



## Editor's Note

I love the springtime with new life budding forth everywhere! In our small flower garden, there are lots of different shapes and sizes and colors, reminding us of God's creative design. Have you noticed the same in the church? All kinds of people having different ages, cultures, gifts, and talents, and all loved by the Creator.

Are you enjoying the diversity? It's one part of knowing the state of your flock (Prov. 27:23)! Interesting that some folks who wouldn't hear of a garden with only

one variety of flower, are uncomfortable in God's people-garden (the church) of many different kinds of believers.

And just as we learn about the differences of plants—some we use fresh-picked; others can be dried and retain their beauty for months—so we must learn about the gifts and talents of Christians, and help them find where they can grow and serve best. Jesus said, "The field is the world" (Matt. 13:38).



## New Testament Overview

### Part 5: The Pauline Epistles

by Warren Henderson

#### Ephesians

*Ephesians* is one of four epistles written during Paul's first imprisonment in Rome (A.D. 60–62). Paul had worked diligently in Ephesus for about three years, taking the gospel message house to house as well as preaching in public (Acts 20:20). By God's grace a church testimony was established. The kindred spirit of Paul and the Ephesian believers is clearly witnessed in Paul's farewell to the Ephesian elders at Miletus (Acts 20:36–38). Paul's appreciation for the saints at Ephesus girds the epistle with a warmth well-suited for declaring several timeless mysteries of what God was accomplishing in Christ on their behalf.

The main theme of the epistle is the Body of Christ, the Church: walking with and serving the Lord. The first three chapters concentrate largely on what the believer has in Christ (position is stressed), while the last three chapters instruct the believer how to live in light of these rich truths (practice is stressed). The epistle may be outlined as follows.

- Introduction (1:1–2)
- The *wealth* a Christian possesses in Christ (1:3–3:21)
- The *walk* a Christian maintains with Christ (4:1–5:33)
- The *warfare* a Christian withstands through Christ (6:1–20)

#### Philippians

*Philippians* is the second of four epistles written during Paul's first Roman imprisonment. Paul journeyed to Philippi,

a Roman colony north of the Aegean Sea in Macedonia, during his second missionary journey. Paul and Silas were arrested there, severely beaten, and imprisoned without a trial. While in the inner prison the two evangelists began singing praises to God. An earthquake occurred that freed the prisoners, yet none fled; and the incident resulted in the jailer and his family coming to Christ—a new church was planted. Although Paul did not stay long in Philippi, the Philippians' deep love for Paul is evident in their giving spirit to support his ministry. The epistle was written to acknowledge a gift received from them. The main theme of the letter is that suffering prompts God's peace when we choose to rejoice in Christ. A simple outline for the book would be

- The single mind (ch. 1)
- The servant mind (ch. 2)
- The spiritual mind (ch. 3)
- The secure mind (ch. 4)

#### Colossians

*Colossians* is the third of four prison epistles. The main threat to the Church at Colossae was Gnosticism. The Gnostics prided themselves in having special knowledge. The Gnostics were undermining truths concerning Christ's humanity and deity, either by posing Him as some hybrid creature between God and man or by saying that there was no complete unity of His deity and humanity. Paul sets the matter straight by explaining the glories

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One mark of the Lord's servant is "sound [or healthy] speech" (Titus 2:8); also called "wholesome words" (1 Tim. 6:3). Godly communication is an important subject for elders personally and in shepherding work. Both lists of elder qualities (1 Tim. 3; Titus 1) describe a church leader as "sober minded," which is shown by his words. And this trait applies to all true believers, not just elders.

A sober or healthy manner of speaking stands in remarkable contrast to one's former way of speaking while still in the world. What made the change? God has taken up residence in the person, and he begins to sound more like the Lord when he speaks! Ephesians 5:26 tells us that reading Scripture washes the believer, so that his very mind is transformed (Rom. 12:1). This is not the result of a religious duty, but simply the outworking of the indwelling Spirit of Christ. The change may be gradual, but it's inevitable, so in a sense, he can't help it.

If saints are going to grow in this virtue, they will need help and encouragement. Among other things, the church becomes a school for sound speech, and elders set an example of what edifying speech sounds like, not just in prayer or preaching, but in all the conversations of life, both public and private. This even includes occasions when elders must stand up against evil communication—even among professing believers.

At the conclusion of the list of elder qualities in Titus 1, Paul mentions one work of the sober-minded elder. Holding fast to the faithful word, he will need to confront people described in the next verse as "vain talkers." They are deceivers "whose mouths must be stopped" or they will undermine the Lord's work in families. They may profess to know God, but their words and works show them to be "abominable, disobedient, reprobate."

What an important subject this is for the health of any church! Diseased speech can cripple or destroy a church. One important work of those who lead is by example and teaching, contending for godly speech that is "always with grace, seasoned with salt." (Col. 4:6) That is, use words that have a purifying and edifying effect rather than a corrupting influence on the hearer.

*Think of that forgotten  
leftover in the  
back of the fridge  
covered with mold.  
Would you serve it?*

Fortunately, we are not left to guess about specifics in this matter. Scripture provides a detailed tutorial on the subject, and this can be a helpful subject to cover in the teaching ministry by a study of Ephesians 4 and 5. Knowing that busy elders appreciate a succinct format, I'll just cover this in outline form, but the reader can fill it out to use as a message or just make notes for personal use. Let's take a look.

First, note that Paul doesn't just give negatives. For each type of faulty speech, he quickly provides the positive balance; i.e., what it is to be replaced with.

1. Put away lying (4:25) and instead speak the truth. All falsehood—and in God's sight there really is no such thing as "a little white lie"—must be banished forever from our communications. Remember that the truth is simple; falsehood becomes complex.
2. Avoid corrupt communications (4:29); let it be replaced with good speech that edifies and serves grace. Corrupt means rotten. Think of that forgotten leftover

in the back of the fridge covered with mold. Would you serve it? By our words we can "serve up" or dish up God's grace to our hearers as a spiritual meal that nourishes the soul.


3. Evil speaking (4:31) must give place to words of forgiveness (v. 32). As we meditate on the words of the Lord, even at His death, we hear no hint of malice or bitterness. Such words have ruined more than one church. Let us imitate the Savior (and the martyr Stephen) in this. They spoke words of forgiveness to the Father in heaven, and so should we, until the sinning person repents (Luke 17:3).
4. Exchange foolish talking (5:4) for giving of thanks. Young Christians must be exposed to a thankful attitude, not only in church meetings but on the job, at sporting events, in dealing with unkind people and so forth. Imagine a church where everyone is constantly thankful to the Lord and for what those who serve as elders do. What a delight that would be!
5. Replace any reference to things done in secret (5:12) with music and melody of heart to the Lord (v. 19). Don't be afraid of this one. Everyone living in today's world knows enough about the subject without going into detail, as the news media delights in covering it. Jesus said, "Men loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil" (John 3:19). The Holy Spirit wants to replace sordid thoughts with "a new song."

Finally, we must know for sure that the enemy of our souls will vigorously resist efforts to change in this area. "Oh that's just the way I am"; "You should hear so-and-so if you think I'm bad"; "Well, we have to live

*(Continued on next page)*

in the world and be aware of what's going on," and similar statements are common.

But objections aside, it remains true that a renewed mind (Rom. 12:2) cannot be hidden. As the Lord once asked, "How can ye being evil speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh. A

good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things." (Matt. 12:34-35). So may every elder in every church resolve with the Lord's help to model sound speech, "speaking the truth in love." (Eph. 4:14). 

## Sound Speech (cont'd from page 1)

of Christ's person and work. He silences the Gnostics by telling them that Christ holds all true knowledge and spiritual life, so if people want to understand what is true and experience spiritual life, they must come to Christ. The theme of the epistle is the preeminence of Christ.

### 1 and 2 Thessalonians

Thessalonica was one of three major seaports of Achaia on the Aegean Sea and its 200,000 citizens were largely native Greeks. In late A.D. 50, Paul and Silas traveled to Thessalonica from Philippi after being severely beaten. Acts records that Paul was only in Thessalonica for a few weeks before a riot forced the missionary team to depart. Yet, it was sufficient time for a church to be planted there. *First Thessalonians* was written at Corinth shortly after Timothy returned from Thessalonica to provide Paul a report on the church. What better way to encourage believers faithfully suffering persecution than to speak about "The Day of Christ" (Christ's coming for the Church) which is mentioned in each chapter.

Apparently, someone had forged a letter in Paul's name, telling the Christians in Thessalonica that they had missed the Lord's coming and were now in "the Day of the Lord" (the Tribulation period). Paul writes the second epistle to correct this error and provide eschatological details concerning the Lord's visible and direct judgment upon all wickedness and His

future rule of all nations on earth.

### 1 and 2 Timothy

Timothy's mother was a Jew (2 Tim. 1:5) but his father was Greek (Acts 16:1). Timothy likely came to Christ as a result of Paul and Barnabas visiting Timothy's home town of Lystra (Acts 14:6-20). Timothy joined Paul during his second missionary journey (Acts 16:1-2) and became a vital extension of Paul's ministry for many years. Paul was between his first and last Roman imprisonments when the first epistle was written (A.D. 64). Paul had directed Timothy to Ephesus to further edify and protect the Church there. Besides personal encouragement to Timothy, the epistle elaborates on the treatment of believing widows, church leadership, deacons, the elderly, masters, youth, and in general how believers should behave in the body of Christ. Church order and faithfulness as a servant of God are the themes.


Paul wrote *2 Timothy* during his second Roman imprisonment (A.D. 66-67). Under Nero's brutal leadership, Rome was severely persecuting Christians. Paul's situation was grave; most of his friends had abandoned him and he was on trial for his life. *Second Timothy* is the last of Paul's known writings; it is a letter filled with personal exhortations and encouragements to his spiritual son Timothy. He was to hold to the Word of God and be faithful to the ministry God had given him to accomplish, no matter what affliction awaited him.

### Titus

Besides Timothy, Paul also refers to Titus, a Greek, as his spiritual son (1:4). Titus may have been led to Christ by Paul; nonetheless, Paul was instrumental in Titus' discipleship. Paul sent Titus to the island of Crete to ensure proper church order was being followed in the local assemblies. Men who were already actively shepherding in the assembly were to be officially recognized as church elders (1:5). The epistle, written about the same time as *1 Timothy*, records the final instructions of the older missionary to his younger son in the faith.

The main themes of this letter are Church order and that sound doctrine must be lived out, as evidenced by good works. Sometimes Paul's epistles to Timothy and Titus are referred to as the "Pastoral Epistles," but this is erroneous terminology. Paul's spiritual sons were to instruct, exhort, and rebuke the saints concerning sound doctrine and good works, yet they were not the Pastors of the churches at Ephesus or Crete; only Christ holds that title in Scripture.

### Philemon

A slave named Onesimus had run away from his master, Philemon, who lived in Colossae. Onesimus traveled as far as Rome before trusting the gospel message and desiring to make amends for the wrong he had done (vv. 11, 18). Paul, being in prison, sent Tychicus to convey Onesimus back to Philemon and to hand-deliver this letter. Paul intercedes for Onesimus and instructs Philemon to receive Onesimus as he would Paul himself. Onesimus was now a brother in the Lord and thus, would live up to his name and be "a profitable servant." Paul instructs Philemon to forgive Onesimus and lay any losses connected with this circumstance to his own personal account. Undoubtedly, Philemon did not charge Paul anything, but rather forgave Onesimus. The epistle teaches us that forgiving love ensures restoration and peace—a truth that all believers know experientially in Christ! 



## Wives' Corner

### Bible Study: The Need *by Kimberly Moffitt*

For the past few years, we have chosen to go through a book of the Bible in our ladies' study at the chapel so that the topic would be applicable for all ages. However, we noticed that it was mainly the older women who were attending. I asked various young women if there was a particular reason why they weren't coming. Some of them shared that they felt they didn't have anything to contribute because the older women knew so much more than they did. They eventually acknowledged that they didn't know how to study the Bible on their own, so weren't even able to prepare so that they could participate.

We might assume that if a person grew up in a Christian home and was part of an assembly fellowship, they must surely know how to study their Bible. That may not be the case. The fact is, you don't know something unless you learn it! We cannot just expect our young people to pick up on how to study the Bible for themselves. Plus, the older they get without being taught these skills, the more embarrassing it becomes for them to admit that they don't have them.

I didn't learn how to study the Bible until after I was married. My husband taught me how to use study

tools such as a concordance and an expository dictionary to look up definitions of words in their original languages and to cross-reference. But what really helped me was a book called *How to Study Your Bible for Kids* by Kay Arthur. My four children and I worked through it together one summer. Though I did it for my kids, I also benefited greatly! This book written for children introduced me to the inductive study method, which utilizes the skills of observation, interpretation, and lastly, application. I learned to ask the questions *who, what, when, where, why, and how*; to identify key words and phrases; to make lists; to compare and contrast; to note locations and expressions of time; and to consider the context in which a passage is found. I love having resources which enable me to go directly to God's Word and let it speak for itself. Learning these things opened up the Bible to me in a whole new way and helped me better understand the heart of God. I have also found that what I discover as I study on my own is truly mine.

Our young women need to know how to study God's Word just as

much as our young men do. They are the ones who will be teaching our Sunday school classes, sharing devotions at camp, leading Bible studies, and speaking at ladies' retreats. We want them to be "approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15). We need to help equip them to understand the Word of God, and then be able to share it clearly and accurately. We do this by being intentional in teaching them how to study the Bible for themselves.

If you have the opportunity to suggest a topic of study for the ladies in your local church, *how to study the Bible* might be worth considering. Then apply what you've learned by studying a book of the Bible together. What a precious gift to give to your women of all ages skills they can use to help them understand God's Word in a deeper way because they have studied its truths for themselves.

*"Make me understand the way of Your precepts; So shall I meditate on Your wonderful works."*

— Psalm 119:27 —



## THE SMALL PRINT

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Specific Bible versions used are indicated at the first quotation in each article.

Note: All words referring to God have the initial letter capitalized. While the original languages of the Bible do not use capitalization, this is the convention in some translations but not in others. So at times there may be inconsistencies in usage in ESN articles.