

Intro to GALATIANS

Theme: The basic problem that Paul is addressing in the letter to the church at Galatia is the problem of extreme legalism. Apparently, there were Jewish Christians who wanted to impose traditional Jewish customs on the new Gentile Christians, namely, the ritual of circumcision. Paul's response to the church is a staunch defense that the Christian believer is justified by faith and faith alone.

Summary of the Book

In **Chapter 1**, Paul dives right in and offers a biographical sketch of his conversion, his background in traditional Judaism, and his defense of the pure Gospel of Jesus Christ. In **Chapter 2**, he recalls a confrontation that he had with Peter over his hypocrisy over these same issues. In **Chapter 3**, he gives the theological basis for the position of justification by faith alone, and continues that argument in **Chapter 4** with a dissertation on the principle of sonship. **Chapter 5** speaks of Christian freedom and the fruits that come from living life in the Spirit versus life living in the flesh. He ends the book by offering some practical teaching in **Chapter 6**, including how to restore a wayward brother, and the principle of sowing and reaping.

Key Verses

2:20—"I am crucified with Christ..." **3:11**—"The just shall live by faith..." **4:5,6**—"Because you are sons..."
5:6—" what matters is faith expressing itself through love..." **5:22-23**—The Fruits of the Spirit,
6:7—"...a man reaps what he sows..."

Intro to EPHESIANS

Theme: The purpose of the book of Ephesians is to bring the Christian into deeper maturity as believers. The letter is a perfect combination of expository Christian doctrine and practical teaching, to put "legs" on the faith that we profess.

Summary of the Book

In **Chapter 1**, Paul lays a theological foundation, with the essence being that believers in Christ are believers because God chose us in Him before the foundation of the world and has blessed us with every spiritual blessing. **Chapter 2** is a continuation of the theme he established in Galatians that we are completely justified by faith and saved by grace. **Chapter 3** contains a prayer that Paul has for the Ephesians that they may be rooted and grounded in the Love of Christ and strengthened with power. The practical teaching begins in **Chapter 4** with a discussion on Christian unity and an appeal for them for function in their area of giftedness within the body of Christ. He then gives some very hands-on, real-world teaching on honesty and integrity in everyday actions and speech. **Chapter 5** continues this teaching, with some deeper words of instruction for families, especially as it applies to husbands and wives. He ends the letter in **Chapter 6** with teaching concerning the essence of our true battle as believers—spiritual as opposed to flesh and blood. He finishes with the vivid description of the symbolic armor that a Christian should don in this spiritual warfare that we wage.

Key Verses

1:3—" Praise be to the God and Father..." **2:8-10**—"For it is by grace that you have been saved through faith,"
4:4-6—"There is one body and one Spirit..." **5:21**—"Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ..."
6:10-11: "Finally, be strong in the Lord..."

Intro to PHILIPPIANS

Theme: The book of Philippians is unique, in that, it is from start to finish a “thank you” letter to the church for their faith and their generosity. While Paul addresses and corrects theological issues and errors in other writings, he avoids that in this book.

Summary of the book:

In **Chapter 1**, Paul is quick to give his deepest thanks for the Philippians for their partnership in the gospel “from the first day until now.” As he writes this from prison, he addresses the fact that some have preached Christ from selfish ambition and false motive. However, he rejoices that Christ is preached, even with false motive. In **Chapter 2**, he does get theological/practical with a dissertation on the humility of Christ and his urging that our attitude should be the same. In the latter part of the chapter, he pays tribute to Timothy and Epaphroditus, who meant much to Paul in his ministry. In **Chapter 3**, Paul lashes out against the Judaizers, much as he did in Galatians, for their attempts to distort the true Gospel. It is here that he pours out his heart again and expresses the true motive of his heart—“to press on toward the goal to win the prize.” He finishes out the letter in **Chapter 4** with final expressions of heartfelt thanks for the church’s generosity and an exhortation to keep their mind’s focused on noble things and to give praise and thanks in all things.

Key Verses:

1:6—“He who began a good work in you...” / **1:21**—“For me to live is Christ...” / **3:7**—“whatever was to my profit, I now consider loss...” / **4:6,7**—“Do not be anxious about anything...” / **4:13**—“I can do all things through Christ...” / **4:19**—“My God shall supply all your needs...”

Intro to COLOSSIANS

Theme: The theme of the book of Colossians is the efficiency of Jesus Christ and His ability to meet every need of our lives. He covers this with a dissertation of the person of Christ and how our relationship with Him should permeate every ounce of our being.

Summary of the book:

The book of Colossians is one of the stronger theological letters that Paul wrote. He begins **Chapter 1** with his usual greeting and thanksgiving for the church. He then moves into a very clear and concise Christology, and makes no mistake as to the Deity of Jesus Christ. “He is the image of the invisible God,” Paul declares, and gives Christ His proper place as the agent of creation in the beginning of time. He moves from that to a declaration of why Christ came to us—for total reconciliation with God the Father. In the latter part of the chapter and into **Chapter 2**, he gives some personal remarks as to his motives and desires as an ambassador of Christ. As he did in Galatians and Philippians, he underscores his commitment to being totally justified by faith and free from the bondage of human regulations with his practical admonitions in the latter part of the chapter. **Chapter 3** is completely practical and ethical in nature, with Paul handing down some clear instructions for daily Christian living. The latter part of the chapter is also devoted to some instructions for the Christian household. **Chapter 4** contains his final greetings and closings.

Key Verses: **1:15**—“He is the image of the invisible God...” / **3: 1**—“Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your heart on things above...” / **3:12,13**—“Therefore as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved...”