

## Lesson 54 Colossians, Philemon and Ephesians

### STUDY QUESTIONS:

1. *The founding of the church in Colossae, which is near Ephesus, is not recorded in Acts. How does it seem to have been founded? Col. 1. The background of Paul's work in Ephesus is recounted in Acts 18, 19, 20.*
2. *We have seen serious threats to the gospel: 1) Jewish legalism, 2) rejection of apostolic authority and ultra-supernaturalism. Note the emphasis on Jesus' physical reality. What may the new threat be to true religion? 2:8,18,20.*
3. *God's purpose in creating the world and its people is stated in Ephesians. Consider 1:10 carefully. Is there one word that states the theme of Ephesians?*
4. *What power does Satan have, and how does he attempt to thwart the Christian soul? Note 2:2, 6:10-20 How can we be safe from him and his darts?*

**Isaiah 55 and prayer.** God's plan is not thwarted; His purpose will be achieved.

**These three books were written in prison.** They originated probably in Rome near the end of Paul's first imprisonment. They evidence the deep reflection of Paul on the gospel in the quiet of life under house arrest, and manifest his peaceful assurance. The struggles of forming new churches and guiding young Christians through all the temptations of dilution or perversion of the faith is over, for now. He has the time, and certainly the mind, to contemplate the wonders of the gospel he has preached, and to grasp more and more the mystery he confronted in the desert of Arabia where he saw and heard things too marvelous to tell. His comprehension expanding, his writing captures the wonders that are more real to him than life.

**Another prisoner is a man he convened to Christ in Ephesus;** Epaphras was a missionary, founding at least one church, the church of

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Colossae, in the same district. Though a prisoner in Rome with Paul, he is in touch with people back in Colossae who inform him that error is creeping into belief there. It is of grave concern to him, and he asks Paul to write addressing this threat to faith. Perhaps Epaphras doesn't feel adequate to address the challenge, and he certainly recognizes Paul's superiority in matters of theology. In this letter, too, Paul expresses a peaceful understanding of the overall meaning of Jesus Christ. He doesn't get into a hassle like he did in the Corinthian letters. He doesn't even take the errors head on. Rather he simply inundates them with the truth of Christ. Writing a letter to Ephesus at the same time, because the messenger is going that way, Paul is free to write of his widening vision. These people in Ephesus are established, he knows them well. Paul lived and worked there the longest of anywhere, so he pours out to them the mature wisdom he has gained; he calls it *epignosis*, full knowledge, *gnosis* being the Greek word for "knowing." He uses this opportunity fully, not bothering with the details of his life, not sending greetings or any such thing. He says at the end of the letter that the messenger, Tychicus, will bring all those details to them - the personal information. Seeming to be in a state of contemplation, he is not really interested in passing along small personal details. Along with these two letters, he also sends a slave with a letter to the slave's owner who is a Colossian named Philemon. So Tychicus has a three fold errand; to deliver a letter to the Ephesians, to take one on to Colossae, and to escort Onesimus back to his owner with an explanation from Paul.

**Philippians is generally considered with these three letters.** Philippians, which we studied with II Corinthians, may have been written during this same imprisonment but it was not sent with this messenger, rather it was sent back with Epaphroditus who had come from Philippi with a gift from the church. These four books are known as the Captivity Epistles.

**Epaphras is concerned over a false teaching at Colossae.** So he asks Paul's intervention. We can only surmise what the heresy is because, as was stated, Paul doesn't tackle the thing directly. We must piece it together from what he does say, noting the words he uses. There are many new words in Paul's vocabulary. We would expect that as he picks

up ideas, even from the heretical teachings, and judges them against the gospel truth. His vocabulary would change in order to define the meaning of Christ anew. As the years go by, pressures from the world's stubborn unbelief, or false belief, impinging on the faith, have caused Paul to attack the problem differently. Colossae is a case in point. The beginning evidence of heresy there is one which will grow into an enormous problem for the Church in the next centuries; one that continues its influence even till our time. Because St. Irenaeus writes about it in the early Second Century, we have some knowledge of the Gnostic heresy (knowledge or knowing is *gnosis*; therefore, the heresy is called Gnosticism) that insinuated itself against the truth of the Church. By his time the denial of the reality and goodness of the material world had come to the point of denying that Jesus was physical, that He had really shed his blood and died. It must have been the Cyrene, then, the one who carried the cross; and as a substitute his was the body crucified and the blood shed, because Jesus could not have been spiritual and holy if He had had a real, but "bad" physical body. The material world was evil, only the spiritual world was good. To know this and other mysteries (synchronizing the mystery religion of the Greeks with Christianity was another attempt to adulterate true faith) was to have a hidden esoteric knowledge given only to certain initiates (also like the Greek mystery religions). Implications of all this we will look at in future lessons.

**Today gnostics still abound.** They are sometimes, if not always enamored with the occult, and are called "New Age" in our times, though there is nothing new about their system of belief which claims a knowledge hidden to most people, derived from contact with the spirit world. Something very like this was going on in Colossae. Called into question was the goodness and even the reality of the material realm. Problems included relationships with spirits, with angels, and the influence of principalities and powers - it sounds like astrology mixed with a little spiritism, salted with a bit of Jewish elements about feasts and seasons. Because *gnosis* was such an important term used to describe this perversion, Paul is careful how he uses the word, and

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when he refers to Christian knowledge, he begins to substitute epi

meaning full knowledge, which is clearly to do with Christ and Christ alone. So in 1:9 he is pointed about using *epignosis* as a contrast to the *gnosis* of this error "And so, from the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge (*epignosis*) of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding to lead a life worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to Him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge (*epignosis*) of God."

**Paul refutes this elementary gnostic heresy by affirmations.** In the famous passage which brings Paul's Christology to a fine point in the first chapter, he refutes this elementary gnostic heresy by affirmations of the material creation in every phrase. Jesus is the image (icon with material reality) of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation (part and parcel of the created world - the gnostic later believed that creation was made by a demonic power). Visible or invisible, all things were created through Him and for Him (things are not evil or divorced from God - they are His own creation). He is before all things and in Him all things hold together. . in everything preeminent. For in Him the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through Him to reconcile to Himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven by the blood of His cross." In the next paragraph Paul asserts Christ's body was of flesh, that His sufferings were for their benefit. Suffering as part of the body of Christ is undertaken in the body of Paul for the same end - he enters in by his own participation into this work of faith and does it physically. This is the mystery that they need to attend to, the mystery which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. This is the wisdom that will bring maturity in Christ. These are catchwords in the heresy which Paul now uses to acclaim true faith. in 2:2 he seems to use a phrase of the heretics, "*gnosis* of God's mystery." A phrase he has never used before, but which he will interpret in the light of truth. In like manner he warns about the deceits of empty philosophy, and recourse to elemental spirits, asserting that the whole fullness of deity dwells in Christ bodily. It is a period in Paul's experience when headship has become even more important in understanding Christ's role - a theme he amplifies in Ephesians, (written at the same time). Christ is HEAD of the body - the head of all rule and authority. Hold fast to the head who has made a public example of principalities and powers which are all subject to Him. He refers to what he has heard about their false mysticism of the senses, the body of flesh - touching, handling, tasting,

etc.; rigorousness of devotion and self-abasement and severity to the body because it is material and evil. Throughout Paul floats above the problem with his epignosis, the full knowledge of Christ; he doesn't need to wrestle in argument - full knowledge will cure it all.

**He ends the letter with a beautiful instruction about walking In faith.** He implores them to put away sin, being renewed in epignosis, after the image of its Creator, to put on love, worship the Name, and give continual thanks. He instructs families in right order, slaves in their relationship to their masters, masters in relationship to slaves. And he closes the letter as he does Ephesians -Tychicus will satisfy curiosity about him. They are to share the letter with the Laodiceans, who have a letter to share with them, which for us is a lost communication.

**Ephesians is the apex of Paul's teaching** in the same way that John 17 is the apex of the teaching of Christ - His final prayer in which He prays for us and tells us His full intent. Ephesians is the apex of St. Paul's vision of the salvation in Jesus that brings about that final end. The theme of both is ultimate union. Reread the section in John chapter 17 that is Jesus' last prayer and notice how Jesus repeats "that they may be one" three times. Recall that Paul in Romans has given us the beautiful teaching of dikaiosune, of how fallen mankind comes to righteousness, or right relationship with God, through faith in Jesus. But dikaiosune is just the beginning of our redemption, it is the entering in, the threshold to the full future life with God. The timeline has shown that the experiences of God's people in the Old Testament were necessary in order to undergird the Incarnation and the Cross. The Old Testament experiences do not in themselves offer redemption, only the promise of it. It is through the Cross we have dikaiosune, righteousness. The reason for this investment of God in His People is that, one and all, they regain the lost union with God that was enjoyed before the Fall. Looking through the first chapter of Ephesians note all the words which

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refer to the purpose of God. There is a long list of them: three times "purpose" is used, then "destined," "mystery of His will," "a plan,"

"fullness of time," "accomplishes," "counsel of His will," and again "destined and appointed." What is the plan? It is stated at the end of 10 , "to unite all things in Him, things in heaven and things on earth." We are, human flesh that we are, finally are to be one with God; we have been destined for it since before the world began.

**We have a deep ache that doesn't really go away.** CS. Lewis explains it as a longing that is common to all. We sometimes credit this strong restlessness to not having the right spouse, or the right house, or having missed our true calling. We seek many ways to assuage it, but there remains a low level of sadness. This nostalgia is not really for the past, or for our childhood, nor is it for some lost opportunity unachieved, rather, it is for reunion with God, to be back home with the Father as it was when we were one with Him before the foundation of the world. Paul is at his best teaching about that Great Reunion. He bursts with amazement at what he sees, his language is profuse and complicated, but full of glory and praise. The sentence at the end of chapter one, full of phrases and modifiers, makes a beauty to diagram, a greater beauty as it resonates in our souls. Paul just can't be lavish enough in expressing his love for God.

**Only in one place is this union actually manifest on earth - the Church.** Though this is a fallen realm, where effects of the Fall plague us in the Church community, nevertheless the vision of the Church as divine lies intact behind all these surface problems. We must remember that a spotless bride of Christ is being formed behind all the besmirchment. The Church is founded on the foundation of apostles and prophets, Christ is the cornerstone. It is an institution like no other because people are its bricks and stones, joined together to be the Temple of the Lord - the place where the Lord lives. In chapter 2 he explains how in this Church, made up of Gentiles and Jews, who formerly were irreconcilable, there is now reconciliation; the two are made one in Christ. There is endless possibility in this illustration for any two estranged parties to find union in Christ, to be one together. It is an image of oneness achieved for three - two otherwise estranged parties, and Christ. Both parties submit to Christ. This Church (3:9) is the instrument that will show the devil - the principalities and powers - that God's grand plan for Reunion is taking place and will be accomplished. The guarantee of this is the Holy Spirit, with whom "you have been sealed. "The unity is to be achieved by

obedience to the head, first headship in the family, and then headship in its prototype, the Church. This is why headship is brought to the fore in these prison epistles.

**Philemon is about the return of a runaway slave.** With the little letter to Philemon, insight into Paul's teaching about submission is intriguing. Did Paul consider slavery and women's role about the same, as we are apt to hear these days? Did he tell both to continue in their "bondage?" Included in such discussions are difficult topics: obedience to unlawful and bad authority, the role of conscience, whether or not Christians are called to overturn institutions in the cause of freedom, etc. Paul took no interest in reforming institutions, did Jesus? The freedom He promised was not freedom from institutions or governments, but freedom for the human spirit and heart. He knew that earthly forms, no matter how reformed, would always gravitate to oppression because that is the condition of the hearts of those who run them, even when they call themselves reformers. The yeast to change things works imperceptibly from the inside out and raises awareness of, love of, and obedience to God, and then quietly works outward to love of others. Justice begins in the righteousness of the individual hearts of those saved by faith in Christ. It will come no other way.

**Does Paul believe women are to be held in the same position as slaves?** The following apocryphal letter written from ideas distilled from his letters attempts to state St. Paul's thought on the question.

"I consider freedom from all bondage the norm of life in Christ. Freedom is to be desired by slaves, and held onto by the free because freedom is to be used for spreading the gospel of Christ. I consider unmarried women and men freer to love Christ and serve him than the married who are obligated to their spouses, but I do not, on the basis of this freedom, encourage women to seek freedom from their husbands nor husbands to seek freedom from their wives, nor do I consider marriage akin to bondage. Far from it.

"This bond of marriage is holy and life, the bondage of slavery is evil and death. Slavery is made by men to degrade some men and elevate others; marriage is ordained by God to make present in human flesh the blessed

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unity of the Godhead, to complete a man, and, in cooperation with Him, to further His reign by fruitfulness and the joy of new life. The slavery bond is to be broken whenever possible, the marriage bond is never to be broken except by death. Each person is called to freedom, never to be a slave of another. A woman is never to be a slave of her husband and is not owned by him; they give each other themselves with free consent. I have taught only the equality of spouses, with love a necessity between the married man and woman; they are to emblem the Church. Marriage will continue to exist because it is God's will, and the fact that a woman is the first server in this covenant, though the role of both is wholly servant, is not to be compared with slavery. Because of the great mystery I regard marriage and the marriage relationship as far beyond slavery as the heavens are beyond the earth.

When I sent Onesimus back to Philemon I sent him back not as a slave but as a man and a Christian. I left it to Philemon give him his freedom. I asked him to treat him as he would me, his father in the faith. I did not want to make the decision for him, he had the legal right to own a slave, although I put as much stress on the point as I could without commanding him as an apostle.

Even our Lord in being a slave for us, as I wrote in the letter to the Philippians, made a free choice about assuming that slavery; and we make a free choice when devoting ourselves to Him. There is no free choice about the human slavery we discuss. If there is a choice, I tell men to shun slavery at all costs. Yet, as long as the bond of slavery exists, the Christian slave must serve willingly. Nowhere have I written or implied that slavery is analogous to anything in the Kingdom, however, marriage is a pure reflection of the Kingdom. In my letter to the Galatians I use slavery with all its negative connotations to contrast with the free-woman. Nowhere have I commended the institution of slavery, everywhere I have commended marriage. Slavery is not an institution founded by God or in godliness, nor something to be perpetuated. It is an evil reality in my age, and it still exists in many places in yours. Abhor slavery, except the willing slavery to Jesus as Lord and Master; exalt marriage as a sign of the ultimate mystery of our union with Him. I, Paul, greet you in Jesus Christ. Grace and peace be with you."

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← BACK TO ETERNAL LIFE WITH GOD →


UNION WITH GOD  
(personal completeness and maturity onto the stature of Jesus Christ, in the community of the Church)

ONENESS - "AS YOU, FATHER, AND I ARE ONE" John 17

Companions:  
Mark  
Luke  
Epaphras  
Aristarchus  
Demus

Archippus, priest  
Epaphras has asked Paul to write. He was the missionary who founded the church at Colossae.

COLOSSAE

GNOSTICISM - Beguilement  
gnosis → epignosis (ginosko)  
musterion - mystery (what only the initiated knew)  
SPIRITISM - true and false materiality  
HEADSHIP  
GENERAL INSTRUCTION FOR THE HOLY LIFE - MATURITY  
LIFE IN CHRIST teleios

PAUL in Prison Rome

MESSENGER - TYCHICUS

PAUL AT PEACE

CLOSE TO THE BEATIFIC VISION

THE APEX OF PAUL'S THOUGHT  
GOD'S ULTIMATE PLAN IS UNITY  
THE CHURCH  
This is the Mystery

EPHESUS

THE DEVIL WOULD DESTROY THIS PLAN

Man and Woman in Christ - headship

HUPOTASSO

FLESH VERSUS SPIRIT

- AD58 PAUL WRITES FROM CORINTH TO THE ROMANS
- AD59 PAUL ARRIVES IN JERUSALEM PETER ALREADY IN ROME
- IN ANTIOCH
- IMPRISONED IN CAESAREA TILL AD61
- AD62 PAUL IS IN ROME UNDER HOUSE ARREST
- AD65-67?
- AD65 PETER AND PAUL DIE DURING THE NERONIAN PERSECUTION

THE RETURN OF ONESIMUS  
"RECEIVE HIM AS YOU RECEIVE ME"  
60,000,000 slaves in the Roman Empire.

Philemon of Colossae (or Laodacia?)

BAPTISM OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Laodacia lost letter



## Lesson 54 Colossians, Ephesians, Philemon Synopsis

### COLOSSIANS

- 1 greetings, 1 Paul am thankful  
Epaphras has told me you are faithful, bearing fruit  
prayer continues for you  
Jesus is the deliverer, through Him redemption, forgiveness of sins  
He is the image of the invisible God  
all things are created through Him  
the first-born of all creation  
head of body, first born of the dead  
the fullness of God dwells in Him  
we are reconciled by His blood  
provided we continue in faith  
our suffering completes Christ's  
the mystery is Christ, in Him  
may every man become mature
2. I desire all to have full knowledge of God's mystery, don't be beguiled  
be rooted in faith you were taught  
not philosophy or elemental spirits  
the fullness of God is in Christ  
who is all authority  
the body buried in baptism  
is raised through faith  
He disarms principalities and powers  
don't be disqualified over food, drink  
or by superfluous beliefs  
hold to Christ not the spurious  
or regulations of a false mysticism
3. if you are raised with Christ  
seek what is above put to death the earthly be  
renewed in knowledge after  
the image of your Creator be  
united, be holy, forgive

4. put on love, let peace of Christ  
rule be thankful, teach and  
admonish each other in wisdom  
sing psalms with thankfulness do  
everything in Jesus' name  
wives be subject, husbands love  
children obey, fathers don't provoke  
slaves obey, in all work serve Jesus  
masters treat slaves justly  
be steadfast in prayer  
pray that I witness to Christ  
be wise to outsiders  
Tychicus will tell you about me  
Onesimus is with me, Aristarchus  
and Mark, Jesus (Justus) greet you  
Epaphras, Luke, Demas greet you  
greet the church at Laodicea  
Nympha and the church in her house  
tell Archippus to fulfill his ministry  
I Paul write this with my own hand

### EPHESIANS

1. Paul's greeting - the ultimate plan  
He chose us in the beginning  
that we should become blameless  
and united with all things in God  
His purpose: we have been destined  
for the praise of His glory  
I give thanks for you that you  
may have wisdom and know hope  
and the greatness of God in Christ  
who sits above every authority
2. He makes you alive, saved from sins  
not following the world's course, nor  
the prince of evil; children of wrath  
now saved through grace  
His immeasurable riches are shown  
we are His workmanship  
Gentiles, remember at one time  
you were separated from God

3. the blood of Christ brings you near  
reconciliation is through Christ all  
members of the household of God  
joined together are a holy Temple the  
Church, Jesus the cornerstone  
I am a prisoner on behalf of Gentiles  
Christ is the unity of Gentile and Jew  
I am a minister of this gospel  
the plan hidden for ages  
that the Church show God's wisdom  
we bow before the Father from whom  
every family on earth is named  
that Christ may dwell in your hearts  
be rooted in love  
a love surpassing knowledge  
be filled with fullness of God  
to Him be glory for ever!
4. walk the walk worthy of the calling  
be unified in Spirit as one Church  
the gifts of the Spirit help us build  
the body to mature fullness of Christ  
don't live futilely, quit uncleanness  
put off nature corrupt through lusts  
don't give the devil an opportunity  
do not grieve the Holy Spirit  
put away anger, clamor and slander  
forgive one another as Christ does
5. be imitators of God  
don't even speak about evil things  
the impure have no inheritance  
don't be deceived by empty words  
don't associate with the disobedient  
you are children of Light, walk wisely  
be filled with the Spirit not wine  
be subject to one another  
wives be subject to your husbands  
Christ is the head of the Church  
Church is subject to Christ  
man is head of his wife

6. the wife is subject to her husband  
husbands love your wives  
marriage is a mystery  
about Christ and the Church  
husbands love, wives respect  
children obey parents  
don't provoke children to anger  
slaves obey, masters be good  
you have a Master in heaven be  
strong in the Lord  
against the devil, contend against  
principalities, powers, spiritual  
hosts of wickedness in heavenly  
places put on the armor of Christ  
pray at all times, keep alert pray  
for me that I may proclaim the  
mystery of the Gospel  
Tychicus will tell you everything  
peace and love and grace to all  
who love our Lord Jesus undyingly
- ### PHILEMON
- Paul, a prisoner, to Philemon a fellow worker and Apphia, his wife his house church, and Archippus  
Philemon is a man of love and faith I could command him  
I would rather appeal for Onesimus whom I could keep as a servant but not without Philemon's consent so I am sending him home  
I want this slave's freedom  
Onesimus is a beloved brother receive him as you would me I will repay any wrong  
I am confident Philemon will obey  
Epaphras sends greetings, also Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke  
the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.

## Lesson 54 Colossians, Ephesians, Philemon Outline

### I. Background to Philemon See outline on Colossians and Ephesians below

- A. This letter is one of that same writing effort carried by Tychicus from Rome
  - 1. the same people are mentioned as Paul's companions at the end
  - 2. Paul says he is sending Onesimus with Tychicus in Cal 4:9
- B. Written to a slave owner merchant of Colossae (or Laodicea) a convert of Paul's
  - 1. he is a Christian who now had a church meeting in his house
  - 2. he is encouraged to take back and free this run-away slave
    - a. Paul has converted him to the faith
    - b. he wants Onesimus accepted as though his own self
    - c. anything the slave has stolen, Paul will reimburse

### II. The Letter to Philemon

- A. Paul's thanks for the family of Philemon, and his wife Apphia
  - 1. there is a church in his house v.2
  - 2. the pastor is Archippus v.2, Col 4:17 (either Colossae or Laodicea)
  - 3. he has heard of their love and faith toward the Lord Jesus v.4
  - 4. they work to refresh the saints v.7
- B. Paul has become a "father in prison to Onesimus"
  - 1. Onesimus belongs to Philemon
    - a. his name means useful - Paul plays on the word
    - b. Paul would have kept him as a servant
      - 1) wants to do nothing without the proper owners permission v.14
      - 2) so he is sending him back v.12
    - c. he is a runaway slave who may have stolen something v.16-18
  - 2. wants Onesimus received as Paul himself v.17
    - a. subtly asks release from slavery
    - b. Paul asks for obedience to himself as apostle v.21
- C. Paul sends greetings from those known in Colossae, Epaphras the original missionary there, Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke

### III. Background to Colossians and Ephesians

- A. Paul is in a Roman prison Col 4:3 (see outline on Philippians lesson 52)
  - 1. Epaphras and Aristarchus (Acts 19:29, 20:4) are fellow prisoners Col 4:10
  - 2. Mark and Justus, fellow Jews, are with him Col 4:10-11
    - a. evidently the breach between John Mark and Paul has healed
    - b. he has written Colossae about this, and to receive Mark Cal 4:11
  - 3. Luke "the beloved physician" is with him Col 4:14
  - 4. writes with his own hand Col 4:18, in an exuberant style without a secretary

- 5. remember my fetters Col 4:18, Eph 6:20 an ambassador in chains
- 6. Ephesians, Colossians, Laodiceans, Philemon written within a few days "
  - a. language and themes the same
  - b. all are to be carried by Tychicus, Acts 20:4, Eph 6:21, Col 4:7
    - 1) a beloved brother of Paul Cal 4:7 a faithful minister
    - 2) he will tell them the personal things about him Col 4:7,9, Eph 6:21
  - c. four letters go to the same area - Laodicean letter is lost Cal 4:16
    - 1) Colossae is a mission church not far from Ephesus
    - 2) Philemon, the slave owner lives in Colossae or perhaps Laodicea
    - 3) Ephesus is the church where Paul had preached and taught 3 yrs.
  - d. Aristarchus, Demas, Luke, Mark, Epaphras are named - (not in Eph.)
- B. Epaphras, a prisoner (Philemon 23,) has asked Paul to write to Colossae
  - 1. a missionary from Ephesus 1:7 Paul attests to his hard work Col 4:13
    - a. Paul has prayed for this church from the start 1:9
      - 1) that they be filled with knowledge (*epignosis*) of His will 1:9
      - 2) that they lead a life bearing fruit in knowledge (*epignosis*) 1:10
      - 3) that they be strengthened for endurance, patience 1:11
      - 4) that they give thanks to the Lord 1:12
      - 5) that they share in the inheritance of saints
    - b. Paul has never seen these Christians or those in Laodicea 2:1
  - 2. he began churches in Colossae, Laodicea, Hierapolis Col 4:13 map B-37
  - 3. he is concerned about rumors of false teaching and has asked Paul to counter them 1:8, 1:23 (we surmise from the content of teaching)
    - a. Paul is mellow - no more hassles like with the Corinthians
    - b. he overcomes error by emphasizing superlativeness of Jesus Christ
    - c. Paul wants the letter read to the Laodiceans 4:16
  - 4. he sends his greeting to them 4:12 always remembers them in his prayers
- C. Early signs are of Gnosticism, the heresy that sweeps the world in the 2nd C.
  - 1. a secret knowledge (*gnosis*) demanded special initiation
    - a. it was a syncretism of old "mystery" religions with Christianity
    - b. in Colossae it added some Jewish practice 2:16
  - 2. gnostics believed the material world was evil, only the spiritual was good
    - a. taught that Jesus did not have a human body, only appeared physical
    - b. speculated that the Cyrene was crucified in Jesus place
    - c. the body meant nothing - so sins of the flesh didn't matter
    - d. complete disjoining of spirit and matter 4.

they courted the spirit world - angels etc.

- a. how to propitiate the angelic powers
- b. salvation was a matter of rising from one angelic principality to another
- c. which took secret knowledge, *gnosis*, into the mysteries, *mysterion*

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d. a division of the world under good and evil forces

#### IV. Letter to Colossians introduction - see above

##### A. The superlativeness of Jesus, His physical reality, and His creation of *things*

1. in Him we have redemption and the forgiveness of sins 1:14

a. we were dead in sin 2:13

b. baptism - we were buried with Him 2:11

c. and raised, we were made alive 2:13

d. the bond of the Law canceled - nailed to the cross 2:14

2. He is the image of the invisible God 1:15

3. He is the first-born of all creation 1:16

4. for Him all *things* were created, in heaven and on earth

a. visible and invisible

b. (angelic) thrones, dominions, principalities, authorities

5. all *things* created through and for Him

6. He is before all *things* 1:17

7. in Him all *things* hold together 1:17

8. He is the head of the body, the Church 1:18

a. He has full authority and rule 2:10

b. hold to the Head for nourishment, togetherness, growth 2:19

9. He is the beginning

10. He is the first born from the dead 1:18

11. He is preeminent in everything 1:18

12. in Him the fullness of God was pleased to dwell 1:19

13. through Him all *things* will be reconciled to God 1:20

14. He sits at the right hand of the Father 3:1

a. seek the things that are above 3:1

b. you are hid with Christ in God

c. when Christ appears, you will appear with Him 3:4

##### B. Paul answers these pre-Gnostics

1. the influence of principalities and powers (angels)

a. Jesus created them 1:16

b. Jesus disarmed them and triumphed over them (the evil ones) 2:15

c. Jesus and you have died to elemental spirits of the universe 2:20

d. don't worship angels 2:18

2. "knowledge" *gnosis*, versus lull-knowledge" *epignosis*

a. don't be deceived by empty philosophy

b. Paul used *gnosis* mostly in other letters, uses *epi-gnosis* in Colossians  
Eph, from "knowledge" to "full knowledge," distinguishing it from their erroneous use of "gnosis"

c. be renewed in epi-knowledge 3:10, in the image of its Creator

3. the real "mystery" is the word of God Paul makes known 1:25-26

a. it is "Christ in you, the hope of glory" 1:27

b. the real "gnosis of God's *mysterion*" (knowledge of God's mystery)

1. in Christ are hid all treasures of wisdom and knowledge 2:2-3, 4:2

2. don't be deceived with anything else 2:4, live as you were taught

4. the physical reality of Jesus

a. use of words - "things" 5x in 4 verses, "create or creation" 3x 1:16-20

b. "body of flesh" 1:22

c. the fullness of the deity dwells bodily 2:9 (don't be deceived)

d. substance belongs to Christ 2:17

5. salvation includes the body of flesh

a. Paul rejoices in "his suffering" in his flesh 1:24 it isn't evil

b. put away what is sin in the earthly 3:5 immorality, impurity, etc.

6. no syncretism with spiritism (see angel worship above) or Judaism 2:16

or false asceticism (part of the "mystery") 2:18

a. do not touch, do not taste etc. 2:31

b. has only the appearance of wisdom

c. self-abasement is no value in checking indulgence of flesh 2:23

C. New teaching, there is co-redemptive suffering we enter into 1:24

1. it is guiltless redemptive suffering

2. it completes Christ's work 1:24, for the benefit of the Church

D. Old problems mentioned, and now a new one

1. circumcision or not 2:11 (Galatians)

2. authority - it is Christ's delegated through the apostles (Corinthians)

3. elemental spirits - (Colossians)

E. Paul outlines the Christian life: the new contrasted to the old

1. the old walk was in the flesh 3:5-8

2. the new walk is in the Spirit 3:12

3. Christian virtues 3:12

a. let the word of God dwell in you richly 3:16

b. do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus 3:17

c. give constant thanks to God 3:17 continue in prayer 4:2

4. family relationships

a. wives be subject to husbands 3:18

b. husbands love your wives 3:19

c. children obey your parents 3:20

5. slaves and masters

a. obey masters for the sake of the Lord 3:22

b. masters treat slaves fairly 4:1

## V. Letter to Ephesians from prison 4:1 (see above)

### A. Paul's three years with the Ephesians Acts 18, 19, 20

1. he gives thanks for them 1:16
2. he hears about their faith and goodness 1:15
3. he continually prays for them 1:16
  - a. that they may have wisdom
  - b. and revealed knowledge with enlightened hearts 1:18
    - 1) that they will know the hope they are called to
    - 2) the immeasurable greatness of His power
      - a) which raised Christ from the dead
      - b) a made Him sit at God's right hand
        - (1) far above all earthly rule
        - (2) above every name and power
        - (3) all things have been put under His feet 1:22,23

### B. The apex of Paul's theology

#### 1. *union with God* is the purpose of it all - because of Love 1:5, 2:4

##### a. words in first 14 verses which point to ultimate plan of God

- 1) even as He *chose us before the foundation of the world* 1:4 that we should be holy and blameless before Him
- 2) He *destined* us in love 1:5
- 3) according to the *purpose of His Will* 1:5
- 4) made known the *mystery of His will* 1:9
- 5) according to His *purpose* 1:9
- 6) the plan for the *fullness of time* 1:10
- 7) of Him who *accomplishes* all things 1:11
- 8) according to the counsel of His *will* 1:11
- 9) we have been *destined* 1:12
- 10) the *guarantee* of our *inheritance* 1:14
- 11) *plan* of the mystery hidden for ages 3:9
- 12) according to His *eternal purpose* 3:11

##### b. *union with God is the purpose of it all*

- 1) to unite all things in Him, things in heaven, things on earth 1:10
- 2) united by subjection to the headship of Christ 1:22ff, 4:15
- 3) union of the opposites - Greek and Jew 2:11
  - a) Gentiles alienated, brought near in the blood of Christ
  - b) Christ is peace between Jew and Gentile
  - c) Christ broke down hostility by abolishing in His flesh the Law
  - d) creating one in place of two in Himself 2:15
  - e) reconciling both to God in one body

#### c. *through* Christ, *in* one Spirit *to* the Father 2:18 (Trinity)

- a) no longer strangers, but members of the household (*oikia* from which comes ecumenism)
2. how the Church fulfills the promise of unity
  - a. first by what Jesus has done
    - 1) 10 be God's sons through Jesus 1:5
    - 2) redemption through His blood 1:7 (the sacraments - His blood purifies in baptism, restores in Penance, brings growth in Eucharist)
    - 3) forgiveness of sins 1:7 makes us alive 2:5,6, raises us with Him
    - 4) lavished grace upon us 1:8 (by grace you are saved)
      - a) Romans' teaching of the gift of God - *dikaion*
      - b) not your doing - not by works
        - (1) any good works *God prepared* for us to walk in 2:10
        - (2) everything is *His* workmanship
    - 5) made us to sit with Him in heavenly places 2:6
    - 6) power within is able to do more than we can ask or think 3:20
    - 7) maturity measured by the stature of Christ 4:13
  - b. sealed with the promised Holy Spirit 1:13
    - 1) the guarantee of our inheritance 1:14
    - 2) do not grieve the Spirit 4:30, but be filled with the Spirit 5:18
  - c. the Church is the Unity (see B 1 b above)
    - 1) her foundation is the apostles and prophets 2:20
    - 2) Christ is the cornerstone
    - 3) in Him the whole structure is knit together
    - 4) a holy Temple dwelling place of God in the Spirit 2:22
    - 5) Paul received his insight into the meaning of the Church as unity between Gentile and Jew from Christ directly 2:2-6
    - 6) that through the Church the manifold wisdom of God be made known to principalities and powers 3:10
    - 7) one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father, above all, and through all and in all. 4:4
    - 8) attain maturity-unity of the faith, knowledge of the Son of God
      - a) not blown about by every wind of doctrine like children 4:14
      - b) nor by the cunning of men and deceitful wiles
      - c) we are to grow up in love and truth to the head - Christ 4:15
  - d. through Christ's gifts of ministry and building the body of Christ some are apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers 4:11
  - e. the great mystery of unity 5:32 - marriage and the Church
    - 1) unity is achieved through submission - in marriage and Church

- a) be subject to one another
- b) wives subject to husbands, as to the Lord
- c) in marriage the two become one 5:31
- 2) headship the same for both, marriage and Church
  - a) wives to husbands 5:23 in everything, respect 5:33
  - b) as Church to Christ
- 3) love is the same for both man and Christ
  - a) husbands love wives 5:25
    - (1) as your own bodies 5:28
    - (2) when you love your wife, you love yourself
    - (3) nourish and cherish it as Christ the Church 5:29
  - b) Christ loves the Church
    - (1) gave Himself up for her
    - (2) sanctified her by washing with the Word
    - (3) that she might be presented before Him in splendor

#### C. Walking in the Spirit 4:2ff

1. unity of the Spirit maintained 4:3
  - a. lowliness and meekness 4:3, 32 patience, forbearance in love
  - b. put away falsehood, speak the truth
  - c. be angry but do not sin 4:26
  - d. do not steal but labor honestly 4:28
  - e. no evil talk 4:29, 5:3,4
2. no longer live like the Gentiles 4:17
  - a. futility of the mind darkened, alienated from the life of God
  - b. hardness of heart 4:18, greed for uncleanness 4:19
  - c. put off the old nature 4:22,31, bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, etc.
  - d. be renewed in the spirit of your mind
  - e. immoral man has no inheritance in the kingdom 5:3-5
    - 1) immorality and impurity or covetousness must not be named
    - 2) God's wrath on sons of disobedience 5:6-7 - don't be with them
3. put on the new nature (Man) created after the likeness of God 4:24, 5:1
  - a. walk in love as Christ loved us
  - b. walk as children of light 5:9 Christ gives us light 5:14
  - c. try to learn what is pleasing to the Lord 5:10
  - d. expose unfruitful works of darkness 5:11
  - e. it is a shame to even speak of such things 5:12
  - f. walk as wise men 5:15-17 do not be foolish, know what the Lord's will is
  - g. do not be drunk with wine, but filled with the Spirit 5:18
  - h. sing praise to God with all your heart 5:19 (see Col 3:16:17)
4. family relationships see husband and wives above

- a. children obey 6:1 honor your father and mother
- b. fathers do not provoke children to anger 6:4
  - 1) bring them up in discipline
  - 2) instruct them in the Lord
5. slaves be obedient to earthly masters
  - a. as to the Lord - doing the will of God from the heart 6:6
  - b. masters be fair and do not threaten 6:9
- D. The Enemy of our souls is the prince of the power of the air 2:2
  1. that spirit is at work in the sons of disobedience 2:2
    - a. under whom we lived in the passions of the flesh 2:3
    - b. following desires of the body and mind 2:3 by nature children of wrath
  2. (God's plan) revealed to principalities and powers in heavenly places 3:10
    - a. not contending against flesh and blood 6:12
    - b. we contend with principalities and powers rulers of present darkness
    - c. spiritual hosts of wickedness in heavenly places. 6:12
  3. put on the armor to stand against the wiles of the devil 6:11
    - a. gird loins with truth 6:14
    - b. breastplate of righteousness
    - c. feet shod with equipment of the gospel of peace 6:16
    - d. shield of faith - quench flaming darts of evil one 6:16
    - e. sword of the Spirit the word of God 6:17
    - f. pray constantly in the Spirit 6:18
    - g. keep alert
    - h. persevere
    - i. make supplication for the saints
- E. Paul's witness
  1. his revelation 3:2
  2. his worship
    - a. 3:14 I bow my knees before the Father
    - b. to Him be glory in the Church 3:21
  3. his prayer for those who believe 3:17 - all love 6:24
  4. he is an ambassador in chains 6:20

#### VI. Themes of the two letters shared in common

- A. Gnostic errors corrected in Colossians also mentioned in Ephesians Eph 3:10
- B. Principalities and powers Col 1:16, 2:15; Eph 2:2, Eph 3:10
- C. Bond of unity in marriage - submission (hypotasso) Col 3:18ff, Eph 5:21ff, 6:1ff
- D. The body of Christ, with Christ the head Col 2:19, Eph 1:22,23
- E. Unity in Christ Col 3:11, Eph 1:10, 2:11ff love in the Unity Col 3:1 (1Cor 13)
- F. Fruits of the Spirit also in Col 3:12 (Gal. 5:22)

## 531 Lesson 54 Colossians, Ephesians, Philemon Outline