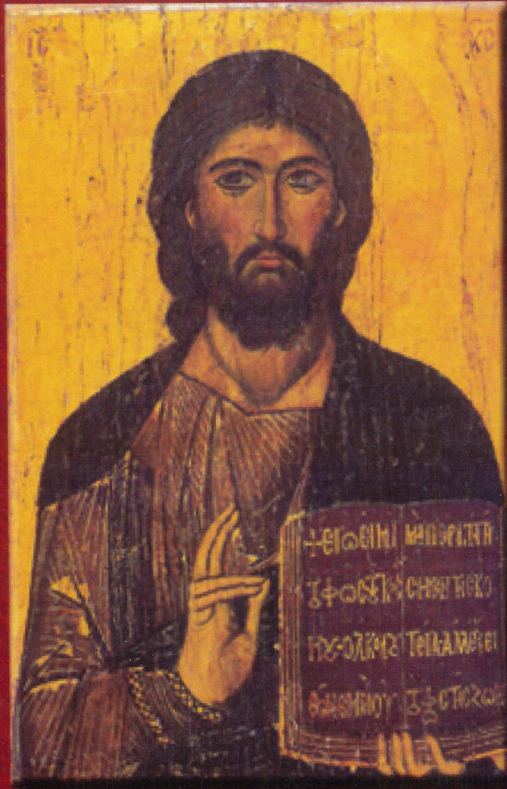


*INVITATION TO CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP*



*Christ-Bearer of Light, 13th C.  
Monastery of St. Catherine, Sinai, Egypt  
John 8:12*

# GOSPEL TO THE NATIONS

*Meditations on*

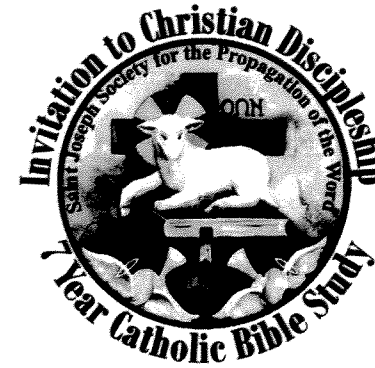
ST. PAUL'S EPISTLE TO THE GALATIANS

and

FIRST LETTER TO THE THESSALONIANS

**INVITATION TO CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP**

A Seven Year Catholic Bible Study



**GOSPEL TO THE NATIONS**

*MEDITATIONS ON*

**ST. PAUL'S EPISTLE TO THE GALATIANS**

and

**FIRST LETTER TO THE THESSALONIANS**

---

James P. O'Bryan, S.T.

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Censores Deputati**

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Bishop of Orange in California**

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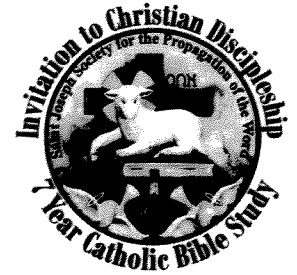
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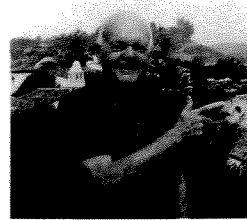
# An Invitation to Christian Discipleship

James P. O'Bryan, S.T.L. Author and Presenter

It was the early 1970's when a group of laywomen in Orange, CA approached Fr. O'Bryan about the lack of Catholic Bible studies in Orange County. There was, of course, the Protestant group nearby that had signed up over 200 Catholics to their study. Father knew he couldn't do the work without a great deal of assistance. Volunteers stepped up to do the logistical tasks and Father worked with the Holy Spirit to provide the inspiration. This was the beginning of his "seven year sentence". Working 60 – 65 hours per week, he was never more than two weeks ahead, and most of the time he was working with less than a day to presentation time. His work was all hand written and needed to be typed and copied for distribution. These two hour sessions (1 hour sharing + 1 hour lecture) were attended by approximately 400 people weekly, split between a morning and an evening class. Father claims he never rewrote a word; "I didn't have the time," he said. He continues his writing today in Riverside, California.



Father's efforts resulted in a seven year study plus several spin-off works used for educating Catholics around the world. The seven year scripture study includes:



Fr. Jim

- Invitation to Christian Discipleship (Intro)
- Hebrews
- The Gospel of St. Mark
- 1 Thessalonians
- The Gospel of St. Luke
- 1 Corinthians
- Acts of the Apostles
- 2 Corinthians
- The Gospel of St. Matthew
- Galatians
- The Gospel of St. John
- Revelation
- Romans

Other excellent teaching materials, often used in RCIA and formation classes, are the result of Father's dedication to the laity. These materials include "Christian with a Capital C," "Rock Foundation Revisited" and "On Eagle's Wings." In 2005, a group was formed to help publish and distribute Father's work. The **St. Joseph Society for the Propagation of The Word, Inc.** has been instrumental in setting up a web site to take on the ministry of spreading the Gospel by promoting the instructional works of Fr. O'Bryan. **Materials available include teacher's manuals, student workbooks, CD's of lectures, and several inspirational works for RCIA and adult education.**

This study is designed to be presented by either the laity or religious. Each scripture study offers Teacher's Manuals, Student Workbooks and CD's. Instructions for starting a study group are included. These studies are accredited by the Catechetical Institute of Orange County and have the Imprimatur through the Bishop of Orange, California. Check our website for a study near you or start a study in your parish. We'll be happy to help you.

This is an "in depth" study of the scriptures so that the Word of Christ, rich as it is, might dwell in us.

*Thus you will be able to grasp fully, with all the holy ones, the breadth and length and heights and depth of Christ's love, and experience this love which surpasses all knowledge, so that you may attain to the fullness of God Himself (Eph. 3:18-19).*

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### ST. PAUL'S LETTER TO THE GALATIANS

1. Introduction to the Epistle to the Galatians - Part I . . . . .	1
2. Introduction to the Epistle to the Galatians - Part II . . . . .	10
3. Apostle of Good News . . . . .	19
4. No Other Gospel. . . . .	28
5. The Shepherd and the Prophet. . . . .	36
6. Justification through Faith . . . . .	45
7. Sons of God. . . . .	56
8. Freedom of God's Sons . . . . .	65
9. The Spirit and the Flesh . . . . .	73
10. The Law of Christ . . . . .	81

### FIRST LETTER TO THE THESSALONIANS

1. Paul in Macedonia. . . . .	89
2. Essentials of Christian Community . . . . .	96
3. Evangelism with Love. . . . .	104
4. Called to Greater Holiness. . . . .	112
5. Thanatos and Parousia. . . . .	121
6. Children of Light . . . . .	130

**APPENDIX**

**Bibliography . . . . . i**  
**Guidelines for Bible Study Groups. . . . . iii**  
**Price List for Teaching Materials. . . . . viii**

## LETTER TO THE GALATIANS

### INTRODUCTION PART I--SUMMARY

#### INTRODUCTION

Through the documents of the Second Vatican Council, the Church teaches the fullness and the perfection of the divine revelation received from Jesus Christ. In the document on Revelation we read: "The Christian dispensation, therefore, as the new and definitive covenant, will never pass away, and we now await no further new public revelation before the glorious manifestation of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Ch.I.,sec.4). Within the same document we read that the Church's understanding of revelation is not static but is in a state of continuous growth in breadth and depth (See Ch.II,sec.8).

Writing around 180 A.D. Irenaeus reflects the wisdom of nearly a hundred and fifty years when he teaches us:

In Deuteronomy, Moses says to the people: "*The Lord God granted you a covenant on Horeb; it was not to your fathers but to you that he gave it.*" Why, then, not to the fathers? Because "*the law is not intended for the upright*" and the fathers were upright men who had the virtues prescribed by the Decalogue (the Ten Commandments) already written in their minds and hearts. They loved the God who created them and did no injury to their neighbor. Thus they needed no written law...

...God spoke the words of the Decalogue to all alike. These words apply to us today for they were not abrogated but extended and deepened by God coming in the flesh.

God indeed gave other precepts as well through Moses, but these were precepts proper to a time of servitude. These precepts were done away with in the new covenant of freedom, which taught men to know God as their Father, to love him wholeheartedly, and to follow his Word as faithful disciples (Against Heresies - Bk.4).

A clear understanding of the relationship of Christianity to the Jewish Torah resulted only after a long, painful struggle within the minds and hearts of the

earliest Christians. This struggle surfaced as the first major internal crisis faced by the infant Christian Church. Upon this crisis depended the catholicity of the Church.

The contents of Paul's letter to the Galatians concerned itself with this Church crisis. To better understand the contents of Paul's letter let us briefly review the background situation that stimulated Paul to write such an emotionally charged apologia and defense of Christian Revelation.

### THE COVENANT OF LAW

God established a Covenant with Israel at Mt. Horeb (also identified as Mt. Sinai). Yahweh established this covenant upon obedience to particular laws. We find the essential precepts of the Mt. Sinai Covenant expressed in the Decalogue found in Exodus 20:2-17 and again in Deuteronomy 5:6-21. A Decalogue of ritual laws can also be found in Exodus 34:17-27, and a code of holiness detailed in chapters 12 through 26 in Leviticus. When all was said and done there existed over six hundred covenant laws. Through the years famous rabbis added their "hedge around the law"--numerous precepts, customs, and traditions designed to protect the law.

The covenant law was called the Torah. Strictly speaking, the Torah was the first five books of the Old Testament. Later the word was applied loosely to the entire Old Testament. The Covenant made at Horeb had indeed, in the words of Simon Peter, become "*a yoke which neither we nor our fathers were able to bear*" (Acts 15:10).

### THE COVENANT OF CIRCUMCISION

The Covenant made with Israel built on the more ancient covenant established with Abraham, the forefather of Israel. Yahweh declared to Abraham, "*This is my covenant with you and your descendants after you that you must keep: every male among you shall be circumcised...that shall be the mark of the covenant between you and me...If a male is uncircumcised such a one shall be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant* (Gen.17:7,10,14).

We see in Leviticus 12:3 that all male Israelite children must be circumcised on the eighth day after their birth in order to share in the covenant promises made to Abraham. God established a covenant of blessing with Abraham. The



covenant and the promises made to Abraham were neither conditional nor temporary. It was an everlasting reward for Abraham's faith and love.

This was not true of the Covenant with Israel, which was conditioned upon the continual obedience of Israel to the Torah. Through Moses, God foretold that these laws would remain in force until the coming of a new Moses (see Deuteronomy 18:15,17-19).

### A NEW COVENANT

The prophets of Israel foretold the establishment of a New Covenant. Jeremiah prophesied, *"The days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and house of Judah" (Jer.31:31)*. The prophet Ezekiel writes of the New Covenant, *"I will give them a new heart and put a new spirit within them... I will make with them a covenant of peace; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them...and put my sanctuary among them forever. My dwelling shall be with them; I will be their God, and they shall be my people (Ez.11:19; 37:25-27)*.

The Twelve Apostles along with other disciples experienced the entire public ministry of Jesus Christ. They heard His teachings and witnessed His deeds. They became the repositories of Christian Revelation. After the death and resurrection of Jesus and the reception of the Holy Spirit, their former experience with Jesus became a well of infinite depth from which the Apostles constantly drew divine wisdom and gained spiritual insight into the mysteries enacted within the life of Jesus. Through the power of the Holy Spirit they began to penetrate the significance of His symbolic actions. They came to realize that a New Covenant had been inaugurated at the Last Supper (see Mt.26:27-28 and Lk.22:20).

We see from Luke's presentation in the Acts that the early Christian Community recognized the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon believers as the fruit of the New Covenant, inaugurated by the Lord Jesus Christ through His death and resurrection from the dead. The Church interpreted the coming of the Holy Spirit and its effects as the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy: *"Then afterward I will pour out my spirit upon all mankind." (Joel 3:1)* Joel went on to prophesy, *"Then everyone shall be rescued who calls on the name of the Lord" (Jl. 3:5)*.

Peter makes clear "the name" through which salvation comes. *"This Jesus is*

*'the stone rejected by you the builders which has become the cornerstone.' There is no salvation in anyone else, for there is no other name in the whole world given to men by which we are to be saved" (Acts 4:11-12).* Peter sufficiently interpreted what it meant to call upon the name of the Lord, but how did the early Church interpret "everyone"? Peter evidently taught Jesus Christ to be the Savior of the world when he said, *"There is no other name in the whole world given to men by which we are to be saved" (Acts 4:12).*

#### THE MOSAIC LAW AND THE NEW COVENANT

It was clear from the Old Testament that there would come a day when salvation would be offered to all mankind (see Is.56:3-7). How universal salvation would be applied to the non-Jew was not clear to the early Church. The Church had begun as a Jewish congregation, accepting Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah. Other than to baptize and to teach, the Lord left no instructions and gave no blueprints as to how the Church was to move from being a provincial body to becoming a Church for all nations embracing all mankind.

What was the relationship of the Mosaic law to the New Covenant? The Scriptures reveal some steps taken by the Church to clarify the position of the Mosaic law in the Christian Community. The Church realized that in some way the New Covenant fulfilled the Old Covenant (see Mt.5:17-20). The fulfillment of the Mosaic law is not seen in its discontinuation but in its perfection within the New Covenant. We see an example of this when our Lord reduces all the commandments of the Old Testament to love of God and love of neighbor: *"On these two commandments," Jesus teaches, "the whole law is based, and the prophets as well" (Mt.22:40).* The Christian Community begins to understand that as the spirit of the New Covenant differs from the spirit of the Old Covenant, the form through which the spirit expresses itself must also be different. People do not pour new wine into old wineskins. It begins to question the enforcement of certain Jewish laws and customs. It begins, at least, to realize that the Lord had abrogated certain external laws and customs (see Mt.9:17; 15:10-20; Mk.7:19).

Jesus certainly taught *"salvation is from the Jews" (see Jn.4:22).* Did this imply Gentiles must become Jews in order to share in the salvation offered through the New Covenant? Many early Christians believed this; insisted upon it. They maintained Gentiles must be circumcised and observe the Mosaic law in order to be saved.

The history of the Church confirms that it is often only a crisis of contention and conflict that forces the truths of Christian Revelation into the Church's conscious awareness. If religious complacency ever existed in the Jerusalem Christian Community it ended with the ministry and martyrdom of St. Stephen. Stephen was one of the Seven Hellenistic Jewish Christians--those Jews born and reared in Gentile cities beyond Palestine. Because of their social environment they were much more open to communication with the Gentiles than were the Palestinian Jews.

As a Christian, Stephen dared to look down the road of Judaism, where he beheld a dead end. He realized that Christians had another road, a further road to travel far beyond Judaism. He became a harbinger sounding "the death knell of the Mosaic ordinances." Stephen echoed anew Jesus' prediction of the demise of temple worship. He made enemies, not the least of whom was Saul of Tarsus. Accusing Stephen of heresy before the Jewish Sanhedrin, the accusers charged that he *"never stops making statements against the holy place and the law. We have heard him claim that Jesus the Nazorean will destroy this place and change the customs"* (Acts 6:13b-14a).

After the martyrdom of Stephen a persecution arose aimed especially at the Hellenistic Jews. Many fled Palestine. The persecution created circumstances out of which a Christian Community, largely Gentiles, would arise in the city of Antioch.

#### PHILIP THE EVANGELIST

Philip, a companion of Stephen and one of the Seven ordained by the Apostles, took the first positive step toward receiving non-Jews into the Church. Philip fled to Samaria and preached the Gospel to the Samaritans; he received many of them into the Church. Peter and John came from Jerusalem and approved Philip's ministry by imparting the Sacrament of Confirmation to the converted Samaritans. In the case of the Samaritans, even though the Jews considered them heretics and half-breeds, they were already circumcised. With the Samaritans it was not a matter of bringing uncircumcised people into the Christian Community. However Philip went on from Samaria to encounter the Ethiopian eunuch on the Gaza road. Although the eunuch believed in Judaism, he was impeded by his physical infirmity from officially becoming a Jew. When Philip baptized the eunuch, he received the first non-circumcised person into the Church. The reception of the eunuch into the Church could have been viewed as a rare exception, fulfilling the prophesy of Isaiah 56:4-5.

## PETER BAPTIZES CORNELIUS

Simon Peter clearly stated the Jewish attitude concerning relations with Gentiles. Addressing the centurion Cornelius and his household Peter said, *"You must know that it is not proper for a Jew to associate with a Gentile or to have dealings with him"* (Acts 10:38). Although the Levitical law did not forbid Jews to eat with non-Jews, it became a corollary of their law that to do so would result in ritual impurity because pagans would not observe their dietary and ritual laws. It will help to understand the problem at hand to realize the Jews made no distinction between impurity that resulted from either moral or ritual prohibitions. Impurity, regardless of its nature, severed one's relationship with God. The Jews made no distinction between a bodily impurity and a spiritual impurity when it came to union with God.

To declare that a Gentile could be accepted into the Church without circumcision was revolutionary, with repercussions on every level of Jewish life. Such a belief was not readily acceptable in the Jerusalem Christian Community. Its practice became a major source of contention and divisiveness within the Community. It produced the first major theological crisis within the Church.

While in Joppa, a city by the Mediterranean Sea, Simon Peter, the recognized leader of the Church, had a vision that altered the policy of the Church. Peter beheld within the vision a large net coming down from heaven filled with creatures forbidden by Leviticus for Jews to eat. A heavenly voice commanded Peter to kill and eat these creatures. The command shocked Peter. Not being a person given to blind, unquestionable obedience Peter refused, giving his moral reasons for his refusal, *"Sir, it is unthinkable! I have never eaten anything unclean or impure in my life"* (Acts 10:14). The heavenly voice replied to Peter, *"What God has purified you are not to call unclean"* (Acts 10:15). The same vision was repeated three times.

Peter pondered over the contents of the vision and wondered what it signified. His consternation was short lived. Concomitant with Peter's vision, in Caesarea, a port city north of Joppa, a certain Roman centurion named Cornelius had also received a vision. Cornelius was commanded to send some men to Joppa to summon Simon Peter to his home. On arriving at the house of Cornelius, Peter found him gathered with members of his family and a group of close friends, waiting to hear what Simon Peter had to say to them. Cornelius humbly said to Peter, *"All of us stand before God at this moment to*

*hear whatever directives the Lord has given you" (Acts 10:33).*

An extraordinary event occurred while Peter spoke to this assembly of non-Jews. *"The Holy Spirit descended upon all who were listening to Peter's message" (Acts 10:44).* It was an extraordinary event because, normally, the reception of the Holy Spirit followed Christian Baptism (See Acts 2:38; 19:4-7). What was even more surprising was the fact that these recipients of the Holy Spirit were all uncircumcised people. This event implied a by-pass of Judaism--something up to now never envisioned by the Christian Community. We are told, *"The circumcised believers who had accompanied Peter were surprised that the gift of the Holy Spirit should have been poured out on the Gentiles also, whom they could hear speaking in tongues and glorifying God" (Acts 10:45-46a).*

From that extraordinary event, Peter interpreted that Jewish circumcision was not a prerequisite for Christian Baptism. *"So he gave orders that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ" (Acts 10:48).* They had received the Holy Spirit--the Fruit of the New Covenant--they certainly should be formally received into the New Covenant.

After the baptism we are told, *"They asked him to stay with them for a few days" (Acts 10:48).* Peter's staying in the home of a Gentile and eating with them signified that the Church had taken a step toward catholicity--toward a realization that it was a new wine to be contained in new wine skins. Peter's action had sown a revolutionary seed within the Christian Community that would reap a harvest of conflict but which, when subsided, would leave a Catholic Church--a house of prayer for all the nations.

**LETTER TO THE GALATIANS  
INTRODUCTION-PART ONE**

**SCRIPTURE READINGS AND QUESTIONS  
SCRIPTURE OF THE WEEK (PLEASE MEMORIZE)**

**"HOW TRUE IT IS THAT GOD SHOWS NO PARTIALITY. RATHER, THE MAN OF ANY NATION WHO FEARS GOD AND ACTS UPRIGHTLY IS ACCEPTABLE TO HIM." --ACTS 10:34b-35**

**FIRST DAY: Read the Summary through The Covenant of Circumcision; Exodus 20:2-17; 34:17-27; Deuteronomy 5:6-21.**

- 1. What do you understand by the Church teaching that we "await no further new public revelation" but "there is a growth in the understanding of the realities and the words which have been handed down"?**
- 2. How would you briefly describe the covenants God made with Abraham and Moses?**
- 3. In what way did the covenant made with Abraham become a foundation for the covenant made at Horeb?**
- 4. What does Deuteronomy 18:15-19 teach us about the Mosaic law?**

**SECOND DAY: Read Summary: A New Covenant; Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ezekiel 11:19-20; Joel 3:1-5; Matthew 26:27-28; Luke 22:20.**

- 1. How would you briefly describe the New Covenant foretold by the three prophets?**
- 2. In what way do you see it differing from the Mosaic Covenant?**
- 3. What do we learn about the new covenant from Mt.26:27-28 and Lk.22:20?**
- 4. How did the early Church interpret Joel 3:1-5?**

**THIRD DAY: Read Summary: The Mosaic Law and The New Covenant; Isaiah 56:1-8; Matthew 5:17-20; 15:1-20; Mark 7:19.**

- 1. What does the reading from Isaiah imply about salvation?**

2. What do you understand by the term "universal salvation"?
3. Generally, how did the very early Church view its relationship with the Mosaic law and the Old Covenant?
4. Mark and Matthew give a different interpretation to Jesus' teaching. What does this tell us?

**FOURTH DAY: Read Summary: The Role of St. Stephen; Acts 6:1-15, 7:54-60.**

1. How would you describe the difference between a Palestinian and Hellenist Jew?
2. What did Stephen foresee concerning the future of Judaism?
3. Why did the Sanhedrin put him to death?
4. What effect did his ministry have upon the Church?

**FIFTH DAY: Read Summary: Philip The Evangelist; Acts 8:4-40.**

1. What effect did Stephen's death have upon Philip?
2. What was the significance of Philip's work in Samaria?
3. What was so extraordinary about Philip baptizing the Eunuch?
4. What does the ministry of Philip teach you about evangelizing?

**SIXTH DAY: Read Summary: Simon Peter Baptizes Cornelius; Acts 10:1-48; Acts 2:38; 19:4-7.**

1. What was the attitude of the early Church members towards non-Jews?
2. What did Peter and the Christian Community learn from his vision in Joppa?
3. What was so extraordinary about the coming of the Holy Spirit upon the household of Cornelius?
4. What do you understand by the Church becoming "catholic"?

## CHAPTER 2

### INTRODUCTION PART II--SUMMARY

#### THE CHURCH OF ANTIOCH

The reception of the Gentiles by Simon Peter into the Christian Community prepared the Church for the progress that would take place in Antioch. Peter set a precedent for the Church when he baptized uncircumcised people. We are given this account of the establishment of the Church in Antioch by Luke, *“Some men of Cyprus and Cyrene among them who had come to Antioch began to talk even to the Greeks, announcing the good news of the Lord Jesus to them. The hand of the Lord was with them and a great number of them believed and were converted to the Lord” (Acts 11:20-21).*

Antioch became the first center for a mixed congregation. This ecumenical congregation of Jews and Gentiles became the testing ground for the catholicity of the Church. In Antioch the Gentile converts probably even predominated. When Church leaders in Jerusalem heard the report from Antioch, they immediately sent Barnabas, a Hellenistic Jew from Cyprus, as their official representative. Barnabas confirmed that the work in Antioch evidently enjoyed the favor of God (Acts 11:23).

To work in this delicate missionary field, Barnabas went to Tarsus and solicited the assistance of Paul who had been converted to Christ some ten years earlier. Paul joined with Barnabas in ministering to the Church at Antioch. By this gesture, Barnabas brought Paul back into the mainstream of apostolic activity. The field that was being firmly established would stimulate and bring to a head the first major, internal crisis within the Church.

#### THE CRISIS OF CONSCIENCE

Peter's action in Caesarea did not go unquestioned or unchallenged in Jerusalem. The knowledge of his action had a divisive effect. The church members that took exception to Peter's action are identified as "some among the circumcised." These men were converted Pharisees who had belonged to a Jewish party dedicated to the strictest observance of the Mosaic law. As Christian beliefs and attitudes solidified within the Church, it was this group of Christians who would form the divisive group called "the party of the circumcision," whose goal was to conserve Judaism within the Church.



Many members of the early Church faced a particular crisis of conscience: should they be directed by their own private interpretation of the Scriptures (Gn.17:7-4 and Lv.12:3), or could they acknowledge the teaching authority of the Church to correctly discern matters of salvation and properly interpret the Scriptures? A Gospel record, written some years later, confirmed that Peter as an individual, and the Twelve as a college, possessed the power to bind and loose within the Church and to teach authoritatively (see Mt.16:18-19; 18:18; 28:19-20). A reasonable presumption being that they possessed the grace necessary to properly fulfill their duties within the Church.

### THE ROLE OF JAMES

The party of the circumcision found their authority and leadership in James, who had become the recognized leader of the Jerusalem Christian Community. Although not generally believed to be an apostle, James was "the brother of the Lord" who probably came to accept Jesus as the Messiah only after the Resurrection. Paul mentioned an appearance of the Risen Jesus to James (1Cor.15:7). The degree and manner of James' relationship with Jesus has been highly debated. Catholics are free to hold any opinion which does not violate the perpetual virginity of Mary.

Sometime between 41 and 44 A.D. King Herod Agrippa executed the Apostle James (brother of John), arrested Peter, and inaugurated a persecution against the Church leaders. Peter escaped prison and fled Jerusalem. Until this time, as the first ten chapters of Acts demonstrates, Church leadership in Jerusalem had been in the hands of Peter and the Apostles. From this time on, James and the presbyters appear in the role of leadership in Jerusalem.

James' concern for the Church appears quite provincial. We have recorded in Acts an example of James' provincial mentality. Presumably James tells Paul, *"You see, brother, how many thousands of Jews have come to believe, all of them staunch defenders of the law. Yet they have been informed that you teach the Jews who live among the Gentiles to abandon Moses, to give up the circumcision of their children, and to renounce their customs. What are we to do about your coming, of which they are sure to hear?" (Acts 21:20-22).*

We hear no rebuttal by Paul. This conversation occurred on his last visit to Jerusalem, only a few years prior to his death in Rome. We can well imagine how the statement by Paul, written a few years earlier to the Corinthians, would have been received by James and the Jewish Christian in Jerusalem,

*"Circumcision counts for nothing, and its lack makes no difference either. What matters is keeping God's commandments" (1Cor.7:19).* A revolutionary statement! One reflecting the spiritual maturity of its teacher. Precisely because of such teachings many, within and without the Church, bitterly opposed and hated Paul.

#### PRELUDE TO THE COUNCIL

Acts records an episode in Antioch that initiated the Church Council at Jerusalem, where the issue of Gentile Christians and the Mosaic law was officially settled. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the Antiochean Community had commissioned Barnabas and Paul to undertake the missionary journey among pagan nations. The two apostles appealed first to the Jews in the pagan cities, but when opposed by them, Paul declared to the Jews, *"The word of God has to be declared to you first of all; but since you reject it...we now turn to the Gentiles" (Acts 13:46).*

Barnabas and Paul then traveled to the Island of Cyprus, crossed over to the mainland at Perga and headed north into the Roman Province of Galatia. There they preached in the cities of Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe. Returning to their home base in Antioch they related to the congregation of believers *"all that God had helped them accomplish, and how he had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles" (Acts 14:27).*

Meanwhile, certain Jerusalem Christians had second thoughts about Peter's action in Caesarea. Correct in-so-far as it went, but it did not go far enough. It was their conscientious decision that Christian Baptism did not exempt Christians from the obligation of being circumcised and observing the Mosaic law. It was their conclusion that observance of the law was necessary for salvation. These men became known in Christian circles as Judaizers. They were probably the first Christian sect born within the Church.

With apostolic zeal some of these Jerusalem Christians arrived in Antioch. Disturbed, no doubt, by the news that Jewish and Gentile Christians were actually in communion with each other, they immediately sought to correct this situation by preaching to the Gentile Christians: *"Unless you are circumcised according to Mosaic practice, you cannot be saved" (Acts 15:1b).* Such a proclamation shocked Paul and Barnabas.

Good people too often remain quiet in the face of error. Silence becomes the fuel feeding the fires of error. Silence in the face of error or a lie becomes an interpreted consent to its truth. Acting upon error produces evil. Think of the evil that flowed from such doctrines as white and Aryan supremacy! The acceptance of error comes through hearing it, and it is heard because its apostles loudly and fearlessly proclaim it. If truth does not receive equal time and treatment, error, with its subsequent evil, triumphs. Truth carries the potential to extinguish the lie and thereby negates its evil consequences. Silence negates the power of truth!

In Antioch, error and evil met its match in Paul and Barnabas, zealous apostles of the truth, men willing not only to preach the truth but willing to die for it, so highly did they esteem the benefit of Gospel truth for mankind. The implications of the theology and practice of the Judaizers did not escape Paul and Barnabas. It implicitly denied that a New Covenant had been established in the Blood of Jesus Christ. It negated the merits of the sacrificial death of Jesus on the Cross. If salvation resulted from circumcision and the observance of the Mosaic law, then the death of Jesus was meaningless and futile--the life and death of Jesus had changed or altered essentially nothing. In the face of such error, with such drastic consequences, men of the caliber of Paul and Barnabas were unable to be silent. Not peace at such a price!

#### THE COUNCIL OF JERUSALEM

The issue divided the Christian Community. The Church decided to appeal to the authorities in Jerusalem for a solution of peace, an authoritative decision that would settle this vital matter of faith and conscience (see Acts 15:2). Subsequently *"the apostles and the presbyters accordingly convened to look into the matter"* (Acts 15:6).

After much discussion Peter took the floor and appealed to the empirical evidence at hand--the visible work of God within the souls of these baptized Gentiles. He argued that God had chosen him first to proclaim the Gospel to the Gentiles, and God had demonstrated approval of the Gentiles by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon them. *"He made no distinction between them and us but purified their hearts by means of faith also"* (Acts 15:9). Peter insisted that if God demanded no more from the Gentiles than faith in Jesus Christ, the Church had no right to demand more--that would be tantamount to testing God. He went on to explain that to insist upon circumcision and the observance of the Mosaic law was to place a yoke on the converted Gentiles, a

yoke that the Jews themselves had been unable to bear.

Peter concluded his presentation by formulating the true belief of the Christian Faith. He declared, "*Our belief is rather that we are saved by the favor of the Lord Jesus and so are they*" (Acts 15:11). The Church recognized Peter's decision as "*the decision of the Holy Spirit*" (Acts 15:28a). Therefore it became the decision of the true Christian Community. "*At that the whole assembly fell silent*" (Acts 15:12a). Public discussion on the matter ended.

This formal decision by the teaching authority of the Church saved the Christian Church from being a Jewish sect--from becoming no more than "the sect of the Nazoreans." This decision resulted, in no small part, from the zeal and wisdom of Paul of Tarsus. It was precisely this controversy that stimulated Paul's letter to the Galatians. However, the error and the spirit of divisiveness spawned by the Judaizers survived for centuries, nourished by heretical Christian sects. Their historical hatred of Paul of Tarsus gives silent testimony to the powerful effect of his work for the preservation of a pure Christian Faith.

#### WHEN, WHERE AND TO WHOM?

There is little agreement among scholars as to the recipients of this Epistle. Generally, all agree that the time of its writing depends upon to whom it was written. Two major schools of thought exist. We know from Acts that Paul and Barnabas traveled through the southern section of Galatia on their first missionary journey. They made converts in the cities of Pisidian Antioch, Lystra, Iconium, and Derbe. Some scholars believe the Epistle was written to the Christians living in these southern cities of Galatia. Those of this school of thought place the composition of Paul's letter in Antioch (Syria), or maybe Corinth, and possibly written as early as 49 A.D. This would make Galatians the first New Testament Epistle written by Paul.

Acts records a second missionary journey by Paul with Silas rather than Barnabas. These two traveled through both the southern and northern sections of Galatia. The northern section was, properly speaking, the traditional Galatian territory. Certain scholars insist that Paul addressed his Epistles to Christians living in Ancyra, Pessinus, and Tavium--cities of northern Galatia. This theory would place the writing of the Epistle sometime around 51 to 54 A.D., from Corinth or Ephesus, after the Letters to the Thessalonians and even, maybe, after the Letters to the Corinthians.

The internal evidence within the Epistle indicates that Paul wrote a short time after the conversion of the Galatians. At the time of the writing of the Epistle, the Council of Jerusalem seemingly had occurred. Paul appears to narrate his own account of the council in his letter. Assuming, as this writer does, that Paul wrote to the cities in southern Galatia, it is hypothesized that Paul wrote the Epistle to the Galatians from Antioch around 50 A.D. At the time of its composition, Paul was probably unable to go directly to Galatia, perhaps because of weather conditions or some prior commitment.

### THE MESSAGE

News that the Galatians had defected from the true faith reached Paul. Members of the circumcision party, arriving in Galatia, had effectively preached the doctrine that Gentile converts must be circumcised and observe the Mosaic law in order to be saved. In order to have their brand of Christianity accepted they had shrewdly resorted to the tactic of destroying the credibility of their opposition, and convinced the Galatians that Paul had failed to preach the true Christian Gospel to them. According to his critics, Paul was obviously a man who sought to please men rather than God. They insinuated he was a bogus apostle speaking without divine authority.

The Epistle to the Galatians begins by Paul bluntly expressing his opinions of the Galatians' present situation. They have been seduced into accepting a false gospel, having fallen under an evil spell that caused them confusion of mind and inconstancy of heart. They have been reduced to foolishness in their religious life.

Wisely, Paul perceives that the credibility of his teachings depends upon the authenticity of his apostolic authority to proclaim the gospel. Forced by the attacks of his enemies, Paul defends his apostolic authority and proceeds to defend the truth of the gospel. It became a battle cry with him: *"I will not treat God's gracious gift as pointless. If justice is available through the law, then Christ died to no purpose!" (Gal.2:21).*

The Epistle to the Galatians certainly has permanent value for the Christian Community. Within the content of this Epistle Paul deals with legalism, license, and liberty. These are three issues vital to Christian life in every age. In defense against legalism, *Paul declares that "only faith which expresses itself through love accounts for anything in Christ" (Gal.5:6).* Paul seeks to free the Christian from the spirit of legalism, which binds, narrows, and stifles the life

of the spirit. He insists, on the other hand, that a Christian must be guided by law in order to avoid a spirit of license and libertinism, which leads to mental impoverishment, moral decay and spiritual bankruptcy, and boredom. He declares there is a spirit of liberty that paradoxically realizes itself in a spirit of "bondage to Christ." He reveals the true liberty that discovers its essential dimensions in its obedient submission to the "Law of Christ."

*"Remember," Paul says, "that you have been called to live in freedom." He immediately adds, "but not a freedom that gives free rein to the flesh" (5:13). "Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified their flesh with its passions and desires" (5:24). In the mind of Paul, the spirit of the Christian truly becomes the Phoenix that arises to new life out of its own ashes. Through his crucifixion of the flesh, the Christian frees himself from being an earth-bound soul and permits the spirit, with eagle wings, to soar into the heavens. It is the spirit of self-sacrificing love that charts the spirit's course to the true freedom of the children of God. On this course the spirit never grows weary of doing good (Gal.6:9), and while it has the opportunity, does good to all men--"but especially those of the household of the faith" (6:10). To the "Israel of God"--to those "who follow this rule of life," Paul says, "Since we live by the spirit, let us follow the spirit's lead" (5:26). After all, Paul insists, "All that matters is that one is created anew" (Gal.6:15).*

## INTRODUCTION—PART II

### SCRIPTURE READINGS AND QUESTIONS SCRIPTURE OF THE WEEK (PLEASE MEMORIZE)

**"I WILL NOT TREAT GOD'S GRACIOUS GIFT AS POINTLESS. IF JUSTICE IS AVAILABLE THROUGH THE LAW, THEN CHRIST DIED TO NO PURPOSE." (Galatians 2:21.)**

**FIRST DAY: Read from Summary: The Church of Antioch; Acts 11:19-30.**

- 1. What was the role being played by the Church of Antioch in the development of the Church?**
- 2. How did the community in Antioch differ from that in Jerusalem?**
- 3. From the reading, what do we discover about the relationship between these two Christian Communities?**
- 4. What can we learn about Christian Discipleship from Barnabas?**

**SECOND DAY: Read Summary: The Crisis of Conscience; Acts 11:1-18.**

- 1. What was the immediate reaction in Jerusalem to Peter's admitting Cornelius and his household into the Church?**
- 2. How would you briefly describe the crisis of conscience faced by many Jewish Christians in the early Church?**
- 3. If you had lived at the time, which side of the question would you be on? Why?**
- 4. Which community would you rather have participated in, Jerusalem or Antioch? Why?**

**THIRD DAY: Read Summary: The Role of James; Acts 12:1-19; 15:13-21.**

- 1. To whom in the Church did Herod direct his persecution?**
- 2. What effect did this persecution have upon the structure of the Church in Jerusalem?**

**3. How would you describe the character of James?**

**4. What does James teach us about life in the earliest Christian Community?**

**FOURTH DAY: Read Summary: Prelude to the Council; Acts 13:1-4, 24-28; 15:1-5.**

**1. In what way did the Community at Antioch contribute to the spreading of Christianity?**

**2. Who were the "Judaizers" and what was their effect upon the Antioch Community?**

**3. What was the reaction of Paul and Barnabas to their ministry?**

**4. How do you feel individual Christians should act in the face of attacks upon Christian faith and morality?**

**FIFTH DAY: Read Summary: The Council of Jerusalem; Acts 15:6-12; 22-35.**

**1. At the Council of Jerusalem, on what did Peter base his argument?**

**2. How did Peter define the true Christian belief?**

**3. What effect did this decision have upon the Christian Church?**

**4. What does this reading from Acts reveal to you about the government and authority in the early Christian Church?**

**SIXTH DAY: Read Summary: The Message.**

**1. What are the two schools of thought concerning the recipients of the Epistle to the Galatians?**

**2. How did the Judaizers seek to destroy the teaching authority of Paul?**

**3. What do you understand by Paul's words in Galatians 2:21?**

**4. What of permanent value does this Epistle offer to every age?**



## CHAPTER 3

### THE APOSTLE OF GOOD NEWS--SUMMARY

#### INTRODUCTION

Paul strikes defensive chords with the opening notes of his epistle to the Galatians. In keeping with the literary custom of the time, his introduction identifies the writer and the recipients of the letter, and also conveys well wishes and blessings from the sender. Paul omits, out of a sense of sincerity, the customary praise and thanksgiving for the recipients of the letter. At the moment his heart held neither praise nor gratitude for the Galatians, which indicated only too well the depth and length of their deviation from gospel truth.

With the first two words, "*Paulos Apostolos*," he boldly places himself alongside the twelve Apostles, and states the authority by which he preaches the Gospel. The opening statement defends Paul's apostolic authority against any accusations that he owes his position to the Church at Antioch or the laying on of hands by Ananias of Damascus. Paul attributes the source of his apostolic authority to God the Father, and he acknowledges the Risen Jesus Christ as the instrument through which he received his commission. He presents himself before the Galatians no less an apostle than the Twelve.

Paul uses the introduction to succinctly express that grace and peace, the fruits of the Gospel, came through the atoning death of Jesus Christ. His death being the only grounds of our acceptance by God, and by which we are now entitled to grace and peace.

In Paul's mind human life is under an evil power, "the god of the present age (*aeon*)," which opposes the Will of God, blinding the minds of men so as not to behold the glory of God shining upon the face of Christ (See 2Cor.4:4). It is an evil *aeon*, which is ruled by men headed for destruction (1Cor.2:6). The death of Jesus delivered Christians from this evil destructive power. Deliverance and freedom from bondage strikes the keynote of this Epistle.

Evidently from Paul's opening statement and subsequent remarks, the idea of being an apostle of Jesus Christ was important to Paul. He is adamant that he is an apostle no less than the Twelve. Many in the early Church were unwilling to acknowledge this claim.

## A DISCIPLE OF JESUS

Mark tells us that Jesus personally chose twelve men to closely associate with him, and on some future date he would send them out with power to preach the gospel. Matthew refers to the twelve as "*the twelve apostles*" (see Mt.10:1). These twelve men were essentially disciples of Jesus Christ chosen by Him for a special mission. They subsequently appear within the Church as an unique group possessing authority and leadership.

Foundational to being an apostle was being a disciple of Jesus Christ. In what did this discipleship consist? The Greek word *mathetes* is translated "disciples." "Disciple" denotes a person who directs time and energy to the acquisition of knowledge under the tutelage of a person superior in that knowledge. The disciple, as an apprentice, seeks to acquire specific knowledge and behavioral skills according to a deliberate and set process. There is a dependent relationship upon a master which is not dissolved until the completion of discipleship. The permanency of the relationship is of the essence.

The concept of discipleship is rare in the Old Testament; the prophets had their servants and associates but not their disciples. In general Israel saw itself, as a whole people, as the disciples of Yahweh. Israel was a people constantly in the state of learning the Will of Yahweh. The veneration of religious leaders had no place in ancient Judaism.

The Hebrew word equivalent to disciple would be *talmid* which means a "learner". A man studying under a noted rabbi was called a talmid. The rabbi would welcome the young man as a talmid as long as he readily accepted instruction with open acceptance and with faithful perseverance.

There are important differences between being a talmid in the rabbinic sense and being a disciple of Jesus. With Jesus, discipleship becomes a unique relationship. It demands a personal attachment on the part of the disciple to the Person of Jesus that shapes the entire life of the disciple. In the first place, Jesus calls His own disciples; they do not choose Him. The final say of who belongs to Him remains with Him. In the second place, the relationship itself between Jesus and His disciples is unique. The emphasis lies not upon learning but upon commitment to the Person of Jesus. Christian Discipleship is essentially concerned with the Person of Jesus. The Person of Jesus is offered as an object of divine faith: "*Have faith in God and faith in me...*"

*(Jn.14:1,10)*. Faith in Jesus becomes the essential characteristic of Christian Discipleship. A disciple of Jesus is primarily committed to the Person of Jesus and not to the acquisition of knowledge. After the death of Jesus there is no evidence that His followers found consolation in His teachings or strength from them to go on. It was His Person that mattered. Their fear and despondency was due to His absence, His death. It was the Presence of the Risen Jesus that restored them to discipleship.

Christian Disciples are primarily listeners of the Word, and obedience to the Word is hallmark of discipleship. An intellectual appreciation of the Word is important but it is not primary. Intellectual appreciation cannot produce either faith or obedience. However, it gives light to faith and encouragement to obedience.

Christian Discipleship in this life does not become a step toward a higher step. Jesus remains the One who gives. There is friendship with Jesus but no equal partnership. The disciple must share in the life of Jesus. The world would receive the disciple as it received Jesus. For this reason discipleship implies suffering in this world for the sake of Jesus, and equally, implies work in this world. Jesus turned mind, heart, and hands outward. He had compassion on the multitude. He said the Son of Man came to serve, not to be served. The task of Jesus in this world becomes the task of His disciples. *"As you sent me into the world so I send them into the world"* (Jn.17:18). From this standpoint of deeper understanding of discipleship let us now turn to the concept of apostle.

## AN APOSTLE OF JESUS

How did the early Church understand the term apostle?

The word itself comes from the Greek *apostolos*. In classical usage the term denoted the sending of a fleet on a military expedition. It became a nautical term for a naval expedition. It carries the idea of passivity because the *apostolos* lacks initiative entirely. Apostles are people who obediently respond to their mission. In the Greek classical definition, *apostolos* denotes the quality of being sent, without conveying the idea of being a messenger.

Generally, scholars agree that the proper understanding of apostles in the New Testament must be found within a Hebrew-Aramaic background. An adequate explanation of the term can be found in the rabbinic institution of

the *saluah* or in Aramaic, the *sellah*. This was a legal rather than religious institution, but one often used for religious purposes. The *saluah* were those legally authorized to act in the name of another person or party. These authorized persons were equivalent to ambassadors that were empowered to act and speak in the name of another. The rabbis held "the one sent by a man is as the man himself." Whatever honor belonged to the sender must be paid to the *saluah*. Usually the *saluah* consisted of ordained rabbis who were set apart for their task by the laying on of hands in the name of the person or the party they represented. Usually two or more representatives were sent, rarely one alone.

In the sense of the *saluah*, we can see that an apostle is one who is made obedient to a mission, a man under orders who, in order to fulfill his mission, must empty himself out, so to speak, so that he may adequately represent another. He acts not in his own name nor through his own power but in the name and in the power of the sender. Jesus probably used the Aramaic *sellah* when he referred to the Twelve as Apostles.

Being an apostle was something other than being a disciple, but certainly no less a disciple. As one studies their situation with the Lord, it becomes evident that the Twelve were disciples and apostles, but they were also something other than disciples and apostles. Speaking of the New Jerusalem, John the Evangelist wrote, "*The wall of the city had twelve courses of stones as its foundation, on which were written the names of the twelve apostles of the Lord*" (Rv. 21:14).

From Acts we learn how the Apostles interpreted their unique status as the Twelve (see Acts 1:17-22). We see that the requirements for being one of the Twelve was to have been associated with the entire public ministry of Jesus, and to have witnessed His resurrection and ascension. In other words, he had become so familiar with Jesus personally that he could verify without a doubt that the Person he encountered after the death of Jesus on the Cross was Jesus of Nazareth--glorified and raised from the dead. This ministry of the Twelve--as living witnesses of the Resurrection--was obviously a ministry that could not be perpetuated within the Church. When the Apostle James was martyred by Herod Agrippa he was not replaced. However, their mission to make disciples of the nations--to teach and sanctify--must continue through those ordained to do so. This was the universal mission of the Church of which the Twelve had become the foundation stones of faith.

## THE APOSTLE PAUL

Paul insists that he stood equally with the Twelve as to being an Apostle of Jesus Christ. During our Lord's earthly life, Paul certainly had not been a disciple of Jesus. He came to faith in Jesus only after formal disbelief and being a persecutor of Christians. However, Paul does insist that he is a witness to the Resurrection of Jesus. He had a conscious and sobering encounter with the Risen Jesus Christ on the road to Damascus. This was neither a vision nor mystical experience resulting from prolonged prayer and fasting. Paul had a head-on collision with Jesus on the highway to Damascus. He found himself communicating with a celestial being more dazzling than the sun; an encounter that left him physically blinded. When Paul directly asked the Person to identify himself, the answer he received was the last thing in the world he expected to hear: *"I am Jesus the one you are persecuting!"* (Acts 9:5). Paul indeed became a witness not only to the Resurrection of Jesus but to the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

We see from Acts that Barnabas and Paul had been formally sent forth from Antioch on a missionary journey (see Acts 13:2-3). Some insisted that Paul was solely an apostle of the Church at Antioch. However, the words from Acts clearly manifest that both Barnabas and Paul were Apostles of the Holy Spirit. The Scripture goes on to say, *"These two, sent forth by the Holy Spirit" (13:4), went forth in the power of the Holy Spirit.*

Paul predated his apostolic vocation prior to his ordination at Antioch. Paul saw his vocation to the apostolate as comparable to the call of Jeremiah the Prophet--set apart and called by God before his birth (see Gal.1:15). To no man, nor to any institution among men, did Paul attribute his role as an Apostle of Jesus Christ. God had integrated Paul into His plan for the salvation of mankind, and he had become an integral part within that plan. Paul so utterly cooperated with his mission that he was able to proclaim, *"the life I live now is not my own; Christ is living in me" (Gal.2:20)*. Albeit, Paul is not one of the Twelve, but he is equally an Apostle with them--indeed an exception to the rule--as one born out of due time.

## GRACE AND PEACE

Paul had a wish: a blessing of *charis* and *shalom* for the Galatians. It became his favorite wish for Christians that all would experience *charis* and *shalom*.

These gifts were intrinsic to the Gospel. *Charis* is often translated as “favor, grace, and gift”. In the classical Greek, *charis* meant “that which delights.” In the mind of one ancient writer, a life without *charis* was a life without charm. It is a concept intimately related to joy. Within classical Greek it came to signify “the favor or the blessings of the gods” and later, the favor of a ruler or the gracious disposition of a ruler toward a subject. *Charis* became a “gracious gift.” It is a religious quality containing the supernatural power of love that streams down from above. *Charis* embodies all this for Paul. For him, *charis* is like a diamond catching, containing, and reflecting the light of the sun, for it contains and reflects the generosity of God to sinful mankind. *Charis* expresses the extravagance of God's love that pours itself out freely with no consideration of the worthiness of its recipients. It expresses that infinite liberality of God towards sinners, because His Son died for them on the Cross. The result of *charis* in the soul is justification--undeserved and unearned.

Between *charis* and *shalom* there is an intimacy and interdependence. From *charis* flows *shalom*. Of course Paul did not use the Hebrew word *shalom* but rather the Greek word *eirene*, which we translate as peace. In the classical Greek, *eirene* signified the interlude between the seemingly everlasting state of war. *Eirene* was a supreme good, for from it flowed all blessings both for land and people. *Shalom* would be the Hebrew equivalent of *eirene*. In its root meaning, *shalom* signifies “well being” which encompasses material prosperity. It expresses not only a state of being, but the relationship that follows from the People of God zealously guarding and fulfilling the covenant with Yahweh. Within such a relationship a person experiences the well being of salvation called peace of soul. The Rabbis taught that into such a state Satan could find no entrance. Only with the departure of *shalom* from the soul was the door left open for the entrance of Satan.

Peace creates the condition within the soul in which God may work. Without this peace God works upon the soul, but not within the soul. For Paul, *shalom* expresses salvation in its deepest sense. It is a spiritual state produced by the soul's union with God. All turmoil and anxiety are absent, and flourishing in the environment established, the spirit spreads well-being to the entire person and beyond; Creation itself is touched. When *shalom* rules the soul it becomes a power that brings about the peace of the universe (see Rom.8:21). *Shalom* flows from the death and resurrection of Jesus. “*Peace*,” says the Risen Jesus to the children of God.

## THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST

After his brief but poignant introduction, Paul wastes little time in addressing himself to the vital issue at hand. He accuses the Galatians of abandoning God in their rejection of the gospel of Christ and with their acceptance of another gospel. Evidently, the preaching of another gospel other than the gospel of Christ strongly stirs the soul of Paul. We should ask ourselves: what, precisely, is meant by the concept of gospel, and what in particular does Paul mean by the gospel of Christ?

The word "gospel" appears sixty times in the writings of Paul. To express the gospel idea, Paul uses the Greek noun *euangelion*, which means "good news," or "glad tidings." Spoken words truly are powers. The power of spoken words is equal to the content of the words. They carry the power to effect what they proclaim. When the content of a verbal message is joyous it causes joy in the hearer. The ancient world held a bearer of bad news responsible for the effect of the news (see 2Sam.4:9). As far as possible, bad news was understandably suppressed. *Euangelion* became the technical term for news of victory in the ancient world.

When we speak of "gospel," let us understand that we mean the utterance of good news that actually produces well-being within the hearers. The very announcement of the Christian Gospel produces salvation within those who believe (see Mk.16:15-16). Proclaiming the gospel in its essence is to proclaim the Person, Jesus Christ our Lord. Certain facts concerning this Person evidently are essential to the proclamation of the gospel: Jesus is the Son of God Incarnated sent by the Father as Savior of the world. The Son of God, Jesus Christ, saved mankind by His suffering and dying on the Cross--His death being the adequate atonement for all sin. His resurrection from the dead rescued humanity from death. At His ascension he entered into lordship of the universe, and sent forth the Holy Spirit of God upon His disciples to establish the Kingdom of God on earth. This Jesus--the Lord--will judge the living and the dead. In essence, this is the content of the "gospel of Christ." The Gospel of Jesus Christ is essentially still "good news of victory." The Victory of Jesus over sin and death.

**REJOICE VICTORY!**

## THE APOSTLE OF GOOD NEWS

### SCRIPTURE READINGS AND QUESTIONS SCRIPTURE OF THE WEEK (PLEASE MEMORIZE)

**"GO INTO THE WHOLE WORLD AND PROCLAIM THE GOOD NEWS TO ALL CREATION. THE MAN WHO BELIEVES IN IT AND ACCEPTS BAPTISM WILL BE SAVED..." --(Mark 16:15-16)**

**FIRST DAY: Read Summary: Introduction; Galatians 1:1-5.**

- 1. What does Paul tell us about himself in his opening statement?**
- 2. What is implied in verse 2 with reference to the "brothers"?**
- 3. What do the opening lines teach about Jesus?**
- 4. What central ideas of this epistle are declared in the introduction?**

**SECOND DAY: Read Summary: A Disciple of Jesus; Mark 3:13-19; Luke 6:12-13, 9:23-26; Matthew 9:35-10:5.**

- 1. In the Greek classical definition, what is meant by disciples?**
- 2. Why was the concept of disciple rare in the Old Testament?**
- 3. What was so unique about being a disciple of Jesus?**
- 4. What do you see to be the difference between being one of the Twelve and being an apostle?**

**THIRD DAY: Read Summary: An Apostle of Jesus; Mark 6:7-13,30-32; Luke 10:1-3; Matthew 10:16-20, 28:16-20; John 20:19-23.**

- 1. What would you say is the difference between being a disciple and an apostle?**
- 2. When were the Twelve made permanent Apostles of Jesus Christ?**
- 3. How did they see their ministry as the Twelve?**
- 4. What do you see to be the difference between being one of the Twelve and being an apostle?**



**FOURTH DAY: Read Summary: The Apostle Paul; Acts 9:1-19, 26:9-23.**

1. What were the requirements to be an Apostle as were the Twelve?
2. How did Paul fit this description?
3. On what did he base his claim to be an Apostle as the Twelve?
4. Why do you think it was so important to him to be recognized as an Apostle?

**FIFTH DAY: Read Summary: Grace and Peace; Luke 10:5-6; Matthew 10:11-15.**

1. How would you define *charis*?
2. What effect did *charis* have in the soul of the believer?
3. How would you define *shalom*?
4. What effect does it have upon the soul?

**SIXTH DAY: Read Summary: The Gospel of Christ; Galatians 1:6-9; 2 Samuel 4:9; 1Corinthians 15:1-11; Romans 1:1-7; Acts 10:36-43.**

1. What must be characteristic of a gospel?
2. What in essence is the Christian Gospel?
3. What is the essential content of this gospel?
4. What makes this "gospel" to you?

## CHAPTER 4

### NO OTHER GOSPEL-SUMMARY

#### THE ANATHEMA

Paul's epistle is literally a diatribe. It was a teaching method of the time that consisted of brief, blunt statements and questions proposed to an imaginary listener, with the writer often answering his own questions. This authoritarian method of teaching did not allow equal time to opposing ideas. When it came to God's glory and the salvation of souls, Paul refused to be tolerant.

With a fatherly concern, Paul feared for the salvation of the Galatians. Their behavior shocked and dismayed him. He viewed it as a defection from God and not merely as confusion concerning Christ. The Galatians are not only being turned away, they willingly cooperate in their defection, which is in process. The evil leaven has entered the mass and, given time, the corruption will be complete.

There is no other gospel in the mind of Paul; this proposed "other" being no more than a perversion of the one true gospel--nothing but a spurious semblance. Paul manifests sincere anger to the degree in which the matter disturbs him. He anathematizes those responsible. In a word, he curses them, which implies he delivered them up to divine wrath and dedicated them to destruction. Such a curse implied spiritual death, deprivation of all spiritual blessings and means to grace. The cursed were considered dead to the Spirit of Christ. Paul's action definitely leaves little doubt that he considered himself infallible in this matter, and that the Christian Religion possessed awesome spiritual powers.

The curse included angels, which was intended to recall the Jewish belief that Moses received the Law through the medium of angels. If an angel of the Old Covenant should bring from the heavens "another gospel," let that angel be cursed, says Paul. Paul clarifies that this is not merely some issue between preachers of the gospel giving various interpretations of the gospel, rather, the issue here at stake is divine truth versus falsehood. Not even an angel from heaven can alter the truth that is in Christ!

Paul's opponents accused him of watering down salvation in order to win the favor of men. They implied that he taught a popular doctrine of "easy grace"

in order to win human acceptance. In the face of this all-inclusive anathema, Paul reasoned that men could no longer accuse him of seeking their good graces. He was aware of the displeasure his curse would cause. He asked, "*Whom would you say I am trying to please at this point--men or God? Is this how I seek to ingratiate myself with men? If I were trying to win man's approval, I would surely not be serving Christ!*" (Gal.1:10). Paul explicitly implies that being a disciple of Jesus Christ is no way to please people of this world.

#### DISCERNMENT OF SPIRITS

John the Evangelist agreed with Paul that Christians must not trust every person presenting himself as a gospel teacher. John writes: "*Do not trust every spirit, but put the spirits to a test to see if they belong to God, because many false prophets have appeared in the world*" (1Jn.4:1). John insists there is a need to "*distinguish the spirit of truth from the spirit of deception*" (1Jn.4:5). He wisely warns Christians to listen carefully with the third ear--to hear what is not being said. "*Theirs is the language of the world and why the world listens to them*" (1Jn.4:5).

Bishop Baldwin of Canterbury wrote: "It is written: 'There are paths which a man thinks straight but which lead to hell.' To avoid them, blessed John advises us to 'test the spirits and see whether they are of God.' But who can test the spirits unless God gives him the gift of discernment of spirits so that he can submit spiritual thoughts, affections, and intentions to penetrating and valid judgment? Yet discernment is the mother of all the other virtues and necessary for each of them, whether we be guiding others or directing and correcting our own lives."

The Christian Community must certainly seriously question any person whose teachings bring a divisive spirit into the Church--teachings that oppose the traditional teachings handed down from approved teachers through the centuries. As Paul told the Corinthians: "*I handed on to you first of all what I myself received*" (1Cor.15:3).

The Church rightly maintains that the Apostles received divine authority and assistance to teach the full revelation of God coming through Jesus Christ (see Mt.28:19-20). Furthermore, it insists that the validly ordained Bishops of the Church have succeeded the Apostles as authoritative teachers within the Church, and today teach in their names.

In order to protect Christian Revelation and Gospel Truth, no one can legitimately preach or teach publicly in the Catholic Church unless they do so in the name of the Bishop of the Diocese and have been commissioned, in some way, to do so. Seemingly, outside of the Catholic Church there is little control over the substance of what is preached or who is permitted to preach. Anyone with a glib tongue, a bible in hand, a bit of animal magnetism, and the medium of television can present oneself as an authority of Christian faith and morality and, alas, effectively sway millions. When it comes to what truly is the Will of God, too often it is the blind leading the blind to the pit. The sheep unscrupulously are led to the slaughter, and monetarily sheared along the way.

St. Thomas Aquinas left this bit of sage advice: "It is better to limp along the true way than to walk fearlessly apart from it. A man may limp along the true way and seem to advance but little, yet he does draw near the goal; but all the tireless running on the wrong road only takes one ever farther from the goal."

#### PAUL BEFORE DAMASCUS

Paul declared that Jesus Christ Himself revealed the good news to him. Paul now proceeds to demonstrate the truth of this statement, first by recalling his life prior to his conversion. This was public knowledge. Addressing the Jews within the temple area he could say, "*I am a Jew, born in Tarsus in Cilicia, but I was brought up in this city. Here I sat at the feet of Gamaliel and was educated strictly in the law of our fathers. I was a staunch defender of God*" (Acts 22:3). From childhood Paul had been introduced by his father into the Pharisaic sect of Judaism. "*I am a Pharisee,*" he said, "*and was born a Pharisee.*" (Acts 23:6). The name "Pharisee" implied "separated ones;" they were Jews who separated themselves from anyone or anything that could contaminate them religiously. They strictly observed all regulations of the Torah and numerous customs and traditions added by the rabbis to ensure a strict observance of the law. The Pharisees accepted the prophets of Israel, and staunchly believed in an afterlife and the general resurrection of the good and the wicked. They tolerated no opposing ideas and refused to associate with those who held them. Paul became a veritable zealot in the observance of Judaism and in the defense of God. What the Galatians were now being taught by the Judaizers, Paul had once even more strictly observed.

Even as a youth Paul possessed that purity of soul that enabled him to wholeheartedly follow his religious ideas without tripping over his emotional

needs or psychological deficiencies. Paul incarnated his faith into zealous action. Because of his hope of eternal life he could say honestly, *"In this regard I too always strive to keep my conscience clear before God and man"* (Acts 24:16). Many share Paul's intense faith but lack the moral courage and fortitude to practice it to the same degree. Many who come to conversion do not do so with the moral integrity of Paul. The emotional disturbances of their lives, the residue of their past evil willfulness, take their toll upon the soul. Many must embrace an asceticism of life for some time before they will possess that purity and strength of soul to completely abandon themselves to the will of God. Paul stood before the Jewish Sanhedrin--before men who knew him from youth, perhaps before his teacher Gamaliel--and declared, *"Brothers, to this day I have lived with a clear conscience before God"* (Acts 23:1).

Paul reacted to Christianity with the violence of a fanatic, a religious zealot. Before King Agrippa he acknowledged: *"For my part, I once thought it my duty to oppose the name of Jesus the Nazorean in every way possible. That is just what I did..."* (Acts 26:9-10).

Paul tells the Galatians, in so many words, that psychologically it was impossible for a man like himself to have been converted to Jesus Christ by any human presentation of the Gospel. Only some extraordinary spiritual experience could logically account for the fact that Saul of Tarsus was now the Apostle of Jesus Christ. Paul personally interpreted his vocation to have been in the category of the call of Jeremiah and Isaiah.

#### PAUL AFTER DAMASCUS

The Galatians are familiar with the account of Paul's conversion on the road to Damascus. The point Paul desires to stress is that he was not instructed in the gospel message by any member of the Church following his conversion--not even by the Apostles. What he knew of the Gospel he received through his personal encounter with Jesus Christ on the road to Damascus and from subsequent visions. Paul proceeds to narrate a brief biography after his conversion to demonstrate the above truth.

Paul's encounter with Jesus as Lord was a traumatic experience affecting every level of his personal existence. A man of Paul's caliber demanded a time to reflect and contemplate. The experience must be assessed in the light of prayerful reflection. His past and future life must be carefully integrated into

this divine call. Out of necessity he must be alone with God. He tells the Galatians, *"Immediately, without seeking human advisers or even going to Jerusalem to see those who were apostles before me, I went off to Arabia..."* (Gal.1:16-17).

Religious fervor naturally accompanies conversion, but religious prudence comes with the experience of time. Paul's fervor could not be doubted, but at times his prudence could be questioned. Prudence knows the goal to be achieved and the proper means by which to achieve it. Many godly enterprises fail because of imprudent zeal.

After his sojourn in Arabia Paul returned to Damascus. Soon he *"began to proclaim in the synagogues that Jesus was the Son of God."* His preaching of Jesus shocked the Jews of Damascus. Paul became irrefutable in his presentation of Christ. He reduced the entire *"Jewish community of Damascus to silence with his proofs that this Jesus was the Messiah."* Their silence did not imply their consent. Paul gathered some disciples about himself but, seemingly, he made more enemies among the Jews than converts. Paul's ministry inspired some of the Jews to try to kill him with the official sanction of the ethnarch of King Aretas. *"Some of his disciples, therefore, took him along the wall one night and lowered him to the ground, using ropes and hamper"* (see Acts 9:19:25). This entire episode was a humiliation for Paul, and he attributed it, some years later, to his human weakness.

#### PAUL RETURNS TO JERUSALEM

The basket incident occurred about three years after his conversion. Only now does Paul return to Jerusalem. The persecutor returns as the apostle. But he receives no open-arm welcome from the Christian Community. Members of the Church avoid any contact with him. They place little faith in the story of his conversion. Many fear a subterfuge--the violent wolf returns in the sheep's clothing. Nevertheless one Christian brother, Barnabas, puts his faith in Paul. Befriended by Barnabas, his advocate before the Jerusalem Community, Paul meets the leaders of the Church.

Paul says he went to Jerusalem *"to get to know Cephas."* (Cephas means "Rock" --the name given to Simon by Jesus.) Scholars have been quick to point out the use of the Greek word *historesia* translated "to get to know." St. John Chrysostom observed that this is an expression usually reserved to express going to see a great and famous city. It suggests going to examine and study a place. Paul's use of the term seems to imply that Cephas is already

something of an institution within the Church. The use of the term *historesia* implies that Paul went to see Cephas with the set purpose to learn--probably about the ministry and teachings of Jesus and the traditions of the early Church. This knowledge would not militate against Paul's claim of not receiving the Gospel from any man. These would be matters naturally sought from one of the intimate disciples of Jesus Christ.

Not only did Paul visit privately with Peter, but he also publicly proclaimed Jesus Christ. He apparently wasted little time in showing up in the Synagogue of Roman Freedmen, taking over where Stephen left off. Paul felt a personal guilt and responsibility for the death of Stephen and experienced a deep psychological need to make reparation in Jerusalem for the death of Stephen. The Lord Jesus denied Paul the luxury of fulfilling this need (see Acts 22:17--21). Obedience is better than sacrifice!

#### PAUL RETURNS HOME

The Christian Community in Jerusalem implemented the Lord's order to Paul:

*"Leave Jerusalem at once because they will not accept your testimony about me."* Word reached "the brothers" that some of the Jews from the Synagogue of Roman Freedmen were plotting to kill Paul. The Church members acted swiftly and prudently to the news of this murderous plot. Some of the brothers *"took him down to Caesarea and sent him off to Tarsus"* (Acts 9:31).

Paul's brief public ministry in Jerusalem only resulted in nearly getting him killed, and perhaps in initiating another persecution for the Christian Community in Jerusalem. Seemingly, the Church was not yet ready for Saul of Tarsus. Paul himself was not yet ready for his ministry within the Church. Paul's spirit needed tempering with patience and prudence. The Church at Jerusalem sent Paul home to Tarsus in Cilicia.

No more is heard of Paul for the next ten years when Barnabas goes to Tarsus and brings Paul into the Christian Community at Antioch and into a ministry of preaching and teaching. Now the Church and Paul are ready for each other and the divine mission for Paul rapidly unfolds itself...

**NO OTHER GOSPEL**

**SCRIPTURE READINGS AND QUESTIONS  
SCRIPTURE OF THE WEEK  
(PLEASE MEMORIZE)**

**“IF I WERE TRYING TO WIN MEN'S APPROVAL, I WOULD SURELY NOT BE SERVING CHRIST.” --(Galatians 1:10b)**

**FIRST DAY: Read Summary: The Anathema; Galatians 1:6-10; Matthew 18:15-18; John 20:22-23.**

- 1. What does it mean to be anathematized?**
- 2. Why do you think Paul went to this extreme?**
- 3. What did including angels signify?**
- 4. What does the last phrase in Galatians 1:10 teach you?**

**SECOND DAY: Read Summary: Discernment of Spirits; John 4:1-6; 2 Timothy 4:1-5; Titus 1:7-16; 2 Peter 2:1-2,17-22.**

- 1. Why is it important to possess the spirit of discernment?**
- 2. What do you learn from the reading from Second Timothy?**
- 3. What advice does Paul give Titus concerning false teachers?**
- 4. How does the Church seek to protect Christian Teaching from error?**

**THIRD DAY: Read Summary: Paul Before Damascus; Galatians 1:11-17; Acts 22:1-4, 26:1-11.**

- 1. What point does Paul desire to make by the review of his early life?**
- 2. What impression do you have of Paul's earlier life?**
- 3. What does Acts 23:1 tell you about Paul?**
- 4. Why do you think Paul reacted so violently to Christianity?**



**FOURTH DAY: Read Summary: Paul After Damascus; Acts 9:20-25; Matthew 10:16-17, 7:16.**

1. What did it take to convert a man like Paul to Christ?
2. How would you define the virtue of Christian Prudence?
3. What do the readings from Matthew teach you about this virtue?
4. What was the purpose for Paul's sojourn in Arabia?

**FIFTH DAY: Read Summary: Paul Returns to Jerusalem; Galatians 1:18-19; Acts 9:26-31, 22:17-21.**

1. What does the use of *historesia* in Galatians 1:18 signify?
2. What do you think was Paul's intention by debating with the Greek-speaking Jews?
3. How does the Lord Jesus respond to the desire of Paul?
4. What do you learn from this?

**SIXTH DAY: Read Summary: Paul Goes Home; Galatians 1:21-24; Acts 11:22-26.**

1. What resulted for the Church in Judea with Paul's departure from Jerusalem?
2. How would you evaluate Paul's ministries in Damascus and Jerusalem?
3. What was Barnabas' special contribution to the Church?
4. How would you evaluate Paul's silent years in Tarsus?

## CHAPTER 5

### THE SHEPHERD AND THE PROPHET--SUMMARY

#### INTRODUCTION

Through means of a brief autobiography, Paul substantiates the statement that he had received the gospel message through a revelation from Jesus Christ. The next step in defense of the gospel was for Paul to demonstrate that the gospel he preaches differs in no way from that taught by the Apostles. Paul narrates, "*Then, after fourteen years, I went up to Jerusalem again with Barnabas, this time taking Titus with me*" (Gal.2:1).

It is generally held that Paul converted to Christianity around 34 A.D. If correct, he visited Cephas first about 37 A.D. and the second visit would have occurred around 50 A.D.

Seemingly this second visit with Cephas occurred sometime after Paul's first successful missionary enterprise among the Gentiles. Speaking with the leaders of the Church, Paul talks as a man who, from personal experience, formulated a method and policy of working among the Gentiles.

A strong sentiment exists among scholars that the meeting between Paul and the Church leaders described in Galatians is the same meeting reported in Acts 15. Certain discrepancies exist between the two accounts, but they are not irreconcilable. That there would be discrepancies between the two accounts shouldn't surprise anyone, especially since the authors had entirely different purposes in relating the same incident.

#### THE SECOND MEETING

In Galatians, Paul mentions going (with Barnabas and Titus) to Jerusalem "again" after fourteen years. Some have assumed Paul meant "a second time" by "again." However all that Paul really implies is that he met with Cephas once again after fourteen years. According to Acts, the Council at Jerusalem occurs after Paul's visit to the Galatians. Paul mentions going to Jerusalem as a result of a private revelation. This does not preclude the fact that he could have been sent as part of a delegation from Antioch. The selection of the entire delegation may have been the result of prophecy. The account in Acts leaves

room for both a private meeting of the leaders with the delegation from Antioch and a public hearing upon the matter.

The point Paul desires to make to the Galatians is that the leaders personally confirmed his presentation of the gospel. He went to Jerusalem with the intention of laying out "*for their scrutiny the gospel as I present it to the Gentiles--to make sure the course I was pursuing, or had pursued, was not useless*" (Gal.2:2). This does not imply that Paul had doubts about the contents of his gospel presentation. His security in what he preached rested upon the personal testimony of Jesus Christ, not upon the confirmation of men! However, if Church leaders in Jerusalem were pursuing a contrary course, then these leaders would undermine his work and subsequently negate much of his labor. Paul could report that the leaders of the Church were in full agreement with his policy.

Evidently the presence of his friend Titus became a test case at the meeting. Titus was an uncircumcised Gentile convert to Christianity. He stands here now in the heart of Judaism--within the cradle of Christianity. Certain Christians insisted that Titus should be circumcised. However, Paul stood adamantly against the circumcision. As a result the leaders did not order Titus to be circumcised. Their decision ultimately validated Paul's position. Paul's point to the Galatians was: how can they accept the teachings of men who insist that Gentiles be circumcised when the leaders of the Jerusalem Church made no such demands upon the Gentiles--Titus a case in point.

Paul went on to say that James, Peter, and John recognized his extraordinary vocation as Apostle to the Gentiles. They even compared his apostolic commission to Peter's, implying Paul's equality with Peter in this regard. They acknowledged Paul was for the Gentiles what Peter was for the Jews. The distinction was probably more geographic than ethnic. In other words, Paul would concentrate his ministry within pagan territory and Peter within Palestine. In actual practice they both would work for the conversion of both Jew and Gentile.

Paul ends his account of this incident by relating to the Galatians that "*those who were the acknowledged pillars, James, Cephas and John, gave Barnabas and me the handclasp of fellowship.*" (Gal.2:9). This implies more than a meeting ending on friendly terms. It signifies a covenant of friendship has been entered into. They recognized each other as partners in this great apostolic enterprise.

## MINDFUL OF THE POOR

The only stipulation placed on Paul and Barnabas was that they be mindful of the poor as they ministered to the Gentiles. The "poor" has generally been interpreted to mean not the poor of the Gentile world, but the poor Jewish Christians of Judea. Seemingly, the early Jewish Church suffered much from poverty. This poverty may have resulted from their first fervor when many sold their property and goods and laid the proceeds at the feet of the Apostles. Also their personal poverty may have been the result of persecution at which time their property was destroyed or confiscated. Also, charity in Judea was dispensed through officials appointed by the local synagogues. Being mindful of the Jewish poor would always remain a concern for Paul. He would later teach the Gentiles: "*For if the Gentiles have shared in the spiritual blessings of the Jews, they ought to contribute to their temporal needs in return*" (Rom.15:25-27).

## NO RESPECTOR OF PERSONS

In a few verses, Paul made several references to Peter, James, and John as important men within the Church. His remarks are not without a tinge of cynicism and deprecation. It is not Paul's intention to show contempt for these leaders or to belittle them. It is a reaction of Paul, not to their position, but to his opponents' exaggeration of their position. Paul's reaction makes clear that he will not be intimidated by the reputation of men on this earth. The judgment of God matters, not that of men. This judgment rests upon what the heart holds, not by the position of authority and power held in this world. Paul acknowledged the authority of James, Peter, and John in the Christian Community, but he was not awed by their person or overly impressed with their position. The next episode narrated by Paul clearly manifests the truth of that statement. Paul relates an incident in Antioch which proves very uncomplimentary to the first head of the Christian Church.

## CEPHAS COMES TO ANTIOCH

As customary, the Antioch Community met on the first day of the week for the agape meal and the celebration of the Lord's Supper. On a certain occasion Simon Peter was present in Antioch. Peter entered into full

fellowship with all members of the Church making no distinction between Jews and Greeks. However, at this time certain Jews arrived from Jerusalem who refused to share in the agape meal with Gentiles. They separated themselves and their food. Simon Peter added insult to injury by joining in with the separated Jews and refusing to eat with the Gentiles. Peter's behavior was purely scandalous as it caused the other Jewish Christians, even Barnabas, to follow his example. This resulted in a complete division within the Church between the Jews and the Gentiles. It made a mockery of the Lord's Supper.

Paul tolerated the situation only briefly. He confronted Peter at the Church assembly. The scandal was public, affecting the entire congregation and warranting public rebuke. Paul stood up and directed a question to Cephas, *"If you who are a Jew are living according to Gentile ways rather than Jewish, by what logic do you force the Gentiles to adopt Jewish ways?" (Gal.2:14)*. Paul clearly and publicly accused Peter and the Jews that were present of hypocrisy. He did this, he said, *"as soon as I observed that they were not being straightforward about the truth of the gospel" (Gal.2:14)*. Without hesitating or awaiting a response, Paul stressed the point that all the Jews present esteemed themselves to be in a favored position before God as the Chosen People and disdained Gentile as conceived in sin. However, they all also recognize that their salvation lay, not in the observance of the Mosaic Law, but in their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, just as had all the Gentile Christians present at this assembly (see Gal.2:15-16).

Paul moves on to attack the position of the Judaizers from Jerusalem. He argues that if justification did not come from the observance of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, how could they insist that those justified in Christ sinned by not observing the Mosaic legislation concerning foods, when Jesus Christ clearly taught that a man is not defiled by what enters his mouth? Paul asks, *"But if, in seeking to be justified in Christ, we are shown to be sinners, does that mean that Christ is encouraging sin?" (Gal.2:17)*. Again he awaits no answer; he retorts, *"Unthinkable!"* Paul insists there is sin against faith if, after being justified through faith in Jesus Christ, they now seek to reestablish as a means of salvation what they had previously rejected. *"If, however, I were to build up the very thing I have demolished, I should then indeed be a transgressor" (Gal.2:18)*.

If the Antioch incident occurred before the Council of Jerusalem, Peter's behavior would be more understandable and excusable. However, Paul seems

to be narrating things in a chronological order, and the presumption must be that the Peter who, in Jerusalem, did proclaim and decree, "*Our belief is rather that we are saved by the favor of the Lord Jesus and so are they*" (Acts 15:10-11), could a short time later place an action that implicitly denied in practice what he professed with his lips. Peter lied in deed if not in word.

Such behavior divided the body of the Church, and made certain Christians the "untouchables." On the theological level Peter's behavior implied even more serious consequences: it implied that Gentile Christians still remained impure before God, and implicitly denied the cleansing effects of the Blood of Christ and the sanctifying Presence of the Holy Spirit within the baptized. Peter clearly loved Jesus dearly, but Peter was a people pleaser. He had a need for the acceptance of others, and at times this need impeded the application of his beliefs and moral principles. They were sacrificed for social acceptance. As Paul observed in Antioch, "*He drew back to avoid trouble with those who were circumcised*" (Gal.2:12). Peter's behavior in Antioch was entirely in keeping with his character. A pope may claim infallibility, but no pope can claim indefectibility (sinlessness).

#### PAUL THE PROPHET

That day in Antioch, Paul played the prophet. As in the Old Covenant, there is within the New Covenant institutional and prophetic authority. There are people appointed to rule the Church in God's Name. From time to time, there are those raised up within the Church by God, with the authority to correct and censure the general community of the faithful, and at times those in authority who abuse their office and neglect their responsibility. This is the unenviable role of the Christian prophet.

Modern Christians often lack the moral courage to incarnate their faith in public practice. They become overly concerned about what people will think. They become more concerned about man than God. This is a serious defect in Christian character with many bad side effects. Each Christian is called primarily to witness to Christian Truth in their particular environment, in their society, in their home or office. Failure to do so not only robs God of glory but may cause serious harm to the souls of others.

#### THE CROSS OF CHRIST

Paul places before the segregated Church of Antioch the Cross of Christ,

knowing full well that this Cross upon which Jesus was crucified had ended all distinctions before God. Before the entire assembly Paul proclaims the depths of his faith in Jesus Christ and the practical extent to which his faith has reached. Dramatically he professes: *"I have been crucified with Christ, and the life I live now is not my own: Christ lives in me"* (Gal.2:19c-20a). Paul has cast his eternal lot utterly upon Jesus Christ. What he intends by this he clearly stated in his letter to the Philippians 3:7-16.

When Paul writes, *"The life I live now is not my own,"* he does not intend to imply he has lost any awareness of his own personal identity, as would be the case with some madman. There is no suggestion that Paul's own personality has been absorbed into that of Christ's. Paul makes this clear by saying, *"I still live my human life, but it is a life of faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me"* (Gal.2:20b). Paul's personal feelings, emotions, and needs all remain the same. He remains totally aware of his own human frailty and personal defects along with his personal gifts of nature and grace, which were considerable. Nevertheless, he subjected all these, the defects and assets, to his life of faith in Christ. Faith in Christ became the sole directing force of his life. The power of faith dominated Paul's life to such a degree that he could honestly say that for him to live is for Christ to live.

### LIFE IN CHRIST

A life lived in total submission to the Holy Spirit is the life of Christ on earth. Christ lived that life on earth for thirty-three years. Paul does not wish to imply his own life was a carbon copy of the physical life of Jesus. The Spirit of God is too creative for duplications. The life of Christ in every person will be totally unique. In actuality, it is Divine Love (Divine Power and Presence) being expressed, made active and visible within the unique, particular circumstances of today. No one life is exactly the same as another. Father Judge would teach the lay apostles of his day that the circumstances of one's personal life were as unique to one as the skin on one's face. Within one's personal circumstances, only the individual person can make God present and permit Christ to live again here and now.

To live a life in Christ a Christians must be prudent. Christ promised that His grace would be sufficient in all circumstances. Grace is the reality of God's present power within the lived experience. This power exists only within the reality of the actual situation. Foolishly, Christians often destroy their courage and confidence, their peace of mind and physical health by living the future in

the present. They burden their minds and bodies with the evil possibilities of tomorrow. Our wild imaginings may never become real, but our imaginings can indeed leave real evil residue within the body. Mark Twain once said, "I have suffered many things in life and most of them never happened."

## CONCLUSION

Looking into the eyes of his congregation Paul declares, in so many words, that he knows not what course other Christians may take but as for himself, *"I will not treat God's gracious gift as pointless" (Gal.2:21a)*. Paul found spiritual freedom in the death of Jesus Christ. In his closing statement Paul summed up well the position of his opponents and their transgressions against the Christian Faith. Paul declares, *"If justice is available through the law, then Christ died to no purpose!" (Gal.2:21b)*. The death of Jesus was being rendered meaningless by the teachings of the Judaizers.

Paul's message was not lost on Peter. Peter recognized "the spirit of wisdom" in Paul. Later he would teach Christians, *"Realize that you were delivered from the futile way of life your fathers handed on to you, not by any diminishable sum of silver or gold, but by Christ's blood beyond all price: the blood of a spotless, unblemished lamb chosen before the world's foundation and revealed for your sake in these last days. (1Pt.18-20)*. Later Peter could say with a grateful heart, *"Paul our beloved brother" (2Pt.3:15)*.



**THE SHEPHERD AND THE PROPHET**

**SCRIPTURE READINGS AND QUESTIONS  
SCRIPTURE OF THE WEEK  
(PLEASE MEMORIZE)**

**"I STILL LIVE MY HUMAN LIFE, BUT IT IS A LIFE OF FAITH IN THE SON OF GOD WHO LOVED ME AND GAVE HIMSELF FOR ME."**

**--Galatians 2:20b**

**FIRST DAY: Read Summary: Introduction; Galatians 2:1-10; Acts 11:27-30; Acts 15:1-5.**

- 1. What was Paul's purpose in relating his second visit with Church leaders?**
- 2. How should the word "again" be interpreted in Galatians 2:1?**
- 3. Which of the two visits described in Acts coincides best with the visit described in chapter two of Galatians?**
- 4. What is your reason for this answer?**

**SECOND DAY: Read Summary: The Second Meeting.**

- 1. What do you understand by Paul's statement in Galatians 2:2?**
- 2. Does this imply Paul had doubts about his teachings? Explain.**
- 3. In what way was the presence of Titus in Jerusalem a test case?**
- 4. What is implied by the "handclasp of fellowship" described in Galatians 2:9?**

**DAY 2: Read Summary: Mindful of the Poor; Acts 4:34-37; Heb.10:34-36; 2Corinthians 8:8-9:15.**

- 1. What may have been some of the causes of the poverty of the Judean Christians?**
- 2. How did Paul fulfill his obligation to the poor in Judea?**

**3. What does 2Corinthians 8:11-15 teach you about charity to others?**

**4. What does 2Corinthians 9:6-9 teach you about almsgiving?**

**FOURTH DAY: Read Summary through Cephas Comes to Antioch; Galatians 2:11-18; 1Corinthians 11:18-21; John 21:15-19.**

**1. How should Paul's words that seem to belittle Church leaders be interpreted?**

**2. What were the issues at stake in Paul's encounter with Cephas at Antioch?**

**3. What does the conduct of Peter teach you about Peter and future Church leaders?**

**4. In Paul's opinion, where did true sin lie in this matter?**

**FIFTH DAY: Read Summary through The Cross of Christ; Galatians 2:19-21; Philippians 3:7-16.**

**1. What is the role of a Christian prophet within the Church?**

**2. What do you understand by Galatians 2:19c-20a?**

**3. What does the reading from Philippians teach you about life in Christ?**

**4. What do you understand by Galatians 2:20b?**

**SIXTH DAY: Read Summary through the Conclusion; Colossians 2:9-15; 1Peter 2:19-23.**

**1. What does 1Peter 2:19 teach you?**

**2. How would you explain this "grace" within your life?**

**3. What does it mean for you to live your life in Christ?**

**4. In an everyday practical manner, how can this be achieved?**

## CHAPTER 6

### JUSTIFICATION THROUGH FAITH--SUMMARY

#### MEANING OF JUSTIFICATION

Of the many meaningful concepts expressed by Paul, none are more important to understand than the terms justification or righteousness, and faith. Their understanding is essential to the comprehension of the gospel message. The statement by Paul, "*A man is not justified by legal observance but by faith in Jesus Christ*" (*Gal.2:16*), became a fundamental principle of the Christian Religion.

In classical Greek, the term "just" or "righteous" (*dikaios*) was applied to a person who conformed to the will or law of God. Such a person stood innocent before the eyes of God. The state of righteousness or justice (*dikaiousune*) was achieved by fulfilling God's requirements for mankind. In a word, the just person accomplished what was right. A person became justified by being placed in a right relationship with God. Such a person stood acquitted of all blame before God. For Plato, justice became a cardinal virtue anchored within the soul of man, which directed him inwardly to live in order and harmony with the natural law of the universe. It became the foundation virtue for Utopia--Plato's perfect world.

In the Septuagint Bible (a Greek translation of the Old Testament), a righteous person (*dikaios*) was the one who fulfilled his duties before God by meeting God's requirements in all his interpersonal relations with God and man. The Mosaic Law became the standard by which man measured his duties towards God and man. A person satisfying these demands had right on his side and possessed a righteous cause before God and man.

For the Jewish Rabbis, the righteous was the one who kept the Law in all its fullness. The merits of such a man outweighed his transgressions before God. The ungodly man was the one whose transgressions in life outweighed his meritorious deeds.

In the Old Testament, the Messiah was called righteous because it was known that his entire life would unfold in conformity with the Divine Will. The Messiah would be "the man of Righteousness" and righteousness itself would be characteristic of the messianic age (*see Jer.23:5-6*).

The prevalent belief among many of the Jews in Paul's time, particularly with members of the Pharisee party, was that only those Jews who faithfully observed the Mosaic Law would stand justified before God at their death and would thereby be destined for Paradise.

Within the writings of Paul, the concept of righteousness or justification takes on a radically different significance in the Scriptures. Paul agrees with the Old Testament in that only the righteous can enjoy true fellowship and communion with God. The fulfillment of the Divine will remains the cause of righteousness. However, Paul proclaims that no man is righteous before the Law. *"It is as the Scripture says: 'There is no just man, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one in search of God'" (Rom.3:10-11)*. Paul concludes that righteousness cannot come from the Law.

Paul insists that a new dispensation for justification has been granted by God through Jesus Christ; a door to righteousness for all mankind has been opened. *"Just as through one man's disobedience all become sinners, so through one man's obedience all shall become just" (Rom.5:19)*. Man, by his works, cannot establish righteousness before God or merit eternal communion with God. The righteousness of man flows only from God's decisive act of intervention for mankind in Jesus Christ. In Christ, a Divine righteousness is established and mankind is brought into this Divine justification--is enabled to share in it.

Jesus Christ, as the Son of God, lived a life of total obedience to the Will of God. His life culminated and perfected itself in a supreme act of obedience--- His death upon the Cross. As Jesus was both God and man, His obedient death upon the Cross was infinitely meritorious--possessing infinite atonement value for sinful mankind. The death of the God-Man atoned for all sin and merited justification for all mankind. God graciously willed that this justification be granted to all sinners who would accept in faith the saving act of God that was accomplished in and through Jesus Christ. It was to this that Paul referred when he said, *"I will not treat God's gracious gift as pointless" (Gal.2:21)*.

Man's justification is a historical fact centered on the death of Jesus upon the Cross, which completely satisfied and vindicated Divine justice. The forgiveness of sins becomes an act of Divine righteousness. Justification has become an act of grace, in which God graciously grants to sinners the status of Christ before His eyes.

## FINAL JUSTIFICATION

Paul does not teach as some have suggested--"Once saved, always saved!" He does teach that the present condition of righteousness possessed by the baptized Christians is the foundation of hope for the Day of Judgment, when the state of righteousness will be perfected and made permanent. With Jewish tradition Paul maintains that no one possesses salvation or righteousness permanently until, at the Last Judgment, the Judge of the Living and the Dead proclaims it to be a fact. Those justified in Jesus Christ can look forward with confidence to the final sentence. However Jesus warned His disciples not to be presumptuous of salvation (see Mt.7:21-23).

Obviously there is a present state of righteousness before God--of acquittal of sin--but there is also a life of righteousness that must flow from this gracious spiritual condition. One can possess the former without the latter. One can begin in the spirit and end in the flesh. The Scriptures clearly teach, through the words of Paul, that final justification or salvation is not only a result of faith, but of a righteous life. A person is juridically acquitted of all sin and declared to be righteous (saved) only when the Just Judge declares in his favor at the Last Judgment. Then the person's life in Christ will be weighed in the balance. *"Affliction and anguish will come upon every man who has done evil.... There will be glory, honor, and peace for everyone who has done good" (Rom.2:9-10).*

## THE MEANING OF CHRISTIAN FAITH

Paul clearly believes that the spiritual condition of justification is essential for salvation. He insists this justification cannot be merited by human effort. Righteousness or justification, as a gift of God, comes only to a sinner through a personal act of faith in Christ. Faith is absolutely essential as a means for salvation in Paul's theology. Therefore, the understanding of this concept of faith is vitally important for us. The Greek word *pistis* is used by Paul to express this concept of faith. Let us seek to understand what Paul means by the term.

In classical Greek, *pistis* is a term rich in meaning. It denotes a thing worthy of trust. It denotes the guarantee that creates the possibility of trust and produces security. *Pistis* is that which can be relied upon. It signifies a dependable belief--that which creates certainty and conviction in a person. The term came to signify an oath of fidelity or the pledge of faithfulness. Even

in classical Greek, *pistis* was closely related to obedience. A person may have the duty to trust the word or command of one worthy of trust, and this implied one acted in obedience to that word or command.

Within the Old Testament, faith always describes man's reaction to God's action in this world, whether in a nation or an individual person. When translating the Hebrew concept of faith into Greek, the word *pistis* is used in the Septuagint Bible. The Old Testament presents two primary reactions of man to God's action--fear and trust. Both concepts are expressed about 150 times in the Old Testament. The immediate reaction to the presence of the supernatural in the Old Testament is fear (see Dn.5:5-6; 8:17).

Obviously, such reactions as fear and trust touch the entire person. Biblical faith touched man, totally affecting his inner life and its external manifestations. Faith became a fundamental willed decision for God that implied turning aside from the powers of this world and relinquishing reliance upon one's own personal strength. For Isaiah it involved rejection of all fear of human might and a fundamental mistrust of it. The Lord was Israel's Rock of Security--"*Trust in the Lord forever!*" says Isaiah, "*For the Lord is an eternal Rock*" (Is.26:4).

Faith has its effect not only upon the present, but the future as well. The believer has security in the future because God's promises will be fulfilled. Faith creates an expectant hope and a stillness of spirit that patiently awaits the manifestation of divine providence. Doubts and murmurings are alien to this spirit. The believer expresses faith in God's trustworthiness by an obedient submission to His commands. For Israel, disobedience was the fruit and sign of infidelity.

Between Old Testament and Christian faith there is a difference. The Jews placed their faith in the God who acts, but not in the Acts of God. These, they experienced within their history. Christians must believe, not only in the God who acts, but in particular, Acts of God such as the Incarnation and the Resurrection,

*Pistis* remains in the New Testament as the leading term by which to describe the religious relationship between God and man. It implies accepting the Christian proclamation; it implies turning in trust to the One God and His Only Begotten Son, Jesus Christ; it implies accepting and trusting what *has* been done in and through Jesus Christ, and what *will* be done in and through

Him. The confession of Jesus as Christ and Lord is intrinsic to this faith along, with accepting His bodily resurrection from the dead. Christian Faith, or *pistis*, is belief in the gospel. This is the faith that leads to salvation: *"For if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead you will be saved" (Rom.10:9).*

For Paul, faith must be more than an inward orientation of one's life toward God. There is an objective, concrete way of salvation offered through Jesus Christ, and this way must be accepted in faith. A Christian must accept the salvation of mankind through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ as a divine historical fact. What occurred in history becomes actualized in the present through the reception of baptism, which follows the profession of faith in Jesus. A profession that must essentially echo the creed preached by Peter at Pentecost, *"Let the whole house of Israel know beyond any doubt that God has made both Lord and Messiah this Jesus whom you crucified" (Acts 2:36).*

The faith that leads to salvation is actualized through repentance and baptism. As Peter continued to preach on Pentecost, *"You must reform and be baptized, each one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, that your sins may be forgiven; then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38).*

Christian Faith throws open the door of salvation and becomes the first step to union with God. As Paul teaches, it leads to a justification that consists in newness of life. It is the human life lived under grace. It is a faith that trusts in all circumstances of life and death that the grace of Jesus Christ will be sufficient. A life lived under grace is a life lived under the power and inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Therefore Christian Faith is not a static condition but finds expression in the daily flow of human life. As it is a life lived in constant temptation, it is a faith which must constantly prove itself.

Obedience becomes intrinsic to the act of faith because faith stands in opposition to the natural person and human certitude. The natural man must be willing to surrender to the demands of faith in order that the believer may remain faithful. Faith and obedience remain the two sides of the same coin (see Heb.3:7-11).

With this background, perhaps we can better understand Paul's own confession, *"The justice I possess is that which comes through faith in Christ. It has its origin in God and is based on faith" (Phil.3:9).* Paul never rested presumptuously in the divine gift of justification or righteousness. His entire

life as a Christian was in pursuit of complete conformity with Jesus Christ, wherein lies Christian perfection. With Paul, we may say it is faith that makes a person a Christian, but it is by one's works that the value of one's Christianity will be measured and weighed in the balance.

### RELIGIOUS FOOLS

The behavior of the Galatians exasperated Paul. When he considered what he had preached among them, what they had believed, what had been the effects of faith in their lives, and now what they had turned to--this watered down mixture of Judaism and Christianity--he could only view them as religious fools, bewitched fools who had fallen under the power of evil. Their behavior defied reason and denied any logic to their religious beliefs. Theirs is a case of crass ignorance--culpable and sinful behavior. For these Galatians, this is not merely a matter of mind but heart as well.

With the reception of Christian Baptism, the lives of the Galatians had been manifestly changed. There had been no lack of evidence of their reception of the Holy Spirit. The presence of the Holy Spirit had testified to their justification before God.

Paul used the reception of the Holy Spirit, and the signs and wonders that accompanied the reception, to demonstrate the foolish position the Galatians had taken. He addressed himself directly to the conditions and problems at hand (see Gal.3:1-5). Paul insinuates that the Galatians have fallen under the power of some "evil eye," turning them away from the Crucified Christ, who Paul had vividly displayed before their very eyes. In other words, Paul had drawn a picture for them of the salvation flowing from the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. Paul sees their turning back toward the observance of the Mosaic Law for salvation as a return to the works of the flesh. It betrays their faith in the Holy Spirit, given to them as the first fruits of their redemption. For Paul, the flesh is the opposite of the spirit, and it symbolizes all that is not Christ--the non-Christ.

### THE EXAMPLE OF ABRAHAM

Paul turns to the example of Abraham as a second step in refuting the position the Galatians had taken. Paul viewed all things that occurred in and through Jesus Christ as preordained by God before time. Not only preordained, but much of it prefigured within the Old Testament. The Old Testament became a



shadow of the reality to come in the New Covenant. Before the beginning of time, God, in His inscrutable Wisdom, willed that the Nations would be justified through faith in Christ. Paul discovered that this divine reality was prefigured and foretold in the Old Testament within the life of one no less than the Father of the Jewish People--Abraham. Paul maintained that long before Yahweh entered into the covenant of circumcision with Abraham, He had made a promise to Abraham that through his seed all the Nations would be blessed. Paul interpreted this seed of universal blessing to be the Messiah---Jesus Christ. In Jesus, the promise to Abraham had been fulfilled.

What is even more to Paul's point is the fact that Abraham, long before circumcision, found favor in the eyes of God. Righteousness and justification were reputed to Abraham--or credited to him--on the grounds that he was a man of faith. The justification of Abraham was a gracious gift from God. Paul tells the Galatians: "*Consider the case of Abraham: he 'believed God, and it was credited to him as justice.'* This means that those who believe are sons of Abraham... Thus it is that all who believe are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith (Gal.3:6-7,9).

#### A CURSE, NOT A BLESSING

In Paul's mind, to fail intentionally or unintentionally to observe the law in its entirety brought down upon a man the curse of the broken law (see Dt.28:15). According to Paul, all men stood before the Law unjustified and cursed (see Gal.3:10-12). Paul goes on to maintain that the Messiah Himself became accursed under the Law by His death on the cross, precisely in order to free all men--Jews and Gentiles--from the curse of sin. In so doing, He established faith in Himself as the new criteria for justification and for inheriting the promise made to Abraham. Paul identifies the reception of the Holy Spirit as the fulfillment of this promise (see Gal.3:13-14).

The Prophet Habakkuk proclaimed: "*The just man, because of faith, shall live*" (Hb.2:4b). Habakkuk foretold the establishment of a new criteria for salvation that transcended the Law, and placed the condition of the human heart above the external works of one's life. The foundation of true religion is heartfelt trust in God. Later we see that James seeks to keep the record straight by guarding faith and religion against those teachers who degrade faith to a barren and sterile assent of the mind to religious truth. He insists, "*A person is justified by his works and not by faith alone... Be assured, then, that faith without works is as dead as a body without breath*" (Jas.2:24,26).

## THE PURPOSE OF LAW

If the Law neither opposes the promise nor produces justification then Paul asks, *"What is the relevance of the law in such cases?"* To the mind of Paul, the Law had a good but limited purpose. It was promulgated through the medium of angels because of the transgressions of men, and *"it was to be valid only until that descendant or offspring came to whom the promise had been given"* (Gal.3:19).

He argues that the revelation of the Mosaic Law forced the knowledge of sinfulness on the consciences of men, the argument being that there is no personal sin where there is no law. Objectively the evil offense existed before the Law, and the Law was promulgated to convict man of sin and to awaken in his heart a fear of God's wrath for such deeds. In the words of Paul the *"Scripture has locked all things in under the constraint of sin"* (Gal.3:22a). He asks, *"Why?"* Paul sees the Law as becoming a means of bringing about the fulfillment of the promise that justification would come through faith. To his question, he gives the answer, *"So that the promise might be fulfilled in those who believe, in consequence of faith in Jesus Christ"* (Gal.3:22b).

Paul continues to explain the purpose of the Law from another standpoint. He views the condition of the Jews before the coming of the Messiah as a time of religious immaturity. Religiously, they were like immature children who, in order to be trained properly for their future role in society, must be, as children, under the supervision of a strict tutor. Paul sees the Mosaic Law as the religious tutor of the Jews (see Gal.3:23-25).

## EFFECTS OF CHRISTIAN FAITH

Paul saw faith in Jesus Christ as the door to religious maturity. He knew such faith had a drastic, personal effect upon the believer. Such a faith was no mere mental assent to truth, but a power that literally incorporated the believing person into Christ. Believers literally constituted the new spiritual Body of Jesus Christ as they all shared His One Spirit. Spiritually, Christians are not many but One. They have become many members of the One Body, which is Christ. As a consequence of this union and incorporation, each person, united with Jesus Christ, is a Son of God. Paul powerfully and beautifully expressed this truth in these words:

*Each one of you is a son of God because of your faith in Christ*

*Jesus. All of you who have been baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with him. There does not exist among you Jew or Greek, slave or freeman, male or female. All are one in Christ Jesus. Furthermore, if you belong to Christ you are the descendants of Abraham, which means you inherit all that was promised (Gal.3:26-29).*

**JUSTIFICATION THROUGH FAITH  
SCRIPTURE READINGS AND QUESTIONS  
SCRIPTURE OF THE WEEK (PLEASE MEMORIZE)**

**"THERE DOES NOT EXIST AMONG YOU JEW OR GREEK, SLAVE OR FREEMAN, MALE OR FEMALE. ALL ARE ONE IN CHRIST JESUS."  
--(Galatians 3:28)**

**FIRST DAY: Read Summary through Final Justification; Jeremiah 23:5-6; Matthew 7:21-23; Romans 2:3-11.**

- 1. In the classical Greek what did the terms "righteous" and "justified" mean?**
- 2. In the Old Testament who would have been considered a "righteous" person?**
- 3. According to Paul, what is the new dispensation for justification?**
- 4. Upon what does final justification depend?**

**SECOND DAY: Read Summary: The Meaning of Christian Faith; Deuteronomy 5:5-6; 8:8; Hebrews 3:7-11.**

- 1. Why do we say Biblical Faith touches the entire person?**
- 2. How would you explain the difference between faith in the Old and the New Testaments?**
- 3. According to Paul, what would be the essential content of Christian Faith?**
- 4. How would you explain the relationship between faith and obedience?**

**THIRD DAY: Read Summary: Religious Fools; Galatians 3:1-5; Acts 8:13-19; 19:6.**

- 1. Why did Paul see the Galatians as religious fools?**
- 2. In the early Church, what were some of the signs accompanying the reception of the Holy Spirit?**

**3. In the mind of Paul, what did the reception of the Holy Spirit prove?**

**4. What would it mean to you to be in the spirit and end in the flesh?**

**FOURTH DAY: Read Summary: The Example of Abraham; Deuteronomy 28:15; Romans 4:1-24.**

**1. What divine reality did Paul see foretold in the life of Abraham?**

**2. What was the cause of the justification of Abraham?**

**3. How did Paul interpret the promise, "All nations shall be blessed in you."?**

**4. According to Paul, what was the relationship between the promise and the covenant of circumcision?**

**FIFTH DAY: Read Summary: A Curse, Not a Blessing; Galatians 3:10-18.**

**1. Why does Paul say the Law brings a curse rather than a blessing?**

**2. How did Jesus Christ deliver mankind from the curse of the Law?**

**3. According to Paul, how does the Mosaic Law affect the promise made to Abraham?**

**4. What do you understand by the statement "The foundation of true religion is heartfelt trust in God?"**

**SIXTH DAY: Read Summary through Effects of Christian Faith; Galatians 3:19-29.**

**1. What did Paul see as the purpose of the Law?**

**2. What do you understand by Galatians 3:22?**

**3. What are the spiritual effects of the Christian Faith according to Paul?**

**4. What do you understand by Galatians 3:38?**

## CHAPTER 7

### SONS OF GOD--SUMMARY

#### INTRODUCTION

Paul declared the supreme Christian dignity when he said: "*All of you who have been baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with him*" (Gal.3:2). Jesus Christ identified the baptized with His very self. He does not distinguish between His own person and that of the baptized, although they remain distinct persons. Christ creates a corporate personality of which He is the Head and the baptized are its members. "*All are one in Christ Jesus,*" says Paul. Yet all remain distinct individuals with their unique responsibilities. All share with Christ the one Holy Spirit, and the merits and graces of Jesus become those of the Body. The dignity and holiness of Christ are imputed to the baptized. God's perfect love flows through the baptized, casting out all fear.

There remains for the baptized the responsibility to be fruitful. As the Body of Christ, it can be nothing less. There is a Kingdom of God still to be wrought within the hearts of men and spread over the face of the earth. True Christians are known not by their membership in the Church but by their fruits.

#### BEFORE THE MESSIAH

Paul taught the Gentiles that they had become children of Abraham and inheritors of all that was promised through their faith in Jesus Christ. He viewed their previous pagan condition as somewhat analogous to the Jews' condition before the coming of the Messiah. All the world was in bondage and held in the condition of spiritual childhood. The Mosaic Law served as the tutor of the Jews, and convicted them of sin. The pagans, on the other hand, were like orphaned children abiding by the will of their departed father. Although in the future they would inherit all, while still in the state of childhood (spiritual immaturity) their condition was no different from that of a slave.

Although all were in a like stage of spiritual immaturity, there was a major difference between the children of Israel and those of paganism. The Jews possessed true knowledge of God as Father and were directed by divine revelation. For the pagans it was, more or less, a time of spiritual darkness.

They were children lost in a dark forest with no true knowledge of their Father or how to reach Him. They looked to the stars above their heads to guide their fate. On a more practical level, human philosophies and governments directed their external conduct, while reason and conscience directed their internal lives. Paul referred to these things as "*the elements of the world.*"

Such conditions endured until Christ came. In the divinely predestined moment, Christ came. The hour of His coming is referred to as "the designated time" or "the fullness of time." It remains a divine secret why God sent His Son to earth when He did. St. Thomas Aquinas reasoned that God delayed the coming of His Son until the moment that mankind had exhausted all human resources in its search for salvation, and was forced by its evident weakness and evilness to look to heaven for salvation and long for its Savior. The Messiah came when the world was most in need and best prepared to receive Him.

#### THE INCARNATION

Paul tells the Galatians, "*But when the designated time had come, God sent forth his Son born of woman, born under the law*" (Gal.4:4). There is a possibility that this letter is the first written Scripture of the New Testament. If so, it is probably the first Scripture reference to the great Christian Mystery of the Incarnation: Jesus is God-Man. Paul's words imply the pre-existence of God's Son and the divinity of the Son. He tells us that God's Son has become a human being and a Jew--"*born of a woman, born under the law.*" In Jesus Christ we have a Person who possesses both a divine and human nature. He is a Person clearly distinct from the Person of the Father, as He is sent forth from the Father. Coming forth from God as Son, He is God--a sharer in the Divine Nature. Herein lies the foundation for belief in the Christian Mystery of the Most Holy Trinity.

Paul maintains the Messiah, as a Jew, was subjected to the Mosaic Law in order "*to deliver from the law those who were subjected to it, so that we might receive our status as adopted sons*" (Gal.4:5). As long as the Jews remained under the law, they remained in the status of "designated heir" no different from that of slaves. Jesus fulfilled the law and through his obedience reached, as a man, spiritual perfection (see Heb.2:10~5:8).

Jesus Himself is the only begotten Son of God, and through a mystical union with this Son, both Jew and Gentile receive the status of adopted sons who

share completely in the life and glory of God's natural son: *"All of you who have been baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with him. There does not exist among you Jew or Greek, slave or freeman, male or female. All are one in Christ Jesus" (Gal.3:27-28).*

#### PROOF OF SONSHIP

Paul saw the reception of the Holy Spirit as proof of the divine sonship and adoption. At the time of Jesus' baptism we read, *"The Holy Spirit descended on him in visible form like a dove. A voice from heaven was heard to say: 'You are my beloved Son. On you my favor rests'" (Lk.3:22).* John the Baptist gave this testimony: *"I saw the Spirit descend like a dove from the sky and it came to rest on him... Now I have seen for myself and have testified, 'This is God's chosen one!'" (Jn.1:32,34).* We see from the Scriptures a correlation between the reception of the Holy Spirit and divine favor. Paul sees it not only as a sign of grace and favor, but of sonship as well. To the Galatians Paul said, *"The proof that you are sons is the fact that God has sent forth into our hearts the spirit of his Son which cries out 'Abba' ('Father!'). You are no longer a slave but a son! And the fact that you are a son makes you an heir, by God's design" (Gal.4:6).* The presence of the Holy Spirit in the souls of the baptized creates a filial relationship with the Father. It is analogous to a parent's protective love of a small child, and the child's absolute confidence and trust in that love.

#### RETURN TO ENSLAVEMENT

Regardless of the Galatians' previous culpability, or lack of it (as pagans), Paul now finds their present behavior inexcusable and censorious. How can they now so willingly turn to feed their spirits, so to speak, upon the husk of this world after having tasted the banquet of the Spirit? They have been rescued by the love of God from the enslavement of paganism, and were recognized as sons of the heavenly Father. Paul sees this serious flirtation and fascination with the teachings of the Judaizers as a return to a different form of enslavement. They are returning to routine and mechanical religious observances in order to please God and win the grace of salvation. He asks them, *"How can you return to those powerless, worthless, natural elements to which you seem willing to enslave yourselves once more? You even go so far as to keep the ceremonial observances of days and months, seasons and years!" (Gal.4:9-10.)*

Most probably Paul refers to the liturgical observances prescribed in the Mosaic Law. He speaks of these practices as lacking the power to strengthen



or enrich the soul. This judgment is made in light of what has transpired in Jesus Christ, and in light of the fact that these practices are being substituted for faith in Christ as the means of salvation.

Apparently, the degree to which the Galatians have entered into these Jewish practices and have abandoned the teachings of Paul leave a sinking and fearful feeling in Paul's heart. He gives vent to these emotions by writing, "*I fear for you: all my efforts with you may have been wasted*" (Gal.4:11).

#### MEMORIES OF BETTER DAYS

What Paul wrote brought his mind back to earlier days in Galatia. He looked back nostalgically to happier times. He recalled how he had once lived among them. He had not lived among them as a Jew, but had conformed himself to their way of life, demonstrating the catholicity of Jesus Christ. He sought to teach them by example that faith in Jesus, not membership in the Jewish religion, was essential for eternal salvation. In a letter to the Corinthians Paul plainly demonstrated his apostolic technique (see 1Cor.9:19-23).

The irony of the situation is that the Galatians have embraced what Paul had abandoned in order to win them to the gospel. In the face of this he writes, "*I beg you, brothers, to become like me as I became like you*" (Gal.4:12). Paul had renounced as a source of his spiritual security the practice of the Jewish religion for an absolute faith in the merits of Jesus Christ as the means of salvation (see Phil.3:7).

Paul assures the Galatians that this is not an issue of personal animosity between them and himself. Personally they had never been anything but kind and gracious toward Paul. He recalls how he happened to preach the gospel message to them. At the time he arrived in Galatia, he had seemingly had another destination in mind for evangelization. He ended up in Galatia only because of a personal infirmity.

There has been much conjecture concerning this mysterious illness of Paul's. Some find clues in the text itself that he may have been afflicted with epilepsy, and others theorize that he probably suffered from an eye disease. Dr. Ramsey suggested that Paul contracted malaria in the malaria-infested lowlands of Perga. What we do know about Paul's illness is that it was debilitating, and had some disagreeable physical aspects that were a trial to those around him. In a word, Paul preached to the Galatians when he was weak and not in his best form. Nevertheless, they received him in an extraordinary manner. Jesus Christ could not have been treated better.

## PRICE OF TRUTH

Paul did nothing to harm the Galatians. He spoke some hard words to them, but they had been spoken for their shock value, hoping to force upon the Galatians the seriousness of their situation. Paul is like a loving parent who cannot remain silent in the face of his children's consorting with corrupt and criminal types. Paul puts a very powerful psychological question to the Galatians: *"Have I become your enemy just because I tell you the truth?" (Gal11.4:16).*

We have only to look at the lives of the Old Testament prophets to see how unwelcome truth can stir deadly hatred in the hearts of its hearers. John the Evangelist identified Jesus as the Light of the world--as a Light of Truth revealing the darkness of sin within the hearts of men. Precisely because Jesus was Truth, he stirred up deadly hatred in the hearts of men that sought his extinction. John explained it all well (see Jn.3:19-21).

Truth is power; it is a power like the sun; it is a power like radiation. Truth is light, but too much light can harm and cause blindness. Truth, like radiation, can heal. Error causes much physical and psychological illness and pain. Too much truth at one time, like an overexposure to radiation, can cause more harm than good. Truths spoken imprudently to another may result in serious harm to the soul. Truth is a power to be handled patiently and prudently. There is a time to speak, and a time to refrain from doing so. There is a time to speak only so much and no more. The amount of truth must not be more than the soul can bear and handle constructively. When using the healing light of truth, both timing and quantity are essential.

Paul cannot but wonder if it is not the truth he preached to the Galatians that causes them to close their hearts to him, and to see him as the enemy of their salvation. Speaking of "enemy" turns Paul's mind back to those Judaizers, the real enemies of their salvation.

## SARAH AND HAGAR

Apparently, these Judaizers were hovering over the Galatians like anxious mother hens, giving their undivided attention to the spiritual welfare of these misguided Christians. The Galatians naturally responded favorably to all this flattering attention. Paul discerns that it is all a means for the Judaizers to get their hooks into the Galatians, to separate them from Paul and his kind, and make them dependent upon them, the Judaizers.

Paul sees the situation as serious. It baffles him how it has all come to this dangerous state. When he left had them, they had seemed so well on the right path and on a sure road to religious maturity. Now they were regressing, back to where they began. Paul used the analogy of a pregnant mother to express his own emotional and spiritual ties with the Galatians. *"You are my children,"* he tells them, *"and you put me back in labor pains until Christ is formed in you. If only I could be with you now and speak to you differently!"* (Gal.4:19-20). Paul humbly confesses, *"You have me at a complete loss!"* (Gal.4:2).

Paul may have felt somewhat at a loss and frustrated by the Galatian affair, but despair itself was alien to him. Paul essentially fights with the intent to win. If one thing proves to be ineffectual, he takes another tactic. He begins with a question to the Galatians that he intends to answer, *"You who want to be subject to the law, tell me: do you know what the law has to say?"* (Gal.4:21).

The Judaizers emphasized the importance of being a descendant of Abraham. Paul points out that Abraham had more than one son, mentioning the son by a slave woman (Ishmael) and a son by a free woman (Isaac). We know from Genesis that God promised descendants to Abraham. When no children were born, Sarah, his wife, gave her maidservant, Hagar, to Abraham in order to bear a son. Ishmael was born to Hagar when Abraham was 86 years of age. However, Ishmael was not the son of the promise. Many years later an old and sterile Sarah miraculously bore Abraham's son Isaac, the divinely promised heir. When Isaac reached the age of three, Abraham celebrated his weaning with a great banquet. At the time we are told, *"Sarah noticed the son whom Hagar the Egyptian had borne playing with her son Isaac; so she demanded of Abraham: 'Drive out that slave and her son! No son of that slave is going to share the inheritance with my son Isaac!'"* (Gal.21:9-10). Some have insisted that Ishmael was teasing or tormenting Isaac rather than "playing" with him.

Paul tells the Galatians, *"All this is an allegory: the two women stand for the two covenants"* (Gal.4:24). Hagar, being a slave, brings forth children into slavery, and is a representative of the Mosaic Covenant made at Sinai in the Arabian desert that brings forth children subjected to the Law, and therefore to slavery. Sarah, as a free woman, brings forth children of the promise, into freedom representing the New Covenant of the Spirit. The child of Hagar was a result of nature--a child of the flesh. The child of Sarah was a result of heavenly intervention--a child of the spirit.

This allegory applies to the Christian Church, which does not produce natural children but children through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. In a word, Paul sees Hagar as representing Judaism, and Sarah as representing Christianity. He insists there exists an incompatibility between the two. One persecutes the other--these descendants of Abraham. Paul makes his application; he began with the question, "*Do you know what the law has to say?*" and now he answers the question, "*Cast out slave girl and son together: for the slave girl's son shall never be an heir on equal terms with the son of the one born free*" (Gal.4:30).

Not too subtly Paul tells the Galatians to get rid of these Judaizers. There is a veiled warning to the Galatians. Remember, even though Ishmael was a dutiful son of Abraham, due to his innate nature he had no lasting place in the father's house. This belonged only to the one who possessed the true spirit of sonship. "*My brothers,*" Paul reminds them, "*We are not children of a slave girl but of a mother who is free*" (Gal.4:31).

## SONS OF GOD

### SCRIPTURE READINGS AND QUESTIONS SCRIPTURE OF THE WEEK (PLEASE MEMORIZE)

"THE PROOF THAT YOU ARE SONS IS THE FACT THAT GOD HAS SENT FORTH INTO OUR HEARTS THE SPIRIT OF HIS SON WHICH CRIES OUT 'ABBA!' (FATHER!)." --Galatians 4:6

**FIRST DAY:** Read Summary through Before the Messiah; John 15:5-17; Galatians 4:1-3; Romans 1:18-23; 2:14-15; Wisdom 13:1.

1. How would you describe the supreme dignity of a Christian?
2. What does this personally mean to you?
3. What is a primary responsibility of the Christian life?
4. Describe the spiritual condition of Jews and Greeks before the coming of the Messiah?

**SECOND DAY:** Read Summary: The Incarnation; Galatians 4:4-5; Philippians 2:6-7; Colossians 1:15-17; 2:9.

1. What does Galatians 4:4 tell us about Jesus Christ?
2. What do you learn about Jesus from the reading in Philippians?
3. What do you learn about Jesus from the reading in Colossians?
4. How would you describe the Christian dogma of the Incarnation?

**THIRD DAY:** Read Summary through Return to Enslavement; Galatians 4:6-11; John 14:17,26; Romans 5:5; 2Corinthians 1:21-22.

1. What do you see as the relationship between the reception of the Holy Spirit and divine favor?
2. What do these readings teach you about the presence of the Holy Spirit in your life?

3. What great Christian mystery is intimated in Galatians 4:6? Explain.

4. Why did Paul see the embracing of Judaism as a return to enslavement?

**FOURTH DAY: Read Summary: Memories of Better Days; Galatians 4:21-15; 1Corinthians 9:19-23; Philippians 3:5-9.**

1. What were the circumstances of Paul's first visit to the Galatians?

2. What does the reading in 1Corinthians teach you about Paul's apostolic technique?

3. What does the reading from Philippians teach you?

4. What do these readings teach you about being an apostle of Jesus Christ?

**FIFTH DAY: Read Summary: Price of Truth; Jeremiah 26:1-9; John 3:19-21; Galatians 4:16-20.**

1. How do people react to truth they do not want to hear?

2. How do you react to unpleasant truth about yourself?

3. What does the reading of John tell you about truth?

4. How should we deal with truth that is painful for another to bear?

**SIXTH DAY: Read Summary: Sarah and Hagar; Genesis 16:1-6; 21:1-13; Galatians 4:21-31.**

1. In the allegory, what do Sarah and Hagar represent?

2. In what way does Sarah represent the Christian Church?

3. What was the answer to Paul's question in Galatians 4:21?

4. What did Paul imply by this answer?

## CHAPTER 8

### FREEDOM OF GOD'S SONS--SUMMARY

#### INTRODUCTION

By using the allegory of Sarah and Hagar, Paul attempts to demonstrate to the Galatians the fundamental difference between the Old and the New Covenants. He especially seeks to show the relationship between God and man within the two covenants. Adherents to the Sinai Covenant, represented by Ishmael, have inherited an enslavement guaranteeing no lasting place within the Father's House. People of the New Covenant, represented by Isaac, have inherited freedom, and as heirs of Christ they possess an assured position within the Father's House.

For Christians now to embrace the order of the Old Covenant was, in the eyes of Paul, a repudiation of Jesus Christ. Not only would this involve moral servitude, but (and much more dangerous) it would actively cut one off from Jesus Christ. That implied being cut off from the effects flowing from the life and death of Jesus (see Gal.5:1-4). Paul implies a serious rupture has occurred in the life-growth process of the Galatians; a relationship has been severed upon which essential elements of life depended. On the natural level it is in the category of divorce or death in a wife-husband relationship. Those Christians who seek their justification through legal observance travel on a dead-end street because by their severance from Jesus Christ, they have "*fallen from God's favor*" (see Heb.6:4-8).

#### FAITH INFUSED WITH LOVE

Confirming a fundamental Christian dogma, Paul writes, "*It is in the spirit that we eagerly await the justification we hope for, and only faith can yield it.*" (Gal.5:5). If the Galatians desire to achieve righteousness through works then Paul will devise the true Christian formula for them. He tells them, "*In Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor the lack of it counts for anything; only faith, which expresses itself through love*" (Gal.5:6).

Paul makes clear what is essential "in Christ Jesus." Faith is essential; it is the door that leads to Christ through baptism. According to John it is the first work (see John 6:28-29). However, life in Christ implies the activity of Christ. Love is essential. The energy of Christ's life is defined as divine love. The

products of His life are works of love. A Christian with faith and no love can be compared to the stillborn or the crib death. Without a life of charitable works, there is truly no evidence that the Holy Spirit is operative within the soul. Without the activity of the Holy Spirit, there is no assurance of salvation or foundation for hope. Faith inflamed with charity saves. Naked faith alone is not enough!

For a time the Galatians had progressed in the essentials of the Christian life. They had walked the assured path of eternal life. However, as seen, they had recently run into a stumbling block (see Gal.5:7-10). Paul discerned the fruit and knew the evil he had to deal with--the Judaizers were the corruptive leaven in Galatia. Paul added a personal malediction on the advocates of circumcision: "*Would that those who are troubling you might go the whole way, and castrate themselves!*" (Gal.5:12).

#### FREEDOM FOR THE GREEKS

The freedom of the children of God is an essential message within this epistle. Paul uses the Greek word *eleutheria* when speaking of freedom. For our own understanding we need to ask what Paul means by freedom. It will aid in the interpretation to understand the concept of freedom within the culture of Paul's time. For both the Jew and Greek the concept of freedom was understood in antithesis to the concept of slavery. Slavery was a concept familiar to all. Around the time of Christ it is estimated that there were over 60 million slaves within the Roman Empire.

The common Greek word for slave was *doulos*. The state of slavery reduced a human being to the category of property (chattel) with no rights before the law. Slavery was considered such a despicable state that a Jew could be excommunicated from the synagogue for calling another a slave.

Within the Greek world, freedom was defined first in relationship to government. To be free meant to be politically free within the political society under which one lived. Freedom for the individual was determined and measured by law. There existed only freedom under the law--never beyond or in opposition to the law. Freedom essentially meant self-government, self determination. The Greeks fought fiercely for political freedom.

With the rise of Greek philosophy, the concept of freedom developed from a political to a philosophical concept. The Greek philosopher sought the more radical freedom of the individual under the law of man's own nature. Freedom came to be associated more with self-autonomy and personal



independence. The philosophers looked to human nature and the laws of the universe for guidelines and horizons for human freedom. The interpretation of freedom depended upon one's definition of human existence. Freedom must essentially be centered on internal freedom--the freedom of the human soul completely under the control of its own will. The perfectly free man moves among men without being subject to being moved by them. The free man was a self-contained island. To be free, man must be God-like. Plato discovered in man a law for the common good--a supra individual aspect of man. This law became the basis of his ideal human life. Obedience to such a law was freeing, not degrading. For the Greek Stoic, freedom was man in possession of his own soul. The fruit of such freedom for the philosopher lay in the inner peace of soul, a peace arising out of a soul at rest in unshakable assurance.

#### NEW TESTAMENT FREEDOM

The New Testament cannot place human freedom in self-autonomy. It knows that true freedom is not essentially threatened by the external world, but by the internal world of the soul. The external world itself has become threatened and corrupted by the soul's perversion of human liberty (see Rom.8:19-22). Man turning in to himself is a turning in upon a deficient being--a turning to a lost cause. The sum total of all human possibilities does not equal a whole and complete happy human being. The Scriptures confirm that man cannot possess true freedom in the face of sin and death. New Testament freedom is man free from sin, free from the law, free from death.

Paul sees clearly that the power of sin over the soul destroys the freedom of that soul to follow its intellectual and spiritual insights. It can desire the good but lacks the will to obtain it (see Rom.7:17-19). The concupiscent cravings of the flesh centers earthly life on a carnal existence (see Rom.6:16-23).

In the New Testament, freedom must begin with freedom from sin. To preserve this freedom, man must also be freed from an inordinate desire for self-preservation of earthly life, which drives him to a self-centered, selfish conservation of physical life. Sin secretly achieves what human nature desires--independence from God. In the darkness of self-deception, man pursues independence and autonomy. Separating himself from God, man cuts himself off from the Source of Life. This very process initiates its own deterioration and corruption, and brings about death for the life that is alienated from the Source of Life. The autonomous life is self-destructive. Jesus taught that all would be disciples: *"If a man wishes to come after me, he*

*must deny his very self... Whoever would preserve his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will preserve it" (Mk.8:34-35).*

### FREEDOM FROM LAW

Paul insists that the law does not lead to freedom but to enslavement. Of itself the Law is holy, as it expresses God's claim upon man. It calls man to the fulfillment of God's Will, a will that expresses God's love for mankind. The road to true freedom lies in man's union with the will of God.

However, human nature dominated by sin and dedicated to self-glory perverts the Law of God. Instead of the Law becoming a means for union *with* God, it becomes a means for freedom *from* God under the Law. Under the Law man selfishly fashions his own self as he interprets the Law for self. Man succeeds in fulfilling his needs and accomplishing his will under the law. The Law of God is followed by man as man follows a wheelbarrow.

Perverting the law into a mere legal system, the Jews had guidelines for their autonomy and independence. The deviousness of human nature manipulates the Law of God in order to create a world acceptable and comfortable to self. We know that in the time of Christ, three distinct groups of Jews--Pharisees, Sadducees and Essenes--took the same Torah and produced three different religious personalities. The Jews were able to stand before God in a state of meritorious achievement, putting God in their debt and at their service. Justification became their legal due--a matter of justice before God. We know Jesus responded strongly to this spiritual situation in Israel (see Mk.7:6-8).

Paul insisted that in the end the Law reveals, in a concrete religious experience, the sinfulness of humanity. Human existence, in order to be free, must enjoy freedom from the Law, because experience proves how well law-abiding people manipulate the Law to further their selfishness, while abiding under the cloud of moral respectability.

### PARADOX OF CHRISTIAN FREEDOM

The Christian concept of freedom is indeed a paradox. The New Testament teaches that the way to freedom does not lie in the control and possession of the human soul, the basis for individual existence. It concretely lies in the sacrifice of self. The only possible way of coming to one's true self is by surrendering the human will to the Will and the Power of God. A life controlled by God comes to true self-control.

The path to freedom is a paradoxical one. It is the path in life taken by Jesus Christ. Jesus did not set himself out upon a road of self-fulfillment or self-discovery, but a path of self-emptying. He turned from the natural instinct of self-preservation and embraced a divine call to self-sacrifice (see Phil.2:7-8 and Jn.13:13-15). Jesus called His disciples to a life of self-sacrificing service of others.

The entire life of Jesus was an act of God. This act was accomplished through the complete surrender of the human will of Jesus to the divine will of the Father, as mediated to the humanity of Jesus through the Holy Spirit. This act of God, incarnated in the body and soul of Jesus Christ, led to the glorification of Jesus in His rising from the dead. Was there any human being ever as free as the Risen Jesus Christ?! Within the Risen Christ is displayed the fullness of the freedom of the sons of God.

#### FREEDOM UNDER THE SPIRIT

The Gospel calls man to freedom and marks the way. The act of God, acted in Jesus, must be re-enacted within the disciples of Jesus. This is the foundation of a new life of freedom. It is the freeing seed which, when matured, will yield true freedom as its harvest. The basis of human freedom lies in submissiveness of the human spirit to the action of the Holy Spirit. A life dynamically under the power of the Holy Spirit cannot be self-oriented. Finding freedom in self-fulfillment is like a fish seeking the sea in a bowl, or a bird searching for the sky in a cage. Only the fish that swims the sea is free, and only the bird soaring in the heavens tastes liberty. Through His life in the Spirit, Jesus found the sea and the sky and knew that from out of a life in the Spirit arises the freedom of the sons of God.

The liberating love of the Holy Spirit hovers over the soul of the baptized as does a mother eagle over her nestlings, urging the baptized to abandon its nest of self-interests and seek the freedom discovered only in a life of actualized love. It is this liberating love that frees the spirit from its own destructive selfishness. This Divine Spirit of love forces the soul out of its isolated and protective environment, and causes it to be concerned with the cause of Christ, the salvation of others. It loses itself in a self-forgetful love of neighbor, which expresses itself in service that reflects the goodness of God. Such persons experience on this earth the highest degree of freedom: a freedom from self, and the freedom to follow, unhindered, the flight of the Holy Spirit along the path of Divine Love.

In the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Christian beholds freedom from death. Only in eternity does the disciple of Jesus experience the fullness of freedom: *"If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, then he who raised Christ from the dead will bring your mortal bodies to life also, through the Spirit dwelling in you"* (Rom.8:11).

### LIBERATING LOVE

The Holy Spirit continues the work of freedom in the submissive soul through the constant activity of liberating love. When the New Testament speaks of love, it uses the Greek word *agape*. Agape was not a word commonly used before the New Testament times. It hardly occurs in secular Greek literature. Some see it as a word coined by Christians to express a new quality and attitude towards others born in the Christian Community, and flowing from the Presence of the Holy Spirit.

Agape emerges within the Christian Community as unconquerable goodwill that will never seek anything but the good of its fellow man. It is a spirit that is not conditioned or curtailed by what other people do in word, or deed, or who they may be. One of the distinguishing qualities of agape-love lies precisely in its ability to love the unlovely and the unlovable. It is love lavished upon others without a thought of whether they are worthy to receive it. Agape love proceeds from the nature of the lover, rather than from the merits of the beloved. No one merits agape-love. As Christians have experienced this love without merit of theirs, it should be dispensed by them to those without merit. *"My dear people, since God had loved us so much, we too should love one another"* (1Jn.4:11).

Agape-love requires a total response of the personality. It begins in the will, permeates the mind and heart, and clothes itself in emotions and affections. Agape-love is a divine gift to the Christian. Nevertheless it does not just happen within the heart, it is willed into expression by a Christian person. Humanly speaking, it is easier to walk on water than to love with the love of agape. It is quite impossible without the operation of the dynamic love of the Spirit of Jesus within the spirit of man: *"The love of God has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit which has been given us"* (Rom.5:5). Paul wrote the Thessalonians: *"As regards brotherly love, there is no need for me to write you. God himself has taught you to love one another"* (1Thes.4:9).

**FREEDOM OF GOD'S SONS**  
**SCRIPTURE READINGS AND QUESTIONS**  
**SCRIPTURE OF THE WEEK**

**"IT WAS FOR LIBERTY THAT CHRIST FREED US. SO STAND FIRM, AND DO NOT TAKE ON YOURSELVES THE YOKE OF SLAVERY A SECOND TIME!" --Galatians 5:1**

**FIRST DAY: Read Summary through Faith Infused with Love; Galatians 5:1-12; Hebrews 6:4-8; James 2:17-26.**

- 1. In the eyes of Paul what are the serious consequences of a Christian accepting circumcision?**
- 2. What do you understand by Galatians 5:6?**
- 3. In what way could the Judaizers be compared to yeast?**
- 4. What does Galatians 5:12 tell you about Paul?**

**SECOND DAY: Read Summary: Freedom for the Greeks.**

- 1. What did freedom under the law mean to the Greeks?**
- 2. How did the concept of freedom develop under Greek philosophers?**
- 3. How do you understand freedom as self-determination?**
- 4. What do you understand by the definition of freedom as "man in possession of his own soul"?**

**THIRD DAY: Read Summary: New Testament Freedom; Romans 8:18-22; 7:17-19.**

- 1. What does the New Testament see as the true threat to human freedom?**
- 2. Why does the New Testament reject the Stoics' concept of freedom?**

**3. What do you learn from Romans 8:18-22?**

**4. What does Romans 7:17-19 teach you about the nature of man?**

**FOURTH DAY: Read Summary: Freedom from Law; Mark 7:1-8.**

**1. Why does Paul insist the Law leads to enslavement rather than freedom?**

**2. How does man pervert the Law of God?**

**3. What do you learn from the reading in Mark?**

**4. Can you give an example of how man can use the law of God to sin?**

**FIFTH DAY: Read Summary: Paradox of Christian Freedom; Philippians 2:7-8; John 13:3-17.**

**1. How would you describe the paradox of Christian Freedom?**

**2. How would you describe the Christian road to freedom?**

**3. What does it mean to travel this road?**

**4. What do these Scripture readings teach us about Jesus and freedom?**

**SIXTH DAY: Read Summary through Liberating Love; 1Corinthians 13:1-13; 1John 3:11-16.**

**1. When is freedom complete for the Christian?**

**2. How would you describe agape-love?**

**3. What is its importance in the Christian life?**

**4. What does the reading from John teach you about love?**

## CHAPTER 9

### THE SPIRIT AND THE FLESH--SUMMARY

#### PAUL'S CONCEPT OF MAN

Paul teaches that an internal war wages within the soul of every human being. The human soul is a veritable battlefield upon which one's eternal life is decided. In this war the "flesh" and the "spirit" are bitter antagonists.

In his letter to the Thessalonians, Paul prayed: *"May he preserve you whole and entire, spirit, soul and body, irreproachable at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1Thes.5:23)*. Seemingly, Paul speaks of the entire person as a trinity: spirit, soul, and body—three in one. It is necessary to understand Paul's concept of human nature to better grasp the conflict between spirit and flesh. Paul described the whole person as being *pneuma* (spirit), *psyche* (soul), and *soma* (body). In the Greek, *pneuma* and *psyche* are not interchangeable. Let us begin with that dimension of man that is most familiar to us--the body.

Paul speaks of the body in three ways. First, he sees the body in a neutral fashion, and speaks of men dishonoring their bodies through perversions. Twice he uses the physical body and its parts as symbolic of the Church as the Body of Christ. Here there is no condemnation implied. Second, he speaks of the body in a way that implies its imperfections and the dangers of the body. He speaks of sin in the body (see Rom.6:6). Third, Paul never implies that the body is evil in itself. It, too, is subject to redemption (see Rom.8:23). The body will be transformed, *"And He will transfigure these wretched bodies of ours into copies of His glorious body" (Phil.3:21a)*. \* The body can be offered to God, *"You should use your body for the glory of God" (1Cor.6:20c)*. \* Finally, Paul teaches that the body of the Christian is the Temple of the Holy Spirit, *"Your body you know is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you since you received him from God (1Cor.6:19)*. When Paul speaks of the "flesh" he is not speaking about the human body itself.

#### PSYCHE AND PNEUMA

Paul speaks of Adam as possessing a *psyche*--a human soul. *"Adam, the first man, became a living soul (psyche)" (1Cor.15:45a)*. The soul is natural to man, and is apparently the source of human life. Plato taught that the soul, or *psyche*, is a pure spiritual principle, a subject of thought, distinct from the

body, and immortal. The soul is the real person for Plato. Aristotle unites the soul and the body, making them both essential components of the human being; for Aristotle, the soul separated from the body is an incomplete person.

Paul speaks of Jesus Christ, in contrast to Adam, as being a life-giving spirit (pneuma): *"the last Adam has become a life-giving spirit" (1Cor.15:45b)*. Jesus seemingly becomes the principle and origin of the spirit of man. The Spirit is the divine and heavenly dynamic force conceived as uniquely existing in Jesus. The Pneuma is a creative and life-giving force possessed by Jesus, and dispensed by Him to the Church. *"You are in the spirit, since the Spirit of God dwells in you. If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ" (Rom.8:9b)*.

The question arises, is the pneuma something other than the Presence of the Holy Spirit in man? Is the pneuma a direct effect of the Holy Spirit in the souls of the Just? Some early Christian writers maintained that only the Christians, as a result of baptism and the reception of the Holy Spirit, possessed a pneuma as an essential part of their being; the consequence of being a "new creation." However, many Christian mystics believed the pneuma of a man to be natural to man, and the very "ground of one's being," the highest dimension of a human being, the creative place where the divine communicates with the human. From this point in man, the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit seeks to move out into the person to bring redemption to the entire human being--body and soul. Whether the pneuma of man is a natural faculty or a supernatural one remains a mystery.

## THE FLESH

The word used for flesh is not *soma* but *sarx*. Apparently, Paul means more than human bodies by the use of the word "flesh;" he means human bodies with all their feelings, emotions and desires. Paul wrote the Galatians, *"The flesh lusts against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh; the two are directly opposed."* Paul recognizes an almost schizophrenic condition in man and says, *"This is why you do not do what your will intends" (Gal.5:1)*. Paul does not deny freedom of will or responsibility for personal sin, but he does understand that the effect of sin reaches deeply into the will of man; it touches the will and weakens it considerably. Holiness and fulfillment of the divine will, unaided by grace, never become more than desires and dreams for the human will.



The "flesh" is the man of sin. The flesh is what man has made of himself in contrast with man as God made him. The flesh is man as he has allowed himself to become in contrast with man as God meant him to be. The flesh stands for the total effect of sin upon human nature. Human nature that is weakened, vitiated, and tainted by sin. The flesh is man as he is apart from Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. What is required to meet the situation of the sinful flesh is not good advice or good example, but deliverance!

When a person becomes subjected to the Holy Spirit a process of spiritualization begins. As a person cooperates with the grace of the Spirit, he or she grows in virtue. The soul moves towards spiritual maturity, putting on "the Mind of Christ." However, we must remember that the body remains unredeemed in this world, and will always be a source of problems and cause of suffering on earth. The body rebels and struggles against its own spiritualization, and strives to control the soul that exercises power over it. A person will continue to experience human weakness and frailty regardless of one's spirituality. Sins will be credited to one of these sources.

#### WORKS OF THE FLESH

Jesus taught His disciples to tell a man by his deeds. By deeds you can discover the wolf under the lamb skin (see Mt.7:15-16). Paul presents a portrait of the man of the flesh. He gives a list of the deeds of the flesh. It is more a popular list than an exhaustive one.

In Romans, Paul seems to imply that idolatry was the primary sin of man, primary in the sense that idolatry perverts the primary relationship of a human being. A creature not properly oriented toward the Creator loses the compass of life's direction, and ultimately fails to be properly oriented to anything else. Unwilling to properly love God, the ability to love anything else deteriorates. Human relations are built upon the quicksand of fallen nature, which quickly sinks into self-concern and illusions. The worship of man himself and other created beings substitutes for worship of God. Superstition replaces faith, and sorcery and witchcraft flourish. Jesus once said, "*And if your light is darkness, how deep will the darkness be!*" (Mt.6:23).

The most obvious works of the flesh for Paul are in the area of human sexuality. Here the physiological dimension of man is perverted. Paul saw the perversion of sex as a natural outcome of man refusing to properly glorify God (see Rom.1:24-28). When Paul enumerates the works of the flesh for the

Galatians, he mentions first *porneia*, *akatharsis*, and *aselgeia*. These three works represent the three stages of moral corruption. Porneia is a sinful sexual act. In the Scriptures the word can apply to all extra-marital and unnatural sexual intercourse. It was especially applicable to fornication, adultery, and homosexual acts. In the Old Testament, porneia was considered one of the seven evil spirits, which in most ruinous fashion drives the soul away from God. Philo considered the spirit of porneia a disgrace, a scandal and a blot on all mankind. The Book of Revelation identifies porneia as one of the sins unbelievers will cling to in the last day, despite divine judgment.

### THREE STAGES OF CORRUPTION

Introducing a person into sexual immorality would be the first stage of moral corruption. Once a person has been introduced to sexual immorality, the second phase of corruption--akatharsia--begins. The evil spirit of porneia moves into the mental faculties, contaminating the mind with sinful sexual thoughts. Dirty thoughts obsess the mind and awaken immoral desires. Such immorality becomes ingrained within the character of the person. The second stage of corruption is completed.

Up to this point, the person may harbor shame and guilt over their sinfulness, and attempt to keep their deeds secret. Publicly they may maintain an entirely different image. However, the third stage of corruption--aselgeia--ends this pretense. Aselgeia reduces the soul to the state of shamelessness. Their sinfulness is now irresponsibly and publicly flaunted without caring what others may think or feel. They often brazenly defend their vice, and condemn virtue itself.

### WORKS CORRUPTING SOCIETY

Paul's enumeration of the works of the flesh indicates that sin embraces man and all he touches. Man can eagerly sacrifice the common good, the welfare of society, for his own personal ambitions. Withdrawing his will from seeking the good of neighbor, man asks, "*Am I my brother's keeper?*" Such an environment gives birth to the spirit of *echthra*--the spirit of enmity--which expresses itself in hate, contempt and indifference to the needs of other human beings. This spirit breeds the users, the manipulators, the schemers, the exploiters, and the murderers.

Echthra spawns its own child. Such selfish orientation toward other social beings naturally begets *eris*--the spirit of contention and strife. A social order perverted by personal enmities and hatred degenerates into strife, which destroys social peace. It is of little good to seek the restoration of social order and peace when the spirit of echthra, the root cause, remains unchecked.

When one makes personal goods the only end for being, then the goods possessed by others--be they material or otherwise--can become a source of disturbance that gives birth to two evil sisters: the spirit of *zelos* (jealousy) and the spirit of *phthonos* (envy). The goods of others have become a motivation of evil within the heart. Zelos desires to possess the goods of another, and its spirit gives birth to theft and injustice. On the other hand, Phthonos begrudges the naked fact that another possesses goods. The envious do not so much desire the goods themselves as they desire to deprive the other of them for fear they may cast a shadow upon themselves. The envious are the destroyers of the property, the works, the fame, and the merits of others. They seek not to enrich themselves, but to impoverish others. Envy is a sickened spirit that shrinks the soul.

Often some others stand in the path of one's desire. The frustration of the desires of the impatient person gives rise to the spirit of *thumos*--that hot anger that seeks to bulldoze anything or anyone out of its path. Anger constantly seizes the selfish one because others often block personal ambition and desires. Thumos stimulates fights, quarrels and all forms of irrational words and deeds that lead to injury and death.

Men of the flesh are hardly capable of community service from altruistic motives. Upon entering public or community service motivated by the spirit of *eritheia*, their services and charities are perverted into seeking personal profit and benefit. Being incapable of unselfish service, they pervert political power and position for personal ends. Eritheia in public servants breeds bribes, graft, unjust legislation and other social injustices.

Others are filled with the spirit of *dichostasia*. So negative of soul, they seek no personal benefit from society, but strive to destroy the harmony of society. Lacking any peace of soul, they can leave nothing at peace. They deliberately foment divisions within families, friends, and organizations. They experience perverse satisfaction when things crumble about them. Dichostasia spawns the gossip, the slanderer, the rioter and the anarchist. Their desire is to destroy, not to build.

There are others who make a doll house of their hearts, and would box the world into the narrow confines of their own minds and hearts. Possessed by the spirit of *hairesis* (narrowness of mind that refuses to tolerate others who either fall short or go beyond their creed with their cults, their cliques or their heresies), they destroy universality, catholicity. The spirit of *hairesis* breeds racial, religious, and ethnic prejudice and foments social injustice and persecution.

When man fails to properly relate to God, he ends in perverting the created world and corrupts himself in the process. The last two works of the flesh pervert social pleasure: the spirit of *methe* that leads to drunkenness, and its brother spirit *komos*--the spirit of debauchery that turns social gatherings into orgies and brawls.

In summary, we may say that Paul teaches that man will be subjected to the Spirit or the flesh. Under the flesh he will produce works of the flesh that ultimately corrupt the nature of man and what he touches. Paul never ceases to teach that a person will ultimately reap what he has sown. He warns, "*I warn you, as I have warned you before: those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God!*" (Gal.5:21b).

In contrast to the works of the flesh, Paul now presents the fruits of the spirit. It should be noted, he speaks of the *works* of the flesh, but the *fruits* of the Spirit. Works are the product of personal labor. They have their source and origin in the person performing the works. However, the fruits of the spirit are not attributable to personal labor, nor do they find their origin and source in the person. They are a result of the Presence of the Holy Spirit within the soul. They come to fruition within the soul because the Holy Spirit has been free to work within the person. Where the fruits of the Holy Spirit blossom all honor and glory belong to God.

When we study these fruits of the Holy Spirit (see Gal.5:22-23) on a deeper level, we will see what a beautiful portrait Paul portrays here of the soul under grace--living in submission to the Holy Spirit.

Paul logically deduces that if the Holy Spirit is the source of Christian life then, indeed, this same Holy Spirit ought to be the principle of activity in our life--the prime mover behind what we say and do. "*Since we live by the spirit,*

*let us follow the spirit's lead" (Gal.5:25). If this be the case then "Let us never," Paul says, "be boastful, or challenging, or jealous toward one another" (Gal.5:26). Such things are works of the flesh, and must be eradicated from our lives and the community. Where there is the life and leadership of the Holy Spirit the fruits of the Holy Spirit flourish abundantly. Christianity flourishes.*

## THE SPIRIT AND THE FLESH

### SCRIPTURE READINGS AND QUESTIONS SCRIPTURE OF THE WEEK (PLEASE MEMORIZE)

**"THOSE WHO BELONG TO CHRIST JESUS HAVE CRUCIFIED THEIR FLESH WITH ITS PASSIONS AND DESIRES." --Galatians 5:24**

**FIRST DAY: Read Summary: Paul's Concept of Man; Galatians 5:13-18; 1Corinthians 6:12-20.**

1. How would you describe Paul's concept of a human being?
2. What do you learn about human nature from Galatians 5:17?
3. How does Paul see the human body?
4. What do you learn about the human body from 1Corinthians 6:12-20?

**SECOND DAY: Read Summary: Psyche and Pneuma; 1Corinthians 15:35-49.**

1. How does Paul contrast Christ with Adam?
2. How does the concept of soul differ between Plato and Aristotle?
3. How would you define the human soul, the *psyche*?
4. How would you define the human spirit or *pneuma*?

**THIRD DAY: Read Summary: The Flesh; 1Corinthians 2:10-16; Romans 7:14-25; Gal.5:17.**

1. How would you explain the concept of *sarx*, or flesh?

2. How do you understand Paul's reference to the human will in Gal.5:17?
3. How can a person become more spiritual and less of the flesh?
4. What can be expected in this life as a result of our human nature?

**FOURTH DAY: Read Summary: Works of the Flesh; Matthew 7:13-20; Romans 1:22-28; Galatians 5:19-21.**

1. What do the deeds and acts of a person reveal about them?
2. Why can idolatry be called the primary sin?
3. What are the effects of idolatry according to Paul in Romans?
4. How would you define *porneia*?

**FIFTH DAY: Read Summary: Three Stages of Corruption; Revelation 21:5-8.**

1. How would you describe *akatharsia*?
2. How would you describe *aselgeia*?
3. What is the course of moral corruption?
4. How would you classify our society today?

**SIXTH DAY: Read Summary: Works Corrupting Society; Romans 1:29-32; Galatians 5:22-26; Sirach 31:29-30; 40:20.**

1. Describe the spirit of *echtha* and what does it produce?
2. What works of the flesh pervert individual relationships?
3. What do you understand by Galatians 5:24?
4. What do you understand by Galatians 5:25?

## CHAPTER 10

### THE LAW OF CHRIST--SUMMARY

#### LOVE, JOY AND PEACE

The spiritual life of the soul develops from its intimate relationship with the Holy Spirit--a hand in glove relationship. A person may possess ministries and charismatic gifts and yet fail to develop a vital spiritual life. One may be too busy in the spirit to develop any spiritual life. Where the fruits of the Spirit blossom is another story. Where there is a personal and intimate love of God good fruit is produced.

Love, joy, and peace are primary to life in the spirit. These are the first three fruits mentioned by Paul. They are intrinsically related to the life that "walks in the Spirit." The greatest of all is agape-love. It expresses the very life of God and the personality of the Holy Spirit. For a human soul to be alive in God it must be ignited by the flame of agape-love, which is the living bloodstream of the spiritual life. Its presence is the only true sign of life in God--even if one has faith to move mountains!

*Chara* or joy is found where love reigns. Joy is the experience of the soul coming to life, a life that is at the furthest extremities of one's being, where being itself strains beyond the boundaries of self in order to transcend itself. *Chara* is the morning that is filled with light, life and vigor. It is an inseparable experience from union with God, and is indeed a concrete experience of salvation. In the New Testament, joy is the immediate result of finding one's God. Joy is not incompatible with suffering in this world, Joy for a Christian is especially related to union with Jesus Christ, and when the soul suffers because of Christ, it experiences a more intimate union with Him, the Man of Sorrows. It experiences itself more deeply united with the life of Christ, and this is the source of increased joy.

*Eirene* (Shalom or Peace) is as closely associated with Love as is Joy. It blossoms, too, when the soul experiences an environment of salvation. Among the Jews, Shalom is a greeting carrying the blessing of "well being," which strongly emphasizes material blessings. It is the condition experienced by the soul in harmony with its Creator and creation. In the New Testament, *eirene*, or shalom, results from the soul's reconciliation with God. It is a condition experienced when the soul is well ordered and fulfilled. This state of Shalom

was perfectly realized in the Resurrected Jesus. The Risen Jesus is the Cause and Source of our peace (see Col.1:19). Peace is the environment in which both love and joy operate. These are the experiences of a soul alive in God, and they are truly the foretaste of heavenly bliss.

### VIRTUES REVEALING LOVE

The next three fruits of the Holy Spirit mentioned by Paul are directed toward making agape-love visible and concrete in social relationships. We begin with *makrothumia* (long suffering), a virtue sorely needed by Christians in "the vale of tears." In the Greek it signifies a spirit patiently resigning itself to certain inevitable sufferings and hardships. In the Old Testament it appears as a unique characteristic of God, who patiently suffers the sinfulness of mankind. It finds expression in the full and generous forgiveness of the repentant sinner. Makrothumia is enduring patience permeated with mercy. The same concept is expressed in the New Testament. Here it is even more emphatically taught that the person experiencing the makrothumia of God must in turn express this same makrothumia by bearing the faults, failings and sins of other human beings. Makrothumia is a spiritual force, rooted in the grace of God, which displays itself in a spirit of long suffering for the spiritual good of others. It is not a virtue that wears a grim and pained expression. It is saved from all this by the fruit of the Spirit--*Chrestos*.

*Chrestos* (kindness), in Greek, expresses a characteristic possessed by a person or thing seen through the eyes of another to which the person or thing relates. If a person is seen by another as chrestos, this implies that the person is seen as honest, upright and of fine moral character. It particularly expresses a quality of refined humaneness in relation to others. This concept remains much the same in the Scriptures when expressing the excellence of a person or thing. For Paul, it expresses a spirit that moves graciously among other human beings with a sensitive awareness of their needs and situation. In a word, a chrestos is kind.

At the very source of chrestos you will find the virtue of *agathosune* (goodness). Agathosune implies moral excellence. For the Greek, those who possessed agathosune were pleasing to the gods. It expressed the state of salvation. In the New Testament agathosune is demonstrated in personal relations, and is preeminently expressed in the ministry of Jesus Christ (see Mt.9:35-36). Agathosune is active goodness that truly proclaims the reign of God on earth.



## VIRTUES SUSTAINING RELATIONSHIPS

The last three fruits of the Holy Spirit are especially manifested in personal relationships. The first of these is *pistis* (faith). We have already spoken of this virtue in depth. Suffice it to say here that it is the foundation of a relationship with God. In this context, the term "faith" probably carries more the connotation of "faithfulness" in a relationship. It is that quality by which the soul remains constant in its commitments.

*Prautes* (gentleness) is one of the most beautiful of the social virtues. For the Greek, *prautes* denotes the gentle and the pleasant. That quality of spirit soothes and calms the irritated and excited. It stands in opposition to all that is rough, hard, violent, brusque or explosive. The possessors of *prautes* express a quiet dignity and friendly composure that is not lost in the face of unpleasant situations. *Prautes* is a deliberate acceptance of life and people at their best or their worst. Paul spoke of it when he referred to the "gentleness of Christ." It is expressed in a spirit of meekness that enables it to correct an erring brother without arrogance, impatience or anger. Paul encouraged the exercise of *prautes* in dealing with erring members of the Community (see Gal.6:1-2). Here Paul implies that the sinner is entitled to such consideration from the Christian Community. He must be treated with the same gentleness a physician would use in setting a broken limb. Jesus said to His disciples, "*Learn of me, for I am gentle and humble of heart. Your souls will find rest*" (Mt.11:29).

*Egrateia* (self control) is the last fruit of the Spirit enumerated; it applies to internal strength of the soul. This gift puts steel in the will, and makes much goodness possible in a human life. In the Greek root of the word, *egrateia* denotes power and lordship over oneself or another. *Egrateia* expresses power within oneself, to be inwardly strong and self-composed. Through this virtue the soul stands freed of external controls. Through its self-restraint, this spirit controls the external environment and its own internal desires of the flesh. *Egrateia* maintains its freedom to follow the Will of God. For Paul *egrateia* expressed the spirit within an athlete that enables him or her to refrain from all things that might injure or hamper his ambitions for victory. Jesus demonstrated *egrateia* when he set his face like flint and proceeded toward Jerusalem, knowing Calvary and death awaited.

## THE RULE OF CHRIST

Since the Incarnation of God's Son, love of mankind has been radically changed. God so identified with humanity that it became no longer possible to love God without a love of mankind. Paul insists upon a concrete love of neighbor as the criterion of a Christian. The self-sacrificing love of Jesus became the measure and rule for Christian life. Paul speaks of it as the "law of Christ." It is the law that transcends the legal and the letter, and totally spiritualizes the law. This law was the rule of Christ's own life. In His life, Jesus reflected the love of the Heavenly Father as illustrated in the Parable of the Prodigal Son, in which the freedom of divine love is manifested. The father honors the son's desire to live an independent life. Out of respect for freedom he refuses to interfere in his son's life, even when his son's willed decisions brought evil consequences, which are the negative side of freedom. Jesus commanded His disciples, *"I give you a new commandment: love one another. Such as my love has been for you, so must your love be for each other. This is how all will know you for my disciples: your love for one another"* (Jn.13:34-35).

Paul was most conscious of the Christians' capability to create an antichristian environment within the Church. He encouraged each one to recognize their personal responsibility to the Body of Christ. He exhorts, *"help carry one another's burdens"* (Gal.6:2), which means having a personal concern for the difficulties and grief burdening the souls of others. Christians must recognize their responsibility, not to live the lives of others or play God within them, but to do what one can to make their lives easier and more tolerable.

Paul had no delusions about the cost of discipleship. It takes one's resources and stretches one's capacities, especially when one deals with the ungrateful and selfish. Loving some people is like pouring water through a sieve. Nevertheless, Paul discovered the secret of such love. To give love with no conditions and with no expectations takes the most out of us and, in the end, gives the biggest return to us. Through such love the power of love grows and matures within the soul. Not even God can give growth and maturity to the soul. For this reason, Paul exhorts the Christians of Galatia: *"Let us not grow weary of doing good; if we do not relax our efforts, in due time we shall reap our harvest"* (Gal.6:9).

## OVERCOMING EVIL

As Paul knew, shadows were in every human life. Within the soil of the soul, weeds and wheat grow side by side. The negative existed alongside the positive. Paul assumed a positive approach toward evil within, eradicating it indirectly. He did not encourage the people to concentrate on their weakness, but to give full attention to their personal power for good. His sage advice was *"overcome evil by doing good!"* Move evil out of the soul by not allowing time, space and energy for it. This was Paul's means for winning the race. He encourages the Galatians, *"While we have the opportunity let us do good to all men--but especially those of the household of the faith"* (Gal.6:10).

To achieve such a desired environment within a community, Paul knew the need for humility as its foundation virtue. Humility is truth, but it is more than intellectual light. Humility is "walking in truth." To produce humility, truth must be expressed in the awareness, attitude and actions of the person. It implies self-knowledge in regard to both the negative and the positive, the evil and the good, the defects and the talents. Humility neither closes its eyes to the shadows nor blinks before the light of one's own worth. With it comes recognition of personal limitations and powers. It liberates the soul from any pre-occupation and over-concern about the opinions of others. It leaves the soul free to be itself and nothing but itself in relation to God, society, and self. Paul urges the Galatians to this humility (see Gal.6:3-5).

There is a burden to being a Christian in this world--a pack to be carried, or to put it in Christian terms: a cross to be taken up. Each and every one has personal responsibilities that must be daily faced and fulfilled. None can fulfill another's personal responsibilities--to each his own.

## THE CROSS OF CHRIST

Paul encourages those who need to be boastful to at least be objective and truthful. Boast about those things achieved through one's own efforts, not the efforts of another. He noted it was the prideful boast of the Judaizers to the Jews of the number of Christians they had persuaded to be circumcised. In a word, they were saying that although the Christians accepted Jesus as the Messiah, they still remained orthodox Jews. Paul makes it clear that he had but one boast, and this boast lay in nothing accomplished by himself. He exclaims, *"May I never boast of anything but the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ!"* (Gal.6:14).

The death of Jesus upon the cross epitomized and symbolized for Paul the life and destiny of Jesus. The vision of the Son of God crucified before his eyes--a deed perpetrated by men of this earth--mirrored to him the sinfulness of the humanity in which he shared and the corruption of the world in which he lived. Before the cross, he experienced the utter poverty of the human soul and its desperate need for salvation. Before this cross and in the light of Christ's life, Paul found nothing within himself of which to boast.

Not only did the Cross mirror the evilness of men, but clearly manifested the evilness of sin in the eyes of God. The condition of sinful man deeply moved Paul. Out of all the darkness of the Cross, like the sun breaking through dark stormy clouds, the infinite, merciful love of God was mirrored to Paul. He experienced the love of God for sinners, and he understood that nothing in heaven, on earth, or in Hell could separate him from the love of God coming through Jesus Christ. He could honestly say, "*Through it, the world has been crucified to me and I to the world*" (Gal.6:14b). For Paul this world was dead; sin ruined it all, and darkness ruled over it. And Paul was dead to this world. Its glamour and glory, its power and prestige were but vanities for Paul. The world had become a sepulcher housing the man of the flesh. This saving knowledge of the Cross must be shared. Paul must preach Christ Crucified to Jew and Gentile alike--"*the power of God and the wisdom of God*" (1Cor.1:24).

Paul paid the price for preaching in the synagogues and the public market places. The Jews scourged him in their synagogues, the Gentiles stoned and flogged him in their market places, and imprisoned him in their jails. The body of Paul was scarred by the lash for preaching the gospel. As pagan priests branded their bodies as slaves of their temples, Paul viewed his scarred body as having been branded for Christ. These scars left no doubt at all to whom he belonged and to what he gave his allegiance. He wrote in closing to the Galatians, "*Henceforth, let no man trouble me, for I bear the brand marks of Jesus in my body*" (Gal.6:17). Paul was the unconditional servant of Jesus Christ.

Upon all the true sons of Abraham, those begotten not of the flesh but of the spirit--upon all who follow in a spirit of self-sacrificing love the Crucified Christ--Paul blesses, "*Peace and mercy on all who follow this rule of life, and on the Israel of God ... Brothers, may the favor of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen*" (Gal.6:16,18). The end of Paul's letter to the Galatians...

PRAISED BE JESUS CHRIST!

## THE LAW OF CHRIST

### SCRIPTURE READINGS AND QUESTIONS SCRIPTURE OF THE WEEK (PLEASE MEMORIZE)

"LET US NOT GROW WEARY OF DOING GOOD, FOR IF WE DO NOT RELAX OUR EFFORTS, IN DUE TIME WE SHALL REAP OUR HARVEST." --Galatians 6:9

FIRST DAY: Read Summary: Love, Joy and Peace; Acts 5:40-42; Colossians 1:15-23.

1. Why can we say that the fruits of the Holy Spirit are true evidence of a spiritual life?
2. What does it mean to you to "walk in the Spirit"?
3. How would you define Joy?
4. Why can there be joy for a Christian amidst suffering?

SECOND DAY: Read Summary: Virtues Revealing Love; Matthew 9:35-37.

1. How is the virtue of *makrothumia* demonstrated in Christian life?
2. How does *chrestos* assist *makrothumia* and add to Christian character?
3. How does *agothosune* proclaim the reign of God?
4. How do you see this being displayed in the life of Jesus?

THIRD DAY: Read Summary: Virtues Sustaining Relationships; Galatians 6:1-2.

1. How would you describe the virtue of *prautes*?
2. How did Paul urge the Galatians to manifest this virtue?
3. How would you describe the virtue of *egrateia*?
4. How does it assist the soul to follow the will of God?

**FOURTH DAY: Read Summary: The Rule of Christ; Galatians 6:3-9; John 13:33-35.**

1. How would you define the "law of Christ"?
2. What does it mean to you to help carry the burden of another?
3. What do you understand from Galatians 6:5?
4. What does Galatians 6:9 mean to you?

**FIFTH DAY: Read Summary: Overcoming Evil; Romans 12:9-21.**

1. What do you learn from Galatians 6:10?
2. What does it mean to walk in the truth?
3. How do you understand Romans 12:21?
4. How would you put this into practice?

**SIXTH DAY: Read from Summary: The Cross of Christ; Galatians 6:11-18; 1Corinthians 1:18-25.**

1. What did Paul learn from the Cross of Christ?
2. Why do you think Paul said it was his boast?
3. What do you understand by "the world has been crucified to me"?
4. What did Paul mean by "this rule of life" in Galatians 6:16?

# FIRST LETTER TO THE THESSALONIANS

## CHAPTER 1

### PAUL IN MACEDONIA - SUMMARY

#### INTRODUCTION

Paul the Apostle established numerous Christian Communities within Asia Minor and Europe, but none were more dear to Paul than the Macedonian churches founded in Philippi and Thessalonica. Certainly these churches became his consolation, causing him the least concern. This is all the more remarkable when you consider how brief a time Paul spent in the formation of these two communities. Perhaps Paul found in Macedonia a fine quality of people with a natural character well suited to spiritual formation.

Paul arrived in Macedonia around 51 A.D. after a successful ministry in Antioch and Southern Galatia. Led by the wind of the Spirit, Paul came to Alexandrian Troas in Asia Minor in the company of his traveling companions, Silas and Timothy. Since the “we” narrative in Acts begins here, Luke the Evangelist probably joined Paul in Troas. Prevented by the Spirit from carrying the gospel north into Bithnia, Paul and his companions waited in Troas for some sign of God’s Will in this matter.

One night, while in prayer, Paul received a vision in which he beheld a Macedonian saying to him, “*Come over to Macedonia and help us*” (Acts 16:9c). Recognizing this as divine direction, Paul and his companions immediately set out for Macedonia to bring the gospel to Europe. Sailing from Troas they crossed the Aegean Sea and came to the port city of Neapolis. They moved on from there to Philippi which Luke describes as “*a leading city in the district of Macedonia and a Roman colony.*” A “Roman colony” implied an area peopled and colonized by retired Roman soldiers, officials, and their families; a place fiercely loyal to all that was Roman.

#### PERSECUTED IN PHILIPPI

Paul was a cosmopolitan apostle. He prudently chose cities of the Roman Empire in which to establish the Christian Church. By establishing the Church in strategic geographical centers, he sought to ensure its rapid expansion. Luke mentions the result of Paul locating in Ephesus and holding daily discussions in the public lecture hall of Tyrannus: “*This continued for*

*two years, with the result that all the inhabitants of the province of Asia, Jews and Greeks alike, heard the word of the Lord” (Acts 19:10).*

An incident occurred in Philippi which ultimately forced Paul and his companions into leaving the city. A certain slave girl, possessing the gift of clairvoyance, attached herself to the apostles. For several days she followed them around the city loudly proclaiming, *“These men are servants of the Most High God; they will make known to you a way of salvation” (Acts 16:17)*. Paul discerned the girl to be possessed. What they did not need was an evil spirit testifying to their mission and the worth of the gospel. Paul, annoyed by this unwanted endorsement through such a medium, *“turned around, and said to the spirit, ‘In the name of Jesus Christ I command you, come out of her!’ Then and there the spirit left her” (Acts 16:18)*. With that exorcism, the girl lost the gift of clairvoyance. As this gift had profited her owners, they became incensed over the exorcism and denounced Paul and Silas before the local authorities as trouble makers.

This public accusation stirred up a civil crowd against Paul and Silas. As a result, the city magistrates ordered them stripped, flogged, and imprisoned. They themselves, the magistrates, had seriously violated Roman law by flogging two Roman citizens without a formal trial. The accused became the accusers. The alarmed city fathers hastened to apologize and to plead with Paul and Silas, for the preservation of civil peace, to leave town.

Apparently Paul left Luke in Philippi to assist the newly established Christian community. Paul learned from the Galatian experience the danger of leaving an immature church unattended.

#### PAUL IN THESSALONICA

Paul, Silas and Timothy headed west. Traveling some 92 miles along the Via Egnatia, the apostles came to the important trading city of Thessalonica, known today as Solonika. Luke presents only a skeleton outline of the activities of the three apostles in Thessalonica. His account in Acts only covers a time-space of less than a month. However, the actual time the three spent in Thessalonica was probably a few months. We know from Paul’s letter to the Philippians that he was in the city long enough to receive financial gifts from Philippi on two different occasions.

In Thessalonica the apostles found the Jewish synagogue. As customary, they attended the Sabbath service and sought an opportunity to instruct the



congregation concerning Jesus Christ. Some Jews were convinced but others strongly opposed Paul's teachings. By the end of the three weeks the congregation was sharply divided over the question of Jesus of Nazareth. Jason, one of the converts, offered the hospitality of his home to the apostles, and it became the meeting place for the newly formed Christian Community. Paul's teaching had the greatest effect among the God-fearing Gentiles attending the synagogue. From these Gentiles a great number along with numerous prominent women became believers.

Paul's success among the Gentiles was too much for his Jewish opponents. They hired some bums, who daily hung around the town square, to incite a riot over the apostles' activities. That same night, under the cover of darkness, the disciples sent the apostles west to Beroea (see Acts 17:11-12).

The apostles successfully continued their work in Beroea until a report reached the Jews in Thessalonica. Some of these Jews immediately hurried over to Beroea *"to cause a commotion and stir up the crowds."* The disciples in Beroea thought it best to send Paul out of the Province of Macedonia. Under escort, they took Paul south as far as Athens which was in the Roman Province of Achaia. Silas and Timothy remained behind in Beroea with instructions to join Paul later at Athens.

#### TIMOTHY REVISITS THESSALONICA

Paul seemingly instructed Timothy to return to Thessalonica and assess the situation there. Since the apostles' departure from there the newly formed Christian Community had been an object of persecution and harassment. Paul looked upon these converts as his dear children in the faith, possessing a fatherly concern over their physical and spiritual well being. In order to receive news about them and send them encouragement, he willingly sacrificed the company of Silas and Timothy and determined to go it alone for awhile in Athens.

Any effort on Paul's part to evangelize the Athenians was just about fruitless. Pride of mind ruled in this city and several more centuries would pass before Athens would accept the "folly of the cross." Disappointed, depressed and deprived of brotherly support, Paul moved on south to Corinth where he would successfully labor for the next two years. Here Silas and Timothy found him, bringing him news and perhaps a letter from the Christian Community in Thessalonica. First Thessalonians is Paul's response to Timothy's report.

## LIVING IN FAITH

Paul's earlier letters paint in broad strokes the nature of Christian Faith in these early days of Christian life. Christians clearly saw their present life in Christ as a preparation for sharing in the victorious return of Jesus in glory. They lived their present life with an eye upon the future. They did not judge their lives of living faith by the here and now, but by what was to come. The doctrine of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ remained vividly before their eyes and served as a constant stimulus to the living out of their Christian lives. It encouraged them, willingly and joyfully, to make the necessary sacrifices demanded by faith in order to ensure sharing in the glorious victory of Jesus, whose return would come suddenly and unexpectedly as the thief in the night, or as a lord returning to his household after a long absence.

Paul possessed a fatherly concern for all those converted through his ministry. His writings demonstrate a particular concern for the quality and degree of their faith--the very foundation of their spiritual life. Through faith, Paul stood firmly implanted in wisdom and fortitude. Few of his converts stood as firmly grounded in faith as he. To ensure against their defections, he labored diligently to establish their faith upon a veritable Rock of Gibraltar. He would say to Christians: "*Test yourselves to see whether you are living in faith: examine yourselves. Perhaps you yourselves do not realize that Christ Jesus is in you*" (2Cor.13:5). He called them to examine the nature and quality of their faith; to examine their lives for evidences of living in faith.

Paul wisely understood the relationship between practicing one's faith and strengthening one's faith. Its practice in daily human relationships made the difference between a faith built upon sand or upon rock. The daily practice of faith firmly establishes it. "*Only faith,*" he taught the Galatians, "*which expresses itself in love is truly a living faith*" (Gal.5:6). Paul experienced the living-in-faith as life lived under the power and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

## THE CHRISTIAN PILGRIMAGE

The New Testament Scriptures confirm that the Christian religion must be lived out in an environment in which "the world, the flesh, and the devil" are in opposition. This certainly suggests that there will be a degree of tribulation and personal persecution within the life of a genuine Christian. Nevertheless, Paul certainly does not desire to leave the impression among his converts that

their religion is a “pie in the sky” faith: a religion which offers only a cross on earth and a crown only in heaven.

In his letters, Paul prays that his converts and fellow Christians will experience grace and peace. As we have seen from our study of Galatians, these are not nebulous, ethereal wishes but realistic gifts of the Holy Spirit which introduce the Christian into the redemption achieved through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. These gifts create within the Christian soul a new quality of life. Presently Christians are a new creation conceived in the joy of the Holy Spirit. Paul often speaks of joy in the Spirit. He speaks of the Thessalonians as receiving the gospel *“despite great trials, with joy that comes from the Holy Spirit” (1Thes.1:6).*

A Christian may be a pilgrim upon earth but, to a degree heaven should be experienced here and now through the manifestations of grace, peace, and joy. Paul encouraged Christians, regardless of their life circumstances, *“Rejoice always!”*

As evidence of their reception of the Holy Spirit and of their cooperation with Him, Paul looked for a dynamic expression of faith within the lives of Christians. This dynamic presence of the Holy Spirit, concomitant with His gifts, amply compensated for any losses in this world, making all necessary sacrifices well worth it. Writing to the Corinthians, he says, *“We do not lose heart, because our inner being is renewed each day even though our body is being destroyed at the same time. The present burden of our trial is light enough, and earns for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison” (2Cor.4:16-17).*

The Christian religion, truly understood and properly applied, leads the individual unhesitatingly to personal maturity. No human life can have any greater natural goal of soul than its own personal growth and development. If within our life-time we fail to achieve some measure of maturity of soul, all other achievements are meaningless. What does it profit us if we gain the entire world and destroy ourselves in the process? Through means of subtle praise and direct admonitions, Paul urges the Thessalonians to greater Christian maturity in Christ.

# **FIRST LETTER TO THE THESSALONIANS**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **SCRIPTURE READINGS AND QUESTIONS SCRIPTURE OF THE WEEK (PLEASE MEMORIZE)**

**“WE MUST UNDERGO MANY TRIALS IF WE ARE TO ENTER INTO  
THE REIGN OF GOD.” (Acts 14:22)**

**FIRST DAY: Read from Summary: Paul in Macedonia; Acts 16:1-15.**

- 1. Where is the land of Macedonia?**
- 2. What were the circumstances that brought Paul and his companions to Macedonia?**
- 3. Why is it believed Luke the Evangelist accompanied Paul to Macedonia?**
- 4. What is indicated about the environment of Philippi by the Jewish place of prayer being located by the river bank?**

**SECOND DAY: Read from Summary; Persecution in Philippi; Acts  
16:16-40.**

- 1. What does the reading teach us about Paul’s method of spreading Christianity?**
- 2. Why do you think Paul performed an exorcism on the girl with the clairvoyant spirit?**
- 3. What do you learn about evangelization from this episode?**
- 4. Why do we believe Luke remained behind in Philippi?**

**THIRD DAY: Read from Summary: Paul in Thessalonica; Acts 17:1-15.**

- 1. What method of evangelization does Paul use in Thessalonica?**
- 2. Why was it politically dangerous to evangelize in the Roman Empire?**

**3. Do you see the apostles' acts of evangelizing as acts of civil disobedience?**

**4. What does this teach you about civil obedience?**

**FOURTH DAY: Read from summary: Timothy Revisits Thessalonica;  
Acts 17:16-34.**

**1. Why was Timothy sent back to Thessalonica?**

**2. What was the climate of Athens at the time of Paul's visit?**

**3. What kind of reception was Paul given in Athens?**

**4. From this experience in Athens, what do you learn about Christian discipleship and evangelization?**

**FIFTH DAY: Read from Summary: Living in Faith; Second Peter 3:3-10.**

**1. How did belief in the Second Coming of Jesus affect Christian life in the First Century of Christianity?**

**2. What Church problem is being dealt with in the reading from 2Peter?**

**3. What does this reading teach you?**

**4. What does it mean to be "living in faith," and how does such faith increase?**

**SIXTH DAY: Read from Summary: The Christian Pilgrimage.**

**1. How should Christian Faith, here and now, affect Christian life?**

**2. Why can Paul encourage Christians to "Rejoice Always!"?**

**3. In what way would you say a degree of heaven or hell can be experienced here on earth?**

**4. What does Second Corinthians 4:16-17 teach you?**

## CHAPTER 2

### ESSENTIALS OF CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY - SUMMARY

#### COMMUNITY OF FAITH

The community aspect of Christianity clearly sounds from the very first notes of First Thessalonians. The apostolic team of Paul, Silvanus and Timothy sends greetings of redemption, grace, and peace to those Thessalonians assembled in the name of God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. The Church at Thessalonica is an assembly of people united through their beliefs in God. It is a small society formed through faith. Its cohesive elements are its religious beliefs. These particular beliefs make this assembly a Christian community. Essential to this community are the beliefs in the Fatherhood of God and the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Within the word structure of this greeting there exists an equation between God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. There is an echo of Jesus' admonition to the disciples: "*Have faith in God and faith in me*" (Jn.14:1b).

Having faith in Jesus Christ implies accepting Jesus' revelation of God whom He uniquely reveals as His Father and, through Him, the Father of His disciples. Jesus possesses a unique Father-Son relationship with God. He alone says, "My Father." His disciples are taught to pray, "Our Father." This filial relationship possessed by a Christian with God rests upon their faith-relationship with Jesus Christ and with the Church established by Him. Only in so far as a person is "in Christ" as part of His Body the Church does this unique relationship exist.

Within the Christian Community the relationship of the faithful with the Father and the Son assume different external manifestations. The Christian sees the relationship to the Father more as a filial relationship. Jesus Christ must be acknowledged as Lord of the assembly and of the person. This implies personal and communal submission and obedience to His Will. However, since Jesus is the perfect lover of the Father, such submission and obedience to Jesus can only lead the disciples into a perfect filial relationship with their heavenly Father. In this filial relationship, Jesus is the Way and the Light leading to eternal Life. Because of our own internal darkness, we must often follow the Way of Jesus with only the Lamp of Faith to guide us.

## A DIVINE SHADOW

Any theology into which authentic faith is placed does not remain an abstraction. It will shape man's concept of self and direct his relationship with other human beings and toward life in general. The revelations of the New Testament carry us beyond the theology of Judaism. As Christians, our concept of God is unique. We worship the Triune God. Christians would expect their lives to reflect at least a shadow of the Triune God on earth.

The nature of God remains the deepest mystery. Through divine revelation we know that within one God dwells the Holy Trinity of Persons. Personal unity resides with God in the community of love. Three Persons dwell in union, forming the Primary Assembly which is the prototype for the Church on earth. Paul makes clear to the Thessalonians that the Church is an assembly which belongs neither to the earth nor to man, but to God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. This knowledge must effectively direct the entire course of this community. The lives of its members must be lived in grace and peace. For the Christian Community to authentically reflect the life of the Triune God on earth, it is also expected to be creative, redemptive and sanctifying.

## CHRISTIAN SURVIVAL

The Christians of Thessalonica, a majority of whom are Gentile converts, must live within an environment and culture completely pagan, among neighbors who worship and live in a manner forbidden to them as Christians. At work, play and perhaps at home, there would be pressures to live in a fashion implicitly denying their Lord. They must exist within social and economic pressures to abandon their faith. At times, they would be subjected to powerful physical and psychological pressures sometimes leading to physical persecution. The strength of perseverance for the Christian would primarily lie in an enlightened faith and within the unity of a loving community. In order to survive and develop, believers must be united in love. There is strength in unity. In Proverbs 18:19 we read, "*A brother is a better defense than a strong city.*"

Paul informs the Thessalonians that he along with Silvanus and Timothy, form a prayerful community. The three of them hold up the Thessalonians before God in common prayer, praying for their growth in holiness and for God's blessing upon their undertakings. Paul knew that one of the fruits of a loving community is offering common prayer for the needs of others. Paul

reminds Timothy that those who have set their “*hope in God*” continue “*night and day in supplications and prayers.*” He urged all Christians to pray for all peoples and especially for political leaders and for peace for the common good (see 1Tm. 2:1-4).

### ROOTS OF CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY

Paul praises the spirituality of the Thessalonians. He writes, “*For we constantly are mindful before our God and Father of the way you are proving your faith, and laboring in love, and showing constancy of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ*” (1Thes.1:3). Faith, hope and charity are the foundations of Christian spirituality. Any life not motivated by these three fundamental supernatural powers cannot call itself, in the Christian sense, spiritual. A life is made definable by the source of its life. If a Christian spiritual life exists, it must flow from these powers manifesting the operations of the Holy Spirit within the soul.

Paul speaks of the supernatural origin of the Thessalonians’ faith. Their faith came through hearing the gospel, and was not a product of natural design or motivation. “*Our preaching of the gospel proved not a mere matter of words for you but one of power; it was carried on in the Holy Spirit and out of complete conviction*” (1Thes.1:4-5b).

### SUCCESSFUL EVANGELIZATION

Successful evangelization depends much upon the arduous labors of the evangelist. However, make no mistake, its ultimate fruitfulness depends upon the operation of the Holy Spirit. The evangelist must prudently plough and sow the seeds, but the Lord grants the increase.

Paul implies that the conversion of the Thessalonians resulted not only from having the gospel preached to them, but having it preached to them out of “complete conviction.” In a word, the faith of the evangelist begets faith. An exposition of faith preached out of intellectual conviction alone may touch the mind but may leave only an intellectual appreciation in the hearer. The personal conviction of the evangelist is important in the effective proclamation of the gospel: he or she becomes a living channel of the Holy Spirit. Of course, essential to conversion is the Presence and operation of the Holy Spirit.



**Much prayer should be offered to the Holy Spirit for those being evangelized. Effective proclamation of the gospel depends upon the condition of the hearers. People are not robots but free agents. The human heart must be open to receive the gospel, to the engrafting of the Word, to a reception of the Holy Spirit. Because of this necessity John the Baptist in the desert and Simon Peter in the temple first preached repentance. They called men to a change of heart.**

**Some souls have erected barriers to the approach of God's Holy Spirit. Seemingly, evidence verifies where a soul remains deeply wedded to sin, as in the case with Antipas and Herodias; where there is intellectual pride, as among the men of Athens; where there is spiritual complacency, as with the Pharisees; where there is indifference to spiritual values, as among the Gentiles. The words of gospel truth fall upon the hearts of hearers such as these as rain pounding on a tin shed.**

#### **CHRISTIAN PERSEVERANCE**

**Writing within the first years of Church evangelism, Paul's words are permeated with genuine optimism and hopeful expectation. Paul, along with other early members of the Church, would come to a more sobering realization that all things well begun in Christ do not all end well. The Church would come to experience people sincerely converted to Christ, sharing in the initial joy and power of the Holy Spirit, but with the passing of time some would nevertheless defect from the Christian Faith. We find an explanation for this phenomenon in the Gospel parable of the sower.**

**The Parable of the Sower implies that a great many do not persevere in the faith. However, it does teach that there are those who hear and take to heart the message of the gospel. They love the Word of God which guides the development of their entire lives. They are "good soil" in which the Seed takes firm root and bears rich fruit.**

**How many people, without a solid moral or theological foundation, are brought into the Christian Church and abandoned after baptism? They are left to survive the best they can in rocky soil, amidst the thorns. No small wonder so many converts melt back into that gigantic wave of the unchurched within a few years and take their ranks among the millions of the spiritually abandoned. If Christians hope to survive in a fruitful way in this pagan world, on-going religious education is essential for all.**

The example left by Paul and his companions became a concrete pattern of love upon which the Thessalonians could model themselves. This, they did, and Paul could later confirm their behavior to be truly Christian. Not only did the Thessalonians receive the Gospel, but they received it joyfully amidst persecution. Nothing demonstrates their imitation of the Lord and Paul more than their efforts to become heralds of the Good News throughout the Provinces of Macedonia and Achaia. The heart cannot contain joy as perfume within a bottle. As with love, it bursts forth with a diffusive force. The apostolic activities of the Thessalonians and the quality of their faith enables Paul to sing their praises. *“Thus you became a model,”* he writes, *“for all the believers of Macedonia and Achaia” (1:7).*

### SPIRIT OF PRUDENCE

The queenly virtue of prudence calls for the evangelist to use proper means to lead a person to faith in Christ. It would certainly be important, at least today, to distinguish between the essentials of the Christian Faith and the cultural developments within a religious faith. We can place needless stumbling blocks to truth. Too often people put all things on the same level, placing needless obstacles to conversion.

Within the First Century, the evangelist would have been faced with dealing in one way with Jews steeped in a biblical faith and tradition, and in another way with Gentiles steeped in paganism with its myths and superstitions. Prudence dictates that an evangelist should understand the religious and social backgrounds of those he or she desires to convert.

How did the early evangelist confront the pagan people of their day? They approached the pagans both in a positive and negative fashion. Positive in that they proclaimed the universal Will of God: God *“wants all men to be saved and come to know the truth” (1Tm.2:4).* Jesus Christ being the veritable Will of God incarnated. As Peter preached, *“There is no salvation in anyone else, for there is no other name in the whole world given to men by which we are to be saved” (Acts 4:12).* The Will of God, as incarnated in Jesus Christ, equated itself with enduring love, overwhelming mercy and compassion for all mankind.

However, there is the negative side to this coin, and the early Christian preachers did not neglect it. Their teachings make it crystal clear that the presentation to the world of Jesus Christ and His gospel brings judgment

upon the world. It forces men to make a decision, a decision which reveals--whether one is conscious of it or not--the true inner person. The evangelist saw salvation or condemnation riding upon a decision for Christ or against Christ: *“The man who believes in it (the gospel) and accepts baptism will be saved: the man who refuses to believe in it will be condemned” (Mk.16:16).*

In order to turn men from idolatry, the early Church did not hesitate to preach the Wrath of God. If love failed to motivate the heart, it often fails to do so where there is much poverty of heart. The evangelist used fear and man’s natural sense of self-preservation to stimulate conversion to Christ. Paul cautioned Christians to live their daily lives in preparation for the Lord's return. It must not catch them unprepared like the thief in the night. They must live daily in the hopeful anticipation of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. Paul’s teachings would have echoed the words of Jesus as recorded by Luke, *“So be on the watch. Pray constantly for the strength to escape whatever is in prospect, and to stand secure before the Son of Man” (Lk.21:35-36).*

## COMMUNITY OF FAITH

### SCRIPTURE READINGS AND QUESTIONS SCRIPTURE OF THE WEEK (PLEASE MEMORIZE)

**“HE WHO OBEYS THE COMMANDMENTS HE HAS FROM ME IS THE MAN WHO LOVES ME AND HE WHO LOVES ME WILL BE LOVED BY MY FATHER.” John 14:21**

**FIRST DAY: Read Summary: Community of Faith, John 5:16-30.**

- 1. What beliefs unite the Thessalonians into a Christian community?**
- 2. How would you describe the Christian’s relationship to the Heavenly Creator?**
- 3. How would you describe a Christian’s relationship to Jesus Christ?**
- 4. How does a genuine filial relationship with the Heavenly Father evolve?**

**SECOND DAY: Read Summary: A Divine Shadow, 1 John 14:8-21.**

- 1. How do religious beliefs truly become manifested within this world?**
- 2. How would you describe the-Divine Life itself?**
- 3. How should belief in the Holy Trinity affect the life of the Christian community?**
- 4. What elements should be present in a life reflecting the mystery of the Trinity?**

**THIRD DAY: Read Summary: Christian Survival, Heb.10:19-39, 1Tm.2:1-8.**

- 1. In what kind of environment did Christians live in the First Century?**
- 2. How does this compare to your environment today?**
- 3. What means were necessary for Christian survival at that time?**
- 4. What do you see as important today in order to survive as a Christian?**

**FOURTH DAY: Read Summary: Roots of Christian Spirituality;  
1Thes. 1-5; 1Cor. 2:1-5; 2Cor. 8:1-5.**

- 1. What are the fundamentals of Christian spirituality?**
- 2. Through what words did Paul confirm the spirituality of the Thessalonians.**
- 3. How can you discern the presence and strength of your own spirituality?**
- 4. By what means was the faith of the Thessalonians and Corinthians grounded in the Spirit?**

**FIFTH DAY: Read Summary: Successful Evangelization through Christian Perseverance; Jn. 3:17-21; Mk. 4:1-20.**

- 1. What do you see as necessary to being an effective evangelist?**
- 2. Why is prayer important for those being evangelized?**
- 3. What spiritual condition can seriously impede the soul's acceptance of the Holy Spirit?**
- 4. To your mind, what is the importance of continuing Christian Education?**

**SIXTH DAY: Read Summary: Spirit of Prudence; 1Thes. 1:6-10;  
Acts 24:22-27.**

- 1. How would you describe the virtue of prudence?**
- 2. How does prudence play an important part in successful evangelism?**
- 3. What were some prudent means used by the early evangelists to convert pagans?**
- 4. What does Luke 21:36 say to you?**

## CHAPTER 3

### EVANGELISM WITH LOVE - SUMMARY

#### INTRODUCTION

Paul appears to have been plagued throughout his apostolic life by people who sought to destroy his effectiveness within the Christian Community by attributing to him all kinds of evil and base motivations. Often he became the victim of character assassination. That he would suffer this at the hands of his enemies is no surprise. These men recognized in Paul a formidable enemy to be destroyed. Surprisingly many of those who did seek to destroy Paul's character were members of the Christian Community. These anti-Paul types also caused the problems in Galatia, and their motives were obvious. They disagreed entirely with the theology preached by Paul. They sought to undermine his teachings by destroying his character.

Among Christians, there can exist a misguided humility that remains silent in the face of personal injustice. It can be an act of genuine humility to remain silent in the face of false accusations, however, the greater good must be considered. Humility does not exclude self-defense. Jesus was certainly not silent when accused of being possessed by Satan. Certain accusations, if believed, not only hurt a reputation but destroy it. At times, the good work accomplished by the accused and their potential to do future good work is destroyed as well. In order to work successfully in society, a good name is needed. Protecting one's name and potential to continue God's work in the world may be more important than humble silence in the face of false accusations. Truth is still the best defense against the lie. However, it must be heard to be effective. Paul wrote, "*We are concerned not only for God's approval but also for the good esteem of men*" (2Cor.8:21).

Many Communities have been destroyed and individual Christians lethally wounded because Christians remained spiritually naive toward its members. In Jesus' Church the wheat and weed will grow side-by-side, and the fisherman's net will contain fish both good and bad. Jesus gave some very practical advice to His disciples when He told them: "*What I am doing is sending you out like sheep among wolves. You must be clever as snakes and innocent as doves. Be on your guard with respect to others*" (Mt.10:16-17a)." "*Be on your guard against false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but underneath are wolves on the prowl*" (Mt.7:15).

## PAUL'S SUBTLE DEFENSE

None could accuse Paul of religious naiveté. His enemies often accused him of the opposite. Paul possessed that practical shrewdness encouraged by Jesus. In his letters to the Galatians and Corinthians, he explicitly defends his reputation against evil insinuations, misrepresentation of facts and false accusations. He prudently fought fire with fire. He did not hesitate to unmask certain members of the Church. He wrote: *“Such men are false apostles. They practice deceit in their disguise as apostles of Christ. And little wonder! For even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. It comes as no surprise that his ministers disguise themselves as ministers of the justice of God” (2Cor.11:13-15a).*

In the letter to the Thessalonians, Paul's self-defense is a bit subtle and lengthy. As he wrote in response to Timothy's report, we must read between the lines to discover certain aspects of this report. No doubt Timothy reported that certain elements continued to work against Paul. This could be expected from the Jewish enemies who followed him to Beroea and drove him south to Athens. The contents of the letter also suggest that Paul was dealing with subtle criticisms of himself within the Christian Community. Criticisms Paul wished, just as subtly, to confront and nip in the bud.

Paul begins by recalling how effective the ministry had been among the Thessalonians. In his dealing with others, his self-forgetfulness is magnificently evident. His personal fatigue and poor psychological state were never permitted to control his working for the salvation of others. God gave the missionaries the strength to proclaim the Good News and to persevere in its proclamation despite persecution. They preached, not from a personal spirit of natural confidence, but in a spirit of complete and sincere conviction. Their God-given responsibility motivated their preaching. Paul does not hesitate to invoke God as witness to his sincerity and purity of intention in proclaiming the gospel.

Paul possessed that lover's heart that desires to give everything possible and delicately avoids being a burden in any way to loved ones. Paul had one boast, and none could take it from him: he preached the gospel free of charge. While in Thessalonica, Paul arose while still dark to toil as a tent maker. His evangelizing time would have been restricted to the evenings and to the Sabbath. If possible, he evangelized while he worked.

## A MINISTRY OF LOVE

The ministry in Thessalonica concerned itself solely with the conversion and spiritual advancement of the converts. Not content with their conversion, Paul and his companions continued to labor for their growth in holiness. Paul could write, *“How we encouraged and pleaded with you to make your lives worthy of the God who calls you to his kingship and glory” (1Thes.2:12)*. All this expressed loving evangelism. What effect did such loving evangelism have upon the Thessalonians? Paul had much to thank God for in this matter.

As a result of such evangelism, their faith rested not on the wisdom of men but on the power of God. Their faith rested not only in the power of God experienced in their reception of the Holy Spirit, but in the power of God personally experienced through the ministry of Paul and his companions. From their example, the Thessalonians knew how to live as Christians. The example was not lost upon them; it produced rich fruit. They could bear up and persevere in the faith in the face of persecution from their fellow citizens.

## REACTION TO THE JEWS

Paul compared these Gentile Christians, amidst their sufferings, to the very hallmarks of Christianity--the Judean Christians. They truly were legitimate offspring of the Mother Church (see 1Thes.2:14-15a).

Paul's feelings at this moment run deep against his fellow Jews. We know from the account in Acts that the Jews in Corinth--where he was writing the letter--opposed him and, as a body, denounced him before the proconsul Gallio. If these latest antagonists' actions were proximate to the writing of this letter, it would explain his vitriolic outburst, *“Displeasing to God and hostile to all mankind, they try to keep us from preaching salvation to the Gentiles. All this time they have been ‘filling up their quota of sins,’ but the wrath has descended upon them at last” (1Thes.2:15b-16)*.

There existed a Jewish belief that God allotted peoples and nations a measure of evil. When they reached the fullness of their measure, the punishment of God descended upon them. A much more mellow Paul wrote some years later from Corinth on the divine destiny of the Jews. Here he insists their rejection to be temporary (see Rom.11:11,25-29).



## A MINISTRY OF SERVICE

Within the New Testament, Jesus gave authority to the apostles and instructed them on how to use it. He pointed out that although He was truly the Lord, He had been among them as one who serves. We see from Paul's words to the Thessalonians, "*even though we could have insisted on our own importance as apostles of Christ,*" he was aware of his position of authority within the Church. What attitude did Paul project towards those to whom he ministered?

Paul understood that essentially the Will of God, no matter how it is expressed, is universal, unlimited love. Paul makes clear that whatever is not propelled upon the wings of love remains earthbound. Whatever is done in the Name of God but not through the power of love is vanity. Paul's ministry was evangelistic love. His actions exquisitely paint a portrait of loving evangelism. It clearly demonstrates how true love of God expresses itself concretely in loving service to mankind: in self-forgetting service that counts not the time, energy, or resources in the ministry to others.

In what way did Paul's conduct express such an attitude toward the Thessalonians? His attitude was completely devoid of any sense of superiority. In general, he expressed and experienced a fraternal sentiment toward his fellow Christians, one that was warm and affectionate in nature. His relationship could be expressed in two words, brotherhood and friendship. Paul felt keenly the subsequent separation from his friends. He could express his feelings only in terms of being suddenly orphaned in the world.

## PAUL'S UNREQUITED DESIRE

Timothy apparently reported to Paul that certain people in Thessalonica felt Paul had lost interest in them. Nothing could be further from the truth. To see them once again had been more than a feeble desire with Paul. It had been a willed decision. He who wills an end wills the means to the end. Paul's attempts to return to Thessalonica were blocked, perhaps by the very men who hounded him out of Macedonia. Unable to go personally to Thessalonica, Paul took the next best step. He sent Timothy at some personal sacrifice to himself.

Paul desired to return to Thessalonica for at least three reasons: he missed the warm and affectionate associations he had with the Christian Community there: he knew they were suffering persecution and was anxious to know how it affected their faith: and lastly, he desired to complete their spiritual formation that had been terminated by his abrupt departure.

As we have seen in Acts, certain hostile Jews stirred up opposition to Paul, forcing him to leave the city under the cover of darkness. The anger, first directed towards Paul and Silas, was now projected towards Jason and his fellow converts. The Jews accused them of disregarding the civil law. These accusations resulted in an on-going persecution of the Christian Community. It was the knowledge of such sufferings and the knowledge of what persecution could do to brothers weak in faith that concerned Paul. He was most anxious for a report on this matter. No matter what form persecution assumed, both Peter and Paul saw the personal presence of Satan as its source.

#### TIMOTHY'S REPORT TO PAUL

Timothy happily reported back to Paul that the Thessalonians had resisted the tempter, solidly in the faith. They still stood firm in the faith and in love. Their affection for Paul remained as strong as ever. They too longed to see him again. The news of the Thessalonians standing firm in the faith refreshed and revived the spirit of Paul. At the time, he was once again undergoing the trials and tribulations in establishing the Church at Corinth. The good news from Thessalonica renewed Paul's hope that, despite the discouraging circumstances in Corinth, his labors in Corinth would be fruitful. As long as the Christian Faith flourished in Thessalonica, the life of Paul would flourish in hope and confidence.

Timothy's report is not completely positive. Paul diplomatically suggests, in a spirit of prayerful thanksgiving, that the Thessalonians are not yet perfect Christians. Work still remains to be done, and Paul prays to be granted the opportunity of completing their formation in the faith. He writes, "*What thanks can we give to God for all the joy we feel in his presence because of you, as we ask him fervently night and day that we may see you face to face and remedy any shortcomings in your faith*" (Thes.3:9-10).

Breaking forth in prayerful utterance, Paul expresses the hope that God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ will aid his speedy return to Thessalonica

**and accomplish the spiritual completion of his brothers and sisters in Christ. In the closing words of chapter three, Paul once again expresses the essential unity existing between the Heavenly Father and the Lord Jesus Christ (see 1Thes.3:11-13). They possess one loving will and purpose for us--our sanctification and our salvation.**

## EVANGELISM WITH LOVE

### SCRIPTURE READINGS AND QUESTIONS SCRIPTURE OF THE WEEK (PLEASE MEMORIZE)

**“MAKE IT A POINT OF HONOR TO REMAIN AT PEACE AND ATTEND TO YOUR OWN AFFAIRS.” First Thessalonians 4:11**

**FIRST DAY: Read Summary: Introduction; Matthew 7:15-23;  
13:24-30,47-50.**

**1. Why do you think Paul made enemies among both Jews and Christians?**

**2. How should a Christian deal with false accusations?**

**3. How would you explain Second Corinthians 8:21?**

**4. What do you learn from Matthew 10:16-17 and Matthew 7:15?**

**SECOND DAY: Read Summary: Paul’s Subtle Defense; 1Thes. 2:1-11;  
1Cor. 9:15-23; 2Cor. 11:7-14.**

**1. How did Paul deal with unjust criticism and false accusations?**

**2. What motivated Paul’s preaching of the gospel?**

**3. What became a point of pride with Paul in his ministry?**

**4. What does 1st Thessalonians 2:7-8 teach you about Paul’s ministry among the Thessalonians?**

**THIRD DAY: Read Summary: Reaction to the Jews; 1Thes. 2:12-16;  
2Mac.14-16; Rom. 11:11, 25-29.**

**1. What effect did Paul’s method of evangelism have on the Thessalonians?**

**2. In what way did Paul compare the Christians in Thessalonica with those in Jerusalem?**

**3. Why does Paul say that the Jews were hostile to all mankind?**

**4. How would you describe Paul's attitude toward the Jews that opposed Christianity?**

**FOURTH DAY: Read Summary: A Ministry of Service; Mk. 9:33-37; Mt. 20:20-28.**

**1. What kind of authority did Paul hold within the Christian communities established by him?**

**2. How did Paul exercise authority in Thessalonica?**

**3. In what way did his exercise of authority demonstrate love?**

**4. How do you see authority today being exercised in your home and in your parish?**

**FIFTH DAY: Read Summary: Paul's Unrequited Desire; 1Thes. 2:17-3:5; 1Peter 5:8-9.**

**1. How does Paul describe his psychological state while he was separated from the Thessalonians?**

**2. What does this tell you about Paul's personal involvement with people?**

**3. Why did Paul desire very much to return to Thessalonica?**

**4. What do you think he meant by "Satan blocked the way"?**

**SIXTH DAY: Read Summary: Timothy's Report to Paul; 1Thes.3:6-13.**

**1. What news did Timothy bring about the Thessalonians' personal regard for Paul?**

**2. What was his report concerning their faith?**

**3. What effect did this report have upon Paul?**

**4. What shortcomings in the faith do you see may be indicated in Paul's prayer for the Thessalonians.**

## CHAPTER 4

### CALLED TO GREATER HOLINESS - SUMMARY

#### HOLINESS VIA LOVE

At this point in his letter to the Thessalonians, Paul turns from personal defense and joyful remembrance to spiritual exhortation. He urges the Thessalonians *“to make still greater progress.”* Whether Paul returns to Thessalonica soon, or whether circumstances delay his return indefinitely, he seeks--present or absent--the spiritual growth and development of the Thessalonians. By the grace of God, progress can be made with or without him. They presently stand firm in the Faith. Now it must become a community permeated and inundated with the fire of God's Holy Spirit. This will guarantee the removal of all those spiritual deficiencies keenly noted by Paul. We find such deficiencies of Faith where faith fails to flower fully in agape-love.

Paul sees agape-love as the root and foundation of all Christian activity and as the only possible evidence of life in God. It is his wish that the Thessalonians be so filled with the loving Spirit of God that they reach out, in God-like fashion, to all mankind—*“overflow with love for one another and for all.”* Such a condition alone ensures a *“blameless and holy”* life before *“our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his holy ones”* (3:13). A blameless and holy life is one separated from sin and consecrated for the accomplishment of God's Will.

Agape-love empowers the human will. The human will--unaided by divine grace--remains weakened and vitiated by sin, prone to self-interest and indulgence. Agape-love can steel the human will against following its own selfish interests and against those enticements which lead to a separation from the Will of God.

The recipient of such a gift must know that agape-love is power for action. For agape-love to be experienced within the soul and to ultimately effect the human will, it must be activated. Within personal action, love becomes a reality. It is only when the sin-prone human will surrenders to the powerful action of Divine Love that the redemption of the human will actually begins to be accomplished.

Agape-love essentially expresses the Life of God. It will follow that a loving human life will fulfill the Will of God. Such a love, activated within the human spirit, makes God present within the soul and its activities. A holy deed consists of such activity. It is through such a means that a Christian abides in holiness and grows in holiness. God calls us to this holiness, and Paul exhorts the Thessalonians to this holiness (see 4:1-3).

### ROOT OF HOLINESS

When exhorting Christians "*in the Lord Jesus,*" Paul implies that the source of their strength to live a life of holiness is rooted into their faith in Jesus Christ. Although the human spirit is capable of goodness, personal moral weaknesses, corruptive environment and other conditions seriously curtail moral goodness.

The sanctification of the Christian primarily implies a consecration which removes the person from the sinful and contaminating world, setting them apart for the worship of God. Secondly, the sanctification of the Christian consists in the actual accomplishment of God's Will. Through humble obedience the human spirit flows in unity with the Divine will and becomes a reservoir and channel of the Holy Spirit. The power to accomplish what is godly follows upon humble submission to the Divine Will. The effect of such submission and action is holiness of person. In the mind of Paul this personal holiness affected those things related to and touched by the holy person, particularly the children of mixed marriages and unbaptized marriage partners. It might not be too much to say that personal holiness blesses, in some degree, the entire universe.

### HOLINESS AND SEXUAL MORALITY

At this point Paul introduces the concept of Christian chastity into his letter. He turns to the subject of sexual morality. Thessalonica was an import seaport and, as customary, such centers often catered to sexual vices. Conjugal chastity was not a virtue esteemed in the Greco-Roman world of Paul's day. Paul clearly and distinctly teaches that the practice of chastity is the Will of God, and he just as clearly and distinctly teaches (in Romans) that the rejection of this virtue by individuals and societies incurs the Wrath of God. Paul knows sexual immorality is incompatible with Christian holiness.

Some disagreement exists among scholars--ancient and modern--over the translation of verse four in Chapter 4; they are nearly equally divided on the subject. The problem centers on the translation of the Greek word *skeuos* literally translated as "vessel." One school of thought insists that in this text, "vessel" should be understood as "wife", especially in context with the verb *klasthai* which is sometimes used for "taking a wife". The text would translate: "*That each of you know how to take a wife for himself in holiness and honor.*" In this context Paul urges marriage and conjugal chastity as a safeguard for holiness. Paul teaches that a wife must be loved and honored as a person and not selfishly exploited for sexual gratification. If "vessel" is understood as body, Paul then teaches that the human body must be an instrument of love and not a means for self-gratification and exploitation of others. In this context Paul urges personal chastity, encouraging self-control and bodily discipline.

On the side, "vessel" being interpreted as "wife", we know that the Rabbis used the term vessel to mean a wife, and in 1 Peter 3:7 the term *skeuos* is translated as wife. In Corinthians Paul viewed marriage as a safeguard against immorality (see 1Cor.7:2).

Again some scholars disagree over the translation of verse six in chapter 4, insisting the word *pragma* refers to business, and that verse six warns against injustice in business matters. They would translate verse six to read "*that no one go too far and cheat his brother in business.*" However, it has been observed that nowhere else in the New Testament does *pragma* mean business, but always means thing, matter, or deed. Other scholars insist, probably rightly so, that Paul is discussing one subject--the matter of sanctification and the duty of every Christian to avoid sexual immorality in order to preserve their holiness. In verse five he cautions against lustful passion in marriage which uses the body of another person for self-gratification. In verse six he condemns the disgraceful cheating of a brother through adultery with his wife or fornication with his daughter. Paul sees a true Christian relationship in marriage as a protection against sinful passion and sexual immorality.

Paul's argument for personal chastity and conjugal chastity is based upon the Will of God--not upon nature or society. He simply states that God forbids sexual immorality, and whoever fails to accept such morality rejects the Will of God and will ultimately experience the Wrath of God.



## EFFECTS OF SEXUAL IMMORALITY

In our study of Galatians, we noted three Greek terms used in the New Testament to express sexual immorality and its degrees of corruption: *porneia*, *akatharsia*, and *aselgeia*. *Porneia* refers to the sexual act itself. Usually it expresses fornication, but it may be used to express any act of sexual immorality. *Akatharsia* is impurity of spirit. In early Judaism, impurity of body had a clinging, permeating force that affected the entire personality. *Akatharsia* expresses that degree of corruption that has moved from a bodily act to the corruption of the human spirit. It can be characterized as dirty mindedness. Within the New Testament, *akatharsia* expresses the state of absolute alienation from God, the state of heathenism, the state of the pre-Christian life. *Akatharsia* characterizes the unregenerated person whose actions are determined by natural passion and lust--never the Will of God. *Akatharsia* is the very opposite of holiness. *Aselgeia* expresses the third degree of moral corruption. At the point of *aselgeia*, the person is so given over to such an excessive sensual gratification that one loses all sense of public decency. One ceases to hide one's immorality and, at times, flaunts it. It is the condition to which man comes when cut off from the grace of God. *Aselgeia* characterizes the people of Sodom and Gomorrah, and the pagan world in general.

Paul was too realistic a minister of Christ to believe that the grace of baptism had permanently eradicated all such vices from the Christian Community. We find him again writing to the Corinthians: "*I may have to mourn over the many who sinned earlier and have not repented of the uncleanness [akatharsia], fornication [porneia], and sensuality [aselgeia] they practiced*" (2Cor.12:21b). The Ephesians are not left in doubt as to what sins are incompatible with Christian holiness. They are told: "*As for lewd conduct [porneia] or promiscuousness [akatharsia], or lust of any sort, let them not even be mentioned among you: your holiness forbids this*" (Eph.5:3). He tells the Ephesians, "*Make no mistake about this: no fornicator [ pornos ], no unclean [ akathartos ] or lustful [ or greedy ] person--in effect an idolater--has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no one deceive you with worthless arguments. These are sins that bring God's wrath down on the disobedient: therefore have nothing to do with them*" (Eph.5:5-7).

## SOURCE OF CHASTITY

The essential reason Paul gives for these prohibitions against sexual immorality is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the baptized. He speaks to the Thessalonians of "*God who sends his Holy Spirit upon you.*" In the mind of Paul, the Presence of the Holy Spirit affects the entire person--spirit, soul, and body (see 1Cor.6:19-20).

Paul is too practical to deny that natural sexual desires can tempt Christians to express these desires in sinful ways, especially when previous to their conversion such expressions were part of their personal history. As he said, "*These sins were your very life.*" He knew their vocation in Christ called them to be witnesses in this world. They must live in a pagan world which encourages vices opposed to Christian holiness; they looked upon adultery and fornication as natural as eating and drinking. A person faced with imminent danger has two choices: fight or flight. When faced with the danger of sexual temptation, Paul prudently advises flight. "*Flee fornication!*"

Since it is the Will of God, the Christian church must urge chastity among Christians. Their holiness forbids anything less. As clearly revealed in the Scriptures, sexual impurity in a particular way destroys that holiness to which God calls each person. Without such holiness it is impossible to see God: "*Blest are the pure of heart for they shall see God.*"

A choice for chastity--often a choice daily renewed--is not an easy one, but the Scriptures insist this essential choice effects eternal life. For this very reason Paul tells us, "*What I do is discipline my body and master it, for fear that after having preached to others I myself should be rejected*" (1Cor.9:27). The sacredness of human sexuality is rooted in the sacredness of the human person. The holiness of human sexuality is rooted in the Presence of the Holy Spirit within the person. Wherever the sense of personal sacredness or holiness is lost, the door is open to human exploitation and the abuse of self and others.

## BROTHERLY LOVE

Having taught the Corinthians how profitless it is to sacrifice without love, even one's entire life, Paul has no intention of isolating the practice and preservation of chastity from agape-love. To be as pure as angels, but as unloving as demons, was of no profit to self or society. In his presentation of chastity, conjugal love is presented as the opposite of selfish lust and the bond of Christian marriage as the opposite of a life of sexual injustice--a life of adultery and fornication. All such conduct, in the mind of Paul, equals selfishness incompatible with Christian love. He urged chastity as a means of perfecting love of neighbor and personal growth in holiness.

Chastity, however, is only one aspect of agape-love. Any love that expresses the life of God must indeed be a many-splendored thing, a power of infinite splendor. After his brief exhortation to chastity, Paul immediately returns to the subject of agape-love (see Thes.4:9-10).

Paul uses the word *philadelphias* to express the concept of brotherly love. Within the classical Greek this word refers to the love of one's blood brother. By the use of the term, Paul implies the intimate family relationship existing among members of the Christian community. Christians are members of God's Family through their incorporation into Christ through baptism and through their reception of the Holy Spirit. In a unique fashion, Christians have become "sons of God" and brothers to one another. For Paul, only the word *philadelphias* expresses the proper relationship between Christians.

Paul confirms that the Thessalonians excel in brotherly love. No one needs to teach them because God himself has been their Teacher. It is the Spirit of God which motivates the Thessalonians to brotherly love. More than once Paul made pointed references to their gift of the Holy Spirit. Over and above this, all Christians have before their eyes the example of the self-sacrificing love of Jesus Christ. He who is Lord and Teacher left the example of His life and death as the Light to guide the lives of all His disciples.

Despite the visible evidence of brotherly love, Paul notes that there is room for growth in charity. Apparently certain individuals were neglecting their social obligation to support themselves by the work of their profession and subsequently making unnecessary and unjust demands upon the charity of

others. In this self-induced idleness, they found time to meddle in the affairs of others. Paul was no bleeding heart that encouraged charity that fostered irresponsibility. He saw these defects in love as detrimental to the idle individuals as they would be without necessities; as detrimental to the Christian Community as it made unnecessary demands upon their charity; and detrimental to society in general as it reflected bad images of Christianity to the pagans. Some see this defective behavior as a result of a mistaken notion among the Thessalonians concerning the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

## **CALLED TO GREATER HOLINESS**

### **SCRIPTURE READINGS AND QUESTIONS SCRIPTURE OF THE WEEK (MEMORIZE PLEASE)**

**“IT IS GOD’S WILL THAT YOU GROW IN HOLINESS: THAT YOU ABSTAIN FROM IMMORALITY.” 1Thessalonians 4:3**

**FIRST DAY: Read Summary: Holiness Via Love; 1Thes.4:1-3; Rom.12:1-2; 13:8-14.**

- 1. What does it mean to you to grow in holiness?**
- 2. What can truly give evidence of the soul’s life in God?**
- 3. What do you see as the relationship between agape-love and human activity?**
- 4. What does 1st Thessalonians 4:3 teach you?**

**SECOND DAY: Read Summary: Root of Holiness; 2Cor. 6:14-7:1; 1Cor. 7:12-16.**

- 1. What would you say is the source of true Christian holiness?**
- 2. Why can’t we depend upon our own nature as the source of our good deeds?**
- 3. Of what does Christian sanctification consist?**
- 4. How would you see the holiness of the individual affecting the community?**

**THIRD DAY: Read Summary: Holiness and Sexual Morality; 1Thes.4:3-8; 1Cor. 6:12-20.**

- 1. In general how would you describe the sexual morality of our present society?**
- 2. Why does Paul urge Christians to practice the virtue of chastity?**

**3. What does he seek to teach the Thessalonians in 4:4-6?**

**4. In the letter to the Corinthians, what does Paul see as the evil of sexual immorality?**

**FOURTH DAY: Read Summary: Effects of Sexual Immorality; Lv.20:9-23; 2Sm.12:1-25.**

**1. How would you describe the process of moral corruption?**

**2. At what stage of corruption would you place our society today? Give an example.**

**3. What does the reading from Samuel indicate to be at the heart of sexual immorality?**

**4. How would you advise a young person to preserve chastity in our society today?**

**FIFTH DAY: Read Summary: Source of Chastity; Col.3:5-10; Rom.6:12-23.**

**1. What does Paul propose as the main reason for Christian Chastity?**

**2. What does Romans teach us about the relationship between the body and spirit?**

**3. What does it mean to you to say that human sexuality is sacred?**

**4. In your opinion, how would a person express the sacredness of human sexuality?**

**SIXTH DAY: Read Summary: Brotherly Love; 1Thes.4:9-12; 1Cor.13:1-13.**

**1. In what way do you see chastity in marriage as an expression of agape-love?**

**2. How does selfishness in human relationships destroy agape-love?**

**3. What does Paul wish to imply by using the Greek “philadelphias” when referring to relationships between Christians?**

**4. How can misguided love foster irresponsibility in others?**

## CHAPTER 5

### THANATOS AND PAROUSIA – SUMMARY

#### IGNORANCE AFFECTS FAITH

Paul desired, as mentioned earlier, to return to the Thessalonians in order to “*remedy any shortcomings in their faith.*” For this same purpose he now writes them. He had previously experienced the evil effects of ignorance of faith. Faith is both a confident trust in the Person of the Lord and an obedient response to religious truth; to a creed of faith to which the intellect consents. These truths become spiritual lights guiding the soul on the Way of the Lord. Without an adequate understanding of the Christian truths, the soul stumbles along the Way, serving the Lord in trial and error. Ignorance is a blindfold upon good will causing it to do more harm than good.

The bliss of ignorance is short lived. Paul does not desire Christians to remain ignorant of the Faith. With defective faith comes defective behavior. Precisely such ignorance now causes a problem in Thessalonica (see 1Thes.4:13). The Thessalonians were defective in their knowledge concerning Christian death. How one looks upon death can effect the quality of one’s present life. The problem in Thessalonica is concerned, not merely with the fact of death, but with death in relation to the Parousia--the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

Either Paul failed to adequately explain the Christian concept of death, or the Thessalonians failed to grasp his explanation. Probably a little of both. Seemingly he left among them the expectation that they would all survive until the Second Coming and consequently they would be assumed into Heaven. The reality of certain Christians subsequently dying caused doubt and uncertainty. Could their dead have any hope of sharing in the glory of the Parousia? They could not envision how their departed loved ones could share in the heavenly moment when Christ returned gloriously to earth. The Thessalonians needed a proper understanding of the theology of Christian death.

#### JUDEO-CHRISTIAN CONCEPT OF DEATH

In keeping with Jewish tradition, Paul spoke of physical death as sleep. Sleep was a euphemism for death, both in Grecian and Hebrew literature. Jesus used this expression when he told his disciples, “*Our beloved Lazarus has*

*fallen asleep, but I am going there to wake him” (Jn.11:11).*

Some have insisted that such a sleep implies “soul-sleep,” a period of total unconscious repose until the resurrection of the body. Certain Old Testament Scriptures seemingly support such a concept. Job says, *“As a cloud dissolves and vanishes, so he who goes down to the nether world shall come up no more” (Jb.7:9)*. When the body enters into a deep natural sleep, it is truly dead to the world. However, it seldom enters into total unconsciousness. There is the internal world of dreams in which the spirit remains quite active while the body sleeps. From the time of physical death, the soul may be asleep to the world it left behind, but it is very conscious of the mysterious world of the spirit that is hidden from the eyes of flesh.

Other Scriptures certainly do indicate conscious life after death (see Mk.12:24-27). We read in the Book of Wisdom: *“But the souls of the just are in the hand of God, and no torment shall touch them. They seemed, in the view of the foolish, to be dead; and their passing away was thought an affliction and their going forth from us, utter destruction. But they are in peace [shalom]... In the time of their visitation they shall shine, and shall dart about as sparks through stubble; They shall judge nations and rule over peoples, and the Lord shall be their King forever” (Wis.3:1-8)*. While dying on the Cross, Jesus said to the Good Thief, *“I assure you: this day you will be with me in paradise” (Lk.23:43)*.

For the Christian, the sleep of death implies rest from labor and a glorious awakening (see Rv.14:13). In a vision John saw the saints in glory identified as those *“who have survived the great period of trial; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb” (Rv.7:14)*. Paul certainly viewed earthly life as a separation from God terminated by physical death (see 2Cor.5:66-68; Phil.1:20-28).

## RESURRECTION OF THE BODY

The New Testament presents Christian death as a transformation of human life and not as the finality of it. The certainty of a glorious transformation of the body through a subsequent resurrection rested upon the fact of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The Christian may say in the words with which Mary Queen of Scots concluded her last will and testament, *“In my ending is my beginning.”*



Paul's doctrine of the resurrection of the body is woven like a golden thread through the tapestry of his theology. He returns us to Adam as the prototype for all mankind. As an evil heritage, Adam left mankind the consequence of sin. Like flowers in the fields, human beings will grow, blossom and die. Such life is called "flesh" to distinguish it from the life of God. Flesh symbolizes human life at its deepest depths in rebellion against its Maker. Such a life inevitably moves by the course of its nature towards *harmatia* (sin) and *thanatos* (death).

Paul sees in the life and death of Jesus the new beginning for the human race. Living out His life from start to its finish in harmony with the Will of God, Jesus becomes the prototype of the new human being. In Jesus the reign of *harmatia* (sin) over humanity ended. In His resurrection He reversed the ancient order. Jesus terminated the reign of *thanatos* (death). Through His life, death and resurrection, Jesus Christ became the source of eternal life for mankind. Referring to Jesus as "the last Adam," Paul writes, "*The last Adam has become a life-giving spirit...the second (Adam) is from heaven...heavenly men are like the man of heaven. Just as we resemble the man from earth, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven*" (1Cor.15:45a-49). Jesus, as the source of the life-giving spirit, imparts to His disciples his Gift of the Holy Spirit, the cause of eternal life.

The Book of Hebrews pictures Jesus as the "pioneer" of our salvation. Jesus first walks the path that each disciple traverses. Paul sees the disciples of Jesus as experiencing the life of the Risen Christ within their lives. What did this imply for the disciples of Jesus? Seemingly the Church grew in understanding of it. Did being freed from sin imply freedom from physical death, a consequence of sin? Perhaps such a belief existed among some early disciples. Paul seemed to imply something along those lines when he spoke about the unworthy reception of the Eucharist (see 1Cor.11:28-30). Perhaps the early Christians did not see themselves so much as incapable of dying, but that they would not die before the parousia.

#### THE DAY OF THE LORD

Good Christians continued to die. The living Thessalonians questioned how these dear dead would be able to share in the glorious return of Jesus Christ. Their doubts and fears on the subject upset their peace of heart and troubled their faith. Paul attributes these troubles to their "shortcomings in the faith," to their ignorance concerning the parousia.

The early Christians inherited from Judaism a solid belief in the "Day of the Lord," an expression which signified the moment in the history of the Chosen People, when Yahweh would directly interfere in the affairs of the world in order to exalt His People above all the nations. This Day of the Lord was seen as a time when the Just would rise from their graves, and all mankind would be subjected to Divine Judgment.

The Christian Community equated the Day of the Lord with the Parousia of Jesus Christ. Paul clarifies for the Thessalonians that the Resurrection of the Just would occur at this time. Concomitant with the Parousia would be the General Judgment of mankind. Therefore, the Day of the Lord would consist in the Parousia, the Resurrection of the Dead and the General Judgment.

Apparently, the Thessalonians had separated within their minds the parousia of the Lord from the Day of Judgment and the Resurrection of the Dead. Paul ties it all together for them (see 1Thes.4:14-18). Although Paul makes no mention of judgment in this text, it is a fact very prevalent in his other writings (see 1Cor.1:8,4:5; 2Tm.4:8).

#### THE PAROUSIA

It is generally agreed that the First Letter to the Thessalonians is one of the earliest Scriptures of the New Testament. Within this epistle we possess our most primitive account of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ which, no doubt, reflects the general teaching of the Christian Church on the Parousia. The word *parousia* itself means presence or arrival. A technical use of the word would describe the ceremonial visit of a ruler to a city or to an apparition of a god bringing divine assistance. The Coming of the Holy Spirit could be seen as a parousia.

The Christian presentation of the Second Coming of Jesus draws heavily upon the revelation recorded in Daniel (see Dn.7:13). This vision from Daniel dominates the Christian presentation of the parousia of Jesus.

With lively description in figurative language, Paul portrays the dramatic suddenness and swiftness of the Parousia. First, Paul explains who can expect to participate in the glorious return of Jesus: those who have believed in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and hold to those truths implied in such belief. Physical death will be no impediment to sharing in the victory of Jesus Christ. Whether living or dead, the faithful will share in the Parousia.

The Parousia will begin with a command. The Greek word used for “command” expresses the order of a general to his soldiers. All Heaven responds to this command as it issues forth from God the Creator. The time of the Parousia, its pregnant moment, results from no natural or preternatural evolution, but it flows from the free will of the Eternal Father. The voice of the archangel will be heard in response to God's command. We read in a Jewish apocryphal work--already quoted--“The archangel Michael summons the angels and sounds the trumpet to herald God's approach for judgment” (Apoc. Mosis XXII).

Paul likewise mentions the sound of the trumpet. It not only symbolizes the moment of final judgment, but the sound of the trumpet is the joyous call to God's People to assemble in worship before Yahweh. It was a sound of consolation as it announced the coming of Yahweh to rescue His people from hostile oppression. Paul speaks of the believers being caught up in the clouds. Within the Old Testament, clouds are instruments God used to manifest His Divine Presence. By placing the saved in the clouds with the Lord, Paul teaches that they will share the eternal life and glory of God.

#### REFLECTIONS OF JEWISH COSMOLOGY

Paul writes of the descent of Jesus and the ascension of the saints for the heavenly meeting within the clouds. This description reflects the cosmology of Paul's time. Hebrew thought pictured the world as an inverted bowl of which the conclave ceiling was the heavens, the home of God and His angels. The earth was seen as a platform beneath the inverted bowl, surrounded by water and supported by six pillars beneath which lay the abyss. Within the heart of the earth lay Sheol, the land of the dead. Within this context of creation, a person would descend into Sheol and would ascend into Heaven. The Lord must descend to the earth, and the faithful, in order to go forth to meet their King, must ascend into the air.

In this letter, Paul makes no mention of the physiological changes that occur in our earthly bodies at the time of the parousia. However, in First Corinthians Paul explains in some detail how our earthly bodies will be transformed into heavenly bodies. These heavenly bodies will be as different from our earthly bodies as a seed is from the blossoming flower (see 1Cor.15:51-52).

## DAY OF DELIVERANCE

The Gospel according to Mark gives an account of the Second Coming that is attributed to Jesus Christ Himself. It is presented in descriptive, apocryphal language which, while not to be taken literally, does indeed impart a true vision to those understanding such figures of speech (see Mk.13:1ff). After giving a similar description, Luke in his Gospel account adds these words of warning by Jesus: *“Be on guard lest your spirits become bloated with indulgence and drunkenness and worldly cares. The great day will suddenly close in on you like a trap. The day I speak of will come upon all who dwell on the face of the earth. So be on the watch. Pray constantly for the strength to escape whatever is in prospect and to stand secure before the Son of Man” (Lk.21:34-36).*

To the mind of Paul, what he describes is the moment of divine deliverance for the People of God, both living and dead. He wishes to make clear in this letter that neither death nor any future cosmic crisis will separate Christians from their Divine Lord. They are assured, on the authority of the Lord, that their blissful reunion with Him will have the added joy of everlasting reunion with other beloved Christians. Such consoling truths should be a constant source of comfort and encouragement to all Christians.

The Parousia is not a time of fear for Christians but of joy, a joy ardently longed for. Jesus tells us: *“When these things begin to happen, stand erect and hold your heads high, for your deliverance is near at hand” (Lk.21:28).*

## THANATOS AND PAROUSIA

### SCRIPTURE READINGS AND QUESTIONS SCRIPTURE OF THE WEEK (PLEASE MEMORIZE)

**“PRAY CONSTANTLY FOR THE STRENGTH TO ESCAPE WHATEVER IS IN PROSPECT AND TO STAND SECURE BEFORE THE SON OF MAN.” Lk. 21:36**

**FIRST DAY: Read Summary: Ignorance Affects Faith; 1Thes.4:13-18;  
Lk.16:19-29.**

- 1. What do you see as the relationship of Christian Faith to knowledge and ignorance of Christian Truths?**
- 2. In what way do you see one’s theology of death affecting the way one lives one’s daily life?**
- 3. What does the reading from Luke teach you about the relationship of life on earth to life after death?**
- 4. What seems to be the Thessalonians’ misunderstanding about Christian death?**

**SECOND DAY: Read Summary: Judeo-Christian Concept of Death; Eccl.9:4-12; Jb7:6-10; Mk.12:18-27.**

- 1. What do the readings from Ecclesiastes and Job seemingly imply?**
- 2. What do you understand about the concept of “soul-sleep”?**
- 3. What do the readings from Mark teach you about death?**
- 4. What is your concept of life after death?**

**THIRD DAY: Read Summary: Resurrection of the Body; 2Cor.5:6-10;  
Phil.1:20-24; 1Cor.15:19-24.**

- 1. How would you say Paul looked upon life after death?**
- 2. To what do the Scriptures attribute the physical death of human beings?**
- 3. In what way do you see Jesus as the hope of Christian resurrection from the dead?**
- 4. For a Christian, what do you think ensures a glorious resurrection from the dead?**

**FOURTH DAY: Read Summary: The Day of the Lord; Mt.25:31-46;  
1Cor.1:4-9; 2Tm.4:6-8; 1Pt.4:1-10.**

- 1. What did the Jews understand by the Day of the Lord?**
- 2. With what did the Christian community equate the Day of the Lord?**
- 3. According to the New Testament, what can be expected to occur at the Second Coming?**
- 4. According to the reading from Matthew and First Peter, how do we best prepare for the Second Coming?**

**FIFTH DAY: Read Summary: The Parousia; Dn.7:9-14; Mt.26:62-66, 24:29-31; Lk.21:25-28.**

- 1. In what way can the Coming of the Holy Spirit be called a parousia?**
- 2. Who can expect to share in the glorious return of Jesus Christ to earth?**
- 3. Who determines the time of the Second Coming of Jesus?**
- 4. What truth is signified by the saints' being caught up into the cloud with Jesus and the angels?**

**SIXTH DAY: Read Summary: Day of Deliverance; 1Cor.15:35-44,50-55;  
Dn.12:1-3.**

- 1. How does the description of the Second Coming reflect the cosmological beliefs of Paul's time?**
- 2. What does Paul teach about the resurrected bodies of the Just?**
- 3. What will happen with those who are alive at the Second Coming?**
- 4. With his presentation of the Second Coming, what does Paul desire to teach the Thessalonians?**

## CHAPTER 6

### CHILDREN OF LIGHT

#### THE TIME AND SEASON

Natural curiosity in Christians would certainly foster the desire to know exactly when Jesus would return in glory. As Christian life grew more difficult in this world, the longing for the Parousia would be more ardent. From our earliest teachings we see that Jesus left behind the idea that His return would be “sudden.” Perhaps it is easy, when longing is at its peak, to interpret “sudden” as “soon.” Paul makes it clear to the Thessalonians that the moment of Jesus' Second Coming is both secret and sudden. These facts, he insists, are well known to them. In other words, they had been part of his oral teaching (see 1Thes.5:1-3).

Throughout the centuries men and women have constantly prophesied the year, the day, the hour and the place of the Second Coming. Paul's words to the Thessalonians imply we can know neither the time nor season of the Parousia. The Scriptures written later reflect the same thought (see Acts 1:6-8; Mt.24:36ff).

Certain quotes ascribed to Jesus seemingly imply that He, too, expected His return to be not only sudden but soon (see Mt.10:23, 24:34). Some scholars suggest that there has been a blending of Jesus' prophetic teachings on the Destruction of Jerusalem and the Second Coming, and such references as the above refer to the destruction of Jerusalem. Others suggest these different views reflect the uncertainty of the early Church on this matter, an uncertainty rooted in the sayings of Jesus.

The Scriptures make one point clear: the Second Coming will arrive suddenly and surprisingly like the thief in the night. The lesson to the Christian Community remains constant in all the Scriptures: Be watchful! Be prepared!

#### CHILDREN OF THE DAY OR NIGHT

As insinuated by Paul, the Parousia will be a fearful and terrible moment for the children of darkness. As they dwell under the dark mantle of Satan, it will find them ill-prepared to meet the Lord. The Book of Revelation speaks of their terror (see Rv.6:15-17).



The very living of the Christian life will be a preparation for the Parousia. The quality of such a life will render them prepared at all times. It shall be for them a glorious day of liberation and justification. Paul tells the Thessalonians, *“You are not in the dark, brothers, that the day should catch you off guard, like a thief. No, all of you are children of light and of the day. We belong neither to darkness nor to night”* (1Thes.5:4-5).

Paul tells the Thessalonians that the children of light are wide-eyed and sober, while in contrast the children of darkness are asleep and drunk. The children of the day remain constantly watchful. Being watchful, in the context of being prepared for the Parousia, means to be sober. Being sober implies a love of moderation, freedom from excess in any extreme. The life of the sober Christian is one filled with a controlled spiritual energy, finding expression neither in religious enthusiasm and excitement nor in slothful and lazy indifference, but in the calm and steady fulfillment of one's moral obligations and one's apostolic ministry. A sober life proceeds from the depth of its own spirit. Spiritual sobriety is the fruit of religious maturity.

#### CHRISTIAN ARMOR

Encouraging Christians to be watchful calls to mind the image of a watchman--an armed guard. Paul describes protective Christian armor as the theological virtues of faith, hope and love. And, indeed, he is right in doing so, for without these powers being activated within the soul there is no Christian life to protect. The activities of these virtues are the genuine proof of being alive in Christ.

Referring to the Thessalonians as the children of light, Paul implies the Word of God guides their steps along the Way of the Lord. Gospel teachings become a spiritual light by which a Christian, through Faith in the Gospel, discerns the good from the evil, the wheat from the weed, and walks securely through the valley of darkness. If a Christian does not wish to be among those whom the thief catches unaware, he or she must avoid becoming a child of darkness. Paul makes it clear that darkness is a state of spiritual stupor, of moral indifference and unconcern for one's eternal welfare. The children of darkness are like drunks asleep in a blazing house.

## LIFE IN GOD

To speak of Christians as children of light implies that they are children of God. Through Jesus Christ their lives are in God. Just as the tree cannot live when not rooted in the earth, so also the Christian cannot live when not rooted in God. When the life-giving Spirit of God flows through the human soul, that person becomes alive in God. The very nature of God is identified as "love." John writes, "*God is Love!*" Love is the very breath of life for a Christian. This loving quality of Christian life alone gives personal existence to God's activity, in a unique fashion, within and through human lives.

Love is not radiation emanating automatically from our natural essence. It is divine energy which lives in deeds of good will, born within the sacrifice of self. In the battle for the Kingdom of God, the war of the soul, Paul calls forth active faith and love. In a war a vigorous offense is the best defense. Paul exhorts, "*Overcome evil by doing good.*" This applies both to external and internal evil. An active faith and a consuming love will protect the soul from forming destructive habits. They guard the soul from "*fulfilling the lust of the flesh.*" Like barnacles on a ship's keel, indolence, indifference and indulgence form within the soul where faith and love lie dormant. Unused powers are lost, and with the loss of faith and hope, the Christian soul is lost. What Paul truly says is that the only adequate defense against the encroaching darkness, while awaiting the Coming of the Lord, is the daily living a holy life. From his knowledge, grounded in the Spirit, Paul infallibly teaches, "*There are in the end three things that last: faith, hope, and love, and the greatest of these is love*" (1Cor.13:13).

Paul clearly expresses in this epistle the source and foundation of Christian Hope: God's most fruitful good will towards us. As Paul put it, "*God has not destined us for wrath but for acquiring salvation*" (5:9a). He immediately goes on to declare that God's good will toward us had incarnated itself in Jesus Christ. He assures us that the acquisition of our salvation comes "*through our Lord Jesus Christ.*"

## LOVE EMBRACES COMMUNITY

Never does Paul separate Christian love from communal responsibility because it essentially expresses the Love of God on earth. Christian love finds its prototype in the Divine Love. Flowing outside itself, Divine Love finds expression, in time, through creation, redemption, and sanctification.

Christian Love should be, in some fashion, creative, redemptive and sanctifying. Indeed, where there is impotence, inversion, and indifference there can be no love of God, no Christian life.

In concluding his epistle to the Thessalonians, Paul makes sixteen points for the establishment of a holy and healthy community. He sounds each point clearly and boldly like distinct musical chords. Nevertheless they are not isolated and disconnected thoughts, rather there is an underlying harmony of thought (see 1Thes.5:12-22).

Paul understood the need for organization and authority in church life. Anything else would have been completely foreign to his experience. Community life depends upon certain people who are willing to sacrificing their time, energy, and talents for the common good, for the affairs of the community. Paul's words imply that these leaders exercise care and concern for the flock. The word that is translated "are over" also means "are concerned about." Paul gives one directive only in regard to such leaders: respect and esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Knowledge and respect are intimately related. Respect is knowing the work another does and appreciating the person for it. In this case Paul infers that the Thessalonians know the sacrifices of time and energy made by their leaders. For the works of the leaders, Paul tells the Thessalonians that these men have a right to their love. It is not so much because of their position in the Lord that this love and esteem is due but because of their work. It is this quality of love that sustains the leaders amidst the labors they undertake and the contentions they must bear.

Where such understanding and love for leadership exists, the foundation is laid for peace in the community. Paul exhorts the community to "*remain at peace with one another.*" He desires all that the Hebrew word *shalom* implies: total well being, the fullness of God's blessings.

#### THE IDLERS, THE FAINTHEARTED, AND THE WEAK

A proper environment must exist in the community before shalom can root and blossom. Paul encourages the establishment of shalom with the following exhortations, in which he notes three classes of Christian needing the community's special attention. First mentioned are the idlers, or better still, the disorderly. The Greek word itself calls to mind a soldier who is out of rank. Among these, authority will find reluctant obedience. Paul wants the

whole community to “stay on their case,” admonish them.

The fainthearted are the second class needing special attention. The word implies people who are small of soul. Greek literature applied the word to those citizens who shirked active duty in the army. Confronted with trials and troubles they grow fainthearted. The Community is urged to console these souls.

The weak are the third class that calls for attention. The weak need community support. This refers to those weak in faith and to the morally weak, with those tendencies toward the immorality described earlier. They must not be ignored, scorned, or abandoned. The Greek word translated as support or help says much more. It calls for a real physical interest. The verb *chesthe* means “to cleave” to or “to put your arms around”. In a word, Paul says to love the weak!

#### IMPORTANCE OF PATIENCE

None deny that these three classes of people cause suffering in the community. They are sources of personal upset and threats to community peace. For all these reasons and more, Paul now tells the Christian Community to be patient with all. Without the virtue of patience, none of the above is possible. Patience is a quality of endurance within the throes of suffering. Patience possesses the hope of bringing eternal good from the evil now suffered. The patient spirit has the ability not to be submerged into present pain but, within its midst, to continue on a tranquil course of loving concern. Not without wisdom does Paul teach patience to be the first fruit of love.

As a practical encouragement to developing patience and growth in love Paul counsels, “*See that no one returns evil to any other; always seek one another’s good and, for that matter, the good of all*” (5:15). Paul warns Christians never to be involved in doing evil. Actions flow from our spirit, and there is a constant circular effect upon what we do and what we become. We are what we do! The Greek text implies more than the seeking of good, it encourages us to “run” after the good. Make the accomplishment of good the priority of our life. It will guarantee our own goodness.

## PRAYERFUL AND JOYFUL THANKSGIVING

Precisely in order to make realistic his exhortations, Paul tells the Thessalonians, "*Rejoice always, never cease praying, render constant thanks; such is God's will for you in Christ Jesus*" (5:16-18). He seeks to turn their hearts toward the inner source of their Christian lives. Christianity is far more than moral obligation to God and neighbor. It is a way of life rooted in God. It is a life primarily determined by its inward activities--its orientation to the God within. It is a quality of life externally recognizable by its continuous joy, constant prayerfulness and thankfulness in all circumstances.

The Scriptures associate joy essentially with salvation. The concrete demonstration of salvation within the soul becomes the specific reason a person experiences joy. As blossoms upon the same branch, joy, prayer, and thankfulness relate intimately. The wise tell us that joy is proper to God, and what is proper to God reaches human beings only through prayerful and mystical union with Him. The spirit of prayer and thankfulness arise out of the soul's awareness of God as the Source of all realized salvific blessings. Experience teaches that unless Christian faith is constantly sustained through prayer, it cannot persevere in a life of goodness to others.

Paul has spoken of the fruits of the Holy Spirit that build personal spirituality. His thoughts now automatically turn to public prayer, and a gift of the Holy Spirit given for the upbuilding of the Community--prophecy. He tells the congregation, "*Do not stifle the Spirit.*" He immediately indicates how this may occur: "*Do not despise prophecies*" (5:19-20).

During the worship service the Holy Spirit moves certain believers to utter inspired messages of encouragement and admonition, and on rare occasions to speak, as did Agabus in Antioch, on future events. To exercise such a gift opened the door, as Paul knew, to foreign spirits--the deluded and self-deceived--to sow their weeds. The easiest solution to the problem would be to suppress the problem. Paul saw this as a rejection of the Holy Spirit. Taking a wiser and saner approach he calls upon the community to exercise discernment, "*Test everything; retain what is good. Avoid any semblance of evil*" (5:21-22).

Paul calls the community to discern if the prophecies are of the Holy Spirit. The traditional criterion by which true prophecy is discerned from the false is its content. A true prophecy cannot contradict the inspired Scriptures, the

revelation of God through Jesus Christ and the Apostles. Of course, the content must be worthy of the Holy Spirit and possess the power to convict its listeners.

Concluding his letter with a customary blessing, Paul calls to mind that the Father in Heaven is the God of Peace and therefore the Source of Shalom--health, happiness and prosperity--and the gift of perfect holiness is His alone to bestow. He prays, "*May the God of peace make you perfect in holiness.*" As Paul continues his blessing, he specifies his requests. As the Thessalonians look forward to the Second Coming with anticipation and some anxiety, Paul prays that the Father will keep them completely free from sin, and dedicated in body, soul and spirit to His worship until the coming of Jesus.

With the closing command, "*I adjure you by the Lord that this letter be read to them all*" (5:27), Paul may have inaugurated the New Testament. Paul feels the content of teachings and admonitions within the letter are so important as to warrant the solemn charge to the leaders to read it to the congregation and privately to any member absent on the day it is read. In such a manner the New Testament was born.

Paul ends his letter to the Thessalonians with his customary blessing: "*May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you*" (5:28). For the twenty-second time within this short epistle Paul mentions the thought that dominates and directs his life--JESUS CHRIST IS LORD!

## CHILDREN OF LIGHT

### SCRIPTURE READINGS AND QUESTIONS SCRIPTURE OF THE WEEK (PLEASE MEMORIZE)

**“GOD HAS NOT DESTINED US FOR WRATH BUT FOR ACQUIRING SALVATION THROUGH OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.” 1 Thessalonians 5:9**

**FIRST DAY: Read Summary: Time and Season; 1Thes.5:1-3; Mat.24:36-51.**

- 1. According to the Scriptures, what can we *not* know about the Second Coming?**
- 2. What can we know?**
- 3. How would you explain the teachings of Jesus that imply the Parousia would be soon?**
- 4. What is to be thought of those people who predict the time of the Second Coming?**

**SECOND DAY: Read Summary through Christian Armor; 1Thess.5:4-8; Rv.6:12-17; Eph.6:13-17; Rom.13:12-14.**

- 1. What does it mean to be a child of darkness?**
- 2. What does Scripture teach about the final destiny of such?**
- 3. What does it mean to you to be “children of light”?**
- 4. What do these readings teach you about surviving in this world as a Christian?**

**THIRD DAY: Read Summary: Life in God; 1Thes.5:9-11; Eph.1:3-14.**

- 1. What does it mean to say that the life of a Christian is “rooted in God”?**
- 2. How does a Christian bring the active Presence of God into the world?**
- 3. What does it mean to you to “overcome evil by doing good”?**

4. What does 1st Thessalonians 5:9 teach you?

**FOURTH DAY: Read Summary: Love Embraces Community; 1Thes.5:12-13; 2Cor.10:1-11; 1Pt.5:1-11.**

1. Why do we say that Christian love must be expressed in love for the community?

2. How does the Christian Community express on earth the love of the Triune God?

3. How does Paul see the role of authority in the Church?

4. For what and in what way should Christian leaders be esteemed by the community?

**FIFTH DAY: Read Summary through Importance of Patience; 1Thes.5:12-13; 2Cor.2:5; Jas.5:7-11.**

1. What three classes of Christians are of concern for the entire community?

2. How are Christians to deal with these members of the Church?

3. How would you describe the virtue of patience?

4. What effect does what you do or do not do have upon you as a person?

**SIXTH DAY: Read Summary: Prayerful and Joyful Thanksgiving; 1Thes.16-28; Jas.5:13-20.**

1. What is the source of joy within the Christian soul?

2. What importance does prayer and thanksgiving have for the life of a Christian?

3. What does James 5:19-20 teach you about evangelism?

4. What one thing in particular did your study of First Thessalonians teach you?



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# **INVITATION TO CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP**

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Note: A few studies are available only in 3-ring binders. One copy each of the Teacher's Manual and Student Manual are purchased, and copies of the student manual must be made for each participant.

## WEEKLY BIBLE STUDY CLASS FORMAT

### First Hour - Small Group Sharing:

- Students break into their small groups (10 or fewer participants)
- Prayer said aloud together (Example: Prayer to the Holy Spirit)
- Songs can be sung
- Sharing begins (approximately 45 minutes)
- Stretch / Break for coffee etc. (10-15 minutes)

### Second Hour – Lecture:

- Prayer said aloud by lecturer.
- Lecture begins for the following week's study (approximately 45-60 minutes)

### Total Class Time - 2 Hours Each Week

The study can be adapted for 10 to 400 people. Committed people needed may vary depending upon the number of students.

### Recommended Personnel:

- Lecturer: To present the material
- Small Group Leader: One for every 10 people sharing answers.
- Secretary: Functions might include making copies of materials (not required if participants each have their own spiral bound student book), distributing copies as required; advertising; registration; collecting fees (where applicable for materials, etc.)

### Purpose:

The motivating purpose for the formation of the Bible Study is to preserve and impart the Christian Faith as understood and transmitted by the Catholic Church through the centuries. Since "ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ," is there anything more important for a sincere Christian than a study of the Scriptures?

### Recommended Work Assignments for Parish Studies

#### Secretary

Will place announcement of day, time and location in the Sunday bulletin beginning four weeks prior to the Bible Study beginning. A flyer can also be posted on the parish bulletin board.

Accept registrations by mail, phone, through the parish office or personally.

Collect fee, if applicable, at the first session of the Bible Study. The registration fee can be used to defray the cost of the study (workbooks printing, coffee etc.) and is also a form of commitment by persons attending to complete the study. You may choose to have a "love offering" bowl for ongoing costs, i.e., coffee etc.

Be responsible for coffee, treats at break.

Each week reproduce the Summaries/Worksheets for entire group and distribute to each small Group Leader (This may be done by rectory personnel). This is not necessary if each student purchases a personal workbook.

### **Group Leader**

Through years of experience, it has been found that it is best to strictly follow the discipline listed below.

--After community prayer, group shares worksheet answers for the week.

--Working in a clockwise order, the student to left of the leader answers the first question. The leader then asks if anyone has an additional or different answer. Move then to the next student, who answers question number (2) and so on, through all the questions for the week. The leader should help ensure answers are in accordance with the Catholic Church. If in doubt, check it out!

--It is the group leader's responsibility to confine discussion to the subject matter being dealt with in the weekly lesson. (Sharing problems or special prayers can be done after lesson is completed) If extraneous discussion is not regulated, the questions will not be answered in the time allotted.

--If a student has a question on the subject and no agreement can be reached, put that student in charge of finding the answer through a priest or any Catholic resource. The answer is to be brought back to the group the following week. (The leader should research the question as well.)

--ONLY students who have done their written homework may participate in the discussion. Others are encouraged to attend, listen, and write down the answers. There is much to be learned from one another, so incomplete homework is no reason to stay away. On the other hand, sharing off-the-cuff (without prayerful study and written answers) has proven too often to be disruptive and misleading.

--If the student is self-centered and tries to dominate the discussion, the group leader must speak to him privately and gently explain the problem, requesting his cooperation within the study guidelines. If the student persists in unacceptable behavior, that student is asked to remain silent or leave the study. (It is better to lose one destructive student than to lose the entire group.)

- Try to bring out the best in each student.
- Occasionally there is just one correct answer; when that is given, do not allow haggling, just move on to the next question.
- At the end of the discussion period, distribute next week's Summary/Worksheet for the students' home study (not required if participants have purchased individual workbooks).
- If time runs out before ALL questions are answered, BREAK anyway. People need the coffee break in order to move around and relax. This is very important. The student needs to be refreshed and ready to concentrate on the upcoming lecture. This should seldom occur. Manage your time; a student may really need an answer to the last question. Time allowed is 45 minutes for small group sharing.
- The first night of the study is a good time to explain the expectations of the group. We share as a community in love, kindness and consideration. This is not just an intellectual study.

#### **Lecturer**

Open with a short prayer.

Prepare (rehearse / edit) and deliver the commentary on Sacred Scriptures for the week. Present the material with personal enthusiasm.

Each lesson contains a great deal of material. The lecturer should read and rehearse ahead of time for a most effective presentation. It need not all be presented. Time allowed is 45-60 minutes per lecture.

You may also elect to play Fr. O'Bryan's recorded tapes or CD's. These are available wherever the studies are sold. They are also excellent for personal review and reflection. (Note: many groups have done years of lessons listening to Father's original recordings...they are great!)

**Total Class Time - 2 Hours Each Week!**

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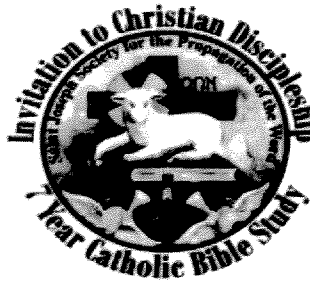
Many groups, large and small, still prefer to use the original (and recommended), method because it provides the fullness of the work. First, the full lecture, or an edited version, is presented by a "lecturer". The lecturer should spend time in prayerful preparation each week before presenting the material, and it should be presented with enthusiasm. Tapes and CDs of Father's original lectures are also available for purchase. They often are used in place of a lecturer. Listening to his recorded lectures at leisure, and being able to pause and replay them provides a wealth of information each week.

The homework portion of the study calls us to obedience and daily prayer as we strive to complete our assignment. Homework is a major factor in our personal spiritual growth. How much time will you give to God? The recommended method requires 2 hours each week as a group and additional study time at home, but the rewards are tremendous. This format may be used in homes or parishes.

A variation on the above, used successfully with High School groups (as large as 50) and adults, is to present the Summaries in place of the full lecture. Homework is assigned, answers are shared in a group, and then the Summary is read for the following week. All students have their printed assignments or workbooks. Homework may be trimmed to one or two questions per day for high schoolers (they already have homework to do). This method can reduce a session to about one hour total rather than 2 hours. This method is useful for severely time-challenged people, but the summaries only include about 20% of the complete lecture. However, the purchase of the recorded lectures which can be listened to during the week may be useful in providing a fuller experience for those who are unable to attend the full sessions.

A more recent method has also been successful for small home groups. Instead of using the Lectures and a lecturer, only the Bible and the Summary/Worksheets or Meditation Workbooks are used. Group members take turns reading aloud the Summary and the Bible references in the workbook--answering the questions as they go along. This eliminates the requirement for homework. A leader is still necessary at each meeting--one leader can be chosen for the whole study, or the attendees can take turns. (Note: Again, listening to parts of the recorded lecture in free time during the week may be helpful in providing more than the 20% of information given in the Summary. Also, the homework portion, though a pain to many, has a place in our lives as we strive to be more obedient to God's call).

All of the above styles have proven to be successful for different people in different situations. Start one in your community today!



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Hebrews	Teacher's Manual, spiral bound 8 1/2 x 11	\$40.00	\$3.10	\$9.00	9
Hebrews	Student Manual, spiral bound 7 x 9 1/2	\$14.00	\$1.09	\$5.00	9
Hebrews	CD's, complete set of Fr. O'Bryan's lectures	\$20.00	\$1.55	\$9.00	9
Corinthians	Teacher's Manual, spiral bound 8 1/2 x 11	\$40.00	\$3.10	\$9.00	11
Corinthians	Student Manual, spiral bound 7 x 9 1/2	\$14.00	\$1.09	\$5.00	11
Corinthians	CD's, complete set of Fr. O'Bryan's lectures	\$20.00	\$1.55	\$9.00	11
Thessalonians/Galatians *	Teacher's Manual, spiral bound 8 1/2 x 11	\$50.00	\$3.88	\$9.00	16
Thessalonians/Galatians *	Student Manual, spiral bound 7 x 9 1/2	\$20.00	\$1.55	\$5.00	16
Thessalonians/Galatians	CD's lectures--To be announced				
Revelation	Teacher's Manual, spiral bound 8 1/2 x 11	\$40.00	\$3.10	\$9.00	12
Revelation	Student Manual, spiral bound 7 x 9 1/2	\$14.00	\$1.09	\$5.00	12
Revelation	CD's lectures--To be announced				

\* Available June 2008; (All are available now in 3-ring binder form @ \$40 + tax + S&H)

<b>Other Catholic Teachings by Fr. O'Bryan</b>					
Rock Foundation Revisited	8 1/2 x 11 workbook, Catholic Teachings	\$15.00	\$1.16	\$9.00	29
Christian with a Capital C	3-ring binder workbook, sequel to Rock Founda	\$15.00	\$1.16	\$9.00	30
The Inner Journey	8 1/2 x 11 workbook, Reflective Teachings	\$15.00	\$1.16	\$9.00	11
The Little Flower	8 1/2 x 11 The Life of St. Therese of Lisieux	\$15.00	\$1.16	\$9.00	N/A
Garden of Eden	8 1/2 x 11 Work on Marriage / Engagement	\$15.00	\$1.16	\$9.00	N/A
Where Eagles Fly	8 1/2 x 11 compilation of saints writings	\$15.00	\$1.16	\$9.00	N/A
Christian Laity in the 21st Century	8 1/2 x 11 reflections on "The Easter People"	\$15.00	\$1.16	\$9.00	N/A

### LIBROS EN ESPANOL

Most of the scripture studies shown above are available in Spanish. The Spanish versions are student workbooks in 3-ring binders 8 1/2" x 11". These may be ordered at the price of \$14+ \$1.09 tax + \$5 shipping & handling (\$20.09 total).





*Angel of Annunciation 12th c. panel  
Monastery of St. Catherine, Sinai, Egypt*