

Week 33 Psalm 66, Galatians 5-6, Ephesians 1-6, Philippians 1-2, Psalm 67

Psalm 66— The psalmist rehearses the Lord’s great miracles for Israel in this song of praise and adoration to God. **How does the tone of this psalm shift in the final stanzas (vv 16-20)?**

Galatians 5— After a contrast of slavery and freedom in chapter 4, Paul emphasizes the importance of freedom that only comes through Christ. The act of circumcision has no value in the Christian life since being circumcised obligates a person to keep all of the law and cuts that person off from Christ Himself. The true righteousness of God is received by faith through the power of the Holy Spirit with acts of love as the end result (vv. 1-6). The churches of Galatia were spiritually advancing, but this false teaching had caused them to get off course. This doctrine of the freedom in Christ is not a license to do anything we want but is an opportunity to serve one another in love (vv. 7-15). The key to living a life that is honoring Christ is to walk in obedience to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The choice is clear, live under the system of the law with the end result being the works of the flesh (sinful nature) and finally ends in death (vv. 19-21), or keep in step with the Holy Spirit’s promptings which produces in us the fruit of the Spirit (vv. 22-23) with eternal life as the end result. Daily we crucify (put to death) our sinful desires by calling on the Holy Spirit to give us power over them moment by moment. **How do we walk in (live by) the Spirit (v. 16, 18, and 24-25)?**

Galatians 6— This chapter speaks of the ways of walking in the Spirit and in love including the gentle handling of brothers who have sinned, sharing in the burdens of others, being responsible with one’s own work and conduct, and generously providing for the needs of those who teach us (vv. 1-6). God has put in the universe the law of sowing and reaping. Our actions have consequences with the result of decay and death if we sow to the flesh or eternal life if we sow to the Spirit. We must never get greedy doing good to all people and especially to believers because God guarantees a bountiful harvest. The Judaizers didn’t keep the law themselves, but they wanted these people to be circumcised so that they can boast that they have made a convert. Paul boasted in the weakness and shame of the cross because through Christ’s death the evil Satanic world system has been destroyed. Such a system had absolutely no attraction to him. What really matters is *that through the power of the cross of Christ, God is creating a whole new creation of people who are being transformed from the inside out* (vv. 7-17). **Explain the meaning of verses 2 and 5. It seems like Paul is contradicting himself.**

Ephesians 61 A.D. This book was a circular letter to be sent first to the church at Ephesus, and then to be read to all the churches in the province. This marvelous letter begins with the incredible blessings we have received because of our relationship with Christ, and the awesome future the Father has planned for us all because we have by faith trusted in Christ. “In God’s eternal plan, God’s great masterpiece the church has now been manifested, in which Christ is united with all the redeemed whether Jew or Gentile, transforming relationships in this life and leading to a glorious future.” Chapters 1 to 3 describe all our blessings we have received and then chapters 4 to 6 gives us practical ways we can live in unity in our relationship with God and other believers. In chapters 5 and 6 Paul speaks of the various attitudes and responses in relationship to marriage, family, and work. The book closes with the believer’s armor that must be put on daily for the spiritual battles we face.

Ephesians 1— After a short greeting, the Apostle Paul gives us two extended sentences in the Greek language. The first sentence is found in verses 3 to 14, and the second sentence is from

verses 15 to 23. We as Christians have been blessed with a multitude of blessings by the Father which came to us through our relationship with Christ. God chose us and adopted us that we should be holy and blameless sons and daughters. The first mystery that Paul revealed in this book is that God will gather together all of His people, both which are in heaven and on earth, in the dispensation of the fullness of the times at the end of the age (vv. 3-14). In an extended prayer for the believers, Paul prays that they will realize and appropriate all the richness and power that is theirs in Christ. The passage ends with the exaltation of Christ over all creation and created beings to become the head over all things for the benefit of the Church, which is His body that fills everything with Himself. 1. Verses 3 to 14 say that the great spiritual blessing to become God's children was a joint participation of the Trinity. What part did each member of the Trinity play for us to become His children? See verses 4-5, 11, verse 7, and verse 13. 2. What are the four prayer requests that Paul makes for the believers? See verses 13 to 21.

Ephesians 2— Paul now speaks of our past slavery to sin, self, and the Devil that was our life's narrative thus leaving us hopeless and spiritually dead (vv. 1-3). The words "But God" shows us the initiative God took, motivated by His mercy and love, to transform evil vile sinners, to raise them from the dead and give them new life, and enthrone them in heavenly realms with Christ. All this was an incredible free gift of God's grace, apart from any human effort, for the purpose of doing good works which are motivated by God's Spirit living in us and are done for His glory (4-10). Now Paul changes from addressing personal reconciliation to that of corporate reconciliation. He paints a bleak portrait of the Gentiles past which was without Christ, without hope, and excluded from the covenants and citizenship of Israel. The words "But now in Christ Jesus" shows the reconciliation that the cross and the blood of Christ achieved to unite two previously hostile enemies to become one new body, thus granting peace, equality, and access through the Spirit to the Father. Now it is clear that race, culture, social status, education, past religion, or gender are no longer relevant. Everyone who is born of the Spirit is a member of the God's new building, a holy temple of God, with the foundation made up of the apostles and the prophets, and Christ being the cornerstone. *1. Who are the three enemies of the Christian? See verses 1 to 3. 2. Express in bullet points the means and goal of salvation in verses 8 to 10.*

Ephesians 3— Paul continues to speak about this body, the church, which God revealed to him. This revelation was a mystery that was not previously known to past generations. "This is so God's multi-faceted wisdom may now be made known through the church to the rulers and authorities in the heavens (v. 10/HCSB)." The apostle addresses his prayer to the Father of not only the Jews but also the Gentiles whether they are in heaven or on earth. First, he asks that our inner man will be strengthened with power through the Spirit. Secondly, he prays that they will have the comprehension and knowledge of the love of Christ in all its fullness (14-19). Paul finishes with the fact that God's ability to work in us and for us far exceeds our scope of comprehension. He then ends with a beautiful doxology (vv. 20-21). *What are the two mysteries found in chapters 1 and 3, and what did Paul mean by the word mystery? See 1:9,10 and 3:3, 6.*

Ephesians 4— Paul has just written three chapters describing all the blessings we have received as children of God without giving a single command. Now in chapters 4 to 6, believers are given practical ways we should respond and "walk worthy of the calling we have received." Godly living with fellow believers will require patience, humility, and love as we strive for unity in the body. This unity of the

Church has as its foundation the Biblical teachings of the first three chapters (vv. 1-6). To promote the unity and growth of the body, Jesus distributed gifts to all believers at His resurrection but gave the specific gifts for some to be apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastor-teachers in order to equip, build up, and prepare the saints for works of service and to reach their full maturity in Christ (vv. 7-16). The life of the non-believing Gentiles is one of futility and rebellion, as well as being marked by sensuality and impurity. As believers, we are commanded to take off the old self and its practices and put on the new self that God planted in us the moment we believed so that Holy Spirit can produce in us the very likeness of Christ (vv. 17-24). The righteous character of Christ will be evidenced in: our truthful speaking, our handling of anger, our industry at work, our wholesome talk, our words and attitudes with others, and our forgiving spirit (vv. 25-32). ***Taking into consideration this chapter, give a summary of what a mature Christian looks like.***

Ephesians 5— Paul gives general instructions on how we can be imitators of God and walk in love as we saw in the life of Christ. He gives us guidelines for sexual propriety, speech, and godly living. Since we are children of light, we need to be godly in our associations and conduct, living a life of goodness, righteousness, and truth. We need to have as our goal the desire to please the Lord in everything, exposing the fruitless works of darkness, and wisely investing our time in discerning and doing the will of God. The keys to a Spirit-filled life are a community of believers that are filled with praise and thanksgiving, mutually submitting themselves to each other in love (vv. 1-21). From 5:22 to 6:9, the apostle spells out the duties and responses in our relationships in life: in marriage, between children and parents, and between slaves and masters (employees and employers). In the relationship of marriage, Paul says, “Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord (v. 22).” To the husbands he says, “Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her (v. 25).” Then to sum up he says, “Let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband (v.33).” In this passage the relationship between the husband and the wife is mirrored in the relationship between Christ and the church. “All concerned experience personal worth, value, security, and significance when these reciprocal relationships are exercised under the lordship of Christ.” #12 p. 717. ***Explain the biblical meaning and purpose of wives submitting to their husbands, and husbands loving your wives as Christ loved the church.***

Ephesians 6— Now Paul speaks of the relationship between children and parents and brings to mind the importance of this because it is the 5th Commandment with a promise for children who keep it. Fathers also must be careful not to stir up anger in their children by the way they discipline them (vv. 1-4). Next, the apostle speaks of the relationship of slaves (employees) and masters (employers). Slaves should serve their masters as he would serve Christ, realizing that someday the Lord will pay them back. Masters are to treat their slaves in the same manner that Christ would treat masters since one day they will be judged by Christ Himself for their stewardship (vv. 5-9). Finally, Paul reminds believers that they are engaged in a fierce spiritual conflict against Satan and his spiritual forces of evil. Unless we find our strength in the Lord’s mighty power, daily put on the believer’s armor, and stand firm in the victory Christ has already won, we will not win in the battle. In addition to the spiritual armor that protects us, we must use the offensive weapons of God’s Word and prayer in order to have victory in the battle (vv. 10-24). ***1. What is spiritual warfare? 2. What are some steps we need to take to gain victory in our battle over our enemy?***

Philippians— This epistle was written by the Apostle Paul while he was under house arrest awaiting trial in Rome about 62 AD. This marvelous book was a personal letter to the church of Philippi thanking them

for their generous financial support and encouraging them to keep Christ at the forefront of their church and personal lives. The beginning of the church of Philippi is described in Acts 16:12-40, and speaks of Lydia coming to know the Lord, the imprisonment of Paul and Silas, and the salvation of the jailer and his family. “Christ” and “joy” are the two themes of this book (each given 18 times), with the most precious words in this letter showing Christ’s humility and exaltation (2:5-11).

Philippians 1— After his initial greeting to the church, Paul tells them of his affection for them and thanks them for their partnership in spreading the gospel. He then prays for them that their love would grow in knowledge and discernment, and that their holiness would increase (vv. 1-11). Paul rejoices that his imprisonment has caused the advance of the gospel, even though some may preach the gospel out of rivalry and strife. His desire is that he will not be ashamed about anything, but will speak boldly for Christ and honor Him (vv. 12-20). Although Paul lived to serve Christ, he also had a desire to depart and be with Christ. He knew that he would stay longer on this earth because of the work God wanted him to do for the churches (vv. 21-30). ***As you read over this chapter, what godly attitudes, motives, and desires do we see in the Apostle Paul that should also be in our lives?***

Philippians 2— Paul desires that the church in Philippi be united in one spirit and purpose by living a life of humility and selflessness (vv. 1-4). Christ Jesus, clearly shown here as fully God, is our true example of humility. He now has been exalted by the Father to the highest place (vv. 5-11). We are to shine as lights in the world by living a pure and blameless life in a depraved generation (vv. 12-18). It was Timothy who has genuine interest for the welfare of the church, thus showing the Christ-like attitude of humility and love. Paul sent Epaphroditus back to the church of Philippi, thanking God for sparing his life and for his faithful service to Paul in Rome (vv. 19-30). ***1. Reading this chapter, what are the attitudes and actions we should have as Christians? Which one do you need to work on the most? 2. What is your understanding of verses 12b and 13? Is salvation by grace or works? Explain.***

Psalm 67— This psalm begins with a popular benediction and continues with requests for His power and majesty to be made known to the world. ***Take some time to consider each “Let” or “May” in the Psalm. Does anything stand out to you?***

Week 34 Psalm 68, Philippians 3-4, Colossians 1-4, 1 Thessalonians 1-5, Psalm 69

Psalm 68— This is a song of David anticipating God’s coming judgment and comparing that to the Exodus and conquest of Canaan. David rejoices in the thought of God’s future judgment of mankind.

Why is this significant?

Philippians 3— In this Christ-centered chapter, Paul contrasts the self-righteousness of the Judaizers including that of his former life, with the perfect righteousness of God which comes only through faith in Christ Jesus. He wanted to truly know Christ and the dynamic power of His resurrection. Such knowledge only comes through sharing in His suffering and death (vv. 1-11). Being assured of attaining eternal life through faith in Christ, we now have a responsibility to run the specific race God has set up for each one of us. Forgetting the past victories or defeats, we now press on to finish our race well, and receive personally from Christ our heavenly reward (vv. 12-15). Though the believers at Philippi were proud citizens of Rome, they needed to focus on their eternal citizenship in heaven (vv. 16-21). **1. If Paul was blameless regarding the righteousness of the law (v. 6), why did he need the righteousness of God that comes by faith? 2. Comparing your spiritual life to a race, where are you right now? 1. Not sure there is a race. 2. Sitting the race out. 3. At the starting blocks. 4. Running at full speed. 5. Ready to give up. Explain.**

Philippians 4— This fourth chapter contains some powerful verses that have been a great consolation to Christians down through the ages. After urging Euodia and Syntyche to be unified, Paul encourages the church to find their full joy in the Lord and be known for graciousness (vv. 1-5). He further gives the prescription to live a life that is not controlled by worry, and then guarantees complete peace for those who follow it (vv. 6-7). Paul asserts that right thinking will lead to godly living (vv. 8-9). He had learned contentment over the years because he found out that Christ would give him the strength to see him through every circumstance (vv. 10-14). Paul assured the church that all their needs would be met in light of their fragrant offering to him (vv. 15-23). **Is it a sin to worry? What is the prescription to live a worry-free life? Have you found it and do you practice it? EXTRA: Why is the teaching of verse 8 so important for the Christian?**

Colossians— This book was written by the Apostle Paul about 60 A.D. when he was under house arrest in Rome. Paul had never been in the city of Colossae and so this church was founded by Epaphras, who was one of his converts who had reported to Paul heresies in the church. The theme of this epistle is the “Preeminence of Christ in all things.” “Jesus Christ is the supreme Lord of the universe and Head of the church and therefore He is the only One through whom forgiveness is possible, making legal obligations or philosophical studies irrelevant in matters of salvation. In chapter two Paul condemned legalism, mysticism, and asceticism which began to cause havoc on the churches in Asia Minor. In chapter 3 through 4:6, Paul explains true godly behavior in the believer’s personal life as well as in the family and the workplace. The book ends with personal greetings to many believers in the church.

Colossians 1— Paul begins by commending the church for their faith in Christ, love for the saints, and hope that is reserved in heaven for them. This spiritual health of the believers was produced by the powerful message of the gospel which is bearing fruit and growing all over the world (vv. 1-8). He prayed that the saints in Colossae would know the will of God and have the power to obey it through right living. Because of the work of Christ, they were rescued from the dominion of darkness and received the forgiveness of sins (vv. 9-14). False teachers were trying to influence the church by saying that Christ did not actually become human flesh but was only spirit. The verses that follow (vv. 15-24) clearly define the

person, nature, and work of Christ showing Him as the Lord of Creation (vv. 15-17) and the Lord of redemption (vv. 18-20). The very purpose of redemption is to take alienated and hostile creatures and reconcile them to their Creator through Christ's death on the cross and present them holy and blameless. Now Paul shares the once hidden mystery that now he is making known to both Jews and Gentiles which is Christ living in us that gives us the "assurance of sharing His glory (NLT)." Paul's goal was to preach Christ so that he may present everyone mature in Christ. Explain the meaning of the following phrases given by the Apostle Paul about Christ; **(1) "He is...the firstborn over all creation" (2) "He is...firstborn from among the dead," and (3) "God was pleased to have all His fullness dwell in Him." Verses 15, 18, and 19.**

Colossians 2— Although the Gnostics taught that there was a secret knowledge hidden from most believers, Paul taught that all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are in Christ, and therefore because we are united with Christ, all that we need is provided to us (v. 3). By faith we can live a Christ-centered life by letting our roots grow down deep in Him and allowing our lives be built on Him. "For the entire fullness of God's nature dwells bodily in Christ (v. 9 HCSB)," and "you also are complete through your union with Christ (v. 10 NLT)." Through this union, we have buried the old life of sin and have become alive in Christ with all our sins forgiven. The legal demands of the Old Testament law were erased and taken away by being nailed to the cross, thus disarming and defeating Satan and his host of evil spirits. Now Paul fights the legalism of false Jewish teachers who tried to add dietary laws and special days as part of the means of being saved in addition to believing in Christ. Paul said that these rules and rituals are only a shadow of the reality which is found in Christ. Don't allow yourselves to get caught up in ascetic practices like the worship of angels, the seeing of visions, or other dietary regulations which are commands and doctrines of man but will not give you victory over evil desires. Only when we stay connected to Christ who is our head will we grow up healthy, strong, and properly nourished. **What were the philosophies that Paul warned the believers not to be captivated by (v. 8)?**

Colossians 3— A life honoring to Christ does not come through legalistic practices or ascetic behavior (chapter two) but comes when we set our hearts and minds on heaven's priorities and eternal realities and thus receiving power for godly living through the indwelling presence of Christ. In order to do this we need to put to death sins of sexual attitudes and behavior as well of sins of speech. Since we are Christ's chosen ones we need to put on the six signs of love given in verses 12 and 13. Although the heretics were trying to cause division in the church, the believers were to allow the peace of Christ and the word of Christ to rule in their hearts. Verses 18 to 4:1 deal with the home and work place by addressing wives and husbands, children and fathers, and slaves (employees) and masters (employers). Each believer has his or her own duties and rights, but everything is to be done for the Lord, knowing that if we properly respond to those in leadership or authority, we will receive an inheritance as our reward from the Lord someday. **How do you understand the role of husbands and wives in marriage as taught in the scriptures? See Verses 18-19, Ephesians 5:22-33, and I Peter 3:1-7.**

Colossians 4— In verses 2 to 6, Paul speaks of a believer's responsibility to devote themselves to prayer and to share their faith to others. With the exception of Romans, Paul's closes his epistle with more personal news, greetings, and final commands than any other of his books. To summarize this book, "Paul makes it clear in Colossians that Christ alone is the source of spiritual life, the head of the body of believers. Christ is Lord of both the physical and spiritual worlds. The path to deeper spiritual life is not through religious duties, special knowledge, or secrets; it is only through a clear connection with the Lord Jesus Christ. We must never let anything come between us and our Savior. **What did Paul say was**

the proper way to communicate the gospel to the non-believer? See verses 5-6. What are some creative ways we can share our faith to our neighbors and friends?

I Thessalonians— Paul and his companions Silas and Timothy arrived in Thessalonica on his second missionary journey in about 50 A.D. After beginning the church, jealous Jews started a riot that forced Paul to flee the city. Paul was greatly concerned about the welfare of the church he planted in Thessalonica and sent Timothy to find out the condition of the church which was under great persecution. I Thessalonians is a letter by Paul to the church to encourage them, praise them for their faithfulness, tell them of his love for them, instruct them in God’s truth, and remind them in the midst of suffering about the glorious appearing of Christ which is the believer’s great hope. The return of Christ for His people is mentioned in every chapter and is the prominent theme of this book.

I Thessalonians 1— In this first chapter Paul expresses his great joy for the transformed lives of the believers in this church. In every way they showed the genuineness of their election by their “work produced by faith, labor prompted by love, and endurance inspired by the hope in our Lord Jesus Christ (v. 3).” When Paul preached the gospel to them, the Spirit of God radically convicted them of their sins, turned them from idolatry, and made them a model of true faith to all the believers in the provinces of Macedonia and Achaia. The ability to endure suffering came because of their living hope in the imminent return of Jesus. ***What indications or evidence might we show that the gospel has truly been heard and believed by a person or a local church in our day?***

I Thessalonians 2— In this chapter Paul opens up his heart and life in full transparency to this beloved church as he shares his godly motives and conduct. First he defended himself from any evil ulterior motives but stated that he treated them with the gentleness of a nursing mother and conducted himself blamelessly. As a father with his own children, he encouraged them to walk worthy of God (vv. 1-12). The apostle thanked God that the message he preached was received as the very words of God with the effect that they were imitators of the churches of Judea who had gone through great suffering at the hands of the unbelieving Jews. Although he was forced to leave them because of the great persecution, he greatly desired to be with them but was hindered by Satan to do so. Paul was looking forward to the reunion with them at the coming of the Lord Jesus (vv. 13-20). ***From verses 1 to 12, what were the evil motives and actions that Paul said were not a part of his ministry to the Thessalonians?***

I Thessalonians 3— Because of his anxious concern for the welfare of the church in Thessalonica and his fear concerning the persecution and strong opposition they were receiving, Paul sent Timothy to them to find out if their faith was strong and to encourage them in their suffering (vv. 1-5). Upon hearing the good news when Timothy had returned to him, Paul was filled with joy because of their love for him and their continued faith in the Lord. He prayed earnestly that he would be able to return to them in the near future to be with them and fill in the gaps that are missing in their faith (vv. 6-10). He closes the chapter with a pastoral prayer that the church would overflow with love for one another and present themselves blameless in holiness at the coming of the Lord Jesus (vv. 11-13). If someone were to tell you that God promises a trouble-free life for Christians, ***how would you answer them? Is there anything you are struggling with right now?***

I Thessalonians 4— Paul encourages the believers to learn how to live in a way that pleases the Lord. The first area of teaching to the church was the importance of living a life of moral purity. It is God’s will that each person live a life of holiness recognizing that all who commit sexual immorality will be judged by God. A second matter of importance is for them to continue in brotherly love, to live a quiet, Christ

honoring life before the outside world, and to work with their own hands so that they would not have to depend on anyone else (vv.1-12). Paul then addressed the question as to what would happen to those believers who had already died. He made it clear that though we will grieve for the passing of fellow Christians, we have the confidence that when Christ comes back both those who have died and those who are still living will be resurrected and caught up in the air to forever be with the Lord (vv. 13-18).

How is acting out sinful desires harmful to the believer?

I Thessalonians 5— After revealing the coming of Christ for His saints (rapture), Paul then begins to speak of the timing of His second coming. He brings encouragement to the church by stating that they will not have to suffer the wrath of God when the Day of the Lord suddenly comes on the people of the world (vv. 1-11). The Apostle Paul ends his letter with exhortations on community conduct and relationships. We are to give our spiritual leaders proper recognition for their labor and care, as well as warning, comforting, helping, or showing patience to the believers in accordance to what each person needs (vv. 12-15). He then gives seven concise commands for our personal and community life (vv. 16-22). He concludes with a benediction expressing complete confidence that the God who started with the work of salvation at the moment they believed will finish the work of sanctification when Christ returns (vv. 23-28). ***If we really believe in the reality of Christ's return, what are ways our lives will be affected?***

Psalm 69— This song of David is set to a popular tune of the day. Numerous messianic verses are found here. **1. How many messianic verses can you find? 2. Why is David being ridiculed by the people? (vv 7, 9-12. See also 2 Samuel 7:2, 13 & 1 Kings 6:1)**

Week 36 Psalm 70, 2 Thessalonians 1-3, 1 Timothy 1-6, Psalm 71

Psalm 70 — This psalm is an urgent request for God to deliver David from his enemies quickly. ***What justification does David offer for requesting God's deliverance?***

II Thessalonians— This letter is in response to confusion by the church of Thessalonica about the timing of the Lord's coming since they thought that Christ's return was imminent because of the increase in persecution. Furthermore, someone had written a letter using Paul's name saying that the Day of the Lord and Christ's coming had already taken place. Paul writes this letter to clarify the timeline of the events that must take place in order for the day of the Lord to come. He also encourages them to stand firm in the teaching he has given them and exhorts the church not to enable idleness or take care of the needs of those who will not work.

II Thessalonians 1— After his normal greeting, Paul commends the believers for their increasing love and great endurance in light of their persecutions and afflictions. God is just and righteous and will one day reward the believers with Christ's eternal kingdom and repay those who are afflicting them with everlasting destruction from the Lord's presence. Paul prays that God would consider them worthy of His calling and that they would receive power to accomplish all the good things their faith prompts them to do. Through all this may the name of the Lord Jesus be glorified, and may the saints likewise be honored at His coming. ***How did Paul encourage the believers in this chapter who were suffering persecution?***

II Thessalonians 2— Because of the misinformation about the Day of the Lord and the coming of Christ for His church, Paul clarifies biblical teaching about the events that must take place first. The Day of the Lord begins with the appearance of the man of lawlessness (antichrist) who will show himself to be God and demand to be worshipped (vv. 1-4). Although the mystery of lawlessness has been working since Paul's time, a restraining force will be taken out of the way so that the lawless one, who operates under Satan's control and power, will reveal himself to the world. Those who rejected the truth of the gospel will be under a powerful delusion by the counterfeit miracles and wonders of the lawless one (vv. 5-12). Paul thanks God for these believers who were chosen by God to be saved and share in the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. He encourages the saints to stand firm in the faith and hold to the teaching he has given them (vv. 13-17). ***Who or what is the restraining force that is now holding back the appearance of the lawless one?***

II Thessalonians 3— As he closes his letter, Paul requests prayer that the gospel will spread rapidly and that all of them would be delivered from wicked men and the evil one. Even after a previous warning (I Thess. 5:14), those who were idle and not working persisted so Paul wrote an extended passage to address the problem of idleness and its solution. During his visit to Thessalonica, Paul set the example by laboring with his own hands so that he would not be an expense to anyone. He commanded the church that no one should associate or help financially those who would not work. ***Why is idleness and laziness wrong?***

I Timothy— Paul sends a personal letter from Macedonia to his son in the faith, Timothy, who is serving in a leadership capacity in the church of Ephesus about 64 A.D. He encouraged Timothy to lead the church into godliness, to instruct those who taught false doctrine, to establish church order through the proper choice of elders and deacons, and various practical instructions for church life. Timothy was raised in Lystra by a Greek father and a godly Jewish mother and grandmother. He was said to be the

first “second generation Christian leader” in the New Testament. He was a companion of Paul on his second and third missionary journeys and was used by Paul as his trouble shooter to help him in churches that had various problems or needs.

I Timothy 1— The first reason for this letter to Timothy was for him to combat false teachings in the church in Ephesus. These false teachers involved the church in endless and irrelevant questions and speculations that got the church off track from its focus on the person and work of Jesus Christ, and its goal of love coming from a pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere faith. Although these men set themselves up as great teachers of the law, they only knew how to lead people into the bondage of legalism which is unable to transform hearts (vv. 1-11). On the other hand, the gospel of grace that liberates is able to take a blasphemer, a persecutor, a chief of sinners and transform him into the Apostle to the Gentiles. The awesome mercy and patience of God had chosen Paul to be an example to those in the future who would believe on Jesus for eternal life. Now Paul encourages Timothy to strongly engage in the battle with a firm grip on his faith and a clear conscience, not like Hymenaeus and Alexander who suffered the shipwreck of their faith (12-20). ***What were the vital elements of living a godly life given by Paul in chapter 1?***

I Timothy 2— Paul directs Timothy into the importance of prayer as part of the church’s worship. Prayer is to be made for everyone in general and for kings and rulers in particular. We are to pray for their salvation and also that we may lead a quiet and tranquil life (vv. 1-3). Verses 4 to 6 give us basic facts about the gospel. Paul speaks of the behavior of the men and women at their worship services in the assembly. Men are to make sure that when they lift their hands in worship, they are living a pure and holy life without anger or controversy. Women are to be modest, gentle, sensible, and defer to male leadership in the church without usurping the role that God designed for men. ***Give four truths of the gospel that Paul states in verses 4 to 6. What other teachings or religious systems do these verses contradict?***

I Timothy 3— Because of the false teaching in the church at Ephesus and the need for godly leaders, Paul taught Timothy the proper organization and the qualifications of those who would oversee the church. As the church at Ephesus was growing, it was needful to evaluate and choose new overseers (elders) by determining their spiritual competency and giving. Paul then lists 15 qualifications that should be used to properly vet the candidates. Then Paul listed nine characteristics of the deacons (servants) but does not include the responsibility of teaching or the overall direction of the church. The deacons were responsible for the various areas of service that needed to be done in the church. The word “wives” could also mean “women” who would serve as deacons (or deaconess) to minister to the various needs of the church (see the deaconess Phoebe in Romans 16:1). Since the local church is the pillar and foundation of the truth, Paul declares that the purpose for this letter was that Timothy will know how people ought to conduct themselves. The chapter ends with an early church hymn that declared the basic truths of Christ’s divinity, humanity, preeminence, and purpose. ***List the 15 qualifications for overseer/elder. Of these, what are two or three you in which have made progress during the last year? In which one of these do you need to grow more?***

I Timothy 4— This chapter describes obstacles that keep the church from experiencing proper unity and blessing. Paul speaks of the false teachers who forbid marriage and demand abstinence from certain foods. However, in reality, these are gifts of God that will spur us on to thanksgiving for God’s goodness (vv. 1-5). The rest of the chapter gives instructions to Timothy on fulfilling his leadership role and

pastoral duties properly. First, Timothy was exhorted to make sure that the believers were instructed in the words of faith and good doctrine. He was to train himself in godliness which has eternal value and to set his hope on the living God (vv. 6-10). Paul was concerned that Timothy would communicate the truth of God's Word as well as demonstrate that truth through his life. Although Timothy was younger than many, Paul did not want the older believers to look down on him. He was to be an example by his speech, conduct, love, faith, and purity and devote himself to the public reading of scripture, to preaching, and to teaching. Verse 8 says, "For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come (NIV)." Next Level Core Value #4 says, "Our bodies are God's dwelling place and property so it is important that we honor Him not only with morally pure lives but also through proper nutrition, exercise, and rest." ***Do you feel you are properly taking care of your body through appropriate nutrition, exercise, and rest? If not, what can you do to grow in this area? Do you need an accountability partner to help you?***

I Timothy 5— Timothy was to treat the believers of the church just as he would members of his family. The church in Ephesus continued the tradition of the church in Jerusalem (Acts 6:1-6) by taking care of the widows in their assembly. Paul set up guidelines for those widows that would be supported by the church. No widow would be supported if she had family members who could take care of her since it was an obligation for each family to provide for their own. Verses 9 to 11 give qualifications for the widows that are to be put on the official support list. Younger widows were not to be put on the list but are encouraged to marry because of the various temptations that would come and cause them to renounce their previous vow. The general principle is that the church should not be burdened with the support of all widows but could help those widows that meet the qualifying criteria (1-16). Paul now gives instructions concerning elders including supporting those who work hard at preaching and teaching. No elder is to be faced with an accusation against them unless it is supported by two or three witnesses. When there is sin involved in the life of an elder, there should be a public rebuking, and the process should be carried out without partiality or favoritism. No elder should be quickly appointed, but first there must be a careful examination of each one since the real spiritual life of a leader may not be immediately obvious (vv. 17-25). ***What are some specific ways a church can determine the true material needs of the believers and the elderly in the church, and how should these needs be met?***

I Timothy 6— This last chapter deals with various matters; the honoring of masters by slaves, the description of sin and ungodliness in the life of a false teacher, the teaching about the uses and abuses of wealth (repeated in verses 17 to 19), a personal challenge to Timothy, and the closing doxology. To honor the Lord's name and teaching, slaves are to regard their masters with all respect, and especially those who have masters who are believers (vv. 1-2). Timothy was to stay away from false teachers who were proud, disputatious, depraved, bereft of the truth, and who exploit the church for material gain (vv. 3-5). Christians are to find contentment in living Christ-honoring lives and by enjoying the blessings of simplicity through having their basic needs met. A love of money and the desire to be rich leads to a path of pain, regret, and self-destruction (vv. 6-10). Paul encourages Timothy to pursue holiness and the fruit of the Spirit, to fight the good fight for the faith, and to seize eternal life in its fullness (vv. 11-12). He ends this personal letter with two themes; a crescendo of praise and worship describing our awesome Trinitarian God, and a challenge to the financially rich to be generous with those in need, not to put their hope in unpredictable and fleeting riches, and to invest their wealth in building God's Eternal Kingdom (13-21). ***Read verses 6 to 10 and 17 to 19. What are the temptations and traps of***

being rich (or wanting to be rich)? What are the obligations for Christians who have wealth? What are the advantages of believers who are not rich?

Psalm 71 — In this psalm we have the perspective of an aging psalmist recounting God's steadfast love and protection. ***In what ways has God shown Himself to be faithful to you?***