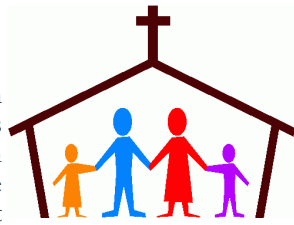


The Lord and His Church

The church at Ephesus is one of the most well-known congregations of the first century. We can read about the church's beginning there in Acts 18 and 19. We read of Paul's meeting with the Ephesian elders in Acts 20. Paul wrote the letter to the Ephesians, and two letters to Timothy who was working at Ephesus when Paul wrote those letters. The Ephesian congregation is also one of the seven churches of Asia that were the original recipients of John's Revelation. It seems Ephesus was a strong church, but even strong churches have their problems that need correcting. A few years after working in Ephesus, Paul wrote the inspired letter to the Ephesians, and in doing so provided Christians with a wonderful treatise on the Church and the lives of Christians.

In this letter (which is very similar to the letter of Colossians) Paul discusses some deep but wonderful theological truths. Paul paints the picture from the beginning of God's redemptive work through Christ. The point is stated early on: every spiritual blessing is found in and only in Christ (Eph. 1:3). Of course, to be "in Christ" is to be a part of His "body" which is the church. The church is the means by which God predetermined to bring people to salvation. The predestination that Ephesians speaks of isn't individual predestination, but collective predestination. That is, God determined those who would belong to the Church would be saved. The invitation to be a part of Christ's church is open to all, but only those that obey and are added to the church will be saved!

A major theme of Ephesians is the unity to be found in the church, even between vastly different people such as Jews and Gentiles. In Christ, we are truly one family! Being in Christ's church also means Christians live a certain style of life. Even home life is changed for those that follow Christ (cf. chapter 5). Thus, the final chapters of Ephesians contain some wonderfully practical and straightforward admonition for Christians of all ages, included the very well known passage about "the full armor of God!"



"That You May Grow Thereby..."

A weekly Bible reading plan



Galatians and Ephesians

The True Gospel and the True Church

Overview

This week we return to the New Testament and to the letters (also known as epistles) written by the Apostle Paul. We've already read the longest of Paul's letters (Romans, 1 & 2 Corinthians), and now we come to Paul's shorter letters. Particularly this week we'll be reading the letters of Galatians and Ephesians. As with all of Paul's letters, these are Holy Spirit inspired writings addressed to congregations in need of further instruction, encouragement, and warning. While the congregations that existed in Ephesus and the areas of Galatia are removed from us by thousands of miles and thousands of years, the challenges they faced, mistakes they made, and encouragement they needed have a contemporary ring to them in many ways. Christians and congregations need to read and study these letters closely to learn and apply the eternal truths that can save our families, churches, and souls!

Suggested Reading Schedule

Monday: Galatians 1-3
Tuesday: Galatians 4-6
Wednesday: Ephesians 1-2
Thursday: Ephesians 3-4
Friday: Ephesians 5-6

Questions:

1. Who travelled to Jerusalem with Paul when he went up there because of a revelation?

2. "For as many of you as were _____ into Christ have put on _____" (NKJV)

3. Spend some time learning the fruits of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23). Try to write them down from memory: _____

4. According to Ephesians 2:10, what have we been created in Christ Jesus for?

5. How can Christians "walk worthy of the calling with which you were called?"

6. Describe the "full armor of God:" _____



NO OTHER GOSPEL

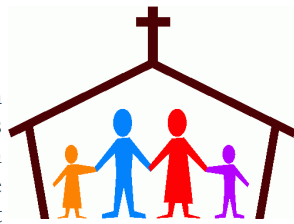
Galatians is one of Paul's most direct letters. The usual "thanksgiving" section that is common in most of Paul's writings is absent, and after the customary greeting Paul immediately launches into the problems that exist among the churches in Galatia. Paul begins with, "I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel..." As Paul explains, there is no such thing as a different gospel—only false doctrine. The Galatian churches were plagued by false teachers known as "Judaizers." These were teachers who claimed to be Christian, but also demanded that certain aspects of the Mosaic Law be observed and continued. For instance, these men usually taught that gentile Christians must be circumcised to be saved. Thus, Paul wrote to the congregations in Galatia to combat the influence of these false teachers. As in 2 Corinthians, Paul has to spend some time defending his apostleship (ch. 1-2). Paul then moves to the weighty section of the letter—a theological discourse on justification by faith apart from works of the Law (ch. 3-4). It's important to understand that when Paul discusses the Law in Galatians, he is almost always referring to the Law of Moses. Some have used Galatians to argue against any type of law, but Paul was battling teachers who sought to mandate parts of the Mosaic Law for salvation. That was false doctrine and legalism, but Paul didn't oppose all law. On the contrary, in this very letter he speaks of "the law of Christ" (Gal. 6:2). The final chapters of Galatians (ch. 5-6) provide practical exhortation on how Christians should live as they are "justified by faith." In this section is one of the most well known passages of Scripture—the fruits of the Spirit (5:22-26), which stand opposed to the works of the flesh (5:19-21). This section provides one of the most practical lists of worldly vices and Christian virtues that Christians can study and work on applying in their lives. While we may not face Judaizing teachers today, we do have to be on guard against any false doctrine that would seek to add to or take away from the one, true, saving gospel. We must always remember, there is no other gospel!

The Lord and His Church

The church at Ephesus is one of the most well-known congregations of the first century. We can read about the church's beginning there in Acts 18 and 19. We read of Paul's meeting with the Ephesian elders in Acts 20. Paul wrote the letter to the Ephesians, and two letters to Timothy who was working at Ephesus when Paul wrote those letters. The Ephesian congregation is also one of the seven churches of Asia that were the original recipients of John's Revelation. It seems Ephesus was a strong church, but even strong churches have their problems that need correcting. A few years after working in Ephesus, Paul wrote the inspired letter to the Ephesians, and in doing so provided Christians with a wonderful treatise on the Church and the lives of Christians.

In this letter (which is very similar to the letter of Colossians) Paul discusses some deep but wonderful theological truths. Paul paints the picture from the beginning of God's redemptive work through Christ. The point is stated early on: every spiritual blessing is found in and only in Christ (Eph. 1:3). Of course, to be "in Christ" is to be a part of His "body" which is the church. The church is the means by which God predetermined to bring people to salvation. The predestination that Ephesians speaks of isn't individual predestination, but collective predestination. That is, God determined those who would belong to the Church would be saved. The invitation to be a part of Christ's church is open to all, but only those that obey and are added to the church will be saved!

A major theme of Ephesians is the unity to be found in the church, even between vastly different people such as Jews and Gentiles. In Christ, we are truly one family! Being in Christ's church also means Christians live a certain style of life. Even home life is changed for those that follow Christ (cf. chapter 5). Thus, the final chapters of Ephesians contain some wonderfully practical and straightforward admonition for Christians of all ages, included the very well known passage about "the full armor of God!"



“That You May Grow Thereby...”

A weekly Bible reading plan



Galatians and Ephesians

The True Gospel and the True Church

Overview

This week we return to the New Testament and to the letters (also known as epistles) written by the Apostle Paul. We've already read the longest of Paul's letters (Romans, 1 & 2 Corinthians), and now we come to Paul's shorter letters. Particularly this week we'll be reading the letters of Galatians and Ephesians. As with all of Paul's letters, these are Holy Spirit inspired writings addressed to congregations in need of further instruction, encouragement, and warning. While the congregations that existed in Ephesus and the areas of Galatia are removed from us by thousands of miles and thousands of years, the challenges they faced, mistakes they made, and encouragement they needed have a contemporary ring to them in many ways. Christians and congregations need to read and study these letters closely to learn and apply the eternal truths that can save our families, churches, and souls!

Suggested Reading Schedule

Monday: Galatians 1-3
Tuesday: Galatians 4-6
Wednesday: Ephesians 1-2
Thursday: Ephesians 3-4
Friday: Ephesians 5-6

Questions:

1. Who travelled to Jerusalem with Paul when he went up there because of a revelation?

2. “For as many of you as were _____ into Christ have put on _____” (NKJV)

3. Spend some time learning the fruits of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23). Try to write them down from memory: _____

4. According to Ephesians 2:10, what have we been created in Christ Jesus for?

5. How can Christians “walk worthy of the calling with which you were called?”

6. Describe the “full armor of God:” _____



NO OTHER GOSPEL

Galatians is one of Paul's most direct letters. The usual “thanksgiving” section that is common in most of Paul's writings is absent, and after the customary greeting Paul immediately launches into the problems that exist among the churches in Galatia. Paul begins with, “I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel...” As Paul explains, there is no such thing as a different gospel—only false doctrine. The Galatian churches were plagued by false teachers known as “Judaizers.” These were teachers who claimed to be Christian, but also demanded that certain aspects of the Mosaic Law be observed and continued. For instance, these men usually taught that gentile Christians must be circumcised to be saved. Thus, Paul wrote to the congregations in Galatia to combat the influence of these false teachers. As in 2 Corinthians, Paul has to spend some time defending his apostleship (ch. 1-2). Paul then moves to the weighty section of the letter—a theological discourse on justification by faith apart from works of the Law (ch. 3-4). It's important to understand that when Paul discusses the Law in Galatians, he is almost always referring to the Law of Moses. Some have used Galatians to argue against any type of law, but Paul was battling teachers who sought to mandate parts of the Mosaic Law for salvation. That was false doctrine and legalism, but Paul didn't oppose all law. On the contrary, in this very letter he speaks of “the law of Christ” (Gal. 6:2). The final chapters of Galatians (ch. 5-6) provide practical exhortation on how Christians should live as they are “justified by faith.” In this section is one of the most well known passages of Scripture—the fruits of the Spirit (5:22-26), which stand opposed to the works of the flesh (5:19-21). This section provides one of the most practical lists of worldly vices and Christian virtues that Christians can study and work on applying in their lives. While we may not face Judaizing teachers today, we do have to be on guard against any false doctrine that would seek to add to or take away from the one, true, saving gospel. We must always remember, there is no other gospel!