

# *Graceful Beginnings*

Short and Easy for Anyone New to the Bible

# Grace Overflowing



The Joy of Christ in Your Life  
(A Study of Paul's Letters)

MELANIE NEWTON



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Melanie Newton is the author of “Graceful Beginnings” books for anyone new to the Bible and “Joyful Walk Bible Studies” for established Christians. Her mission is to help women learn to study the Bible for themselves and to grow their Bible-teaching skills to lead others. For questions about the use of this study guide, please visit [melaniemewton.com](http://melaniemewton.com) to contact us.

*Joyful Walk Bible Studies* are grace-based studies for women of all ages. Each study guide follows the inductive method of Bible study (observation, interpretation, application) in a warm and inviting format. We pray that you will find *Grace Overflowing* to be a resource that God will use to strengthen you in your faith walk with Him.

*Grace-Based • Christ-Focused • Bible-Rich*





## MELANIE NEWTON

Melanie Newton is a Louisiana girl who made the choice to follow Jesus while attending LSU. She and her husband Ron married and moved to Texas for him to attend Dallas Theological Seminary. They stayed in Texas where Ron led a wilderness camping ministry for troubled youth for many years. He now helps corporations with their challenging employees. Melanie jumped into raising three Texas-born children and serving in ministry to women at her church.

Through the years, the Lord has given her opportunity to do Bible teaching and to write grace-based Bible studies for women that are now available from her website ([melaniemNewton.com](http://melaniemNewton.com)) and on [Bible.org](http://Bible.org).

Melanie Newton loves to help women learn how to study the Bible for themselves. She also teaches online courses for women to grow their Bible-teaching skills to help others—all with the goal of getting to know Jesus more along the way. Her heart's desire is to encourage you to have a joyful relationship with Jesus Christ so you are willing to share that experience with others around you.

Jesus took hold of me in 1972, and I've been on this great adventure ever since. My life is a gift of God, full of blessings in the midst of difficult challenges. The more I've learned and experienced God's absolutely amazing grace, the more I've discovered my faith walk to be a joyful one. I'm still seeking that joyful walk every day.

*Melanie*

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- Be a Christ-Focused Small Group Leader
- Leap into Lifestyle Discipleship
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## Introduction

*The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. (1 Timothy 1:14)*

### GRACEFUL BEGINNINGS

The *Graceful Beginnings* books are Bible studies specifically designed for anyone new to the Bible—whether you are a new Christian or you just feel insecure about understanding the Bible. The short and easy lessons will introduce you to your God and His way of approaching life in simple terms that can be easily understood.

Just as a newborn baby needs to know the love and trustworthiness of her parents, the new Christian needs to know and experience the love and trustworthiness of her God. A *Fresh Start* is the first book in the series, laying a good foundation of truth for you to grasp and apply to your life. The other books in the series can be done in any order.

### SOME BIBLE BASICS

Throughout these lessons, you will use a Bible to answer questions as you discover treasure about your life with Christ. The Bible is one book containing a collection of 66 books combined together for our benefit. It is divided into two main parts: The Old Testament and the New Testament.

The Old Testament tells the story of the beginning of the world and God's promises to mankind given through the nation of Israel. It tells how the people of Israel obeyed and disobeyed God over many, many years. All the stories and messages in the Old Testament lead up to Jesus Christ's coming to the earth.

The New Testament tells the story of Jesus Christ, the early Christians, and God's promises to all those who believe in Jesus. You can think of the Old Testament as "before Christ" and the New Testament as "after Christ."

Each book of the Bible is divided into chapters and verses within those chapters to make it easier to study. Bible references include the book name, chapter number and verse number(s). For example, Ephesians 2:8 refers to the New Testament book of Ephesians, the 2<sup>nd</sup> chapter, and verse 8 within that 2<sup>nd</sup> chapter. Printed Bibles have a “Table of Contents” in the front to help you locate books by page number. Bible apps also have a contents list by book and chapter.

The Bible verses highlighted at the beginning of each lesson in this study are from the New International Version® (NIV®) unless otherwise indicated. You can use any version of the Bible to answer the questions, but using a more easy-to-read translation (NIRV, NLT, NET, ESV) will help you gain confidence in understanding what you are reading. You can find all these translations in the “YouVersion App” or on [biblegateway.com](http://biblegateway.com).

This study capitalizes certain pronouns referring to God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit—He, Him, His, Himself—just to make the reading of the study information less confusing. Some Bible translations likewise capitalize those pronouns referring to God; others do not. It is simply a matter of preference, not a requirement.

A map is included in each lesson so you can follow Paul’s journeys, see where he was when he wrote each letter, and see where the receiving church or individual was located.

## GRACE OVERFLOWING

The Grace Overflowing lessons give you an overview of the thirteen letters of the Apostle Paul found in the New Testament. Paul was a very well-educated and devout Jew. Jesus chose him to be an apostle to non-Jews everywhere, to teach the message of God’s grace to them. And Paul understood God’s grace overflowing to his life so well because he experienced it.

You received this same grace overflowing to your life the moment you trusted in Jesus Christ. And God’s grace is overflowing to your life every day because you are in Christ.

The New Testament contains 13 of Paul’s letters. In his letters, Paul presents **Christ as everything we need for life**. The *Grace Overflowing* lessons do not cover each letter in detail, but you will learn a simple phrase describing how each letter presents Christ as the

answer to specific needs we have and how He meets those needs in our lives as we trust in Him to do it.

*As you experience God's grace overflowing to you, you will discover the joy of having Christ in your life!*

## ELEMENTS OF EACH LESSON

This book covers the 13 letters of Paul in the Bible.

1. Each lesson begins with a Bible verse that relates to the focus of the lesson. We recommend that you memorize these verses as they are easy ones for you to learn. The point is to begin the habit of memorizing Scripture. You will be surprised at how soon it just flows from your mind.
2. Start your study with the prayer given after the focus Bible verse. Prayer is just talking to God as conversation with someone who loves you dearly. The beginning prayer simply asks Jesus to teach you through the lesson.
3. This is followed by a simple study of the letter(s) being covered by the lesson. Read the Bible verses and answer the associated questions. This study uses the NIV translation. We recommend you use that or other easy-to-read translations (CSB, NLT, NET, ESV). See "Bible Basics" above for online sources of these.
4. In "The Joy of Christ in Your Life" section at the end of the study questions, you will be encouraged to dwell more on what you learned in the lesson that helps you to live out the joy of having Christ in your life. This may also include times of reflection and prayer.
5. Deeper Discoveries (optional): We have provided additional reading of each letter studied in the lesson. You can spend a few minutes reading and reflecting on what you learn about Christ and His life in you from each passage.

## SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

While you can work through these lessons as a personal study, this study is perfect to use for small groups. Share the following suggested guidelines with the group members to maximize your discussion group experience.

- Set aside some time each week to do the study questions so that you will get to know God better.
- Consistently attend whether your lesson is done or not. You will learn from the discussion.
- Respect each other's insights. Listen thoughtfully. Share your own insights, but do not dominate the discussion.
- Celebrate unity in Christ by avoiding controversial subjects such as politics, divisive issues, and denominational differences.
- Maintain confidentiality of whatever is shared within the group.

Enjoy your small group discussion and learn from one another. As you do so, you will have a greater connection with each other. And you'll have more reason to praise God as you see and hear how He has been faithful to each of you through the years. A small group is a great place to share how you are experiencing the joy of Christ in your life.

## SUGGESTED LEADER GUIDE FOR GROUP DISCUSSION:

Discussing the lesson (apart from the “Deeper Discoveries” readings) should take about an hour, making this an easy study to fit into a busy workday schedule.

1. Pray for the Lord Jesus to teach you what He wants you to know through the lesson.
2. Work through the LESSON together, reading the Bible verses and discussing the questions. Predetermine which of the explanatory paragraphs you will read as a group. Most simply confirm the truths learned in the questions just asked.
4. Pray for the group members using the prayer prompts at the end of the lesson. Remind them to do the next lesson, if applicable to your group.

# Overview of What You Will Learn

The Grace Overflowing lessons will cover these truths for you to know:

- ✓ ROMANS: Christ is our righteousness.

*This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. Romans 3:22 (NIV)*

- ✓ 1 CORINTHIANS: Christ is the wisdom of God.

*...but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. (1 Corinthians 1:24 NIV)*

- ✓ 2 CORINTHIANS: Christ is our comforter.

*Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all **comfort**, who **comforts** us in all our troubles, so that we can **comfort** those in any trouble with the **comfort** we ourselves receive from God. (2 Corinthians 1:3-4 NIV)*

- ✓ GALATIANS: Christ is our freedom from the law.

*My brothers and sisters, you were chosen to be free. But don't use your freedom as an excuse to live in sin. Instead, serve one another in love. (Galatians 5:13 NIRV)*

- ✓ EPHESIANS: Christ is the powerful head of the church.

*God placed all things under Christ's rule. He appointed him to be ruler over everything for the church. (Ephesians 1:22 NIRV)*

- ✓ PHILIPPIANS: Christ is the supplier of every need.

*And my God will supply your every need according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:19 NET)*

- ✓ COLOSSIANS: Christ is Lord over everything.

*For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or*

*authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. (Colossians 1:16 NIV)*

- ✓ 1 & 2 THESSALONIANS: Christ is our returning Lord.

*For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 NIV)*

- ✓ 1 TIMOTHY: Christ is our mediator.

*For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus... (1 Timothy 2:5 NIV)*

- ✓ 2 TIMOTHY: Christ is the giver of crowns.

Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing. (2 Timothy 4:8 NIV)

- ✓ TITUS: Christ is our blessed hope.

*That's how we should live as we wait for the blessed hope God has given us. We are waiting for Jesus Christ to appear in all his glory. He is our great God and Savior. (Titus 2:13 NIRV)*

- ✓ PHILEMON: Christ is the renewer of hearts.

*Renew my heart. We know that Christ is the one who really renews it. (Philemon 20b NIRV)*

*Experience God's grace overflowing to you every day and the joy of having Christ in your life. Enjoy!*



## Paul and His Letters

1

*The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.. (1 Timothy 1:14 NIV)*

**Pray:** Lord Jesus, please teach me through this lesson.

### GETTING THE BIG PICTURE

*If you want to say hello to a friend who lives far away, what methods would you likely use today?*

You probably mentioned texting, Facebook, email, and/or phone call. Those are great ways to instantly communicate to someone you know and love. Fifty years ago, the only ways to talk to someone who lived far away was by phone call using a phone attached to the wall and by writing letters or sending a telegram. But 150 years before that, letters were the only method you could use, knowing that your friend wouldn't receive your letter for a week, maybe a month or more. How would you like that?

In the New Testament of the Bible are 13 letters written by a man named Paul. Once you know some of Paul's story, then you'll see why he wrote those letters.

Paul was a real person who lived at the same time as Jesus and for many years afterwards. We have no indication that he had ever met Jesus before the Resurrection. Paul was a very well-educated, a devout Jew, and a Roman citizen. At first, he did not believe Jesus was the Son of God and fought against Christians, dragging them out of their homes and putting them in prison. Paul made it his mission to get rid of this group of believers in Jesus as the Messiah. The first Christians were known as "those belonging to the Way." One day, while traveling from Jerusalem to Damascus (in Syria), Jesus confronted him about this misdirected "mission."

**Read Acts 9:1-9.**

*What happened to Paul while he was traveling (verses 3-4)?*

*What did Jesus say to Paul (verses 5-6)?*

*After that, what did Paul do for the next three days (verse 9)?*

**Read Acts 9:15.**

*What specific job did Jesus give to Paul?*

**Read Acts 9:20.**

*What did Paul do immediately after that announcement?*

Paul believed the vision and changed from being an enemy who hated Jesus into a friend who loved Jesus. Jesus gave him a specific job to do, and He started doing it immediately.

Several years after Paul trusted in Jesus as His Savior, he moved up to **Antioch** to pastor the church there with his friend Barnabas. While a group of church leaders was praying, the Holy Spirit told them to send Paul and Barnabas to faraway places to tell people about Jesus. Today, we would call Paul and Barnabas “missionaries.”

Paul made three “Missionary Journeys” from Antioch to many different cities in the Roman Empire. As a young man, he was known by his Jewish name “Saul.” But as he traveled throughout the Roman Empire among non-Jewish people, he most often used his Roman name “Paul.”

In each city that Paul and his co-workers visited, people heard the message about Jesus and became Christians. They met together and formed a church in that city. Paul loved those people very much and wanted to hear how the young churches were doing. Someone would bring him news about the church members in a particular city then Paul would write them a letter, usually answering some questions they had or teaching them something they needed to know about living as Christians.

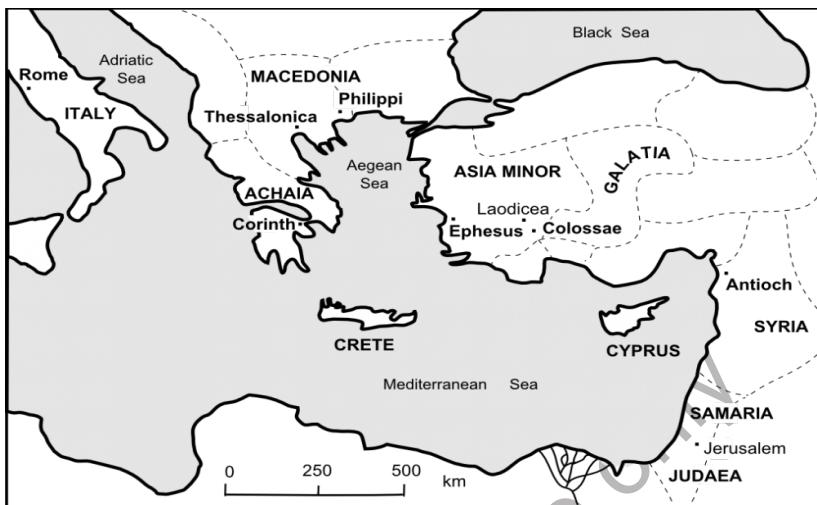
The Holy Spirit guided Paul to write those letters and preserved 13 of them for us to have in our Bibles. Paul wrote eight of these letters to churches that he had started or had strongly influenced. He wrote five letters specifically to individuals—pastors and church leaders. These letters are a gift to us 2000 years later.

## THE JOURNEYS

Let's get a brief overview of Paul's missionary journeys, including some highlights or important diversions. You can follow the journeys on the map provided.

### *First journey:*

Paul and Barnabas started at Antioch and traveled by boat to Cyprus. A few months later, they traveled by boat then lots of walking to towns in the area of Galatia—Psidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, Derbe. Most of these people weren't Jewish and worshipped other gods before believing in Jesus. Paul and Barnabas returned to Antioch where Paul wrote *Galatians*, the first letter to a church.



### *Second journey:*

After some time in Antioch, Paul wanted to go back and visit his Galatian friends. As he and his new partner Silas visited the Galatian churches, a teenager named Timothy joined the travelers. Paul wanted to visit other cities in that area, but the Holy Spirit sent him to Troas (along the west coast). At Troas, God gave Paul a dream about a man from Macedonia (northern Greece) saying, “Come over and help us.”

Paul obeyed the vision and sailed with his friends across the sea then walked to Philippi. They spent a few weeks in Philippi and 3 weeks in nearby Thessalonica. Paul went from there to Athens and then to Corinth where he spent two years and wrote *First & Second Thessalonians* before returning home to Antioch.

### *Third journey:*

Back in Antioch, Paul wanted to go visiting again. He traveled through Galatia then to Ephesus where he stayed for 3 years. Then, he went to Thessalonica, Corinth, and back to Ephesus. Paul wrote *First & Second Corinthians* and the letter to the *Romans* during his third journey. Paul ended this journey in Jerusalem to deliver some money that the Greek churches sent to help the poverty-stricken Jewish Christians in Jerusalem and Judea. Paul was arrested in Jerusalem.

#### *First imprisonment:*

From Jerusalem, Paul was transferred to Caesarea where he spent two years in confinement. When he appealed to Caesar to hear his case, he was transferred by boat to Rome for another 2 years of house arrest. While in Rome, Paul wrote *Ephesians*, *Philippians*, *Colossians*, and *Philemon*.

#### *Fourth journey time:*

After Paul's release from house arrest in Rome, he traveled with Timothy to Ephesus where he left Timothy to pastor the church there. Paul traveled with Titus to Crete and established churches there, leaving Titus as pastor. While Paul traveled in the area of Macedonia, he wrote *First Timothy* and *Titus* to encourage and instruct the young pastors.

#### *Second imprisonment:*

Paul was arrested again and placed in a Roman dungeon where he wrote his last letter, *Second Timothy*. Paul was executed shortly thereafter (~67 AD).

## THE LETTERS

### Find all thirteen letters in your Bible's Table of Contents.

Paul authenticated his letters with specific writing (2 Thessalonians 3:17; 1 Corinthians 16:21; and Colossians 4:18). The receivers knew they were genuine, copied them and passed them along to other churches. Years after Paul wrote his letters, these 13 were collected and organized in the New Testament by size and type. The first nine in the list are the ones written to churches (Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians). The last 4 letters were written to individual people (1 and 2 Timothy, Titus and Philemon).

When we write a letter, we usually start it by saying "Dear friend" or Hello there." At the end, we sign our names. Paul both greets the people and signs his name at the beginning of each letter. Let's see this in a few of his letters.

*In the verses below, look for the words Paul used to identify himself to the recipients. Notice the two words—grace and peace—that he used in each one to greet the recipients.*

2 Corinthians 1:1-2—

Ephesians 1:1-2—

1 Timothy 1:1-2—

Titus 1:1,4—

In each letter, Paul identified himself as an apostle chosen by the will of God and/or a servant of Jesus Christ. In his greetings to the recipients of his letters, you read the same two words: grace and peace.

Grace means “undeserved favor.” The Gentiles wished each other favor with the gods they worshiped so grace was a familiar word for them. Paul taught that Jesus’ death on the cross is God’s grace gift (His favor) who takes away our sin (wrong things we think and do). God gives us His grace every day so we have strength to live to please Him. Praise God for His grace given to you! [Do some praising here!]

The Jews wished each other “peace” (shalom). So peace was a familiar word for them. Paul taught that Jesus gives us peace with God because our sins are forgiven. Nothing can ever take our relationship with God away from us. This helps us to feel peaceful and blessed by God instead of worried about the eternal future. Praise God for His peace given to you! [Do some praising here!]

Paul used both words in each letter to reach out to both the Jewish and Gentile Christians in the churches and to bring the two groups together in their common faith.

## CHRIST IS EVERYTHING WE NEED

Through the *Grace Overflowing* lessons, you will become familiar with the people receiving each letter, the challenges they were facing (needs similar to your own), and the biblical solutions God gave to them (and you) through Paul.

Paul presented Jesus Christ as the answer to their need. We will see that we have the same kinds of problems in our lives today and that Christ is still the answer to our problems as well through His overflowing grace. With each letter, you will learn a phrase describing how Christ is presented in that letter as the answer to a particular need.

### Read Philippians 1:21.

*What does Paul declare about his life?*

Jesus, God’s son who gave his life on the cross for our sins, is also known as Christ. Christ is His title. It comes from the Greek word *christos*, which translates the Hebrew title “Messiah” meaning “anointed one.” God promised to send the Messiah who would bring salvation to everyone. He is both savior and king of planet Earth. According to Psalm 110:1, the Messiah would sit at the right hand of God and be called Lord. Jesus claimed this for Himself. Jesus is the Son of God who is Christ the Lord. In many places in the New Testament, He is also called the Lord Jesus Christ. References to “Lord” in Paul’s letters refers to Jesus Christ.

In the first letter he wrote to his close friend Timothy, Paul described how he had experienced God's grace in his own life. It is because of God's grace that Paul could definitively say, "To live is Christ."

**Read 1 Timothy 1:12-17.**

***What did Paul say about himself and what God did for him (verse 13)?***

***What else did God do for him (verse 14)?***

Paul exclaimed that God's grace is so abundant that it's like a vessel overflowing or a stream overflowing a waterfall into a pool below (like the front cover of this book). It covers and fills whatever is around and beneath it. The Apostle Paul looked at his own history, which was filled with horrid behavior, filled with what many would consider unforgivable deeds. You may have thought of your own life in that way.

***Rewrite verse 13, inserting your name and what characteristics defined your life before Christ.***

***Why did God show mercy to him and you (verses 13 and 15)?***

*What flowed out of Paul's heart as he recalled God's grace overflowing to him (verse 17)?*

God chose to extend His grace to Paul and show him mercy. Not just a little bit of grace. Abundant grace. Overflowing grace. Paul did not deserve anything but punishment and shame. God's grace overcame that. **God's grace is His undeserved favor abundantly poured out on those who desperately need Him.** It is God giving favor to someone, not because they are good enough to deserve it but because His love chooses to do so. God chooses to have His grace overflowing to every believer from the moment of salvation. And we continue to receive God's abundant grace throughout our lives on earth.

You received this same grace overflowing to your life the moment you trusted in Jesus Christ. And God's grace is overflowing to your life every day because you are in Christ.

Paul's life was changed from the inside out. He became a beacon of Christ's life shining through his own life. Christ displayed Himself through Paul's life because grace overflowed into his life. Paul understood God's grace so well because he desperately needed it for life. He firmly believed this truth: **Christ is everything we need** for life.

Christ is everything you need for abundant life. He is the answer to your specific needs and meets these needs in your life as you trust in Him to do it. Your life will also be changed from the inside out.

*Christ's life will shine through your life as you learn to live dependently on Him and His grace overflowing to you.*

**What are your biggest challenges in life?**

*Pray: Ask Jesus to show you through these lessons how He is the answer to each one of those needs.*

### **DEEPER DISCOVERIES (OPTIONAL):**

Spend a few minutes each day reading Acts chapters 9-15 to get a historical perspective on Paul's life and writings. What grabs your attention?

**Read Acts chapter 9.**

**Read Acts chapter 10.**

**Read Acts chapter 11.**

**Read Acts chapter 12.**

**Read Acts chapter 13.**

**Read Acts chapter 14.**

**Read Acts chapter 15.**

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## The Letter to the Romans

*This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. (Romans 3:22 NIV)*

**Pray:** Lord Jesus, please teach me through this lesson.

### THE KEY QUESTION

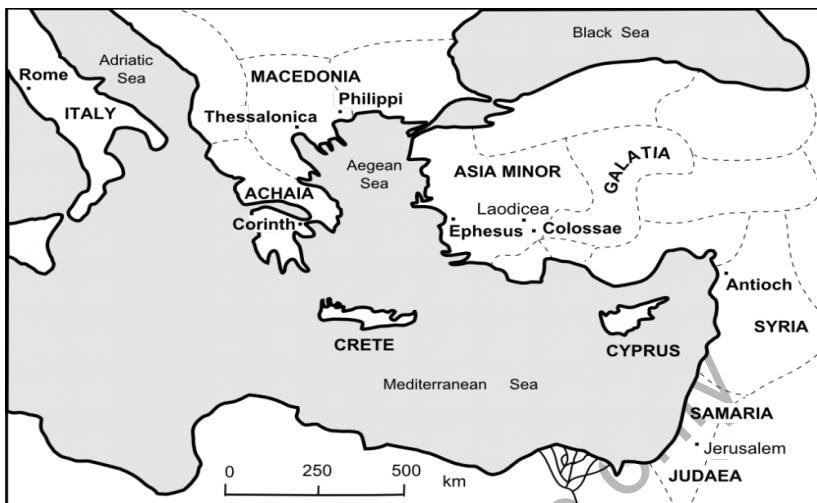
While growing up, were you better at playing a sport than your brother or sister was? Or were you better at making good grades in school or more talented than a sibling? Did that make your parents love you more than them? If you were not as good at sports or grades, did they love you less? Hopefully, your answer is “no.” Good parents who truly love their children do so equally regardless of one’s ability or achievement. And they consider what each child needs and how their differences are expressed. Good parents can give equal love to their children while allowing them to do different things.

The key word for our lesson today is **equal**. The question to ask is: “How are we equal?” How can we be equal to other people in God’s eyes while still being different?

### THE PEOPLE AND THEIR NEED

Today’s letter was written to a group of believers living in **Rome**, the largest city in the Roman Empire. The Romans were hardworking, highly organized people who built towns and roads throughout their Empire. They were proud of their accomplishments, and Rome was the center of their world.

We do not know who started the church at Rome. After Jesus’ resurrection, Roman Jews visiting Jerusalem for Passover heard Peter preach the gospel in Acts 2:10 (“some visitors from Rome”) and believed. They may have gone back to Rome, shared the gospel with their friends, and started a church of Romans who believed. About 15 years later, Emperor Claudius got mad at the Jews and kicked them out of Rome. For their own safety, Christian Jews left town, also. At that time, Christianity was still considered part of the Jewish religion. That left mostly Gentiles (non-Jews) in the Roman church. They got used to



not having the Jewish Christians around and might have even felt relieved not to have them.

The Jewish Christians tended to think they were more righteous (better at worshipping God) than the Gentiles. In their minds, the Bible was written by Jews and for Jews. Jesus was a Jew, and God had called the Jews His chosen people. After 5 years, it was safe for the Jews to come back to Rome. Suddenly, in the Roman church there were Jewish Christians again who still might have thought they were better than those who stayed behind. It was not a healthy situation.

While in **Corinth** (see on map) on his 3<sup>rd</sup> missionary journey, Paul heard what was happening with the Roman church. Though Paul was a Roman citizen, he had not yet been to Rome. He did, however, know quite a few of the Roman Christians and was planning to visit them. The two groups needed to get along. So he wrote a letter. We have that letter called “Romans.” It is a gift from God to us.

In his letter, Paul reminded both groups of Christians—those who had once been Jews and those from non-Jewish backgrounds—that they were **equal** before God. Neither was better than the other. Both had been equally guilty of sin. By faith in Christ, both had been made equally right with God. Even today, Christ makes us all—from different countries and traditions—equally right and acceptable to God by our faith in Christ. Let’s find out what that means.

## THE ANSWER: CHRIST IS OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS

In Romans chapters 1, 2 and the first part of three, Paul wrote that every person who has ever lived has sinned (done wrong things that displease God). Only Jesus never sinned.

**Read Romans 3:9-12.**

*Who is right with God (righteous) on their own or does anything good in God's eyes on their own?*

The phrase “to be right with God” means the same as the word “righteous.” When you are right with God or “righteous,” you are not separated from Him because of your sin. No one is right with God (righteous) or does anything good in God’s eyes on her own. That includes Jews as well as non-Jews. Only Jesus never sinned.

**Read Romans 3:19-20.**

*“The Law” refers to the rules the Jewish people followed to please God. Will following all the Jewish rules make anyone right with God?*

*Trying to follow religious rules makes us aware of what (verse 20)?*

**Read Romans 3:21-24.**

*How does the righteousness from God come to us (verse 22)?*

*Why is there no difference between people (verse 23)?*

*God declares all believers in Christ to be what (verse 24)?*

**Read 2 Corinthians 5:19-21.**

*God is no longer doing what (verse 19)?*

*What actions has God taken for us (verse 21)?*

Jesus Christ, who is completely righteous because He never sinned, died for our sin on the cross. When we believe, He takes our sin away and gives us His righteousness. This action of God's is often called "The Great Exchange" and makes us totally acceptable to God. "Justify/justified" means to be declared not guilty of sin. This works

equally for every person. In Romans, Christ is our righteousness as described in Romans 3:22.

*This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. Romans 3:22*

***How do we get right with God—by following rules or by faith in Christ?***

***How do we get right with God—by our own traditions & way of doing things or by faith in Christ?***

## THE JOY OF CHRIST IN YOUR LIFE

Christ is our righteousness. That's how everyone's Christian life begins.

*So if you put your trust in Christ to take away your sin, are you more or less right with God than...*

- Someone who is the top athlete in the world and is also a Christian?
- Peter, Paul, John, or any of the other apostles who lived in the first century ADs?
- Someone in professional ministry today like Beth Moore, Jennie Allen, or Ann Voscamp?
- Someone who spent years teaching persecuting Christians but has just accepted Christ?

The answer to the above questions is “neither.” Every believer is equally right with God and has equal righteousness from God. There is no distinction.

***Are you confident that His love for you is equal to His love for the most famous Christian you know?***

*God loves all believers equally—regardless of your looks, your career, your family, or your talents. His love for you is perfect.*

In Paul's letter to the Romans, **Christ is our righteousness**. Once you are made right with God by faith in Christ, you receive Christ's righteousness so that when God looks on you, He sees Christ in you. This is God's grace-gift overflowing to you.

*Pray: Thank Jesus for being your righteousness, making you right with God by faith so that you are loved by your God.*

### **DEEPER DISCOVERIES (OPTIONAL):**

Spend a few minutes each day reading parts of this wonderful letter. Reflect on what you learn about the joy of having Christ in your life.

**Read Romans chapter 8.**

**Read Romans chapter 12.**

**Read Romans chapter 13.**

**Read Romans chapter 14.**

**Read Romans chapter 15.**

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## The First Corinthians Letter

3

*but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the **wisdom** of God. (1 Corinthians 1:24 NIV)*

**Pray:** Lord Jesus, please teach me through this lesson.

### GRACE OVERFLOWING

- ✓ In ROMANS, **Christ is our righteousness**. Every believer is equally right with God and has equal righteousness from God.

### THE KEY QUESTION

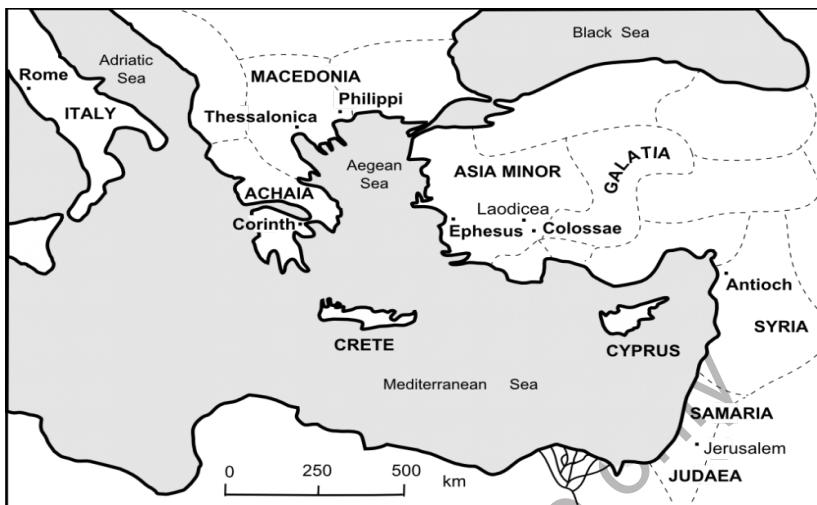
Are people only considered smart if they made top grades in school? Or can they be considered smart in other ways, such as designing structures and building prosperous businesses? Do you know some really smart people who make bad decisions about how to behave, how to choose friends, or how to treat other people?

Educating our minds helps us to gain knowledge about living in God's world. When we take knowledge we have learned and make good decisions about how to use that in our lives, we gain what is called **wisdom**. Wisdom is applying what you know to make good decisions for your life.

The key word for our lesson today is **wisdom**. The question to ask is, "Where do we get wisdom?"

### THE PEOPLE AND THEIR NEED

On his second missionary journey, Paul spent a lot of time in **Corinth**, a big city in southern Greece (see on map). At least 500,000 **Corinthians** lived there. Many of them were very wealthy and thought they were smart because their businesses prospered so much. The Corinthians were Greeks who thought their Greek writings and philosophy were the best in the world—the wisest stuff. They loved



listening to traveling teachers and great thinkers so they could learn the latest ideas. They thought that their great education could save them. Oh, they could talk Greek philosophy that made them sound very smart. But they weren't very smart in how they behaved. The Corinthians worshiped idols and were an immoral people, doing some very bad things and not caring who got hurt in the process.

Paul spent about 18 months teaching in Corinth, but he was not discussing philosophy like the other traveling teachers. Paul taught them that believing God's plan for Jesus to die on the cross and be raised to life again was true wisdom and the way to be saved. Many Corinthians believed and started a church there.

**Read Acts 18:1-11.**

*With whom did Paul stay and why?*

***Some of the Corinthian Jews rejected Paul's preaching. Who did respond with faith in the gospel (verses 7-8)?***

***What did Jesus do and say to encourage Paul to continue his work there (verses 9-10)?***

Paul preached Christ to the Jews before and after Silas and Timothy brought money given by the churches in northern Greece for his ministry. Aquila and Priscilla became his close friends and helped him with church planting for many years. Jesus encouraged him to keep on preaching the gospel in spite of the opposition. The Lord knew the hearts of all and that many would eventually believe there in Corinth.

A couple of years later while Paul was in Ephesus (see on map) on his third missionary journey, he learned that the Corinthians were having some problems living as God's people. They were fighting with each other and were bragging about how much knowledge they had. They were not living as followers of Christ should live. So Paul wrote them a letter, discussing the truth about knowledge and wisdom.

We have that letter called *First Corinthians*. It is a gift of God to us. Paul reminded them (and us) that God's wisdom was better than human education, and Christ is the wisdom of God. Look to Him to find out how to live the best kind of life. Let's see what Paul said.

## **THE ANSWER: CHRIST IS THE WISDOM OF GOD**

**Read 1 Corinthians 2:1-5.**

***What was the focus of Paul's preaching to the Corinthians (verse 2)?***

***Paul did not use or rely upon what strategy to preach the gospel (verses 1 and 4)?***

*Upon what did he rely instead (verse 4, end)?*

*What reason did he give for not using the flashiest words to influence them (verse 5)? See also 1 Corinthians 1:17.*

Paul preached Christ and Him crucified, the plain and simple gospel. He did not rely upon eloquence, superior wisdom, and wise and persuasive words, which were (and still are!) the usual practices of influential speakers. He came to them in humility. The phrase “fear and trembling” was commonly used to describe humility. Paul let the gospel message and the power of God displayed by the Spirit do their work. He stayed Christ-focused with his message.

In our world, we can be impressed with our own ideas. The Greeks were also impressed with their own ideas. But God wisely planned that the world would not know Him through its own ideas or its own wisdom (Romans 1:20). It is not education that separates someone from God. Sin separates humans from a holy God. We need something to take away our sin problem so we can have a relationship with God. God’s plan was that His Son Jesus would die for our sins and rise again from the dead. Through faith in Him, we can have forgiveness of all our sins and a relationship with God.

**Christ is the wisdom of God.** Paul stressed this in chapter 1 of his letter.

**Read 1 Corinthians 1:20-21.**

*What has God made foolish (verse 20)?*

*What could the world through its wisdom not do (verse 21, first part)?*

The foolishness of God in verse 21 refers to Jesus' death and resurrection. The Greeks thought that a savior letting himself get killed was a foolish idea and a sign of weakness. Paul wrote a whole chapter (chapter 15) describing how the resurrection of Jesus from the dead was true and absolutely necessary for our faith.

**Read 1 Corinthians 1:24-25.**

*What is Christ called in verse 24?*

*What is wiser than human wisdom and stronger than human strength (verse 25)?*

Paul told the Corinthians that God's plan was wiser and stronger than anything they could get from their own learning (verse 20). Their learning could not make their sin go away. They needed to trust in Jesus who died for their sins and then became alive again by the power of God. In 1 Corinthians, **Christ is the wisdom of God.**

**Read 1 Corinthians 1:26.**

*Of what does Paul remind the Corinthians about themselves and their own situation in life?*

**Read 1 Corinthians 1:27-31.**

*Why did God choose to do what the world considers weak and foolish (verse 29)? See also Ephesians 2:8-9.*

*What does Christ do for us (verse 30)?*

*What makes us right with God—our faith in Jesus or how smart we are (verse 30, first part)?*

Through our faith in Him, we get righteousness (being made right with God), holiness (being set apart from sin), and redemption (no longer under the power of sin).

Later in his letter (1 Corinthians 8:1), Paul tells the Corinthians that knowledge can make people proud. Someone who has had a lot of education, who has advanced in her career, or who is very talented can tend to brag about herself.

*If we must boast, we should we boast about what (verse 31)?*

*What do you think that would look like?*

Through Christ, who is the power of God and the wisdom of God (verse 24), we get what we need to know God which isn't available to us through human wisdom (verse 21). Christ gives us everything we need to live our lives the way that God desires for us. We learn the wisdom of God in the Bible. With this knowledge, we must choose to want God's wisdom and apply it to our lives.

## THE JOY OF CHRIST IN YOUR LIFE

Christ lives in us by way of His Spirit through whom we have access to the wisdom of Christ.

**Read 1 Corinthians 2:9-13.**

*What does God reveal to us through the Spirit (verse 9-10)?*

*What may we understand now (verse 12)?*

*How does the Spirit help us to understand (verse 13)?*

**Read 1 Corinthians 2:15-16.**

*The one with the Spirit can do what (verse 15) and why (verse 16)?*

Because we have the mind of Christ through the Spirit of Christ within us, we can know the things God has prepared for those who love Him. We may understand what God has freely given us because the Spirit enables us to understand the Scriptures. We can then judge or discern what is God's will for us in every area of life. That's wisdom.

*Remember that our definition of true wisdom is "applying what you know to make good decisions for your life."*

True wisdom means taking knowledge we have learned from Christ in the Bible about how to be holy and making good decisions about how to use that in our lives, while trusting in Christ's power to help us do it.

Let's see how this works in one area of our lives—choosing people to follow as friends or leaders.

**Read 1 Corinthians 15:33.**

*What advice is given to believers?*

Hanging out with the wrong people can lead to being influenced to sin by them. The Corinthians tended to follow the wrong kind of leaders. That is seen throughout 1 and 2 Corinthians.

*Consider the people with the most influence on you. Are they being led by Christ's wisdom given to us in the Bible or by the world's ideas of what is right? Do they mostly brag about Christ's work in their lives or themselves and their own efforts?*

If those with the most influence over you are more culture-focused than Christ-focused, ask the Lord to break off their influence and give new godly friends and leaders to follow.

**Christ is the wisdom of God**, greater than your human wisdom or strength. He will give you the wisdom to make good choices of friends who will not influence you to sin.

***Do you have confidence in Christ as the wisdom and power of God?***

*Pray; Thank God for His wisdom and plan to send Jesus to meet your need for wisdom in your life. Desire to please God with your life and choice of friends or influencers to follow. Ask Jesus to help you do this.*

### **DEEPER DISCOVERIES (OPTIONAL):**

Spend a few minutes each day reading parts of this wonderful letter. Reflect on what you learn about the joy of having Christ in your life.

**Read 1 Corinthians 1.**

**Read 1 Corinthians 2.**

**Read 1 Corinthians 12.**

**Read 1 Corinthians 13.**

**Read 1 Corinthians 15.**

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## The Second Corinthians Letter

*Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all **comfort**, who **comforts** us in all our troubles, so that we can **comfort** those in any trouble with the **comfort** we ourselves receive from God. (2 Corinthians 1:3-4 NIV)*

**Pray:** Lord Jesus, please teach me through this lesson.

### GRACE OVERFLOWING

- ✓ In ROMANS, **Christ is our righteousness**. Every believer is equally right with God and has equal righteousness from God.
- ✓ In 1 CORINTHIANS: **Christ is the wisdom of God**, greater than any human wisdom or strength.

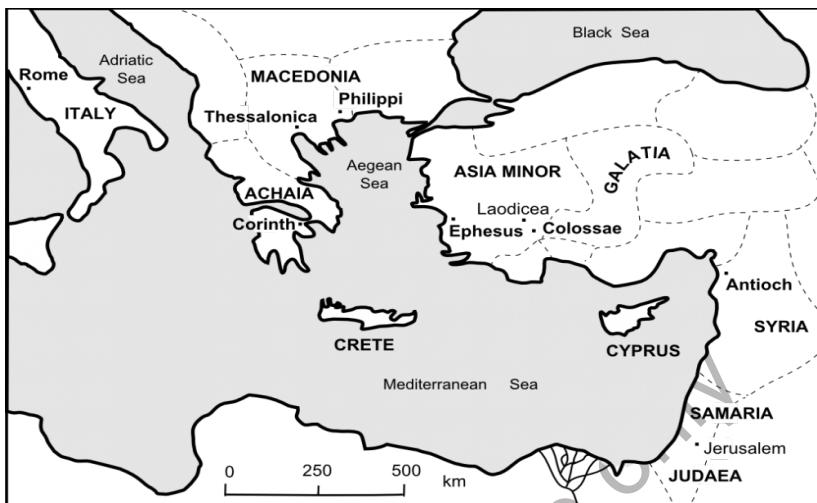
### THE KEY QUESTION

*When you are hurting deep inside or having a tough time, what helps you to get through it? What gives you comfort when you need it the most?*

As you might guess, the key word for our lesson today is **comfort**. The question to ask is: "How does Christ give us comfort to ease our hurt?"

### THE PEOPLE AND THEIR NEED

On his second missionary journey, Paul spent a lot of time in the big city of **Corinth** in southern Greece, (see the map). From the last lesson, you learned that Greek people were especially interested in listening to traveling teachers so they could learn the latest ideas. As Greeks, the



Corinthians loved getting knowledge and discussing ideas. But they worshiped idols and were a very immoral people, doing some very bad things and not caring who got hurt in the process. Paul spent a year and a half teaching about Jesus' death and resurrection in Corinth. Quite a few Corinthians believed, and a church was formed.

A couple of years after Paul left Corinth, he heard about some misbehavior in the church there and wrote a letter to them during his third missionary journey to encourage them to do a better job of loving one another.

After Paul wrote that letter called *First Corinthians* (Lesson 3), some false teachers crept into the church giving the Corinthians very wrong ideas about Jesus. They tried to turn the people against Paul. They said that God must not really be with Paul because Paul was going through some troubles such as getting beaten and thrown in jail. They said that God would never let hurtful things happen to someone He truly loved and who was living the right way.

Paul knew better. So while he was in **Macedonia** (see on the map), he wrote this letter we call *Second Corinthians* to the people living not only in the city of Corinth but also in the whole surrounding area of southern Greece called Achaia. It is a gift from God to us. In it, Paul said to them and to us that Christians who are loved by God will suffer some troubles in this world, but **Christ is our comforter** when we hurt.

## THE ANSWER: CHRIST IS OUR COMFORTER

**Read 2 Corinthians 1:3-5.**

*How is God described in verse 3?*

*What does God do for us when we have trouble and why (verse 4)?*

*Through whom does our comfort abound (verse 5)?*

*What does it mean to comfort or be a comforter for someone?*

In 2 Corinthians, Christ is our comforter. We experience the sufferings of this world as Christ did, and we receive the comfort of Christ when we need it (verse 5). Christ comforts us in ALL our troubles (verse 4). That includes those that just seem to happen to us and those we cause because of wrong choices we make. It also includes those that result from our living out our faith. Paul had experienced the comfort of Christ many times. Let's see what he shares with the Corinthians.

**Read 2 Corinthians 1:8-11.**

*What did Paul and his companions experience (verse 8)?*

***What did Paul say is the purpose for God letting us go through hurtful times (verse 9)?***

***What is one thing you can do to help someone who is having trouble (verse 11, first part)?***

***Why will many people give thanks (verse 11, second part)?***

In John 16:33, Jesus said to His followers that we will have troubles in this world. In those troubles, God wants us to learn to not depend on ourselves but to depend on Him and His great power, which raised Jesus from the dead. He wants us to put our hope in Him and count on His work to deliver us when we are in the midst of troubles.

**Read 2 Corinthians 4:6-9.**

***Paul and his friends experienced what troubles (verses 7-9)?***

***In those troubles, they were not what?***

*What did they have working on their behalf (verses 6 & 7)*

**Read 2 Corinthians 4:16-18.**

*In your troubles, why should you not lose heart (verse 16)?*

*How can you view those troubles (verse 17)?*

**Read 2 Corinthians 6:3-7.**

*What are some “light and momentary” troubles that Paul experienced (verse 5)?*

*What good things had Paul learned or experienced through his troubles (verses 6 & 7)?*

*Who gives us the power to stand firm and keep doing right during our troubles?*

God's empowering presence through the Holy spirit gives us the ability to stand firm, keep doing right, and continue serving God during our troubles. All believers have the Holy Spirit living within our spirits. You can be assured He is there. And none of us can endure troubles without depending on the Spirit's power inside of us to help us get through it without wanting to do the wrong things or just wanting to quit. It is God's power in us that makes us strong during those times. We can learn good things as we trust in Him just as Paul did. That's a way Christ comforts us.

*What good things have you learned through your difficult experiences? How has Christ been your comfort at those times?*

### **Read 2 Corinthians 12:8-10.**

Three times, Paul asked the Lord to take away one of his troubles. In the New Testament, "the Lord" refers to Jesus Christ.

*What was the Lord's answer to this man whom He loved dearly (verse 9, first part)?*

*What was Paul's response to Christ's decision (verse 9, second part)?*

*What was the result of that choice (verse 10)?*

Jesus did not take away one of the hurts that Paul was experiencing. He said that His grace to Paul was sufficient for Paul to manage any weakness because the Lord knew it drove Paul to rely upon Him more. The same is true of you. Paul's response was to rejoice in anything that makes Christ stronger in him.

Consider anything in your life right now that is very tough, sad, or otherwise painful.

***Do you believe that God loves you even though He allows you to go through that pain?***

***How might what Christ said regarding Paul bring comfort to you experiencing pain in your life?***

Remember that the best and most loving parents still must let their children hurt sometimes (cutting teeth, learning to ride a bike, gaining and losing friends) in order for them to live as adults. God loves you even more than the best parents could every day. He wants you to learn how to live as His child, depending on Him for the comfort and strength that flows from God's grace for you.

*Human parents raise their children to be less dependent on them and more independent. God raises His children to be less independent of Him and more dependent on Him.*

Whatever makes us rely on Him more is good for us, even if it hurts.

## THE JOY OF CHRIST IN YOUR LIFE

### Read 2 Corinthians 5:1-5.

*What is the promise to all Christians once life in this body (our earthly tent) ends (verse 1)?*

Christ comforts us in many ways. You already learned in this study that He renews us on the inside even as we are wasting away on the outside (2 Corinthians 4). We experience suffering in our earthly tent (physical body). But believers can have confident hope in what Christ has promised for our future after we leave this body. We will have eternal life in a new body that will never hurt or die again. Isn't that great news that is also comforting?

Christians who are loved by God will suffer some troubles in this world, but Christ is our comforter when we hurt.

*Consider those areas of your life where you are needing Christ's comfort right now. Will you let Christ be your comforter as you endure that pain and suffering?*

Often God uses our Christian brothers and sisters to share Christ's comfort with us.

*With whom have you shared your pain? Have you allowed them to pray for you? To assist you? To give you comfort?*

**Pray:** Turn to Christ for comfort in your pain. Ask Him to give you strength to do what is right in the midst of your troubles. Thank Him for His faithfulness and kindness to work in your life.

For further study of 2 Corinthians, see *The God-Dependent Woman Bible Study* at melaniemewton.com.

### **DEEPER DISCOVERIES (OPTIONAL):**

Spend a few minutes each day reading parts of this wonderful letter. Reflect on what you learn about the joy of having Christ in your life.

**Read 2 Corinthians chapter 4.**

**Read 2 Corinthians chapter 5.**

**Read 2 Corinthians chapter 6.**

**Read 2 Corinthians chapter 11.**

**Read 2 Corinthians chapter 12.**

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## The Letter to the Galatians

*My brothers and sisters, you were chosen to be free. But don't use your **freedom** as an excuse to live in sin. Instead, serve one another in love. (Galatians 5:13 NIRV)*

**Pray:** Lord Jesus, please teach me through this lesson.

### GRACE OVERFLOWING

- ✓ In ROMANS, **Christ is our righteousness**. Every believer is equally right with God and has equal righteousness from God.
- ✓ In 1 CORINTHIANS: **Christ is the wisdom of God**, greater than any human wisdom or strength.
- ✓ In 2 CORINTHIANS: **Christ is our comforter** when we hurt.

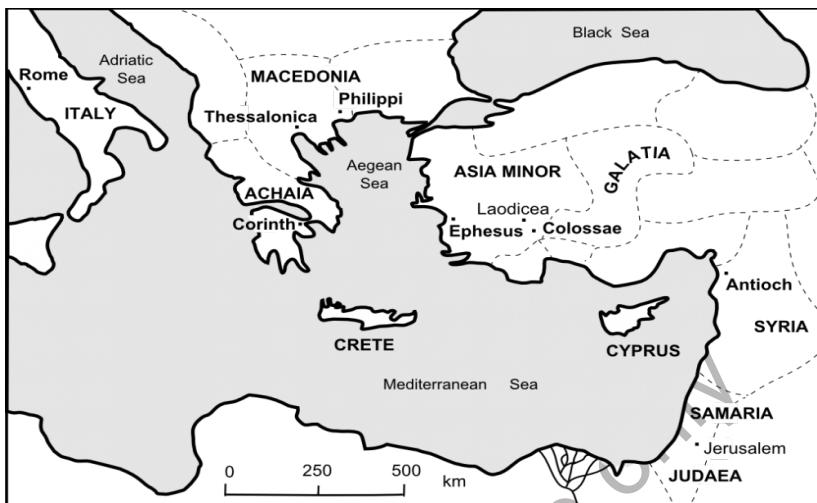
### THE KEY QUESTION

Consider being in an art class with a teacher who says art begins with a blank sheet of paper and lots of different colors. Then, you paint whatever your heart desires on the paper. That art teacher moves away. You get a new teacher who says art should be done on a paper with a big square on it. You can only use 2 colors she chooses, and whatever you paint must stay inside the lines of the square. Would you like that? Which type of painting gives you more freedom and is more enjoyable?

The key word for our lesson today is **freedom**. The questions to ask are, "Freedom from what and freedom to do what?"

### THE PEOPLE AND THEIR NEED

On his first missionary journey, Paul and Barnabas visited four towns in an area called **Galatia** (see the map). It is in the center of modern Turkey. The people who lived there were called **Galatians** and were mostly Greeks and Romans who did not know God. Some Jews lived there as well. Whenever Paul visited a town, he would go to the local synagogue. Jews met there to worship God every Saturday like we do at churches in our towns. Greeks and Romans who wanted to worship



the Jewish God joined them there. As a traveling teacher, Paul was invited to speak to everyone at the synagogue meeting. So he gave them the good news about Jesus.

In each town, a few Jews believed Paul's message about Jesus, but it was mostly the Greeks and Romans who listened to Paul and trusted in Jesus to take away their sins. The new Christians started meeting together with Paul who taught them about Jesus and their new freedom to love and serve God because their sins were totally forgiven. This made the Jewish synagogue leaders jealous because the Greeks and Romans were becoming Christians instead of becoming Jews! So the Jewish leaders chased Paul out of every town. In one town, they tried to kill him by throwing large rocks at him (called "stoning" in the Bible). He was badly hurt, but thankfully he did not die. Bravely, Paul went back to each town, appointing leaders for the new churches. Then, he and Barnabas headed back to Antioch to report back to the church there and praise God together. You can read about the founding of these churches in Acts 13:13-14:25.

Back in Antioch, Paul heard that other teachers had gone to those Galatian towns and told the new Christians that God's gift of Jesus was not enough to get rid of sin! The bad teachers said the Galatian Christians also had to follow "the Law" of Moses in addition to believing in Jesus. Only by following the Law every day could anyone be truly forgiven by God for their sin. For example, you had to eat Jewish food. No ham or shrimp. You had to wash your dishes by the rules. Following

that Law is like having to paint inside the square instead of all over the page. The people had become confused. So Paul wrote them a letter and explained to them the freedom they had in Christ and how not to give up on that.

We have that letter called Galatians. It is a gift from God to us. Paul said to them and to us that in Christ, there is freedom. What kind of freedom? Let's find out.

## THE ANSWER: CHRIST IS OUR FREEDOM

*Freedom from works to earn or maintain God's acceptance*

**Read Galatians 2:15-16.**

*How do we become right with God (justified) and have our sins forgiven—by following a lot of special rules (as in the Jewish Law) or by faith in Jesus only?*

During the time of Moses (as described in the Old Testament books of *Exodus* and *Leviticus*), God gave the Jewish people His laws for life in His land. Some were for running the civil government of Israel. Some were moral rules about how people should treat one another. Those have never changed and continue for Christians. Most of the laws were the religious laws (circumcision, sacrifices, staying clean versus unclean). The Jews were saved by faith in God. But they had to follow those laws to get ongoing forgiveness for sins and maintain a right relationship with God. The religious laws are what Paul was referencing in Galatians. God's laws taught how sinful they were and how much they needed God's mercy. They also taught what holiness is and how they could live their lives God's way, just like the way a parent or guardian trains a child to become a responsible adult. The Law was in charge until Christ came. Christians are no longer under its control (Galatians 3:24-25).

The same is true about human-created religious rules that someone might impose upon you. Those would include the addition of any other conditions to faith in Christ in order to gain and maintain acceptance from God, and even how to stay saved. It is taking your faith in Christ and adding other things you must do or not do for God to accept you

and let you keep your salvation. You can recognize it as “faith plus” good works or “faith plus” following church rules. It is not a reference to what is clearly taught in the New Testament about what sin is and what living a life that pleases God looks like

*Do you recognize any “faith plus \_\_\_\_\_” teachings in your life so you would remain acceptable to God?*

*Why do we tend to submit to such unbiblical teaching?*

In Galatians, **Christ is our freedom** from the Mosaic law and freedom from works to earn or maintain our salvation.

**Read Galatians 5:1.**

*Christ has set us free so we should not do what?*

A yoke of slavery refers to chains and bondage. Paul told the Galatian Christians that the bad teachers had put chains on them to make them slaves to the Jewish Law. Broken chains would make a good symbol for this freedom that Christ gives all believers.

**Read Galatians 3:1-5.**

*After beginning by means of the Spirit, what were they doing now (verse 3)?*

**Read Galatians 3:26-27.**

*By faith in Christ, you are now what and clothed with what?*

**Read Galatians 5:2-4.**

*When you chain yourself to works to maintain your salvation or standing with God, from whom are you alienating yourself?*

By faith, you are a child of God and clothed with Christ. You receive the Spirit as assurance of your life with God. Yet, you can be drawn into giving up your freedom and depending on works instead. Paul said you have alienated yourself from Christ and fallen away from grace (driven off course). To alienate yourself means to separate yourself from what you already have in Christ and choose to live your own way. You don't lose the benefits of being clothed with Christ as a child of God. Instead, you are ignoring them. Consider the parable of the prodigal son in Luke 15. He left the privileged life of his father's house (alienating or separating himself) and lived on his own efforts (driven off course). Never did he stop being the father's son. And he chose to go back to enjoy the life he had been given with his father.

Christ fulfilled all the religious requirements in the Mosaic Law that make us right with God. As you learned in Lesson Two, God offers us a permanent right relationship with Him based on our faith in Christ. Salvation is based on faith in Christ alone not by works. Paul's emphasis on freedom expressed in this letter fueled the Protestant Reformation, which helped to bring God's grace and a love for God's Word to millions around the world. We are to stay Christ-focused and Christ-dependent, "not by works, so that no one can boast" (Ephesians 2:9).

**Christ is our freedom from works** to earn or maintain God's acceptance. Christ is also our freedom from the desires of the flesh.

*Freedom from the desires of the flesh*

**Read Galatians 5:13-15.**

***In your freedom, what are you to do and not to do (verse 13)?***

***What should govern your freedom?***

Thinking about artwork again. Even if you are given a blank piece of paper and lots of paint colors, you are still not free to do some things. You aren't free to paint the floor or someone else's paper. Those things would affect someone else negatively. In the same way, we are not free to do anything we want with our lives. God still wants us to love one another, not kill anyone, not lie, not steal, not cheat, and not be hateful. Those rules about how to live are still good for us to follow. God gives us help to do that.

**Read Galatians 5:16-21.**

***What freedom does the Spirit give to us (verse 16)?***

***What conflict is ever-present within us (verse 17)?***

***What are the evident behaviors when the flesh (sinful nature) has control of us (verses 19-21)?***

The flesh is that part of the human spirit that is in rebellion against God. It comes from that part of the personality where sin dwells. That's why some translations use the phrase "sinful nature (NIV)" to describe the flesh. We don't know what it is, but we know how it works. It sends messages to the mind that are in conflict with the Spirit. When the flesh has control of us, the resulting behavior is obvious and ugly!

When you trusted in Christ as your Savior, the Holy Spirit came to live inside of you. You have been released and are no longer in bondage to sin and guilt. You are released from the power of the flesh to make you gratify its sinful desires. You have become the possession of a loving, merciful God and can live in the security of your freedom from bondage to sin. You have a new master now with greater power living inside of you—the Spirit of God Himself. He enables you to live in a way that pleases God.

Sadly, the flesh does not improve or change its nature over time as long as we are in our bodies. At the moment of salvation, we are born again of the Spirit. Our bodies are not born again, and our souls (mind, emotions, and will) are not instantly transformed. While the flesh doesn't improve, our choices can change over time as we learn to live by the Spirit.

God isn't interested in your conformity, though. He is more interested in your heart behavior. Consider the story of a little boy who was standing in his chair. His mother told him to sit down. The little boy sat down, but he told his mother that while he was sitting on the outside he was still standing up on the inside. That's the flesh. God wants you to choose to do the right things because your heart wants to obey Him. Paul referenced loving others (Galatians 5:13-14).

***Consider when it is hard to love someone or be kind to someone. How should you respond and why?***

***Who gives you the power to love someone or be kind to someone when it is hard?***

*The Holy Spirit works from the inside out, giving us love for others from our hearts.*

We can ask God's Spirit to help us love others, especially when it is hard. The Bible calls that bearing fruit. In Galatians, **Christ is our freedom from the desires of the flesh.**

## THE JOY OF CHRIST IN YOUR LIFE

Read Galatians 5:22-23.

*When you are living in freedom from the desires of the flesh, what will be evident in your life?*

Claiming your freedom from the flesh and living by the Spirit produces fruit evident to all, even more than the ones listed here. His fruit makes our lives reflect the life of Christ in us.

In Galatians, **Christ is our freedom** from works to earn God's acceptance and freedom from the desires of the flesh.

*What is your heart response to this gift of freedom God has given to you in Christ?*

**Pray:** Thank God for the gift of His Spirit to lead your heart to do the right things. Ask Jesus to help you be more intentional to love someone or be kind to someone this week when it is hard to do so.

## **DEEPER DISCOVERIES (OPTIONAL):**

Spend a few minutes each day reading parts of this wonderful letter. Reflect on what God's marvelous grace offers to you. This is the joy of having Christ in your life.

**Read Galatians chapter 1.**

**Read Galatians chapter 2.**

**Read Galatians chapter 3.**

**Read Galatians chapter 4.**

**Read Galatians chapter 5.**

**Read Galatians chapter 6.**

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## The Letter to the Ephesians

*God placed all things under Christ's **rule**. He appointed him to be **ruler** over everything for the church. (Ephesians 1:22 NIRV)*

**Pray:** Lord Jesus, please teach me through this lesson.

### GRACE OVERFLOWING

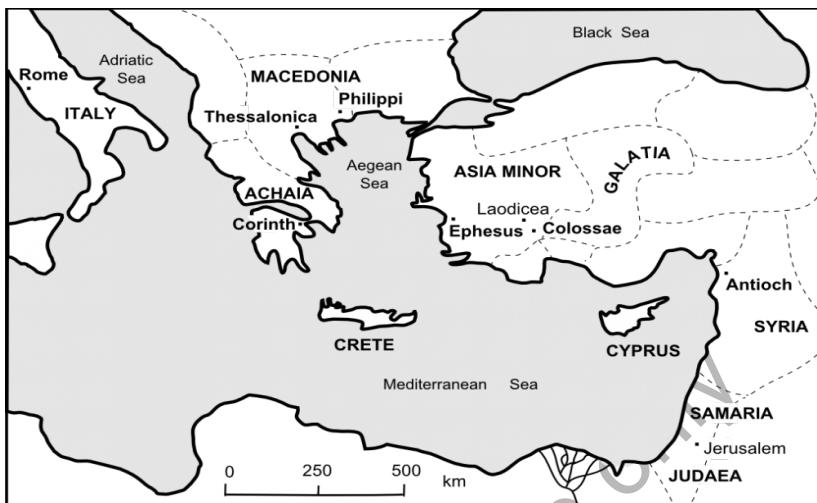
- ✓ In ROMANS: **Christ is our righteousness**. Every believer is equally right with God and has equal righteousness from God.
- ✓ In 1 CORINTHIANS: **Christ is the wisdom of God**, greater than any human wisdom or strength.
- ✓ In 2 CORINTHIANS: **Christ is our comforter** when we hurt.
- ✓ In GALATIANS: **Christ is our freedom** from works to earn God's acceptance and freedom from the power of sin.

### THE KEY QUESTION

Some people wear things that they think gives them good luck—a pair of socks, a special shirt, a rabbit's foot. What about you? Do you possess anything that you think gives you good luck? Why do you consider that item to be lucky? Do you think that item really has power to give you good luck and success?

Likewise, some things are associated with causing bad luck—walking under a ladder, breaking a mirror, or jinxing a pitcher throwing a no-hitter. But do you think those things really have power to give you or others bad luck?

The key word for our lesson today is **power**. The question to ask is, "What kind of power gives us success in life?"



## THE PEOPLE AND THEIR NEED

On his third missionary journey, Paul spent time in **Ephesus**, a large city of 250,000 people (see the map). The people living there were called **Ephesians** and were obsessed with power, especially witchcraft and magic. They were very afraid of evil spirits and bad luck so they clung to anything that would keep them safe—lucky words written on socks or recited aloud to chase evil spirits away, necklaces with power to give them success when playing sports, and books of magic spells to keep them safe. Ephesus was a mess!

Paul spent almost three years with the Ephesians, teaching classes every day to those who wanted to learn a new way to live. And God did “extra-miraculous” miracles through Paul. (You can read about this in Acts 19:8-20.) God showed them that He was **more powerful** than their magicians, lucky charms, and magic words. God was more powerful than the evil spirits or any substitute they might trust for protection against bad luck. God knew what they really needed—Himself!

Many Ephesians trusted in Jesus for their protection. Then, they got rid of their substitutes with a big bonfire to burn their sorcerer’s manuals, lucky socks, and magic necklaces. They attended Paul’s classes then spread out and shared the good news about Jesus throughout the whole area, establishing churches all over the place. Seven years later, while Paul was a prisoner in Rome, he wrote a letter to the church in Ephesus, and churches in the surrounding area. He reminded them that no matter

how hard life gets, Jesus Christ is the powerful head of the Church—more powerful than any substitute for success in life. Paul told them that Christ will return someday to rule over earth and defeat all evil. And Paul told them Christ's power makes it possible for them to live God's way today and not be afraid. The Holy Spirit guided Paul as he wrote this letter so it is a gift from God to us. From Ephesians, you can know that **the treasure you have in Jesus Christ is more powerful and valuable than anything you could substitute for Him.**

## THE ANSWER: CHRIST IS THE POWERFUL HEAD OF THE CHURCH

Read Ephesians 1:13-14.

*When the Ephesians believed the good news, what did God give to them and does to us as well (verse 13, second part)?*

Read Ephesians 1:19-23.

*In verses 19-20, what does Paul want the Ephesians to know about the might of God's power?*

God's power is more powerful than any substitutes you could rely upon for success in life. And His power is at work **for** us who believe.

*Christ is in heaven at the right hand of God the Father. Over what does Christ have authority (verse 21)?*

*Does that mean Christ is ruler over even the evil spirits? Is He ruler over anything that causes bad luck?*

The phrase “all rule and authority, power and dominion” in verse 21 includes all spiritual powers—the good angels, the demons (evil spirits), and Satan himself. “Every title that can be given” may refer to those names used in magical formulas to control evil spirits. Demons are behind every reference to evil spirits.

Demons are angels created at the beginning of creation. The Bible teaches that one angel rebelled against God and took 1/3 of the angels with him. We know that rebel leader as Satan, also called “the devil,” and those with him in rebellion against God are known as “demons.” Satan and his demonic forces do everything they can to thwart the good purposes of God—gaining control over people through deception, counterfeits, fear, manipulation, and torment.

In His life on earth, Jesus as the Son of God demonstrated that He had greater power over all the spirit world—the good angels who served Him plus Satan and his demonic forces. The resurrected Jesus, in heaven once again, is still more powerful than Satan and any demon. Jesus Christ has the power of a great king who is king above all other powers and kings.

*Over what else does Christ have authority (verses 22-23)?*

In Ephesians, Christ is the powerful head of the Church. He is the ruler, the head who fills every need in every way. The Church includes everyone who has already trusted in Christ for salvation. **With Christ ruling over believers and living in believers through His Spirit, there isn’t any need for lucky socks, magic words, or special charms to keep bad things from happening to you as a Christian.**

**Read Ephesians 2:1-5.**

*What other powers are influencing us (vv. 1-3)?*

***What do you learn about God in v. 4?***

***What does God do with His power (v. 5)?***

**Read Ephesians 2:6-9.**

***Where does God place us as believers?***

***Why does God save us by grace through faith (v. 9)?***

In the mind and plan of God, all Christians are seated with Christ in heaven under His powerful authority. We are not under Christ's feet like all the angelic powers. We are seated within His authority over anything that could come against us.

People in a western culture don't consciously admit to being afraid of evil spirits like the Ephesians were and like some parts of our world still are. But we do fear bad things happening and try to manage supernatural or cosmic power in such a way that results are "virtually guaranteed" in our favor. As a culture, and really as humans everywhere, we seek anything that will satisfy the spiritual hunger in our souls and "guarantee" successful living.

Paul basically said this, "Why trust in any substitute power which can never be as powerful as Jesus Christ Himself to help you live a good life?" Jesus' power is available to every believer. Jesus Christ is living inside you through His Holy Spirit. **Christ is the powerful head of the Church.** His power works **in us** to help us live God's way and **for us** to protect us from anything evil. Let's look at both of those.

## **1. CHRIST'S POWER WORKING IN YOU:**

**Read Ephesians 3:16-20.**

Paul prayed for the Ephesians (and us!) to know this power working within Christians.

*What does Christ's power within you help you to know  
(verses 18-19)?*

*Is there a limit to Christ's power working in you (verse 20)?*

Christ wants you to know, really know, how much He loves you. He fills you with Himself. His power is immeasurably more than you can even imagine. And Christ's power works **in you** to help you know how much He loves you. Christ's immeasurably great power is also working within you to help you live God's way.

*As you read the following verses, answer this question,  
“What godly behaviors require Christ’s power in you and  
why?”*

**Ephesians 4:2—**

**Ephesians 4:15—**

**Ephesians 4:29—**

**Ephesians 4:32—**

**Ephesians 5:20—**

You need Christ's power working within you because those godly behaviors are hard to do. You can't consistently do them on your own. Christ's power enables you to live God's way as you trust Him to work in and through you. By faith, you can access His power to help us.

## **2. CHRIST'S POWER WORKING FOR YOU:**

We will have trouble in this world because evil still exists until Christ returns. Some challenges that come against us can't be explained by selfish human behavior as much as by an unseen enemy controlling people or situations. These are spiritual battles against evil forces working against us. We can have victory during spiritual battles through the power of Jesus Christ.

Paul told the Ephesians and us how to overcome bad things by trusting in the power of Christ to hold onto us and protect us. We are given God's very armor to wear during the battle. In Ephesians chapter 6, Paul described God's armor, using the image of a Roman soldier fully prepared for battle. All of this is ours. We just need to use it.

**Read Ephesians 6:10-18.**

*Why do you need the full armor of God (verses 11-12)?*

*What pieces of armor have you been given (verse 14-17)?*

*In verse 18, what privilege have you been given to communicate with your commanding general (God)?*

For a battle-ready Roman soldier, all the pieces of armor worked together to protect the soldier during battle. The same is true for you. The soldier's belt held his weapons so your belt is the truth of God's Word. Your breastplate is forgiveness of sin and Christ's righteousness covering you and protecting you from the devil's accusations about your sin. Your shoes are the truth of the gospel that you can share with others so they can have peace with God, too. Your shield is your faith in the truth that God always loves you and is always with you. Your helmet is your secure salvation by faith in Christ. Your sword is God's Word and the Spirit of God working in you.

Prayer is your freedom to talk to God in fearful situations and trust Him to do amazing things on your behalf. Nothing is too big or impossible with prayer because God can do anything that He wants to do. He will answer the way He knows is best. So pray in the Spirit, by the Spirit, and through the Spirit—God's empowering presence within you. Prayer is an act of faith in Jesus as the greater power.

*What are you able to do with God's armor (verses 11, 13, 14)?*

***What would it look like to stand firm?***

***What would it look like to not stand firm?***

***What are you also able to do (verse 16)?***

***What could the “flaming arrows of the evil one” coming against you look like?***

The armor that Christ provides for you isn't real armor. It is things you KNOW to be true—spiritual armor. Christ gives you this armor the moment you believed in Him. He did this so you can stand strong whenever you are attacked or tested. You just need to acknowledge it and use it.

Flaming arrows thrown at you are anything meant to deceive you, to make you self-sufficient rather than God-dependent, to make you feel helpless and hopeless, and to make you rely on substitute powers. What God has already provided is completely sufficient to extinguish all those flaming arrows thrown at you. By faith in Jesus as the greater power, the fiery darts of deception, doubt, despair, mistrust, hopelessness, and helplessness will be extinguished as they hit your firm faith in Jesus.

By using this armor, you learn to trust in Christ's power rather than in your own. Stand firm in the fact that you are a child of God, one of His

saints, dearly loved and accepted by God. You are in Christ. Nothing or no one is more powerful than He is. He is **for you!**

*Are you confident in that?*

## THE JOY OF CHRIST IN YOUR LIFE

Christ is the powerful head of the church. His power works **in us** to help us live God's way and **for us** to protect us from anything evil. You can trust in Christ's power to protect you and bring good into your life rather than any substitute you might consider substituting for Him.

*Christ's power makes it possible for us to live God's way TODAY and not be afraid.*

*What things have you been relying upon for power in your life? Are you willing to give up those substitutes and rely on Jesus' power alone to bring success in your spiritual life?*

**Pray:** Ask Jesus to help you know how much God dearly and deeply loves you. Then, choose to trust in Christ's power working within you to make a difference in your life.

For further study of Ephesians, see *Seek the Treasure Bible Study* at [melaniemewton.com](http://melaniemewton.com).

### DEEPER DISCOVERIES (OPTIONAL):

Spend a few minutes each day reading parts of this wonderful letter. Reflect on what you learn about the joy of having Christ in your life.

**Read Ephesians chapter 1.**

**Read Ephesians chapter 2.**

**Read Ephesians chapter 3.**

**Read Ephesians chapter 4.**

**Read Ephesians chapter 5.**

**Read Ephesians chapter 6.**

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# The Letter to the Philippians

*And my God will **supply** your every need according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:19 NET)*

**Pray:** Lord Jesus, please teach me through this lesson.

## GRACE OVERFLOWING

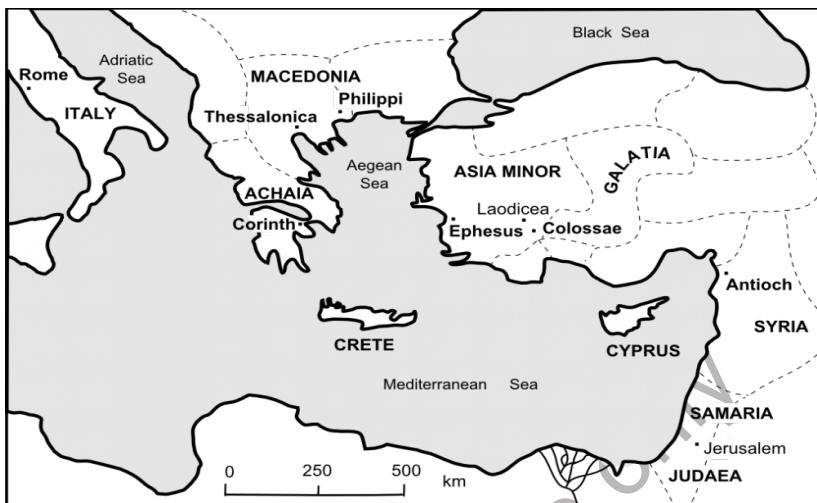
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- ✓ In EPHESIANS: **Christ is the powerful head of the church**, working in us to help us live God's way and for us to protect us from anything evil.

## THE KEY QUESTION

*Recall a time when you had a need, and God supplied what you needed through someone.*

Did you thank the person who supplied what you needed? Everyone needs to write thank-you notes once in a while. Receiving a thank-you note can make anyone feel appreciated.

The key word for this lesson is **supply**. The questions to ask are: "How does God supply what we need? How do we say thank-you?" The letter to the Philippians is a thank-you note from Paul to the Philippian church because they supplied Paul with something he needed.



## THE PEOPLE AND THEIR NEED

On his second missionary journey while Paul was in Troas (west coast of Turkey), God showed him a vision of a man from Macedonia saying, "Come over and help us." Paul, Silas, Timothy and their new friend Luke (who wrote *Luke* and *Acts*) traveled across the Aegean Sea to **Philippi** (see the map).

At first, Paul shared about Jesus with a group of women (one named Lydia) who worshiped God and met together for prayer. They believed and were joined by many other new believers who responded to Paul's preaching during the weeks he spent in Philippi. Then he and Silas were thrown into prison. That night while they were singing and praising God, an earthquake happened that loosened all the prisoners' chains. But no one escaped. The prison guard was so grateful that he and his whole family chose to believe in Jesus, too. The new community of Philippian believers met in Lydia's house. You can read about his time there in Acts 16.

Paul was forced to leave Philippi. Yet, the church continued to show their love for him. The Philippians sent money often to supply Paul's needs as a missionary. After his third missionary journey, Paul went to Jerusalem where he was arrested and sent to **Rome** as a prisoner. While there, the Philippians sent one of their own people to encourage Paul and to bring money to supply his needs even though they were

very poor. So Paul wrote them a letter, thanking them for their gift (among other beautiful things written in it about Christ).

We have that letter called *Philippians*. It is a gift from God to us. Paul said to them and to us that **Christ is the supplier of our needs**. Let's see what he means.

## THE ANSWER: CHRIST IS THE SUPPLIER OF EVERY NEED

**Read Philippians 1:3-8.**

*Why did Paul thank God for the Philippians (verse 5)?*

*What confidence did Paul have about them (verse 6)?*

*How did Paul feel about them and why (verse 7)?*

Paul thanked God for the Philippians for many reasons. Paul loved them because they were fellow believers in Christ. He was thankful to God because of their partnership with him in the spread of the gospel. Paul's joy about the Philippians was enhanced knowing that God would finish the good work He had already begun in them as believers.

**Read Philippians 1:9-11.**

*What did Paul ask God to do for them (verse 9)?*

*Why (verse 10)?*

*The result would be what (verse 11)?*

**Read Philippians 2:13.**

*God works in you to do what?*

Paul asked God to supply more of their spiritual needs. He prayed that God would make their love abound even more than what they already had. He also prayed for God to give them more knowledge and insight so they would be able to discern what is good and what is not good. The result would be that they would be pure and filled with the righteousness of Christ. Paul knew that God would work in them in such a way that they would want to do God's will and purpose in their lives.

**Read Philippians 2:25-30.**

*Whom did the Philippians send to Paul and why (verse 25)?*

*What else do you learn about Epaphroditus (verses 26-30)?*

Besides money, Epaphroditus likely brought news about the church as well as hands and feet to help Paul in his imprisonment. He may have also brought encouraging words to Paul. Paul appreciated what the Philippians did.

**Read Philippians 4:6-10.**

*What does God supply to you as needed (verses 6-7)?*

*What or who else does God supply (verse 10)?*

**Read Philippians 4:10-14.**

*Why did Paul rejoice (verses 10 and 14)?*

*What had Paul learned about living on whatever Christ supplied to him (verses 11-12)?*

*Who gives you strength to be content with His supply (verse 13)?*

Paul rejoiced because the Philippians could do what they wanted to do. Christ supplied what was needed to take care of Paul through them. He had learned to be content with whatever Christ supplied to him and how

to live within whatever means he had been given. He could do that because of Christ's strength in him, enabling him to do so.

**Read Philippians 4:15-19.**

*What do you learn about the Philippian church (verse 15-16)?*

*How did Paul view their gifts (verse 17-18)?*

*According to verse 19, what does God do?*

**Read 2 Corinthians 8:2 and 5.**

*What more do you learn about the Philippians?*

The Philippians had been financially supporting Paul's ministry since they first knew him. This was before any other churches joined to help Paul. We learn from 2 Corinthians 8:2 that they gave joyfully and generously out of their extreme poverty. Christ supplied Paul's needs through their sacrifice. And he was grateful. He was also confident that God would supply their needs as well.

## THE JOY OF CHRIST IN YOUR LIFE

In Philippians, Christ is the supplier of every need. And Christ often supplies the needs for one person through the generosity of another as God has supplied their needs. That's what He did for Paul through the Philippians. Christ was supplying the Philippians' needs so they could help Paul. All was given with love. Needs can be things other than money such as food, help, and encouragement. So you can see why I called this letter a "thank-you" letter from Paul to the Philippians.

*What are some ways that friends have been there for you when you really needed help?*

*How do you feel when you need help and receive it?*

Paul said he and the church at Philippi were partners (Philippians 1:4-5). Their common goal was the spread of the gospel. With your money, time and talents, you may partner with your local church, a mission agency, and/or a missionary for the purpose of spreading the gospel, making disciples, and growing God's kingdom on the earth.

**Christ is the supplier of every need** of yours so that you can help others.

*Pray: Do you know someone who needs help today? Ask Jesus to show you how you can supply a need for them today in His name. Thank God for supplying your needs so you can help others.*

For further study of Philippians, see the *Knowing Jesus...Knowing Joy! Bible Study* at melaniemewton.com.

## **DEEPER DISCOVERIES (OPTIONAL):**

Spend a few minutes each day reading parts of this wonderful letter.  
Reflect on what you learn about the joy of having Christ in your life.

**Read Philippians chapter 1.**

**Read Philippians chapter 2.**

**Read Philippians chapter 3.**

**Read Philippians chapter 4.**

## The Letter to the Colossians

*For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. (Colossians 1:16 NIV)*

**Pray:** Lord Jesus, please teach me through this lesson.

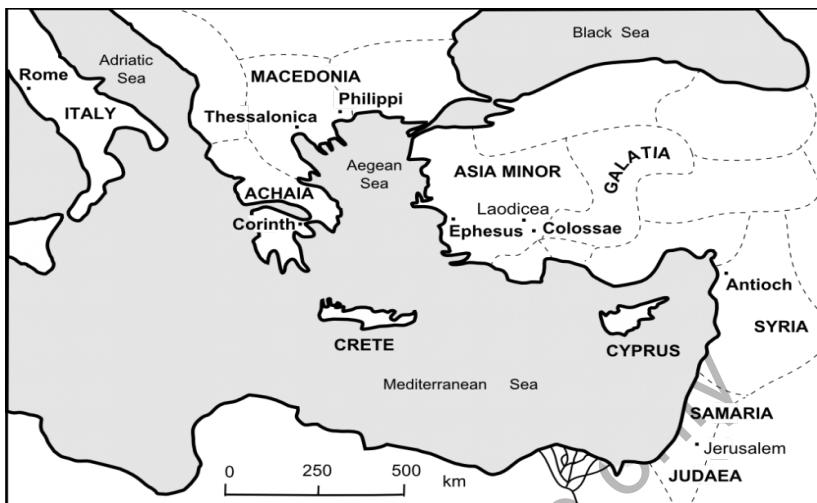
### GRACE OVERFLOWING

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- ✓ In EPHESIANS: **Christ is the powerful head of the church**, working in us to help us live God's way and for us to protect us from anything evil.
- ✓ In PHILIPPIANS: **Christ is the supplier of every need** of yours so that you can help others.

### THE KEY QUESTION

What comes to mind when you hear or read the word "lord" or "master"? Do you tend to submit to authority or push against it to follow your own way? Many of us like the idea of authority managing everyone and everything else as long as we can keep doing what we like with no one bothering us. Go ahead and admit it. ☺

The key word for our lesson today is **lord**. The questions to ask are, "Who is really 'lord' of our lives, and what does that mean?"



## THE PEOPLE AND THEIR NEED

On his third missionary journey, Paul spent 3 years in Ephesus, a large city of at least 250,000 people. While there, Paul held classes every day for anyone wanting to learn about Jesus Christ, having their sins forgiven, and gaining a new way to live. One of Paul's students named Epaphras traveled to the nearby town of **Colossae** (see the map) to teach the Colossians living there. The people were mostly Greeks and Romans who did not know God. So Epaphras taught the Colossians the "good news" about Jesus dying for their sins and being raised from the dead so that they could believe in Him and receive eternal life.

A few Jews believed the message about Jesus. Yet, it was mostly the Greeks and Romans who listened and trusted in Jesus to take away their sins. They started worshiping God together and learning more about Jesus and their new life as Christians. After Epaphras left Colossae, other men told the new Christians that Epaphras did not tell them the whole story. Some said that Jesus was not really God and that it's better to worship angels who were closer to God than Jesus was. Others taught that only by following religious rules could anyone have a right standing with God. Those rules said you could only eat certain foods, could enjoy nothing fun, and couldn't get married. Yet, none of those rules taught them how to get rid of bad behavior like lying, unkind words, and unresolved anger. Seven years after the church was started,

Epaphras was so concerned that he traveled to Rome where Paul was a prisoner and told him all about it.

Paul had never met the Colossians, but he loved these young Christians very much. So Paul wrote a letter that Epaphras carried back to Colossae. Paul knew that Epaphras had taught the Colossians the truth that Jesus Christ was Lord over everything, including angels. Remember that Jesus is His name, and Christ is His title, which refers to His authority as **Lord**.

In his letter, Paul emphasized the truth that Jesus is Lord over everything. We have that letter called *Colossians*. It is a gift from God to us. Paul said to them and to us that **Christ is Lord over everything**—angels, creation and even our behavior. What does that look like? Let's find out.

## THE ANSWER: CHRIST IS LORD OVER EVERYTHING

**Read Colossians 1:15-18.**

*What did Paul declare about Christ in these verses?*

Verse 15—

Verse 16—

Verse 17—

Verse 18—

As God, Christ is the Lord over creation—"firstborn" refers to priority in inheritance. Christ was present before the world was created. All things were created by Him and for Him. Jesus Christ is Lord over all creation, including angels. Christ holds everything together. This might mean that He makes it keep working in the way He planned. Christ is Lord over our world. And He is Lord over the Church, which includes all believers. He has the supremacy over everything. That means He's in first place.

In Colossians, **Christ is Lord over everything**. Paul told the Colossian Christians they had received the full story about Jesus from Epaphras. Christ is completely God and as God, He is Lord over everything, including angels. Paul told them to not worship angels in Colossians 2:18-19. And he reminded them of what they received through Him.

**Read Colossians 1:13-14.**

*What is true about every Christian (verses 13-14)?*

**Read Colossians 2:13.**

*What is true about every Christian (verse 13)?*

**Read Colossians 1:21-22.**

*What is Christ's goal for you (end of verse 22)?*

**Read Colossians 2:6-7.**

*How are you to live as a Christian to reach that goal?*

When you trust in Christ, you are rescued from darkness and transferred to Christ's kingdom. You are made alive, and all of your sins are forgiven. His goal is to present you to God as holy, without blemish, and free from accusation. When you stay rooted and built up in Him, you can serve God completely with your life and honor Christ as Lord over your behavior. That's what Paul taught the Colossians as well.

**Read Colossians 3:8-9.**

*What kind of behavior is not proper for a follower of Christ who has been given a new life?*

Christ as Lord over our behavior wants us to stop our destructive anger, rage, hate, lies, and filthy/mean words. Let's see what kind of behavior is right for us.

**Read Colossians 3:12-15, 17, 23.**

*According to each verse, what kind of behavior is proper for a follower of Christ who has been given a new life?*

Verse 12—

Verse 13—

Verse 14—

Verse 15—

Verse 17—

Verse 23—

As you learned in Lesson Six (Ephesians), these are hard to do and do not come naturally to us. Paul wrote this, *To this end I strenuously contend with all the energy Christ so powerfully works in me.* (*Colossians 1:29*) The great news is that Christ's power in us enables us to live this way as we submit to Him and trust Him to work in and through us. That submission is the "strenuously contend" part. It is hard to do.

According to verse 15 above, Christ gives you peace in your heart. You are to let that rule your actions like as a baseball umpire saying to anger, "You're out!" and to kindness, "You're safe!" **Christ is Lord over your behavior.**

In verse 17, we are reminded to do everything we say or do in light of Jesus as Lord. We read in verse 23, "Work at everything you do with all your heart. Work as if you were working for the Lord, not for human masters." This applies to any work you do—inside and outside the place where you live.

## THE JOY OF CHRIST IN YOUR LIFE

In Colossians, **Christ is Lord over everything.** He is Lord over the universe and the earth. It is His job to sustain and save the planet, not ours. We are to be responsible residents of this earth under our Lord's direction. But He is the one who is Lord over planet Earth. Christ is Lord over all the angels, too. We are not to focus on the angels, worship them, or call upon them for help instead of relying upon Christ who is Lord over everything.

Christ is Lord over our behavior. He wants us to approach life His way and enables us to do what He asks by giving us the power of the Holy Spirit in us.

As Lord over your behavior, He is powerful enough to change your bad behavior into good behavior that pleases Him. You must choose to submit to Him as Lord. He deserves it!

*Our willingness to let Him change us is worshiping Him as Lord.*

**Read Psalm 139:23-24.**

**What does David ask of God?**

**Ask Jesus to help you recognize the areas of your life where you are not submitting to Him as Lord. What has He revealed to you?**

**Pray: Thank Him for your life. Ask Him to make the change in your life so your behavior matches who you are as a follower of Christ.**

For further study of Colossians, see the *Healthy Living Bible Study* at melaniemewton.com.

### **DEEPER DISCOVERIES (OPTIONAL):**

Spend a few minutes each day reading parts of this wonderful letter. Reflect on what you learn about the joy of having Christ in your life.

**Read Colossians chapter 1.**

**Read Colossians chapter 2.**

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**Read Colossians chapter 3.**

**Read Colossians chapter 4.**

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## The First and Second Letters to the Thessalonians

*For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 NIV)*

**Pray:** Lord Jesus, please teach me through this lesson.

### GRACE OVERFLOWING

- ✓ In ROMANS, **Christ is our righteousness**. Every believer is equally right with God and has equal righteousness from God.
- ✓ In 1 CORINTHIANS: **Christ is the wisdom of God**, greater than any human wisdom or strength.
- ✓ In 2 CORINTHIANS: **Christ is our comforter** when we hurt.
- ✓ In GALATIANS: **Christ is our freedom** from works to earn God's acceptance and freedom from the power of sin.
- ✓ In EPHESIANS: **Christ is the powerful head of the church**, working in us to help us live God's way and for us to protect us from anything evil.
- ✓ In PHILIPPIANS: **Christ is the supplier of every need** of yours so that you can help others.
- ✓ In COLOSSIANS: **Christ is Lord over everything**. He is Lord over the universe, the earth, the angels, and our behavior.

### THE KEY QUESTION

Do you have family members who live far away from you who come to visit you? What do you do to prepare for guests coming? How do you greet them when they walk in the door? After your guests leave, are you eager for their returning back to visit you again?

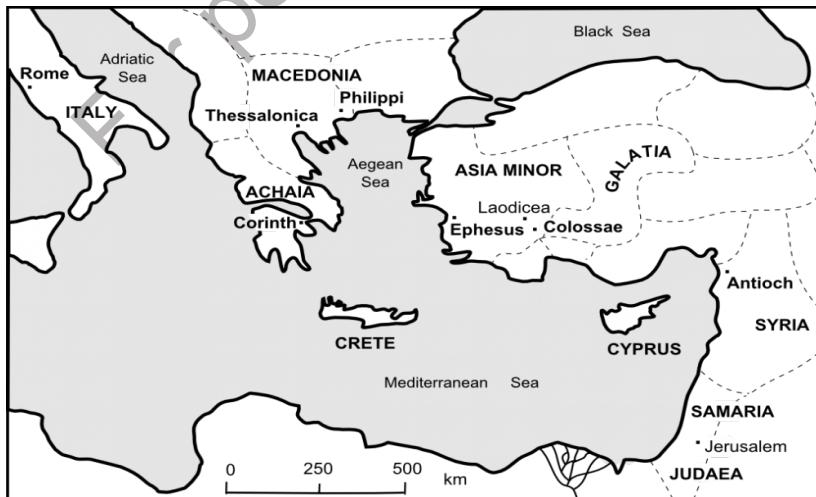
Consider babies who are born during a time of war when their parents are soldiers deployed overseas. The babies may not get to see their dads or moms for months or even a year or more. They may hear about their parents and even see a picture or video feed of them. But they don't really get to experience knowing their moms or dads until the soldiers return back home. Then, parent and child meet face-to-face in a warm embrace of love.

The key word for our lesson today is **returning**. The questions to ask are, "Who is returning, and how do we prepare for it?"

## THE PEOPLE AND THEIR NEED

While Paul was in Troas (above Ephesus on the map) on his second missionary journey, God showed him a vision of a man from Macedonia saying, "Come over and help us." Paul and Silas obeyed, traveling first to Philippi where they preached and a church was formed. After spending a night in prison for driving an evil spirit from a girl, Paul and Silas were forced to leave Philippi. They went down the road to **Thessalonica** (see on map), the capital of Macedonia and a large city of 200,000 people who were called **Thessalonians**. You can read about his time there in Acts 17:1-15.

Paul preached the good news about Jesus' death and resurrection for several weeks in the synagogue in Thessalonica. Some Jews believed as well as a large number of non-Jews. The Jews who did not believe started a riot in the city in order to stop Paul. They rushed to the house



where Paul was staying and dragged the owner of the house out and down the street to the courthouse. The man was released, but the new Thessalonian believers thought it was too dangerous for Paul to stay. So they helped him to escape in the middle of the night.

After he left Thessalonica, Paul went down the road to Berea then to Athens. There he sent his friend Timothy back to Thessalonica to check on the church there. Timothy brought back a good report about the Thessalonian Christians. In fact, their faith in Christ had become known throughout all of Macedonia. Everyone knew that they had turned away from worshiping false gods to serve the living and true God. And they were waiting for Jesus to return from heaven to rescue them from their present hardships. The people who had started the riot were making life hard for those new believers, causing much suffering for them.

When Paul got to **Corinth** he wrote a letter to the Thessalonians to encourage them during their hardships and to answer their questions about Jesus' return. Later, while he was still in Corinth, he wrote the Thessalonians another letter to answer more of their questions. We have both of those letters called *First Thessalonians* and *Second Thessalonians*. They are gifts from God to us.

In his letters, Paul confirmed to them and to us that indeed **Christ is our returning Lord**. We can be joyful about the news that He is coming back for us. We can live with joyful hearts while waiting.

## THE ANSWER: CHRIST IS OUR RETURNING LORD

*To deliver all Christians:*

**Read 1 Thessalonians 1:10.**

***When Jesus returns, He will deliver us from what?***

There are two aspects of God's wrath in the New Testament: 1) God's righteous anger against sin (Romans 1:18) and 2) God's judgment of the earth through the Tribulation called "the day of the Lord" (Revelation 6:17). Christ's death on the cross satisfied God's anger against sin for

individuals. Everyone who trusts in Christ is already saved from the wrath of God against sin. God's wrath against the earth during the Great Tribulation is still future. Jesus will first rescue all believers, dead and alive, from having to experience the wrath of God during the Tribulation.

Let's look at how Jesus delivers us. Paul began by talking about those who experience death before Jesus comes back.

**Read 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18.**

***What fears or concerns do you have about death and dying?***

Paul referred to the dead Christians as those who "sleep in death" (NIV). For Christians, death is like falling asleep on earth and waking up in heaven where Jesus is. Believers have hope that nonbelievers do not have. Grief is real. Sadness is a normal human emotion. We miss those we love who have died. But if they are Christians, they are instantly with Jesus (2 Corinthians 5:6-8). We can rejoice about that.

***Who will Jesus bring with Him when He comes to deliver us (verse 14)?***

***What will we who are still alive see and hear at that time (verse 16)?***

***Then, what will happen to living Christians (verse 17)?***

**Read John 11:43-44.**

*What did Jesus do and say to Lazarus?*

Jesus' loud shout to Lazarus to come out was a foretaste of His command to all those who "sleep in death" when He returns. No Christian who has died will miss Jesus' return to rescue us. They will be coming with Him to get those of us who are still alive. We will rise to meet Jesus in the air. In our English translations, verse 17 uses the words "caught up" to describe Jesus coming for us. The Greek word means "to snatch by force." About 300 years after Paul wrote, Latin translators used the word *rapturo* (the act of carrying off) to translate the original Greek word. This event has been called "The Rapture" ever since. And the definition of rapture has changed to "joyful ecstasy" to match the event. ☺

**Read Philippians 3:20-21.**

*What is the promise to believers?*

The Bible says that when Jesus returns, He will make new bodies for all believers—those still alive and those who died. Those new bodies will be like Jesus' resurrected body—sinless, never to die again. He'll take us all to heaven, where we belong, to live with Him in our new bodies until the time is right for us to come back to live on the earth with Him.

*How do you feel knowing that Christ is our returning Lord and that He is coming back for you one day?*

*To defeat His enemies and set up His kingdom on earth:*

Second Thessalonians refers to the time after the Rapture when there is great distress on the earth ("the day of the Lord"). This great distress (commonly called "The Tribulation") will last until Christ returns to win victory over His enemies and set up His kingdom on earth. He will come in judgment at that time, not as rescuer. It is a separate time from the Rapture of the believers.

*And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendor of his coming. (2 Thessalonians 2:8)*

**Christ is our returning Lord.** When He comes for us, we will receive new bodies and live forever with Him. When He returns to earth, He will make everything right again.

## THE JOY OF CHRIST IN YOUR LIFE

We don't know when Jesus will come to rescue us. We don't know all the details about what takes place after that. We do know that the Tribulation will be a terrible time, worse than anything our whole planet has ever seen. We aren't to focus on that, though, trying to figure it out. Instead, accept that God gives us enough information about the future to warn those who reject Him now and to motivate us to live in such a way that draws unbelievers to Christ so they can be rescued, too.

We can do some things while we are waiting for our returning Lord. In 1 Thessalonians 5, Paul listed some intentional actions we can take now that would represent God well. We will focus on verses 16-18.

### Read 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18.

It is God's will (verse 18) to rejoice always, pray continually (literally, like a lingering cough), and give thanks in all circumstances (not "for" but "in").

***What could "rejoice always" look like in your life?***

*What could “pray continually” look like in your life?*

*What could “give thanks in all circumstances” look like in your life?*

Even if things aren't going our way all the time, we can still rejoice in the fact that Jesus, the Son of God, loves us individually. This rejoicing may not be easy. It does take practice, but it's good for us to try. And to pray consistently really helps with the joyful part when times are tough. We can take everything to God, even the bad or sad things, and we will receive His peace (Philippians 4:6-7). Now, “peace” may not sound like “joy,” but it's a whole lot better than “miserable,” isn't it? We can choose to give thanks no matter what else happens—even if being thankful isn't what you feel like doing at the time. Living this way will draw people to Christ as they see Him living His life through you.

In Paul's letter to the Thessalonians, **Christ is our returning Lord**. When He comes, we will receive new bodies and live forever with Him.

*Be joyful about that and live joyfully while waiting!*

*Pray: Praise God for the hope you have that Jesus is coming again for you and that you don't have to be afraid of death. Ask Jesus to help you be joyful, to be faithful to pray, and to be thankful while waiting for Him to return.*

For further study of 1 and 2 Thessalonians, see the *Perspective Bible Study* at melaniemewton.com.

If you want to know more about what happens when someone dies, read my blog series on death and beyond at [melaniemewton.com/blogs](http://melaniemewton.com/blogs).

## **DEEPER DISCOVERIES (OPTIONAL):**

Spend a few minutes each day reading parts of this wonderful letter.  
Reflect on what you learn about the joy of having Christ in your life.

**Read 1 Thessalonians chapter 1.**

**Read 1 Thessalonians chapter 2.**

**Read 1 Thessalonians chapter 3.**

**Read 1 Thessalonians chapter 4.**

**Read 1 Thessalonians chapter 5.**

**Read 2 Thessalonians chapter 1.**

**Read 2 Thessalonians chapter 2.**

**Read 2 Thessalonians chapter 3.**

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## The First Letter to Timothy

*For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus... (1 Timothy 2:5 NIV)*

**Pray:** Lord Jesus, please teach me through this lesson.

### GRACE OVERFLOWING

- ✓ In ROMANS, **Christ is our righteousness**. Every believer is equally right with God and has equal righteousness from God.
- ✓ In 1 CORINTHIANS: **Christ is the wisdom of God**, greater than any human wisdom or strength.
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- ✓ In PHILIPPIANS: **Christ is the supplier of every need** of yours so that you can help others.
- ✓ In COLOSSIANS: **Christ is Lord over everything**. He is Lord over the universe, the earth, the angels, and our behavior.
- ✓ In 1 & 2 THESSALONIANS: **Christ is our returning Lord**. When He comes, we will receive new bodies and live forever with Him.

### THE KEY QUESTION

*When have you needed someone to represent you to someone else?*

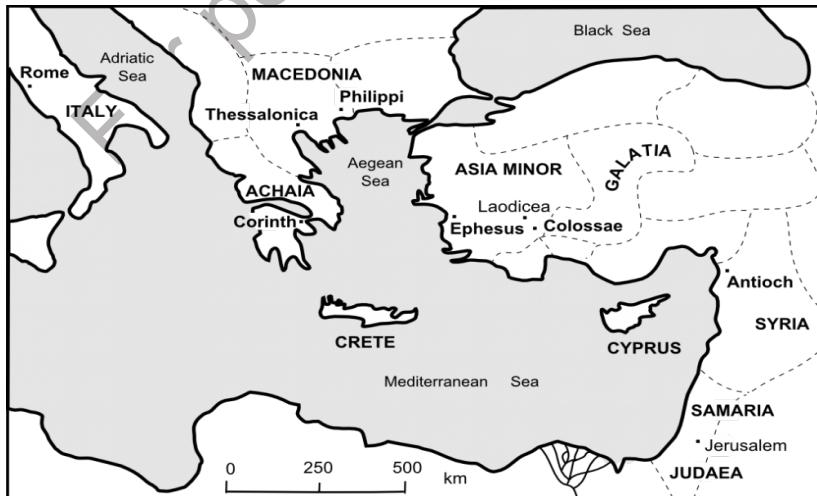
Whoever did that for you was acting as a mediator—someone who goes between two people or groups to solve a problem or settle a dispute. A professional baseball player hires an agent to act as a mediator between himself and a team that is interested in hiring him. The mediator needs to understand both sides—what the player needs and what the team needs.

The key word for this lesson is **mediator**. The questions we will consider are, “Why do we need a mediator, and who is the best one for us?” Paul’s letter to Timothy answers those questions.

## THE PEOPLE AND THEIR NEED

Timothy was a teenager when he met Paul. You can read his story in Acts 16. His family lived in Lystra so he was a Galatian. His father was a Greek man; we know nothing of his faith. But Timothy’s mother and grandmother were faithful Jewish women who taught the Old Testament scriptures to this boy they loved so much. As the women heard Paul preach, they believed in Jesus, and so did Timothy.

Timothy may have seen Paul heal a lame man in his town. That would have been exciting! He may also have watched as an angry mob threw stones at Paul and left him for dead. Yet, he also knew Paul survived.



When Paul came back to Lystra a couple of years later on his second missionary journey, Paul invited Timothy to travel with him. What an honor! Do you think Timothy might have been a little bit scared, too?

Timothy helped Paul as he preached throughout Greece—Macedonia in the north and Achaia in the south. He carried money to Paul collected by the Philippian church to care for Paul's needs in Corinth. Timothy could be trusted. During the 3 years Paul was in Ephesus teaching them about the amazing power of God, Timothy was there, too.

When Paul was in a Roman prison for two years, Timothy was right alongside him much of the time unselfishly taking care of Paul's needs (Philippians 2). By now, Timothy was a young man of about 30 who for at least 13 years had been learning how to teach about Jesus and serve God's people well as he watched Paul do it. Paul thought of Timothy not only as a very faithful friend but also as his spiritual son.

When Paul was finally free from prison, he and Timothy traveled to visit friends in the churches they had founded. When they got to **Ephesus**, Paul recognized some men in the church were teaching bad stuff about Jesus, saying that Jesus could not have been a man and God at the same time.

Paul wanted to go on to visit his friends in **Macedonia**, but he did not want to leave the Ephesian church in turmoil. So he left Timothy to teach truth to the church there while Paul went on to Macedonia. Paul thought he'd get back to Ephesus soon, but that did not happen. He was concerned about what was going on in Ephesus, so Paul wrote a letter.

We have that letter called *First Timothy*. It is a gift from God to us. In it, Paul reminded Timothy, the Ephesians, and us that Jesus was fully God and fully man. He had to be both in order to be the perfect mediator for us. In First Timothy, **Christ is our mediator**. Let's see what that means.

## THE ANSWER: CHRIST IS OUR MEDIATOR

**Read 1 Timothy 1:11-17.**

**What was entrusted to Paul (verse 11)?**

*What had Christ done for Paul (verse 12)?*

*For what did Paul thank Christ (verse 13)?*

*What did Paul receive (verse 14)?*

*How did Paul view himself before knowing Christ (verse 15)?*

*What could Christ display in Paul's life (verse 16)?*

*Write Paul's response to the Lord's abundant grace toward him (verse 17) in the space below.*

True teaching agrees with the good news that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. Paul was thankful for this good news for

himself because he was a sinner who needed God's mercy. Christ showed him that mercy and love, too.

Did Paul need someone to understand how bad he was and how much he needed help? Yes! He called himself the worst of sinners. He could not help himself. He did not know any better. Paul needed a mediator to get him out of his trouble.

### Reread verses 13-14.

Remember that grace is "undeserved favor." Paul used a word picture to describe grace that conveys the idea of overflowing.

*What picture comes to mind when you read about something overflowing with abundance?*

*How generous is God with His grace to everyone?*

### Read 1 Timothy 2:3-6.

*What does God want (verse 4)?*

*Who is the go-between for God and humans (verse 5)?*

## ***As the perfect man, what did Christ Jesus do for us (verse 6)?***

Remember that the title Christ refers to Jesus as God. Notice Paul's emphasis on Jesus as a man. Do you think of Jesus as a man, as a human just like you are? It is easy to forget that Jesus was fully human. As a man, Jesus could understand how you feel and think. He could understand your troubles and how hard it is to get yourself out of trouble, especially to get rid of the wrong things you do against God. He can have compassion on your helplessness. Isn't that wonderful news?

In 1 Timothy 2:5, Jesus is called our **mediator**. A mediator helps to solve a dispute between two persons. We were separated from our God because of our sin. Jesus took that sin upon Himself—became the bridge for us to have a relationship with God. No one else, nothing else can ever do that for us—not a parent, a boss, a judge, or a pastor—only Jesus Christ, who was fully human and fully God. Because He was both, He could represent each side perfectly. Isn't God's plan wonderful?

In 1 Timothy, **Christ Jesus is the mediator** between us and God. No man or woman can do that for you.

## **THE JOY OF CHRIST IN YOUR LIFE**

Christ is the perfect mediator between God and mankind. As mediator, Jesus understands your needs and the best way for God to take care of your needs.

**Read Hebrews 4:14-16.**

### ***What is Jesus called in verse 14 (first part)?***

In the Old Testament, the High Priest represented all Israel before God, mediating for them. He offered the sacrifices to cover the people's sins.

***What is true about our high priest Jesus (verse 15)?***

***What can you do when you are weak and hurting (verse 16)?***

***When can you go to Him? How often?***

***What are you promised to receive from Him?***

***How should that make you feel?***

When you are weak and hurting, you can go directly to Jesus and tell Him all about it. You can go to Him any time and as often as you need it. You will receive grace and mercy in your time of need. That's a promise! And you should feel thankful for receiving mercy and help just like Paul was thankful for Christ Jesus showing him mercy when he needed it.

**Read Romans 8:34-39.**

*What is Christ doing for you (verse 34)?*

*What can separate you from Him?*

**Christ is our mediator.** As mediator, Jesus understands your needs and the best way for God to take care of your needs.

*Respond by joining Paul in his response of praise to God for His overflowing grace given to you through Jesus Christ.*

*Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen. (1 Timothy 1:17)*

**Pray:** Where are you hurting today? Where are you feeling weak? Go to Jesus now and tell Him all about it. Let Him pour out His grace on you abundantly.

For further study of 1 Timothy, see the *Adorn Yourself with Godliness Bible Study* at melaniemewton.com.

## **DEEPER DISCOVERIES (OPTIONAL):**

Spend a few minutes each day reading parts of this wonderful letter.  
Reflect on what you learn about the joy of having Christ in your life.

**Read 1 Timothy chapter 1.**

**Read 1 Timothy chapter 2.**

**Read 1 Timothy chapter 3.**

**Read 1 Timothy chapter 4.**

**Read 1 Timothy chapter 5.**

**Read 1 Timothy chapter 6.**

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## The Second Letter to Timothy

*Now there is in store for me the **crown of righteousness**, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.*  
(2 Timothy 4:8 NIV)

**Pray:** Lord Jesus, please teach me through this lesson.

### GRACE OVERFLOWING

- ✓ In ROMANS, **Christ is our righteousness**. Every believer is equally right with God and has equal righteousness from God.
- ✓ In 1 CORINTHIANS, **Christ is the wisdom of God**, greater than any human wisdom or strength.
- ✓ In 2 CORINTHIANS, **Christ is our comforter** when we hurt.
- ✓ In GALATIANS: **Christ is our freedom** from works to earn God's acceptance and freedom from the power of sin.
- ✓ In EPHESIANS: **Christ is the powerful head of the church**, working in us to help us live God's way and for us to protect us from anything evil.
- ✓ In PHILIPPIANS, **Christ is the supplier of every need** of yours so that you can help others.
- ✓ In COLOSSIANS, **Christ is Lord over everything**. He is Lord over the universe, the earth, the angels, and our behavior.
- ✓ In 1 & 2 THESSALONIANS, **Christ is our returning Lord**. When He comes, we will receive new bodies and live forever with Him.
- ✓ In 1 TIMOTHY, **Christ is our mediator**. As mediator, Jesus understands our needs and the best way for God to take care of our needs.

## THE KEY QUESTION

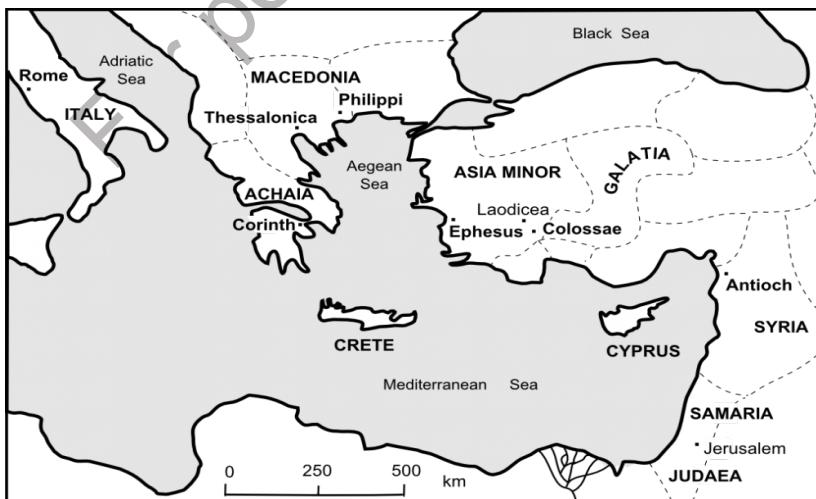
What do you like best about giving gifts to someone? Is it easy or hard to choose what you want to give? Are you a cheerful giver, or do you resent having to choose a gift for someone? What can you give that does not cost money yet cost time, effort, and creativity? What's the best gift you have given to someone?

The key word for our lesson today is **giving**. The questions to ask are, "Who is the best giver, what does He give to us, and how can we be givers like He is?"

## THE PEOPLE AND THEIR NEED

Remember that Paul loved Timothy as a son and a friend. After Paul's release from his first Roman imprisonment, he and Timothy traveled to visit friends in the churches they had founded. When they got to **Ephesus**, Paul left Timothy to teach truth to the church there while Paul went on to **Macedonia**. Paul thought he'd get back to Ephesus soon, but that did not happen. So he wrote the letter called *First Timothy*.

Paul traveled for a while longer, but then he was arrested again and sent to **Rome**. This time Paul was thrown into a cold dungeon, and he knew that he would soon die. Paul had already appeared once before the wicked Roman emperor Nero, whose hatred of Christians had increased by that time.



Paul felt very lonely because many of his friends had left him. At this time, only his doctor friend Luke (the writer of *Luke* and *Acts*) was still with him in Rome. Other friends were taking care of the churches Paul had founded, including Timothy who was still overseeing the church at **Ephesus**. Paul knew God was with him still, even in prison. He wrote another letter to Timothy—the last one he wrote that we have in our Bibles. Paul asked Timothy to come right away and bring his coat and scrolls he left behind in Ephesus. Paul was not sure Timothy would get to Rome before Paul was executed. A very sad time!

This letter contains Paul's last words of encouragement to Timothy and warnings that Nero's hatred of Christians would cause many believers to suffer. We have this letter called *Second Timothy*. It is a gift from God to us.

In his letter, Paul reminded Timothy to stand firm on the truth he had heard from Paul. Don't let the bad teachers win. Don't give up because of suffering. The Holy Spirit would be his continual helper and guide. And Jesus Christ rewards those who are faithful to Him. He gives many good gifts, including crowns. Yes, I said crowns. In *Second Timothy*, **Christ is the giver of crowns**. Let's find out what that means for us.

## THE ANSWER: CHRIST IS THE GIVER OF CROWNS

**Read 2 Timothy 2:1-7.**

*How does the true message get passed on (verse 2)?*

*What choices do these workers make? What are the rewards?*

- The soldier:
  
- The athlete:
  
- The farmer:

*What will Christ give to those who need it (verse 7)?*

**Read 2 Timothy 2:15.**

*As a worker in God's kingdom, what are you supposed to do?*

Pastors and church leaders are to teach trustworthy people who can teach others, also. This is called disciple-making—making disciples for Jesus. As individual followers of Christ, we are to do our best to please God and to teach truth correctly. Paul encouraged Timothy to keep doing what is right and keep teaching truth even if some people who hated Christians would try to stop his teaching what the Bible says.

**Read 2 Timothy 4:6-8.**

*Why did Paul feel that he had been faithful to the God he served (verse 7)?*

*What is waiting for him (verse 8)?*

*Who will give it to him?*

***Who else will receive that crown?***

***Does that include you?***

In Second Timothy, **Christ is the giver of crowns.** Christ is a giver. In fact, He is the best giver of all, including the giving of crowns.

**Read 1 Peter 5:1-4.**

***What crown does the Lord Jesus give (verse 4)?***

***To whom and for what reasons (verses 1-3)?***

**Read James 1:12.**

***What crown does the Lord Jesus give to those who love Him?***

Some crowns are rewards to believers who have worked hard to please the Lord Jesus as in the “Crown of Righteousness” and the “Crown of Glory.” Other crowns are given to every believer as in the “Crown of Life.” We aren’t sure what we are supposed to do with those crowns. But we have a glimpse of what some people do with their crowns in heaven.

**Read Revelation 4:10-11.**

*Some think the 24 elders represent all believers in the Church. They give back their crowns, laying them at Jesus' feet. Why do you think they do that?*

*Jesus Christ is the best giver! He rewards those who are faithful to Him.*

In Second Timothy, **Christ is the giver of crowns**. He rewards those who are faithful to Him.

## THE JOY OF CHRIST IN YOUR LIFE

We have learned from Paul's other letters that Christ is a giver not only of crowns but also of many other good gifts to those who trust in Him.  
**As you read the next paragraph, mark all the gifts He gives to you.**

To all believers, Christ gives forgiveness of all sin, salvation, and eternal life. We have also learned that Christ provides a relationship between God and man (1 Timothy) that gives freedom from the law so we can choose to please God (Galatians). He is the supplier of every need (Philippians). He gives us protection and Holy Spirit power to live a life that pleases God (Ephesians) as we change our behavior (Colossians). Christ gives us spiritual wisdom (1 Corinthians), comfort (2 Corinthians), righteousness (Romans), and a new body when He returns (1 Thessalonians). We will soon learn that He also gives us hope (Titus) and new hearts (Philemon). Christ is the best giver! We can follow His example and be givers, also. But we sometimes get to thinking about ourselves too much and don't want to be givers.

**Read 2 Timothy 3:1-5.**

*How does the Bible describe the people who are living as takers rather than givers?*

- Verse 2—

- Verse 3—

- Verse 4—

- Verse 5—

***Yikes! That sounds pretty bad, doesn't it? Do you know anyone like that now?***

Look at Paul's warning in verse 5, "Avoid such people." Yes, of course! One translation puts it this way, "Teach the people not to follow their example! (NIRV)"

***What choices must you make to not follow their examples?***

**Read 2 Timothy 3:14-17.**

***How do you keep following the right examples (verses 14-15)?***

***Why is knowing the Scriptures (the Bible) important for you (verses 16-17)?***

Through Christ's example, the examples of other Christlike believers, and the Scriptures, you can live as a giver rather than as a taker.

***Does Christ want you to be a giver because you have to or because you love Him and want to please Him in gratitude for what He has done for you?***

**Christ is the giver of crowns.** He rewards those who are faithful to Him.

*Pray: Thank Jesus for what He gives to you. Ask Jesus for a heart that wants to give to others as Jesus has given to you. Ask Him to help you stick to the truth of God's Word even when others do not.*

For further study of 2 Timothy, see the *To Be Found Faithful Bible Study* at melaniemewton.com.

## **DEEPER DISCOVERIES (OPTIONAL):**

Spend a few minutes each day reading parts of this wonderful letter. Reflect on what you learn about the joy of having Christ in your life.

**Read 2 Timothy chapter 1.**

**Read 2 Timothy chapter 2.**

**Read 2 Timothy chapter 3.**

**Read 2 Timothy chapter 4.**

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*That's how we should live as we wait for the **blessed hope** God has given us. We are waiting for Jesus Christ to appear in all his glory. He is our great God and Savior. (Titus 2:13 NIRV)*

**Pray:** Lord Jesus, please teach me through this lesson.

### GRACE OVERFLOWING

- ✓ In ROMANS, **Christ is our righteousness**. Every believer is equally right with God and has equal righteousness from God.
- ✓ In 1 CORINTHIANS, **Christ is the wisdom of God**, greater than any human wisdom or strength.
- ✓ In 2 CORINTHIANS, **Christ is our comforter** when we hurt.
- ✓ In GALATIANS: **Christ is our freedom** from works to earn God's acceptance and freedom from the power of sin.
- ✓ In EPHESIANS: **Christ is the powerful head of the church**, working in us to help us live God's way and for us to protect us from anything evil.
- ✓ In PHILIPPIANS, **Christ is the supplier of every need** of yours so that you can help others.
- ✓ In COLOSSIANS, **Christ is Lord over everything**. He is Lord over the universe, the earth, the angels, and our behavior.
- ✓ In 1 & 2 THESSALONIANS, **Christ is our returning Lord**. When He comes, we will receive new bodies and live forever with Him.
- ✓ In 1 TIMOTHY, **Christ is our mediator**. As mediator, Jesus understands our needs and the best way for God to take care of our needs.
- ✓ In 2 TIMOTHY, **Christ is the giver of crowns**. He rewards those who are faithful to Him.

## THE KEY QUESTION

What is hope? Your answer depends on your perspective. The kind of hope that the world offers is generally the wishful thinking kind where someone is not sure they will get what they want or need but “hopes” they will. Biblical hope is the **confident expectation** of something that will definitely take place because it is based on God’s promises.

***When do you need hope?***

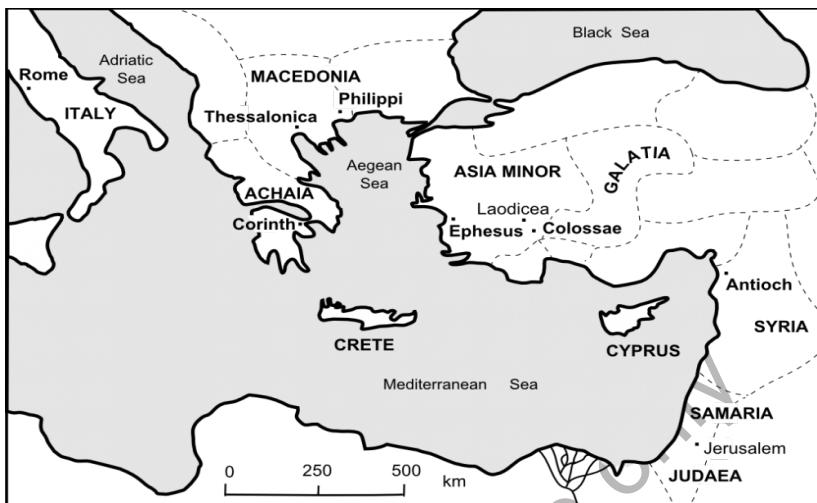
***What happens when you lose hope?***

The key word for our lesson today is hope. You need hope whenever you are facing something tough to do, when you are sad and/or when you can’t see the end. The result of losing hope is discouragement. The questions to ask are, “What is hope in the Bible, and how does hope affect our lives?” Paul’s letter to Titus gave the people in the churches on the island of Crete the answers to those questions.

## THE PEOPLE AND THEIR NEED

During Paul’s first missionary journey, a young man named Titus heard Paul preach about Jesus. Titus was a Gentile, meaning he had not grown up worshiping the God of the Bible. As he listened to Paul, Titus’ heart responded to the message, and he believed in Jesus. Paul brought him to Jerusalem to show the apostles and other Jewish believers how a Gentile could love God just as much as they did. Titus represented all the other non-Jewish people who became Christians and were completely accepted by God through their faith in Jesus Christ—like most of us! Hooray!

Titus continued to travel with Paul on missionary journeys, helping in the work of sharing the gospel. During the 3 years Paul was in Ephesus teaching them about the amazing power of God (third journey), Titus



was there. Then, Paul sent him to Corinth to help that church with its work. Paul thought of Titus not only as a very faithful friend but also as his spiritual son because he had led him to trust Christ.

After Paul was released from the Roman prison where he had been for two years, he and Titus traveled to the island of **Crete** (see the map). The people, called Cretans, were known to be very rough people who were liars, lazy, and loved to eat and argue with one another. Paul and Titus taught them about their need for God and the good news about Jesus. God was certainly powerful enough to change their hearts and their behavior. Soon, there were enough believers to start churches in several towns.

Paul wanted to go visit the church in **Corinth** so he left Titus on Crete to continue teaching the new Christians and to appoint church leaders for each new church. When someone came to replace him, Titus left Crete and met Paul in western Macedonia to continue the missionary work northward into what is now Albania. The gospel was spreading farther into Europe.

While on the island of Crete, Titus was a busy man as he cared for all the new Cretan believers, especially because the people just did not know how to do what is good in God's eyes. Paul knew Titus needed some encouragement and reminders of what was important to teach the people. So Paul wrote the letter called *Titus*. It is a gift from God to us. In it Paul reminded Titus, the Cretans, and us that **Christ is our hope**.

for any kind of life that pleases God. Our hope in Christ sets us free from the bad things we used to do and teaches us to do what is good. Let's find out more about this hope we have in Christ.

## THE ANSWER: CHRIST IS OUR BLESSED HOPE

Read **Titus 2:11-14**.

*God's grace teaches us to say "no" to what (verse 12, first part)?*

*What would that include? See also 3:3.*

*If we say "no" to ungodly ways, we must say "yes" to what (verse 12, last part)?*

*Who gives you power to live this way—your own strength or the Holy Spirit living inside you?*

Ungodliness includes things that go against God's way of living a life that pleases Him. We are to say "no" to such godless ways and "yes" to doing what is right in today's world. The Holy Spirit living inside of us is the only way we can consistently do what is right. Don't forget that.

Jesus wants us to live in dependence on His Spirit inside of us to be able to live the kind of life that pleases God.

***We are to live this way while we wait for what (verse 13)?***

In Titus, **Christ is our blessed hope**. The word "hope" in the Bible is the confident expectation of something that will definitely happen because it's based on God's promises and faithfulness. It has been promised to you, it is good, and you know it will happen. In Titus 2:13, the promise is that Christ is going to appear in all his glory. He is coming back. We will see Him at some point in the future—guaranteed. That's hope we have in Christ. Let's see some of the other good things we have.

***Christ gave Himself to what for us (verse 14, first part)?***

***For what purpose does He purify / cleanse us (verse 14, last part)?***

Christ gave Himself to redeem us from all wickedness. That means He sets us free from the power of sin in our lives. We covered this in Lesson 5. He cleanses us from sin (purified us) so that we would be a people of His very own, ready and eager to do what is good in His name and for His glory.

**Read Titus 3:3-8.**

***What is life like for anyone before they know Christ (verse 3)?***

*What did Christ do for us (verse 5)?*

*Who is poured out on us to cleanse us through rebirth and renewal (verses 5 and 6)?*

*What other hope do we have (verse 7)?*

*Because of the hope that rebirth, renewal, and eternal life bring to us, how should we live now (verse 8)?*

We have already been set free from doing bad things in order to do what is good. Our sins have been washed away permanently. We've been given new life now by God's Holy Spirit who lives inside us from the moment we believe in Jesus. That life lasts forever. The Spirit gives us power to live the kind of life that pleases God. We've been adopted as God's children. All these things have been provided for us by Christ who is our hope. Because of that hope, we should devote ourselves to doing that which is good.

*Knowing God's promise that all those good things will happen to you, how does that make you feel?*

In Titus, **Christ is our blessed hope**. The word “blessed” means “happy.” We can be truly happy in our hope because we know all those things promised to us will happen. Hope is God’s gift to us.

## THE JOY OF CHRIST IN YOUR LIFE

Remember that hope is the confident expectation of something that will definitely happen. We have this blessed hope in Christ. It can never be taken away from us. Knowing this can help us in two ways:

- 1) We can look at life as an adventure with God because the best is yet to come for us.
- 2) We can let God’s Spirit give us a longing to do what is good.

Let’s look at each one of those.

### *1) Looking at life as an adventure with God*

*What do you think would happen if you began each day by asking, "What new adventure do you have for me today, O God?" How would that affect the way you looked at your day?*

### *2) Longing to do what is good*

We will long to please God—not because we have to do good things but because we are so thankful for what God has done for us that we want to do what pleases Him. We can be teachable—letting God’s Spirit teach us how to say “no” to godless ways and “yes” to doing what is right while we are waiting for Jesus to come back.

*Where do you need to say “no” to godless ways in your life?*

*Where do you need to say “yes” to doing what is right in your life?*

*Who gives you the hope to live a life of adventure with God and learn to do what is good?*

In Titus, **Christ is our blessed hope**. We can look at life as an adventure with God because the best is yet to come for us. We have the confident expectation of something that will definitely happen because God has promised it to us. That kind of hope will never disappoint.

*Response in prayer & praise:*

This time respond through any creative means you choose (journaling, prayer, poem, drawing, painting, song) to illustrate what you have learned from this lesson about Christ being your hope. An extra page is added at the end of this lesson for you. This will be your praise to Him today.

For further study of Titus, see the *Adorn Yourself with Godliness Bible Study* at melaniemewton.com.

## **DEEPER DISCOVERIES (OPTIONAL):**

Spend a few minutes each day reading parts of this wonderful letter.  
Reflect on what you learn about the joy of having Christ in your life.

**Read Titus chapter 1.**

**Read Titus chapter 2.**

**Read Titus chapter 3.**

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## The Letter to Philemon

*Renew my heart. We know that Christ is the one who really renews it. (Philemon 20b NIRV)*

**Pray:** Lord Jesus, please teach me through this lesson.

### GRACE OVERFLOWING

- ✓ In ROMANS, **Christ is our righteousness**. Every believer is equally right with God and has equal righteousness from God.
- ✓ In 1 CORINTHIANS, **Christ is the wisdom of God**, greater than any human wisdom or strength.
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- ✓ In 1 TIMOTHY, **Christ is our mediator**. As mediator, Jesus understands our needs and the best way for God to take care of our needs.
- ✓ In 2 TIMOTHY, **Christ is the giver of crowns**. He rewards those who are faithful to Him.
- ✓ In TITUS, **Christ is our blessed hope**. We can look at life as an adventure with God because the best is yet to come for us.

## THE KEY QUESTION

Think about a time when someone wronged you. How long did you stay wounded? What did it take (or would it take) to bring about reconciliation? How hard was it to forgive that person?

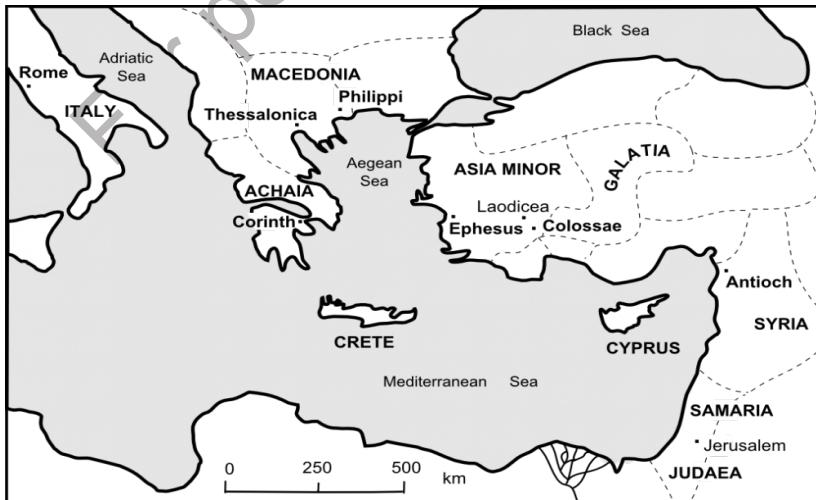
The key word for our lesson today is **forgiveness**. The question to ask is, "How do I really forgive someone who has wronged me?"

## THE PEOPLE AND THEIR NEED

Paul looked across the room of his **Roman** prison at the young man, Onesimus. How dear he was to Paul! The young slave had stolen some money from his master in **Colossae** and run away. Somehow, he ended up in Rome and met Paul. Though Paul was chained to a Roman guard, people could come and visit him, even stay with him.

Somewhere Onesimus found his way to Paul, Paul told the runaway slave about Jesus, and Onesimus trusted Christ to take away his sins. Paul became his spiritual father, teaching him and loving him as a Christian son. Onesimus learned to love Christ Jesus and received a renewed heart. As much as Paul wanted this young man to stay near him, he knew that Onesimus should return to Philemon, his owner, and seek forgiveness for stealing the money and for running away.

Philemon was a fairly rich man who owned slaves, a common condition at the time. One of every two persons in the Roman Empire was a slave.



Every large Roman household had them. Slaves were not free to do whatever they wanted but had to do whatever their owner said. Any slave who ran away could be killed. Paul certainly did not want that to happen to his son Onesimus. Paul had to trust Jesus with Onesimus' safety.

Paul may have met Philemon because Paul calls him a dear friend and knows him well enough to appreciate him as a Christian brother and a leader of the church in **Colossae**. Christ had renewed Philemon's heart from being a sinner separated from God to being completely forgiven.

Now, Philemon the slave owner and Onesimus the runaway slave were Christian brothers. Would Onesimus have the courage to return to his master, or would he run away again? Would Philemon forgive Onesimus for stealing money and running away, or would he have Onesimus killed?

Paul sent Onesimus back to Philemon. It was the right thing to do. And he sent a letter along with Onesimus. We have that letter called *Philemon*. It is a gift from God to us. *Philemon* is the shortest of Paul's letters, more like a postcard. It is also the most personal.

In his letter, Paul reminded Philemon and us that **Christ is the renewer of hearts**. Christ had renewed Paul's heart and Philemon's heart when each heard the gospel message and believed. Christ had renewed Onesimus' heart, too. A renewed heart is grateful for the forgiveness received through God's grace and wants to be a "grace giver" to others. Let's find out how that works.

## THE ANSWER: CHRIST IS THE RENEWER OF HEARTS

Philemon has only 1 chapter so we just use verse numbers. Since it is so short, we will read all of it to get the whole story.

**Read Philemon 1-3.**

***What information is given about Philemon?***

Paul called Philemon a dear friend who was working for the gospel. A church met in his home. Apphia and Archippus may be his wife and son who are fellow believers.

**Read Philemon 4-7.**

*What else did Paul know about Philemon (verse 5)?*

*For what did Paul pray (verse 6)?*

*What had Philemon done for the Lord's people (verse 7)?*

The word translated “refreshed” means “to give rest, to bring calmness, to help one recover strength.” It is the same word Jesus used when He said,

*Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. (Matthew 11:28)*

Christ renews and refreshes our hearts so that we can do the same for others.

*How can a mature Christian refresh the heart of another believer?*

Philemon was faithful and loving as he took care of the needs of the church there in Colossae, encouraging the people and giving them hope.

**Read Philemon 8-11.**

***What did Paul do instead of ordering Philemon to forgive Onesimus (verse 9)?***

***What would be the advantage to both of them if Philemon forgave Onesimus out of love and respect for Christ and Paul rather than doing so just because he felt forced to do it?***

Notice that Paul said he was in prison and that Onesimus was his spiritual son and a fellow believer. By not ordering Philemon to forgive Onesimus, Paul made him think about it and appealed to him on the basis of love.

**Read Philemon 12-16.**

***In verses 12-14, how did Paul show respect for Philemon's authority as Onesimus' master?***

***According to verses 15-16, how had the slave to master relationship changed?***

Paul knew Philemon had the right to make all decisions regarding Onesimus. So he sent Onesimus back rather than assuming it was okay for him to stay with Paul. But now Onesimus is more than a slave. He is a Christian brother. That changes everything in his relationship with Philemon.

**Read Philemon 17-22.**

*In verse 17, Paul asked Philemon to welcome Onesimus back. What might be the opposite of welcoming him?*

*In verses 18-19, Paul offered to pay anything Onesimus owed to Philemon. Hmm. Did Paul steal the money?*

*How did Paul's offer to Philemon (verse 18) reflect what Christ did for our bad behavior?*

**Read Philemon 23-25.**

*In verse 25, Paul wrote, "May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit." What did Paul want Philemon to remember about his own life?*

Jesus died on the cross for our sins, not for his own. Paul repeated Jesus' example of someone who substitutes himself for another. Paul did not have to pay what Onesimus owed, but he offered to do it to help heal the relationship between Onesimus and Philemon. Christ healed our relationship with God when He died on the cross for our sins even though He never sinned.

In Philemon, **Christ is the renewer of hearts.**

## THE JOY OF CHRIST IN YOUR LIFE

The NIRV translation of verse 20 says this,

*Renew my heart. We know that Christ is the one who really renews it. (Philemon 20)*

We learned in Lesson 12 that our salvation brings renewal to our hearts done by the Holy Spirit.

**What could it mean to renew something?**

Renewing may involve restoring a relationship or repairing something broken so that it works well again. It is making something like new again.

**How does Christ renew our hearts?**

**How does Christ use others to renew our hearts?**

Paul called Jesus **Lord** 5 times in this short letter. Jesus is Philemon's king and master as He is our king and master. Paul reminded Philemon that he has received forgiveness through grace overflowing to him from Jesus who is his Lord. Because Philemon had received grace from his Lord Jesus, Philemon should, therefore, be a "grace giver" to Onesimus.

*Christ calls us to be grace givers to others as we have received grace from Him.*

***What do you think it means to be a "grace giver?"***

**Read Ephesians 4:32.**

***How can you be a "grace giver" in your life?***

A grace giver is kind and tenderhearted, forgiving others as Christ has forgiven us. A grace giver does not hold grudges and works at renewing relationships rather than being continually angry with someone.

***What relationships in your life need renewing?***

In Philemon, **Christ is the renewer of hearts**, making us right with God so our relationship with God is no longer broken. He forgives us completely, gives us new hearts and fills our hearts with joy. Christ gives us His grace so that we can then give grace to others, following His own example. A renewed heart is grateful for the forgiveness received through God's grace and wants to be a "grace giver" to others.

*Pray: Ask Jesus, as the renewer of your heart, to help you be a grace giver to your family members, co-workers, friends, and others whom He places in your life.*

For further study of Philemon, see the *Healthy Living Bible Study* at [melaniemewton.com](http://melaniemewton.com).

To review what you have learned in this whole study, see the chart, “A Quick Look at Paul’s Letters” on page 149.

### **DEEPER DISCOVERIES (OPTIONAL):**

Spend a few minutes each day reading parts of this wonderful letter. Reflect on what you learn about the joy of having Christ in your life.

**Read all of Philemon again.**

*Keep reading to preview Lesson One of the next study in this series, *The Walk from Fear to Faith*. This is a brief study of Old Testament women who learned how to trust God with their fears.*

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# Preview of “The Walk from Fear to Faith”

*The Walk from Fear to Faith: Trusting God with Your Fears*

## Lesson 1: Got Fear? Trust Your God

*When I am afraid, I put my trust in you. In God, whose word I praise—in God I trust and am not afraid. What can mere man do to me? PSALM 56:3-4*

**Ask the Holy Spirit to teach you through this lesson.**

### THE GIFT OF FEAR

You know that feeling. The pit in your stomach, pounding of your heart, and rush of your thoughts as you go from just the possibility of a job loss to starving and being homeless on the streets—all in a matter of seconds. Gripped by fear, although an imagined one.

Fear is a normal human emotion designed by God to alert us to danger so that we will take action against it. It has a purpose. It tells us to take precautions, to be wise in our dealings with strangers and strange situations. We need to think of it as a gift.

We know fear has a dark side as well. Bible teacher Jill Briscoe has often said, “Women are a fear-driven, performance-oriented species.” Just watching the daily news can panic us. But what did she mean by fear-driven? Why would fear drive us? And what does fear drive us to do?

Women in general are created with a nesting instinct, a need for security and stability, and a desire to control our environment in order to create that security for us and for those we love. Our American way of thinking is this: we can fix it—whatever “IT” is. When we cannot fix it, we panic.

Fear can be real or imagined. For me, a real fear is meeting a snake in my woodsy yard while gardening. I know they are there so I carefully do everything I can to avoid interaction with them.

I experienced an imagined fear as my youngest daughter was growing up. That fear manifested itself in ongoing nightmares about her being

kidnapped or molested. She was never threatened that way, but she was friendly and outgoing. I guess I thought she was more vulnerable than my older, more cautious daughter. When that young daughter became a strong teen girl who was daily hockey-checking her older brother into the wall as they met each other in the hallway, those nightmares stopped. I guess my subconscious recognized that she could handle herself.

*Consider examples of both real fears and imagined ones in your life.*

Fear is an ever-present emotion with most women—real fears as well as imagined ones. Is it realistic to think we can live without fear? No! Our faithful God understands this about us.

**Read Psalm 56:3-4.**

*Write out these verses in the space provided below.*

*Reading back over the verses, underline the phrases that tell you what to do when you are afraid.*

Notice that David doesn't write, "If I am afraid." He says, "When I am afraid." Fear will happen.

God gave us the emotion of fear. It was given with a purpose—**to alert us to danger so that we will take action against it**. Yet, sudden fear can cause us to be terrified. We can let fear take root in us so that we give way to panic and hysteria. Does that ring any bells with you? Are you prone to hysterics?

God knows this about us. When we are afraid, God wants us to trust Him and not give way to fear. Learning to do that is our **walk from fear to faith**.

## TRUSTING A FAITHFUL GOD

"When we look at life just with our own eyes, we become fearful, pessimistic, & negative. We become people who feel, 'I don't know if that can work. I don't know if I can get through this.' When we look at the Scriptures and begin to...see how God empowered normal average people like you and I, the Holy Spirit takes the Word of God and strengthens us and gives us courage that we did not know we had." (Steve Hixon, pastor)

Because God understands this tendency to fear and panic, the Holy Spirit inspired Peter to write to us women in 1 Peter 3:3-6 words that strengthen us and give us courage we did not know we could have.

Read 1 Peter 3:3-6.

*What does God consider to be great worth in His sight (verse 4)?*

Although the focus of this passage is a marriage relationship, the principles relate to any woman's character ("inner self"), especially the qualities of a GENTLE and QUIET spirit that are precious in God's sight. These enable a woman to "do what is right and not give way to fear" (verse 6).

But you may be thinking, "How can that apply to me? I have a bubbly personality. I'm not naturally quiet." Before you start feeling put out about these words or afraid that you could never measure up to this, let's find out what "gentle" and "quiet" actually mean.

*Gentle = Controlled strength*

"GENTLE" does not mean passive, weak, or someone who cannot help herself. Rather, it means "**controlled strength.**" Picture a mother cradling a newborn. She has the physical strength to harm that child but doesn't because her strength is under control. If you are going to have a gentle spirit, what will you need? Strength under control.

*A woman with a gentle spirit has a humble heart that bows itself before God, recognizes God's dealings with her as good, and chooses not to be contentious or resistant against Him.*

*Quiet = Tranquility from within*

"QUIET" does not mean whisper, silent, or bland. It does mean "**tranquility arising from within**" and includes the idea of causing no disturbance to others. Think how a woman's hysterics affect those around her—family, friends, and coworkers.

*A woman with a quiet spirit has an inner peace and calmness in the midst of any circumstance. Have you experienced that kind of peace?*

Gentleness and peace are the fruit of the Holy Spirit's work (Gal. 5: 22-23) in a believer's life and available to every Christian woman who desires them—that includes you and me! We can have a tranquil spirit in the midst of chaos. See how it fits with the "strength under control" mindset?

***Now that you know the real meanings of these words, are you more likely to desire these qualities? Why?***

***Why do you think these qualities in a woman would be so precious – of great worth – to God?***

**Read these verses again.**

*For this is the way the holy women of the past who (1) put their hope in God used to make themselves beautiful...like Sarah...You*

*are her daughters if you (2) do what is right and (3) do not give way to fear. (1 Peter 3:5-6, NIV)*

***In the verses written above, underline the three choices women can make—identified by (1), (2), and (3).***

Peter identifies these examples for us as “holy women of the past.” The word “holy” means set apart for God’s special use. These women are holy because they had learned to trust in God when they were afraid. As holy women, these women were beautiful in God’s eyes (regardless of their outward appearance, age or societal status). This beauty attributed to them by God Himself was based on three choices they made (“used to make themselves beautiful”) that every woman can also make:

- Choice #1: You can put your hope in God—in God and His Word rather than the unreliability of ourselves or others.
- Choice #2: You can do what is right—according to God’s way of approaching life, not the world’s way, especially those cultural practices that go against God’s Word.
- Choice #3: You can choose to not give way to fear. Let’s examine this one more closely.

*Choose to not give way to fear*

Choose to not give way to fear. What does that mean?

We know this: God’s not saying, “Don’t ever feel fear?” God gave us the gift of fear as a normal human emotion designed to alert us to danger so we can take action against it. He’s saying, “Here’s why you don’t have to be terrified and paralyzed by your fear.” We are to face our troubles without panic and hysteria. We are to TRUST GOD—in whom we have put our hope and by whose Word we are taught to do what is right.

***Have you ever felt terrified? How did you respond?***

***God says that having a gentle and quiet inner spirit will make it easier for us not to get so terrified and stay that way.***

***What's harder for God: rescuing us from desperate circumstances or developing in us a gentle and quiet spirit?***

Did you select the “developing in us a gentle and quiet spirit?” I agree because it involves our cooperation! Is it too difficult for Him? No! A humble, peaceful heart makes it easier for us to face troubles without panic and hysteria and to choose to trust in the faithfulness of God.

We have a faithful God. That's not imaginary. In 1 Peter 3, Sarah represents several other everyday women who lived in Old Testament days who put their hope in God and found Him worthy of their trust. This was their walk from fear to faith. What is that?

## **THE WALK FROM FEAR TO FAITH**

In the Bible, “walk” refers to following a certain course of life or conducting oneself in a certain way. It is your daily life. How you choose to live daily. What motivates you. What guides you. What decisions you make in how you will respond to life. Will your daily walk follow God’s way of approaching life or the world’s way? Your walk is your choice.

For the purposes of this study, your choice involves moving away from fear and toward faith. Most of us have a pretty good understanding of fear in our lives. But what is faith? God defines that for us Himself through the writer of Hebrews.

**Read Hebrews 11:1.**

***What is faith?***

**Read Hebrews 11:6.**

***What must one believe about God?***

Did you notice that faith is related to confidence? Confident hope and confident assurance that what we believe is true. That confidence is in the fact that our God exists and is good to anyone who seeks Him. This confidence pleases Him. Hebrews 11 continues to relate the lives of men and women who had this confidence in God.

**Read the following verses. In each, who chose faith in God over giving way to fear?**

Hebrews 11:11—

Hebrews 11:23—

Hebrews 11:31—

**Read Hebrews 11:35 (first half of verse).**

***By faith, what did these women receive?***

These are the women who are our examples of choosing faith in God over giving way to fear. Old Testament women.

## CONNECTING WITH OLD TESTAMENT WOMEN

You may have very little knowledge of the Old Testament so these women may be strangers to you. Even though these women lived years ago, they were still women like we are.

As everyday women, they cooked meals, did laundry, and raised children. They had responsibilities inside and outside of their homes, including home businesses. They experienced hormone fluctuations and menopause. They laughed with their friends, differed with their mates, and cried when a loved one died. They wrote songs and played musical instruments. I bet they all found ways to use their 20,000 words per day!

At one time, they were 20-somethings, then 40-somethings, then 60-somethings and maybe more. They wore beads, earrings, and ankle bracelets. Their hair needed to be combed and fixed, and it turned grey as they aged. No doubt, some of them, if not all, had something on their bodies that sagged!

These women also experienced fear at various times in their lives just like we do. They faced invading enemies, sick family members, and empty pantries. They faced creditors and surprise houseguests. They even had “bad” days when things did not go right, sometimes due to their own choices.

These were **EVERYDAY WOMEN**, just like we are.

*As women in general, what kind of life experiences for them might have been the same as your own life experiences?*

*What kinds of fears did these women face that you may also face?*

Their stories—snippets of their biographies—are preserved for us to get to know them, and to know their God who is also our God—an **EVER-FAITHFUL** God whose character never changes.

They knew Him by the personal name *Yahweh* (YAH-weh). In our English translations, it is usually written as LORD in capital letters. In the Old Testament, you'll find the phrase "the LORD your God" or "the LORD our God" at least 500 times. Every time, that phrase is emphasizing, "We have a personal God. His name is *Yahweh*." It is the name by which God wished to be known and worshiped in Israel and by Israel, and it means, "I am." This name expressed His character as **constant, dependable and faithful**.

Jesus applied God's name "I am" to Himself (John 4:26; 8:59). Those listening knew he was declaring Himself to be God. So the ever faithful, promise-keeping God of the Old Testament is embodied in the Lord Jesus Christ of the New Testament and forever.

We still have a personal God.

## THE WALK FROM FEAR TO FAITH

Read John 14:27 and 16:33.

*What does Jesus promise to you?*

*He is with you through any trouble. You can trust Him. Our God is trustworthy!*

*What might be holding you back from trusting Him whenever you are afraid?*

“When we experience anxiety or fear, the enemy can try to use it as an opportunity to make us feel guilt or shame. That’s when we pause and ask God for help, knowing He understands and never condemns us.” (Holley Gerth, “Fear Not,” *Homelife Magazine*, March 2016)

## JOURNAL YOUR FAITH STORY

*Describe a problem in your life (current or past) where you have needed to make a choice to do right, but the possible consequences have filled you with fear. What have you learned about trusting God and living by faith in that area?*

## **“EMBRACE 4 TRUTHS ESSENTIAL TO FAITH”**

**Recommended:** Listen to the podcast [The Walk from Fear to Faith-4 Essential Truths](#). Use the section below as a listener guide.

When we look at life just with our own eyes, we become fearful, pessimistic, & negative. We think to ourselves, “Nothing’s going to work. I don’t know if I can get through this.” But when we look at the Bible and begin to see how God has empowered everyday people like you and I, the Holy Spirit takes the Word of God to strengthen us and give us courage that we did not know we had. Our examples are Old Testament women. As we join these Old Testament women on their faith walk, we will see consistent truths that we can embrace and apply to our lives today in our WALK FROM FEAR TO FAITH.

### *Truth #1: God loves you*

John 3:16; John 16:27; Romans 5:5

You are part of that world that God loves. And as a believer in Jesus, God the Father loves you and pours out His love into your heart so you can experience His love.

### *Truth #2: God knows what is going on in your life*

Matthew 6:31-32; Psalm 139:1-10

God is everywhere and knows everything. God knows what is going on in your life. He knows your needs and how to meet them.

### *Truth #3: God can do something about it*

Genesis 18:14; Luke 1:37

Is anything impossible for the Lord? The answer is, NO! Our God is all-powerful. He is capable of doing anything He chooses to do that agrees with His character and His purposes.

### *Truth #4: You can trust His goodness in whatever He chooses to do*

Psalm 119:68; Proverbs 3:5

The Bible says that God is good, and what He does is good. It is a choice to trust God and bank on His goodness.

As we study each of these women—our mentors, we will see that during her faith walk, a loving God said “no” to some things. Yet, she chose to trust Him rather than submit to fear. And God rewarded her faith with an outpouring of His blessing in other ways. You and I can do the same.

When You don't move the mountains I'm needing You to move  
When You don't part the waters I wish I could walk through  
When You don't give the answers as I cry out to You  
I will trust, I will trust, I will trust in You!  
(Lauren Daigle, “Trust in You”)

Dear friends, God may not choose to rescue you from everything that is threatening you. But in any and all situations, you can embrace these truths, making them personal...

- #1. God loves me
- #2. God knows what is going on in my life
- #3. God can do something about it
- #4. I can trust His goodness in whatever He chooses to do

*You can count on that!*

## REFLECT

*What is causing you fear today? What are your choices for acting on that fear? Apply the 4 truths to your situation. Pray about your fears and decisions you are making to trust God in them. Thank God for His grace toward you and His love for you.*

Get *The Walk from Fear to Faith* at [melaniemewton.com](http://melaniemewton.com) as well as most online bookstores.

## A Quick Look at Paul's Letters

<i>Letters to churches (city)</i>	<i>Year written</i>	<i>Where written</i>	<i>When Paul visited</i>	<i>Christ in the Letter</i>
<i>Romans (Rome)</i>	57-58	In Corinth during Paul's 3rd missionary journey	After 3rd journey when Paul was arrested and brought to Rome as a prisoner under house arrest	Christ is our righteousness.
<i>1st Corinthians (Corinth)</i>	55-56	In Ephesus during Paul's 3rd missionary journey	During 2nd missionary journey	Christ is the wisdom of God.
<i>2nd Corinthians (Corinth)</i>	55-56	In Macedonia during Paul's 3rd missionary journey	During 2nd missionary journey	Christ is our comforter
<i>Galatians (region of Galatia)</i>	49	After 1st missionary journey when Paul returned to Antioch	Traveled through region on all 3 missionary journeys	Christ is our freedom from the law.
<i>Ephesians (Ephesus)</i>	61	During house imprisonment in Rome after 3rd missionary journey	During 2nd and 3rd missionary journeys	Christ is the powerful head of the Church.
<i>Philippians (Philippi)</i>	61	During house imprisonment in Rome after 3rd missionary journey	During 2nd and 3rd missionary journeys	Christ is the supplier of every need.

<i>Colossians (Colossae)</i>	61	During house imprisonment in Rome after 3rd missionary journey	None known	Christ is Lord over everything.
<i>1st and 2nd Thessalonians (Thessalonica)</i>	51	In Corinth during Paul's 2nd missionary journey	During 2nd missionary journey	Christ is our returning Lord.
<b>Letters to individuals</b>	<b>Year written</b>	<b>Where written</b>	<b>When Paul met him</b>	<b>Christ in the Letter</b>
<i>1st Timothy (in Ephesus)</i>	63-66	During Paul's 5 years of freedom after his 1st Roman imprisonment	Converted by Paul in Galatia during 1st journey; accompanied Paul on 2nd and 3rd journeys	Christ is our mediator.
<i>2nd Timothy (in Ephesus)</i>	67	During 2nd imprisonment in Rome just before his execution	Converted by Paul in Galatia during 1st journey; accompanied Paul on 2nd and 3rd journeys	Christ is the giver of crowns.
<i>Titus (in Crete)</i>	63-66	During Paul's 5 years of freedom after his 1st Roman imprisonment	Converted by Paul; accompanied Paul and Barnabas to Jerusalem on 2nd journey	Christ is our blessed hope.
<i>Philemon (in Colossae)</i>	61	During house imprisonment in Rome after 3rd missionary journey	Friend of Paul whose slave, Onesimus, had run away and been converted by Paul	Christ is the renewer of hearts.