

MIN 7012 W8 L1
Radical Theology

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In the midst of today's negativity and doubt concerning faith, many claim that Paul just does not understand what it means to be a follower of Christ today. . . . Really? Maybe we are the ones who have it wrong?

Paul is a credible witness; one only needs to look at his life to realize that he was sold out for the gospel. Look at Paul's life and trials:

Are they servants of Christ? (I am out of my mind to talk like this.) I am more. I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my own countrymen, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false brothers. I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches. (Cor. 11.23–28)

Yeah, beaten, flogged, stoned, etc., all because of his devotion to Christ. Paul is resolute in his devotion to *The Way*. If we question Paul's character and his words about following Christ, then who will ever be able to convince us? The question is, do you want to believe Jesus is who the Bible says He is and that He is calling you to step up and step into His reconciliatory performance? Iron only strengthens when it is sharpened.

Paul is practical as well as profound. He never leaves us in the clouds. He never separates knowledge from action. Christianity is both word *and* deed. Our faith is meant to be lived out. The Bible is meant for performance. Christ's incarnational performance is what we are called to follow, enter into, and live out ourselves! Think of your life and how much we gain confidence through the rewards of this world. But the world does not have *Truth* to offer or build our confidence on. So we must continually ask ourselves, what should our confidence be in and how do we maintain and grow in this source? How can we be *in* the world but not *of* the world? Theologian Karl Barth once wrote that "Christians do not strive 'against' anybody (nor *for* anybody either!), but *for the faith!*" The pages of Philippians contain life lessons and role models of faith—people who challenge believers to put faith in action.

Philippians

Philippians is a beautiful letter Paul wrote to a church he loved. The church in Philippi was established by Paul and Silas on Paul's second missionary journey (Acts 16:11–40). Lydia and her household and the jailor and his household were among the first converts. Philippians was written to thank the church for the gift they sent to help Paul while he was in prison (Phil. 4:10–20).

Just as Ephesians sets forth the church of Christ, Philippians sets forth the mind of Christ (Phil. 2:1–11). Even though Paul was a prisoner when he wrote to Philippi, he is full of joy. The key word in Philippians is "joy." This word, and other forms of it, such as "rejoice," is found at least fifteen times in the four chapters of this epistle. Philippians teaches us that Christians can be happy even if we are in the midst of hardship and suffering. We are joyful because of the hope we have in Christ.

Philemon

Philemon is one of the shortest books in the New Testament. It is a personal letter that Paul wrote to his friend Philemon, who was a Christian. The church met in his house (Phil. 2). Slavery was common in the Roman Empire in Paul's day. Philemon had a slave named Onesimus, who had run away from his master. Paul met him and taught him the Gospel. Now, he is sending Onesimus back to his master. He sends this letter along with him. He points out to Philemon that he will now have Onesimus back as a brother in Christ. The New Testament does not specifically forbid slavery. Neither did the apostles command that owners of slaves must free them. However, the principles of Christ, when applied, will cause people to give up slaves. If one would not want to be a slave of another person, he will not make another person his slave. This is the application of the "Golden Rule" (Matt. 7:12).LECTURE 2

Colossians

False teachers had come to Colossae with a strange new doctrine. They mixed pagan philosophy and Judaism with Christianity. The author of Colossians opposed this false teaching by showing that Christ is over all things. Any spiritual teaching that is not Christ centered from beginning to end is false. If it is wrong about the nature of Christ, it cannot be right about anything else!

Colossians has been called "the most Christ centered epistle in the New Testament." It shows that Jesus Christ is head over all things. He existed before the world came into being. Indeed, He is the Creator of all things. All the fullness of the Godhead dwells in Him. He is the head of the church. Through His death on the cross, He has made it possible for all to be reconciled to Him (Col. 1:14–20).

Ephesians

Ephesians has been called "Paul's great treatise on the church of Christ." It tells of the church as part of the eternal purpose of God (Eph. 3:8–11). It describes the church as "the body of Christ." Christ is the head of the body (Eph. 1:22, 23, 5:23). There is one body, just as there are one God, the Father; one Lord and Savior; one Holy Spirit; one hope; one faith; and one baptism (Eph. 4:4–6).