Paul in Christ. So called were Andronicus and Junis (Rom. 16:7). How and where these were jailed no one knows. This phrase does not prove they were prisoners in the same place at the same time. What they have in common is that they were prisoners in Christ Jesus. Epaphras was with Paul in Rome when the letters to the Colossians and Philemon were written. Perhaps, he was the one who told Paul of the problems at Colossae and the character and conduct of Philemon. Paul wrote, *“as you also learned from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf, who also declared to us your love in the Spirit. ...Epaphras, who is one of you, a bondservant of Christ, greets you, always laboring fervently for you in prayers, that you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God”* (Col. 1:7,8; 4:12).

The next four are called *“fellow laborers”* a very common description used for Paul's many companions throughout his journeys. Mentioned here is Mark or John Mark the cousin of Barnabas. He was an early disciple (Acts 12:12). He was selected to join Paul and Barnabas on the first missionary journey, but he abandoned them (Acts 13:13). Later, Paul and Barnabas had a heated argument over taking Mark on the second missionary journey. Eventually, Barnabas took Mark and left for Cyprus while Paul replaced him with Silas. At the end of his life while awaiting execution during his second Roman imprisonment Paul wrote Timothy to *“get Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for ministry”* (2 Tim. 4:11). He was also associated with the apostle Peter. His Gospel account of the life of Christ was perhaps the first written. The congregation at Colossae was given instructions concerning Mark, *“the cousin of Barnabas (about whom you received instructions: if he comes to you, welcome him)”* (Col. 4:11). Although less is known of Aristarchus, a Jewish convert from Thessalonica, he did travel with Paul returning with him to Jerusalem on the third journey (Acts 20:4). He has also sent greetings to Colossae as a fellow prisoner (Col. 4:10). When the Ephesian mob rioted at the Temple of Artemis they seized *“Gaius and Aristarchus”* (Acts 19:29). It is believed that he was executed by Nero during the persecutions of Christians following the great fire in Rome.

During his first imprisonment Demas was a co-worker of Paul. During Paul's second imprisonment in Rome he told Timothy, *“for Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world, and has departed for Thessalonica”* (2 Tim. 4:10).

Before joining up with Paul, Luke was a physician by trade. He was with Paul on part of his third journey to Jerusalem and accompanied him on the trip to Rome as a prisoner. While at Rome he stayed with Paul and wrote his Gospel and the Acts. He was even present during Paul's second imprisonment. He wrote to Timothy *“only Luke is with me”* (2 Tim. 4:11).

Blessing

25 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.

Again the term *“your”* is plural. Paul farewell blessing goes to all those addressed in this letter. This final reminder of the Lord's unmerited favor toward Philemon and his home would not extended to Onesimus. Did Philemon do what was expected of him? If he had not would this letter be a part of the New Testament canon. Would not all those who read it know whether or not Philemon listened to Paul's request?

Slavery and Philemon

During the Civil War many pro-slavery advocates argued that Paul never condemned slavery.

When he wrote Philemon he had a chance to call for the emancipation of all slaves but he did not do so even for Onesimus his son in the faith. True, Paul did not command or tell Philemon to release Onesimus. If such a command from an apostle had gone out into the Roman world the Gospel message would have been overshadowed by social reforms of nations instead reforming the hearts of souls. Christians would not co-exist long with slavery in the Roman Empire. The two were incompatible with regarded to the equal value of human beings before God, the Golden Rule, relationships in the family of God, etc.

Questions:

1. Show from the scriptures the repentance involves restitution?

2. What possible financial wrongs may Onesimus have caused Philemon when he ran away?

3. Matching: Compare Onesimus' reconciliation with Philemon with passage with corresponds to our reconciliation to God.

_____ Onesimus ran away and wronged Philemon	a. Romans 6:23a
_____ Paul had not been part of Onesimus' guilt.	b. Romans 5:8,9
_____ Paul worked to reconcile Onesimus with Philemon	c. Romans 3:23; Is. 59:1,2
_____ Onesimus' debt to Philemon had be paid	d. Hebrew 4:15
_____ Paul promised to pay Onesimus' debt.	e. 2 Cor. 5:17-21

4. How is it that Onesimus' debt put to Paul's account could be automatically cancelled?

5. What made Paul so confident in Philemon's obedience?

6. Why is it okay to expect a Christian to do more than just obey?

7. Should a first century Christian have sought freedom from slavery? Explain.

8. T F Paul was very unsure of being released from his first imprisonment in Rome.
9. How would Paul's upcoming visit to Colossae influence Philemon's decision?
10. Who would be a gift to Philemon's household when released? How?
11. Who was Epaphras?
12. Who was Mark?
13. Who was Demus?
14. Who was Aristarchus?
15. Who was Luke?

Application & Discussion:

1. Although the word "forgive" is not mentioned in Paul's letter to Philemon, why was it so important for Philemon to forgive Onesimus? Give passages supporting your answer.
2. How does Christianity do away with slavery in society?