

# *Profile of the New Testament*

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## ***The New Testament: What It Means***

The New Testament gets its name from prophecies in the Old Testament that predicted God would work in a new way to bring His blessing to man. God had created the world and man, and had put man in the world to live. In his living, man did not do the will of God but acted according to his own desires. This is called sin and caused death to come upon the children of men. But the grace of God provided a way in which the sinner could be delivered from the curse of death into the life of God.

Sin was real but the grace of God is greater than sin. This grace is available for all men, but is operative only in those who yield themselves into the will of God, trusting Him and obeying Him. Abraham obeyed God and received the promise that in his seed all nations would be blessed. Generations later, this promise was repeated to David with the further revelation that one of his seed should become King of Kings and Lord of all. This one would be the Anointed One, the Messiah, and He would perfectly obey God and would bring God's people to blessing and peace.

All this was fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth who was born of a virgin as the incarnate Son of God. After living in perfect obedience as Jesus of Nazareth, He offered Himself as a sacrifice to provide forgiveness of sin. God raised Him from the dead and gave Him all authority over all His creation. The glorified Christ Jesus sent His Holy Spirit into His believers enabling them to have fellowship with God and to have joy and peace in believing. This was the New Covenant in which the believer becomes a child of God.

## ***The New Testament: Whom It Is About***

The Bible tells the truth about God's plan to create beings who would live in fellowship and communion with Himself. After God created man in His own image and put him in this world, man sinned against God and was condemned to death. In grace God redeemed man and called man to come to receive the benefits of salvation as a free gift on the basis of a substitutionary sacrifice.

God called Abraham and gave him and his seed the promise of blessing on the condition of obedience. The descendants of Abraham became known as the children of Israel. Despite every opportunity and much blessing, Israel proved to be incorrigibly sinful. The prophets predicted that God would accomplish His original purpose in a new way.

God would send a chosen Servant to be the One who would live perfectly and would give Himself to save whosoever would come to Him, by dying for them and being raised into newness of life. This person was Jesus of Nazareth who came to do the will of God in saving lost souls who would believe.

The New Testament tells the story of His life on earth, His death, resurrection and present ministry, and the lives of those who believed in Him. Then it explains much of what happens in the living experiences of those who now accept Christ as Savior and Lord. The New Testament, like the whole Bible, tells mainly the truth about Jesus Christ.

## ***The New Testament: What Is In It***

The New Testament begins with the four Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Each of these presents an image of Jesus Christ, different from each other but not in contradiction. They are not biographies. There is no record of anything from the time Jesus of Nazareth was twelve until He was about thirty years of age. Apparently nothing happened in that period that had any bearing on what He came to do. The one event receiving major attention was His death and resurrection.

These books are followed by the book of "The Acts of the Apostles" which tells about events in the history of the early Christians. Much about the nature of Christian life and experience can be learned in reading and studying this book.

The next nine books are the Church epistles of Paul. They are letters written by Paul to Christians in the cities where he had ministered, dealing with problems of living in Christ. They are useful today wherever similar situations exist or are developing. To understand the epistles it is essential to keep in mind they were written by a man who believed that Jesus Christ was alive, and that He is coming again to judge.

The next four books are short letters written to individuals, as indicated by the names of each respectively.

The next eight books are called the General Epistles. They were written by several authors to all believers in a general way.

The last book in the Bible is a book of prophecy written at a time when the Christians were facing persecution.

### ***Matthew***

Matthew is the first of the four Gospels. Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Sometimes the question is asked as to why there are four Gospels. It is admitted they are different, but no one ever claims there is any contradiction. When it is considered that these are not photographs but rather, portraits, it is easy to understand.

In painting portraits of Teddy Roosevelt there could be one of a Range Captain of the "Rough Riders"; one of an author; one of the President of the U.S.; and one of a big game hunter in Africa. Each would be a true portrait. Each would be distinctively different. But not one would contradict the other.

The four Gospels are separately distinctive in that each portrays the events in the life and death of Jesus of Nazareth to show one aspect of the work and the meaning of Jesus Christ.

Matthew seems clearly to show Jesus of Nazareth as the true Son of David who is to be King of Kings, and Lord of Lords. The wise men came looking for Him, who had been born King of the Jews. He was accused before Pilate as being a rival of Caesar because He said He was a King.

Throughout this book Jesus of Nazareth refers to the fulfillment of the plan of God as the Kingdom of Heaven / the Kingdom of God.

## Matthew: "The King"

- 1-4 The Coming of The King
- 5-15 The Proclamation of The Kingdom
- 16-27 The Suffering of The King
- 28 The Triumph of The King

## ***Mark***

Mark seems to show clearly that Jesus of Nazareth is the true Servant of God. His birth is not noted or described. His genealogy is not mentioned. This benefits the lowly role of Him who made Himself of no reputation and took upon Him the form of a servant.

In Mark the events recorded are short and direct. There is no explanation or interpretation of the actual facts as recorded.

That this is not a biography can be seen in that there is no reference to the thirty years He lived on earth before John the Baptist began to preach. Also of the 16 chapters in the book, the last 6 deal with the last week of His life on earth. Even when considering that Mark tells only about His public ministry, it is impressive that the first 10 chapters tell of incidents in about 3 years of service whereas the last 6 chapters tell of incidents occurring during the last week.

Mark has been called the Gospel of Action. It records only one long discourse given by Jesus of Nazareth, and that is not explanation but rather prediction of what will happen at the end of the world. Mark records 18 miracles but only 4 parables in the ministry of the Lord. He makes it impressive that Jesus of Nazareth exercised the power of God in all the supernatural works which He did.

## Mark: "The Servant"

- 1 The Servant Is Put to Work
- 2-9 The Servant at Work
- 10-13 The Servant Prepares for Death
- 14-15 The Servant Is Obedient unto Death
- 16 The Servant Triumphs

## ***Luke***

Luke is the one Gospel written by a man who was not born a Jew. It is possible that Luke had not seen Jesus of Nazareth. It appears that he joined the company of witnesses to Jesus Christ when they were venturing to enter into Macedonia to preach the Gospel there.

Apparently Luke was a physician and thus he would listen to the testimony of the believers who told of what Jesus of Nazareth had done, with a mind trained to note exactly what happened in the course of the events being reported.

It seems significant that the Gospel of Luke gives the most complete and careful report of just what

happened at the time of the Virgin Birth, and also what happened at the time of the Resurrection. It could be expected that each of these events would be most fascinating to a doctor. There is a fitness about this being the report of a doctor since it could be expected that his research would be competent and thorough.

The record written by any other person could be just as factual and just as true but the fact that this was written by a doctor is impressive.

Throughout this Gospel Jesus of Nazareth is seen dealing with men and their needs, showing "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which is lost."

## Luke: "The Savior"

- 1-3 The Savior's Coming
- 4-9 The Savior's Work and Teaching in Galilee
- 10-19 The Savior's Work and Teaching from Galilee to Jerusalem
- 20-21 The Savior's Work and Teaching in Jerusalem
- 22-23 The Savior's Suffering
- 24 The Savior Is Glorified

## *John*

John is the Gospel that sets forth evidence that Jesus of Nazareth was the incarnation of God. It opens with the affirmation that the Word of God, which from before the beginning of Creation was with God and was God Himself, was made flesh and dwelt among men as Jesus of Nazareth.

There is no reference to Bethlehem nor to His Jewish genealogy. But there is repeated and varied references to His Deity.

"I am" is an expression known in Jewish culture as referring to Jehovah God. Jesus of Nazareth used it again and again to identify Himself, clearly making the assertion "Before Abraham was, I am."

Certain supernatural works are recorded to give evidence that He was truly the Son of God with power. John admits that no attempt is made to record all the signs and wonders done by Jesus of Nazareth, but asserts certain illustrations have been chosen to enable the reader to believe that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God.

In this Gospel more is told about the Holy Spirit than in any of the others.

## John: "The Son of God"

- 1:1-18 The Incarnation of The Son of God
  - 1-12 The Public Ministry of The Son of God
  - 13-17 The Private Ministry of The Son of God with His Disciples
  - 18-19 The Suffering and Death of The Son of God
  - 20-21 The Resurrection and Appearing After Death of The Son of God

## ***The Acts of The Apostles***

The Acts of The Apostles is a record of what happened in the time after the ascension into heaven of Jesus Christ. As the name indicates, the focus of attention is upon the Christians who lived in the world after Jesus Christ was taken into heaven.

The book begins with the preparation of the believers for the coming of the Holy Spirit, who was poured out into the hearts of the disciples on the day of Pentecost. With the coming of the Holy Spirit the disciples began witnessing to the truth of Jesus Christ.

The witness was given first in Jerusalem, where signs and wonders were done in the name of Christ Jesus. Then Philip went down into Samaria and preached so that many Samaritans believed.

Led by the Holy Spirit the disciples, led by Peter and John, witnessed to the Gentiles, so that many believed.

Barnabas called Saul to help him preach and teach in Antioch. From here the Holy Spirit sent Barnabas and Saul to go to distant cities. Saul became Paul the great Apostle to the Gentiles and eventually preached the Gospel in Rome, even though he was a prisoner.

### The Acts of The Apostles "The Gospel in The World"

1-2 Preparation of The Witnesses

3-7 Power of The Witnesses

8-12 Propagation of The Gospel "in Judea and Samaria"

13-18 Promotion of The Gospel "Unto the Ends of the Earth"

## ***Romans***

The epistle to the Christians in Rome is recognized as the important doctrinal discussion in Paul's writings. The first part of this letter deals with the fact of sin being found everywhere so that it is true to say "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God."

Then Paul states the Gospel in its simplest form pointing out that it is the plan of God to save whosoever will turn to Him and accept His promise in Christ Jesus. This is justification and it is grounded in the grace of God, who is willing and able to save as many as will come to Him through Christ.

When the soul is reconciled to God in Christ, He gives the Holy Spirit to the believer. The Holy Spirit will bring the will of Christ into active operation in the believer and will give grace to the believer which will enable him to walk in the will of God. This is Sanctification.

As the believer walks in obedience, as led by the indwelling Holy Spirit in the will of the Lord, there is much joy in the Lord and fruit bearing in the life. This is Glorification, and is the will of God for all, "whosoever believeth in Him."

## Romans "The Gospel of God"

1:1-7 Salutation

1:8-3:20 All men need righteousness before God

3:31-4:25 All men may have the righteousness of God by faith in Christ

5-8 All men who are thus justified will be finally sanctified

9-11 The Jews missed this great blessing from God

12-16 Believers must yield themselves into the Will of God that they may be glorified

## *I Corinthians*

I Corinthians was written by the Apostle Paul to the Christians in Corinth where Paul had been as a missionary. After he had won these persons to accept Christ Jesus, both Peter and Apollos had ministered to them in the Gospel.

As new believers they had much to learn about living in the will of God. When a person accepts Christ Jesus as Savior and Lord he is born again and becomes a child of God in the Spirit. As long as he lives in this world in his physical body he is still a child of Adam in the flesh. Thus the believer has two natures: flesh and spirit.

In the flesh the Christian has habits and values that are human. When he accepts Christ he is minded to do the will of God, but he still may not realize he has habits and customs that are carnal in origin and nature.

Continuing to act in a carnal way would be a blemish in the life of a believer, and would need to be corrected. The Corinthian believers wanted to honor the Lord, and Paul wrote this letter of instruction to show them the carnal nature of their faults and to point out how corrections could be made by yielding to the indwelling Holy Spirit in obeying the will of the living Lord.

## I Corinthians "Immature Conduct Causes Problems"

1-4 Divisive loyalties to individual preachers are childish

5 Toleration of open sin is a blemish in the Church

6:1-8 Contentiousness is not worthy of a Christian

7 Domestic relations should be guided by the Holy Spirit

8-10 Christian liberty should not be abused

11:1-16 Feminism is unbecoming in the Church

11:17-34 Conduct at the Lord's Supper is spiritually important

12-14 Spiritual excellence is gained through love

15 Doctrine of the Resurrection is true and vital

16 Personal admonitions

## *II Corinthians*

II Corinthians was written by Paul the Apostle to the Christians in Corinth to explain more fully the practical bearing of the Gospel in the life of a believer. Just as I Corinthians dealt mainly with the blemishes which had appeared in the life and thought of the new believers in Corinth, so this second letter deals primarily with the description of the characteristics of a mature Christian.

Paul uses himself as an example. This is not a matter of arrogance or pride, but it is recognition of fact. Paul knew in his own heart how sincerely he wanted the Holy Spirit to guide and strengthen him. And he knew that his experience would be normal for any person walking by faith.

Righteous conduct would never result from personal effort as by works of law but as a result of believing in the living Lord. Such faith would be generated in the worship of the living Lord.

Paul warned the Corinthian Christians to avoid fellowship with insincere persons, urging them to fix their attention upon the living Lord in heaven.

### II Corinthians "Saved To Serve"

Christians are saved to serve

1:1-11 through suffering

1:12-24 by being in the Will of God

2 by being quick to forgive

3 by beholding Jesus Christ in worship

4 through suffering in self-denial

5 through expecting to go to heaven

6 through separation from ungodly influences

7 through diligent repentance

8-9 through liberal generosity

10-11:15 through vigilance against error

11:16-33 through respect for faithful leaders

12 through quiet trust in God's grace

13 through self-examination

## *Galatians*

The epistle to the Galatians was written by Paul as a pastoral letter to be read in the several churches existing in the region of Galatia. The purpose of the letter was to clarify the spiritual process which would produce fruit-bearing conduct.

The natural man readily thinks he must personally produce fruit by his own efforts. Jewish influence gave the impression that keeping the regulations of the law as set forth by the priests, including circumcision, observance of special days, etc., would result in godly living.

Paul pointed out that these Christians had accepted Christ by faith, trusting in the grace of God, and now insists that it is this principle that will produce spiritual fruit. He recognizes the law is useful as a schoolmaster to bring the soul to Christ, but emphasizes that Christ is the end of the law for everyone that believes.

Flesh and Spirit are both in the experience of the Christian but they are contrary to each other. The intelligent believer will set himself to walk in the Spirit and thus be delivered from the flesh.

The classic description of true spiritual experience is Paul's own testimony "I am crucified with Christ yet . . . Christ liveth in me."

### Galatians "Saved By Faith"

Christians are saved by faith, not by works of the law

- 1 This is what Paul preached, and his Gospel was true
- 2 This is what the Old Testament taught
- 3 This is what the Christians had experienced
- 4 This is true about becoming spiritual
- 5 This does not mean one will be careless about his conduct

### *Ephesians*

The epistle to the Ephesians is another of the great doctrinal discussions which Paul wrote to the churches where he had served as pastor. The purpose of the letter seems to be to show the relationships which exist in the new life the believer has in Christ Jesus.

First, Paul emphasizes that all the benefits which come to the believer come directly as a result of what God does. Not only has God forgiven the sins of the believer but He has planned to bring the believer into personal communion with Himself.

This is done by His power in translating the believer out of this world into eternal relationship with Himself. God gives His own eternal life to the believer, and also gives His Holy Spirit to bless and to help the Christian.

By having His One Spirit dwelling in each believer God builds all believers into a unity like a body, of which Christ Jesus is the Head and the believers are the members. The believers are also members of one another. This unity consists of the members who have been regenerated by the Spirit and adopted as children of God into one family.

Because these relationships are real the believers should be careful to walk in the Spirit, seeking to find ways to bring their personal conduct into peaceable, loving fellowship with each other.

### Ephesians "The Church Is the Body of Christ"

- 1 The Church has all spiritual blessings through Christ
- 2:1-18 The Church grows through understanding the work of Christ
- 2:19-3:12 The Church is built by God through faith
- 3:13-4:6 The Church is strengthened by Christ dwelling in the heart
- 4:7-16 The Church should be edified by the faithful service of its members
- 4:17-6:9 The Church should walk pleasing to God
- 6:10-24 The Church should be on guard against Satan



## *Philippians*

The epistle to the Philippians was written by Paul to a company of new converts who were in danger of discouragement because of his own fate, and also in danger of being persecuted. Paul realized what a shock it would be to these young converts to see himself, the Apostle of Jesus Christ, the King of Kings, the Lord of Glory, arrested as a common criminal, and kept in jail with the possibility of being put to death.

Paul evidently wrote to strengthen their spirit and to bolster their morale. He stated his own conviction that God would certainly watch over them. Then he pointed out that his being put in prison had actually spread the Gospel. In fact, if they killed him, folks would talk about Jesus Christ to whom he personally witnessed; and if they did not kill him, he would talk about Jesus Christ. So in either way the name of Jesus Christ would be spread abroad.

So Paul wrote to strengthen them. He praised them for their record in witnessing. He urged them to humbly and meekly promote goodwill among the brethren, by having the mind of Christ as their own attitude. He urged them to be humble like Jesus of Nazareth, considerate of each other like Timothy, zealous in service like Epaphroditus, and consecrated like Paul himself. By praying about everything they could live with confidence.

### Philippians "Blessedness Is in Fellowship with Christ"

- 1 Paul exhorts believers to be of good cheer
- 2:1-4 Paul urges believers to keep a godly frame of mind
- 2:5-18 – with humility – as Jesus Christ
- 2:19-24 – with concern for others – as Timothy
- 2:25-30 – with zeal – as Epaphroditus
- 3:1-21 – with consecration – as Paul
- 4:1-5 Paul urges believers to rejoice
- 4:6-7 – in prayer
- 4:8-9 – in virtue
- 4:10-23 – in contentment

## *Colossians*

The epistle to the Christians who lived at Colossae was written probably about the time of the letter to the Ephesians. The general structure of these two epistles is very similar, and the contents of each are much alike.

It is commonly thought that in the city of Colossae there had been considerable teaching spread abroad that would deny that Jesus of Nazareth was actually God. These teachers would accept Him as worthy of worship and esteem, but would not want to acknowledge Him as God.

Paul makes a special point of emphasizing the preeminence of Christ in all creation, leaving no room for any reduction of His significance. He then goes on to emphasize that it is the fact that the living Lord is active in the believer that makes living by faith possible.

Paul recognizes there are teachers who attempt to produce godly living by ascetic self-discipline and mystic spiritual activities. He has no hesitation to repudiate these.

He calls upon believers to focus their interest and their attention upon the invisible realities of heaven and urges them to live humbly and faithfully, putting their whole trust in Christ.

## Colossians "Christ Is Over All"

- 1:1-13 Salutation
- 1-14-20 Doctrine - Christ is preeminent in all the universe
- 1:21-29 - Christ is in the believer
- 2:1-23 - Christ is all the believer needs
- 3:1-4 Duty - set your affection on things above
- 3:5-9 - put off the old
- 3:10-4:6 - put on the new
- 4:7-18 Greetings

## *I Thessalonians*

I Thessalonians was written by the Apostle Paul to set out to the believers in Thessalonica what is involved in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Such description would help these converts from heathenism to understand both their privileges and their possibilities as Christians.

Paul had preached in Thessalonica for about three weeks when intense opposition from the Jews caused him to leave. Doubtless there had been little time to show what happens when a person accepts Christ, but in this epistle there is a full discussion.

Paul points out that the life in Christ begins when the soul accepts the Gospel of Jesus Christ as he himself preached. He took himself as an example of true evangelism and reminded them that his message was not approved by everyone. He had been shamefully treated by hostile opposition but he had persisted in preaching that they might hear and believe.

It was their response by faith that brought them into the grace of God. When they realized how God loved them, their hearts were filled with love toward God and man, so that their conduct was marked by self-control that they might help others. Death bringing separation from loved ones need not be feared because such separation would be only temporary. The Christian has the prospect of living forever with Christ and His own.

## I Thessalonians "The Model Church"

- 1 This Church had been established by model evangelism
- 2 Paul had served as a model pastor
- 3 Their faith was firmly centered in Jesus Christ
- 4:1-12 Their love led them to sanctification in conduct
  - clean
  - controlled
  - industrious
- 4:13-5:28 Their hope was grounded in the return of Jesus Christ

## *II Thessalonians*

II Thessalonians was written by Paul to correct some false impressions which may have been caused by his first epistle. In his first letter to the Christians in Thessalonica, Paul emphasized the truth that Jesus Christ is coming again, at which time there will be an end to this world as it now exists. Some of the believers got the impression this return would be so soon that normal activities which required long-range planning could well be ignored.

This resulted in careless, irresponsible neglect of normal duties, so that the reputation of Christians was being dishonored among men.

Paul stated clearly that the Lord would return in person from heaven "with His mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." But he urged the Christians not to be disturbed over any idea this return would occur immediately. He pointed out that a certain degree of apostasy must first take place.

In the meantime, believers should keep in mind the will of the Lord that in love toward God and Man they should maintain good works to the glory of the Lord.

### II Thessalonians "The Return of the Lord"

1:1-12 The Lord Jesus Christ will return

2:1-8 The return of the Lord should not excite people as to the time of the event

2:9-17 The return of the Lord can easily be mistaken

3:1-18 The cure for mistaken opinions about the return of the Lord is diligent work

## *I Timothy*

The first epistle to Timothy was written by the Apostle Paul to his young fellow-laborer, who had been left in charge of the church at Ephesus. In the plan of God, believers are helped in their living experiences by the ministry of certain persons to whom the Holy Spirit gives some gift of ability to help others. Thus a Christian is ready to look for and to listen to guidance as he faces the problems of living. This very disposition to heed the word of leaders makes it possible there may be mistakes in conduct resulting from wrong guidance. For this reason, Paul put Timothy in charge of the church at Ephesus and commissioned him to keep the people from error and loss.

Paul bluntly warned Timothy that false teachers have become active who base their doctrine upon their own interpretations of Scriptures in which they stress the law of God. Paul admits the law has a valid function to expose sin, but points out it is utterly invalid to produce spiritual life, and uses his own testimony as evidence. It is not interpreting the law that will help the soul, but yielding one's self into the love of God.

After urging that Christians be diligent in praying for all persons, Paul instructs Timothy both as to godly character in the examples of the church leaders and as to ungodly practices he should avoid.

## I Timothy "The Right Ways of Christian Living"

- 1 Right Doctrine
- 2 Right Practices
- 3 Right Order
- 4 Right Living
- 5 Right Conduct
- 6 Right Attitude

## *II Timothy*

The second epistle to Timothy is even more definite in warning against errors and fruitless practices which threaten the spiritual life of believers. Paul begins his letter by emphasizing the sound origin of Timothy's faith. When error is common, it is very important that a Christian keep in mind those things which belong to the basic convictions which he has in his heart. In Timothy's case, he had the great advantage of having a believing grandmother and a believing mother. Paul himself was encouraged about the future of Timothy's own faith when he remembered the faith in his family. Paul urged Timothy to remember with all appreciation this origin of his own confidence, and then instructed him how to develop and to strengthen his own grasp of the truth. Timothy should be bold to hold fast the form of sound words which he had learned from Paul. He should be willing to discipline himself even as he studied the Scriptures to be able to hold himself to a straight course in his understanding. By avoiding foolish questions and turning away from vain, foolish persons, he should remember what he had learned from the Scriptures and should definitely preach the Word at all times in every situation.

## II Timothy "Preach the Word"

- 1-2 Exhortation
- 3 Warning
- 4 Confidence in the face of death

## *Titus*

The epistle to Titus was written by Paul the Apostle to a young minister who has been placed in charge of a congregation of new converts in a situation that made godly living difficult to achieve. This is the only instance in Paul's writings where he comments on conditions in the community that could affect Christians. It is true that he outlines definite characteristics which should be maintained by the leaders, but this is not much different than the guidance he gave to Timothy. Such could be common spiritual problems wherever natural persons become believers in Christ.

But when he comments on the native traits of the Cretans and implies these would call for strict discipline, he opens the door to see that community customs can affect the reception of the Gospel. The conclusion is clear: when converts are won to believing in Christ Jesus in a community where the

common attitude is lax and careless, believers need to be urged to be grave and sincere in their personal commitment to the Lord who gave Himself to die that they might have eternal life.

## Titus "Church Order"

- 1 Qualifications and Duties of Church Officers
- 2-3 Instructions in Practical Godliness

### *Philemon*

The epistle to Philemon is a striking example of the kind of pastoral work a minister of the Gospel would do among the Christians under his care. Paul wrote to a fellow believer who was active in witnessing for Christ to exhort him to act in a certain way toward one of his own servants.

The fact seems to be that one of the slaves belonging to a Christian called Philemon had committed theft and then had run away as a fugitive. The slave was Onesimus. In his travels he came to Rome, where he met Paul, and was converted to accept Christ Jesus. As a regenerated child of God, he was guided by Paul to return to his master and resume his service from which he had fled.

Paul then wrote this letter to Philemon, urging him to receive the penitent Onesimus and reinstate him without punishment. Paul offered to reimburse Philemon for whatever loss he had suffered because of the theft by Onesimus.

Paul grounds his appeal on the fact that such grace on the part of Philemon would be consistent with the Gospel of Christ, and would glorify the name of Christ, who had given Himself for Philemon.

### Philemon "An Appeal for Charity"

A personal letter to a godly, generous Christian requesting charity on behalf of a converted runaway slave.

### *Hebrews*

The epistle to the Hebrews is a very important discussion of the truth that believers in Jesus Christ should exercise their faith to the achievement of complete consecration. The origin of the title is obscure because there is no reference to Jewish ideas as such in the letter itself.

The whole line of thought focuses attention upon the danger that believers who have accepted Christ and know they have been forgiven, may stop short of personal commitment to communion with the living Lord and to obedience in His will that they might bear fruit to the glory of God.

The epistle is developed in interpretation of Old Testament Scriptures which showed the truth in the events which occurred in the history of Israel. Salvation is a movement with a beginning in the turning to Christ which we call "conversion," and with an end in the communion with Christ which we call "consecration."

Israel began by coming out of Egypt as led by Moses, but later provoked God at Kadesh Barnea by not entering the land as directed by Moses because of unbelief. This inglorious fate was possible in the experience of a Christian but could be avoided if the believer would be diligent to respond in obedience to have fellowship with Christ in complete self-denial and in looking for the blessing of the Father in communion with Him.

### Hebrews "The New Covenant Is Better"

- 1-2 Because Jesus Christ is better than angels
- 3-4 Because Jesus Christ is better than Moses
- 5-6 Because Jesus Christ is better than Aaron
- 7 Because Christ's priesthood is better than Levi
- 8 Because the promise in the New Covenant is better
- 9 Because heaven is better than the tabernacle
- 10 Because the New Covenant means obedience from the heart
- 11-13 Because the New Covenant works by faith

### *James*

James is an epistle written to Christians scattered out from Jerusalem, in which instruction is given to guide believers into fruitful living. There is no one problem held up for interpretation nor for solution. The general tone is that of giving guidance so that effectual living can be the result.

This letter is very much like a gardener's manual in which there are many items mentioned that could be hindrances to spiritual life but which could be handled to remove their threat to blessing from God. Just as a gardener has weeds to hoe and branches to prune, so a Christian may find there are things a believer might do that would hinder blessing, and things he ought to do if he wants blessing.

James did not consider such hindrances to be necessarily evil. Often the removing of the hindrance would prove to be the very thing that would advance spiritual operation in his soul.

James felt that believing in the Lord included not only confidence in what Christ had done, but also obedience to what God wanted the believer to do. Whereas God is the One who does all things that are a blessing to the soul, it is also true that the believer must commit himself into obedience to the living God.

### James "Real Faith Is Practical"

- 1 The Work of Patience
- 2 The Work of Faith
- 3 The Work of Wisdom
- 4 The Work of Humility
- 5 The Work of Prayer

## *I Peter*

I Peter is an epistle written to Christians living in Asia Minor to guide them and to comfort them when they will be persecuted. To become a believer, a person must deny self and accept the will of God in all circumstances and situations. Accepting Christ means that the person is deliberately giving up his own freedom of choice to do as he pleases in order to yield himself into obedience to the will of the living Lord. The natural suffering involved is aggravated by other persons who deliberately do what will bring hurt and distress to the Christian. Peter knew that such would be the fate of many believers, and he wrote to strengthen their faith and to comfort them with assurance of the goodness of God.

Persecution will come, but God is faithful to keep the believers through all trials by His grace. Suffering may be disheartening, but God has promised to save all who trust in Him. The Christian should be an obedient child and keep himself entirely committed to obedience to the will of God. He should feed on the Word of God that his faith might grow. He should realize that God has plans to use him in His will and so remember that he belongs to God. The Christian should be especially careful to avoid seeking his own satisfaction but should submit himself in every circumstance as in the will of God.

Suffering will come, but it is better to suffer while doing the will of God than to suffer because one is willful and disobedient. What happens in this world is not the final nor the eternal outcome for the Christian: God will watch over him here and bless him richly forever.

### I Peter "Grace Leads Into Right Conduct"

- 1: 1-12 Thanksgiving for the blessings of Grace
- 1:13-5:14 Instructions for believers to have right relations
  - 1:13-25 – toward God
  - 2:1-12 – toward self
  - 2:13-5:14 – toward others
    - 2:13-17 – in civil matters
    - 2:18-25 – in industrial matters
    - 3:1-7 – in domestic matters
    - 3:8-4:19 – in general affairs
    - 5:1-14 – in Church activities

## *II Peter*

II Peter is an epistle written to Christians who are faced with the dangers of having no strength in themselves and of being misled by false teachers who promote error. Becoming a Christian begins by accepting Christ Jesus by faith, but this involves the believer in obedient response to the living Lord in all phases of his personal experience. Peter writes to urge Christians to persist in their commitment to obey the will of God.

Believing the Gospel is primary and basic, but this is more than mental assent to accept the message as true: it means that the believer yields himself into the will of God in all things. He will not only believe the facts about what Jesus Christ has done, is doing and will do, but he will act in such a way that his conduct is good, intelligent, self-controlled, steadfast and showing godliness, brotherly kindness

and charity. In this way he need never fear the danger of being "barren nor unfruitful," but he can expect the full blessing of God.

The Christian can be encouraged by remembering the testimony of the apostles who personally saw and knew Jesus of Nazareth. He can also be strengthened by noting the Scriptures which were written for his learning.

False teachers will beset the believers with deceitful ideas, but the Christian can remember that God is able to save him from all such perils.

In fact, God will in due time judge this whole world to destroy it, but He will bring a new heaven and a new earth for the believer.

## II Peter "Healthy Spiritual Living"

- 1 Progress in Christian living is possible
- 2 False teachers are a real peril
- 3 The second coming of Christ is important

## *I John*

I John was written to Christians to encourage them to commit themselves without misgivings into the love of God as manifested in Jesus Christ. This letter has special meaning for any soul who is troubled about not really being saved.

John begins by reminding his readers that he personally saw, knew and walked with the incarnate Word of God. He knows that fellowship with God is possible and that anyone who is willing to come to the light will be accepted of God.

Sin is the first great threat to the assurance of a Christian but it can be removed. When the believer confesses his sin, God forgives and cleanses him through the blood of Christ. Sin is wrong and a Christian should not commit sin; but the living Lord in heaven now is interceding on behalf of the believer, and God will keep the Christian in His mercy and grace.

The believer is called to share in the glory of communion with God, and he can be sure that God will be faithful to His promises. The Christian should not allow his own doubts to hinder his complete trust in God. If the believer will act in love toward God and toward man, he will know in himself that he is accepted by God.

## I John "Salvation Is Real"

Those who have eternal life will live

- 1 – in light
- 2 – in righteousness
- 3-4 – in love
- 5 – in faith

Those who live such lives may know

- 5:11-13 – they have eternal life
- 5:14-15 – their prayers will be answered



5:16-19 – God's people do not live in vain

5:20 – they belong to Christ

## ***II John***

II John is a letter written to a Christian who was in danger of being deceived by false teachers.

It is significant to note that in the New Testament there is a distinct note of warning against error and deception in each of the "second" epistles.

I Corinthians is a letter of correction in which Paul discusses one blemish in conduct after another in the life of the Christians in Corinth. Such admonition could seem heavy to bear by the young Christians who were so gifted as the Corinthian Christians were.

II Corinthians is written by Paul to emphasize that he really had the authority as an apostle to write as he did. He argues evidence of his apostolic role which the Corinthians themselves knew to be true. Then he openly charges those who oppose him as being "Ministers of Satan" and concludes by reminding the Corinthians of his own sufferings in service which showed his integrity.

I Thessalonians is the outstanding letter dealing with the return of the Lord. But His precious truth had been perverted to mislead some believers.

II Thessalonians is a sharp rebuke to any who will misrepresent the truth of the return of the Lord.

I Peter was written to encourage Christians to be holy in conduct in the face of peril or persecution.

II Peter is a sharp denunciation of false teachers who apparently were leading Christians to think that empty formalism would be enough.

I John was written to show Christians the blessedness of communion with the living Lord.

II John warns Christians to have no dealings whatever with anybody who teaches anything else.

### **II John "Beware of Error"**

## ***III John***

III John is a letter of commendation written to a Christian who had helped other believers by his hospitality.

To be a Christian in this world is to be a stranger in a strange land. Because the believer lives his life in the conscious presence of God and refers all his own acts and decisions to the living Lord for guidance and approval, he is often looked upon as an alien by those who do not share his faith. This hostility will often result in a Christian being bereft of the common courtesies and aids, which men commonly share with each other. For this reason it is so important that Christians who can do so should help Christians who are in need.

This is especially true in the case of those who devote themselves to the ministry of the Gospel. It is not to be expected that servants of the Gospel will be supported by men who do not believe in the Lord. This means that Christians should be willing and ready to help in supporting those who teach and preach the Gospel.

Because the minister of the Gospel is so dependent upon such support from the brethren, it is particularly hard when any oppose him.

### III John "Help the Good Ministers"

#### ***Jude***

Jude is an epistle of warning written to Christians to bring to their attention the danger of being misled by some within their own company who are not obedient to the will of God. It seems that Christians are particularly in danger because they may be so unsuspecting. When a soul comes to Christ in repentant confession of his own sin and commits himself humbly in all sincerity to a genuine obedience, he is like a child. He is inclined to think others will be as sincere as he is. But unfortunately this is not true. The Scriptures record the dangerous fact that deceivers mingle with believers and are a threat to their blessedness.

Jude bluntly warns Christians that such deceivers are to be found among believers. He points out that such has been the case in the history of God's people and then reminds them that God will judge and destroy such false leaders and all who follow them. Jude calls upon true believers to beware of such subversion and with great care to keep themselves "in the love of God looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Jude urges Christians to be charitable and quick to rescue such as may be victims of such deception. This note of warning is most salutary to all believers.

#### Jude "Avoid False Prophets"

1:1-16 The Fate of Wicked Disturbers

1:17-25 How to Contend for the Faith

#### ***Revelation***

The Revelation is the last book in the Bible and is for many persons the most difficult to understand. It is the one book which promises blessing to those who read and hear and "keep those things which are written therein." Despite the admitted obscurity of much that is in it, this book has always fascinated Christians and many times in the history of the Church has provided comfort and encouragement to Christians facing hardship and persecution.

This book was written by John on the isle of Patmos, where he was a prisoner because of his evangelical witness and ministry. It was addressed to congregations in Asia Minor who were in danger of severe persecution.

The body of the book is a report of certain visions in which John was shown the glory of the living Lord, the will of the Lord about the Churches' named in the vision, the scene in heaven where the Lamb that was slain sits on the throne, and the great conflict between Satan and the Word of God over the souls of men who believe in the grace of God, which culminates in final, complete victory by the Son of God to the glory of God.

## The Revelation "The Glorious Future"

- 1 Introduction - The Vision of The Glorified Son of God
- 2-3 The Seven Churches
- 4-7 The Seven Seals
- 8-9 The Seven Trumpets
- 10-14 The Seven Mystic Figures
- 15-18 The Seven Vials
- 19-21 The Final Conflicts and Triumph
- 22 The Epilogue – Conclusion with Invitation