

LESSON 34

PAUL'S WRITINGS

Memory Verse : Colos. 1: 18 -29

Objective : To be convinced that the tongue, hand and mind of a child of God must be used for the glory of God.

Introduction : The biography and the writings of Paul are highly valuable for the believers. His epistles are fundamental to the doctrines of the Church. Let's study about "The epistles of Paul" and gain a general idea of the epistles in common.

There can not be a biography of Paul without touching his valuable writing (epistles). Most part of the New Testament is made up of epistles that the apostles wrote to Churches and Pastors. Of the 27 New Testament books 21 are epistles. The doctrines of the New Testament Church are set forth in these epistles. We get historical background needed for the establishment of doctrine from the Gospels and the book of Acts. But the pith of the doctrines is in the epistles. These doctrines were not just given as a set of philosophical facts, but rather, they were given through the precedents and practical experiences of individuals or groups. This factor distinguished the doctrines as practical precepts relevant to life at any time from some abstract theories. For instance, most of the epistles were written to individuals or groups sometime to settle disputes or correct an erroneous teaching or to straighten out mistakes, as the occasion demanded. But they have been arranged in such a way by the Holy Spirit that the Christian Church at any time can benefit by their admonitions and regulations with respect to nearly all needs. Therefore, we get a clear idea of the practice and precept for the Christian Church of all times from the epistles (Rom. 6: 17). Though the authors were different and the subject matters varied, all were connected to one another and supplementary to each other.

FIVE AUTHORS WROTE THESE EPISTLES :

Paul	-	14	epistles	(Romans to Hebrews)
John	-	3	"	(1st , 2nd and 3rd john)
Peter	-	2	"	(1st and 2nd Peter)
James	-	1	"	(James)
Jude	-	1	"	(Jude)
Total	-	21		

Of these 21 we are going to study only about Pauline Epistles. All the 14 of Pauls epistles were written during the period of 17 years from 51 to 68 A.D. In Paul's epistles, the doctrines are given in an order. The following chart shows the **Chronological arrangement of Pauline Epistles.**

- 1) I & II Thessalonians - During the second missionary journey.
- 2) I & II Corinthians - During the third missionary journey.
Romans, Galatians
- 3) Ephesians, Philippians - During paul's first imprisonment in
- 4) I Timothy, Titus, Hebrews - After the release from the first Roman imprisonment .
- 5) II Timothy - During the second imprisonment in Rome (just prior to his martyrdom).

These 14 epistles can still be classified according to their characteristics.

I) Church Epistles :

- (9 Epistles to 7 Churches)
- 1, 2 Thessalonians - Church of Thessalonica
- 1, 2 Corinthians - Church of Corinth.
- Galatians - Church of Galatia
- Romans - Church of Rome.
- Ephesians - Church of Ephesus.

- Philippians - Church of Philippi.
Colossians - Church of Colosse

II) Pastoral Epistles : - 4 Epistles to 3 persons.

- 1, 2 Timothy - to Timothy
Titus - to Titus
Philemon - to Philemon.

III) General Epistles:

- Hebrews - To all Jewish Christian believers every where

In the general epistle of Hebrews, the Christian faith has been interpreted in the light of the Old Testament and the excellency of the N. T. faith is revealed. In the Pastoral Epistles, mainly the matters of Church administration are dealt with.

However, the New Testament doctrines have been laid down in the 9 Epistles to 7 Churches, Just as in the contents of the Bible, we can find out the wisdom and control of the Holy Spirit even in the book arrangement. These epistles, for instance, are not arranged in chronological order. If we stress on chronological order, the epistle to Thessalonians must come first. But how come that the Thessalonians' Epistle has gone to the last of the Church Epistles and Romans written during the middle period to the first place? A Chart showing **The Epistles and the theme** of each of them will explain this better.

- 1) Romans - Justification.
- 2) Corinthians - Sanctification
- 3) Galatians - Liberty in Christ.
- 4) Ephesians - Spirit filled life.
- 5) Philippians - Joy in Christ.
- 6) Colossians - Spiritual perfection
- 7) Thessalonians - Hope (The Lord's coming)

As we analyse them, we can understand one thing. These are the spiritual experiences God wants us to have in our Christian life and they are given in the order of sequence that we must possess them.

Certainly, the spiritual blessing and divine experiences that God brings into our lives are in a particular order or sequence. They are given to us or effected in us only in the proper sequence. The Holy Spirit has arranged the books in such a way to teach us this truth.

The primary need of a man who is sinful by nature and a vessel of God's wrath is to get right with God after being cleared of his punishment. This great achievement which is impossible by himself is made possible by God's acceptance of the death of Christ, which is the redemptive act for man. Any sinner can be justified before God freely today. A person who has obtained justification through Christ who has been resurrected for our justification, must also grow with its divine effects. These are the subjects dealt with in the epistle of Romans.

A man who is promoted from the position of a sinner to being righteous in Christ, must progress in the path of sanctification. This also is possible on the basis of Christ's death. God has sanctified the sinner in Christ Jesus. But he who is thus called to be saint must perfect holiness in the fear of God, cleansing himself from all filthiness of flesh and spirt. The theme of Corinthians is sanctification.

A Christian who progreses after justification in the path of sancitification enjoys true liberty. He is at complete liberty through Christ. No teaching or commandment can enslave him. Galatians teaches us about the fact that the liberated man serves God at joyful liberty.

The spirt- filled life is the most blessed experience of a child of God. The kind of life Ephesians shows us is a life of worship advancing for the glory of God being filled with the Holy Spirit with Psalms and praises and singing in the hearts to the Lord.

Joy is the outcome of such a spirit- filled life. He rejoices in the Lord. His is the great joy which can not be touched or quenched by any of the adverse circumstances of this world. Philippians proclaims this wonderful truth.

Although a Child of God has his own limitations and short comings, in Christ he is not - so. By justification, he is in Christ, Colossians teaches us that a believer is perfect in the son of God in whom all the fullness of God dwells.

The epistle to Thessalonians stresses on the blessed hope for the child of God. That is nothing but the coming of the Lord Jesus

Christ the blessed event of rapture, When the dead saints resurrect and living saints get transformed and shall be taken up together in the twinkling of an eye.

It pleased God to illuminate to all men in order the spiritual blessings that God has in store for a sinner, for which God used Paul.

Note : The authorship of the book of Hebrews by Paul is not in record. But it is generally accepted that Paul wrote this.

EXERCISE - 34

Answer the following questions

1. Who are the authors of the epistles ? How many epistles did each of them write ?
2. In total, how many epistles are there ?
3. Within a span of how many years did Paul write his epistles?
4. Write the Chronological arrangement of Pauline epistles ?
5. Write the theme of all Pauline epistles.
6. What is the primary need of a man who is sinful by nature ?
7. What should a person do after becoming righteous in Christ?
8. what is the most blessed experience of a child of God ?
9. What is the outcome of a spirit-filled life ?
10. What does the epistle of Colossians teach us ?
11. What is the blessed hope for the child of God ?

