

For Adults Ages 18 and Up

Adult Bible Class



Winter Quarter

December | January

February 2023-24

Adult Bible Class

WINTER QUARTER

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Union
Gospel
Press

Edited and published quarterly by
THE INCORPORATED TRUSTEES OF THE
GOSPEL WORKER SOCIETY
UNION GOSPEL PRESS DIVISION

Rev. W. B. Musselman, Founder

Price: \$4.69 per quarter*

*shipping and handling extra

ISBN 978-1-64495-404-1

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We Are Alive!

BY MATTHEW ROBINSON

Scripture has a strong word for the state of humanity apart from Christ: *dead*. Not merely sick. Not merely misguided or in need of correction. Dead.

Praise God that Scripture has an even stronger word for the state of those who are in Christ: *alive!* This eternal life that God has breathed into dead sinners encompasses not only our future life in heaven but also our life here and now.

This quarter we will seek to understand the nature of that new life in Christ. We will explore biblical principles for living it out as well as practical ways we can apply those principles today.

Unit I focuses on the nature of our new life in Christ, showing the stark contrast between our old life and our new life. Before, we were dead in our sins and unable to please God in anything we did (Eph. 2:1-3). Now, we can please Him in both life and death (lesson 1). We are able to rejoice even in our greatest trials, because Christ's glory has become our greatest goal (Phil. 1:12-26).

Everything that we considered "gain" in the past is now "loss" when compared with knowing Christ and His power in our lives (Phil. 3:7-21; lesson 2). The sinful passions we once held in the highest esteem, we now understand are doomed for destruction. What we once considered "glory," we now recognize as "shame" (vs. 19).

Before, we were governed by fear; now, we are governed by peace (Phil. 4:4-18; lesson 3). God has given us free access to His throne of grace that we might cultivate that peace with Him

through prayer (vss. 6-7). Even in our trials we can pray "with thanksgiving"; as we depend on the Lord, He will strengthen us for every circumstance (vs. 13). Because "to live is Christ" (1:21), we can be content in Him. A believer in the worst of circumstances is infinitely better off than an unbeliever in the best of circumstances (cf. Ps. 37:16; 73:1-18).

How is all this possible for human hearts that were formerly imprisoned in darkness? The answer is in the Christmas message (lesson 4): In the incarnate Son, the light came down from heaven and scattered the darkness (John 1:1-5). For all who do not receive Him, exposure to the light leads to judgment. But for all who do receive Him, the light of Christ's holiness will purify our hearts. As we expose our lives to that light, the darkness that remains in us will have nowhere to hide. It must flee from the righteous Judge (Eph. 5:1-2, 6-14).

We might recap unit I this way: our life in Christ has been given to us as a free gift, and God promises to finish the work He has begun in us (Phil. 1:6). But that does not mean we can just sit on the sidelines and watch. In fact, Paul instructs us to "work out [our] salvation with fear and trembling," even as God Himself is the one working in us (2:12-13).

Unit II focuses on several key principles we need to keep in mind as we seek to live transformed lives in Christ. The first principle we need to understand is *why* God has chosen to give us new life in Christ (lesson 5). Ephesians

1:3-14 tells us the reason: that we might be “to the praise of his glory” (vs. 12; cf. vss. 6, 14). Glorifying God involves becoming “holy and without blame before him” (vs. 4), that is, being transformed into the image of Christ (Rom. 8:29).

Lesson 6 (Eph. 2:1-10) shows us our responsibility as children of God to respond to His grace. Our transfer from death to life had nothing to do with any works that we did (vs. 9), but as living children of God we are to walk in obedience to our Father by doing the good works that He Himself has lovingly prepared for us to do (vs. 10).

Our growth in holy living does not happen in isolation. It happens within the church (lesson 7). God has broken down every excuse for hostility between Christians by basing His salvation of each one of us on the blood of Christ, not on our own merit. Therefore, we are called to be transformed into the image of Christ not only as individuals, but also as a unified body of believers (Eph. 2:11-22).

Christ gives the church spiritual leaders to aid in this process of growth (Eph. 4:1-16; lesson 8). Ultimately, the role of these leaders is not to take all the work of ministry onto themselves, but rather to *equip* all the saints for that ministry (vs. 12). He has uniquely gifted each Christian so that we will build one another up in love.

Within this broader church context, Paul singles out the family unit as one of the most important contexts for spiritual growth (lesson 9). For those of us with families, mutual self-sacrifice in marriage and patient instruction of children are two primary means of growth in Christ (Eph. 5:21—6:4).

Finally, in unit III, keeping those guiding principles in mind, we turn to some practical instruction for living our new life in Christ.

Lesson 10 (Eph. 6:10-24) reminds us that living for Christ is not only a path to walk; it is a battle to fight. This battle



is a spiritual one—not against people but against demonic powers and sin (vss. 10-12). That means our armor needs to be spiritual. Paul tells us what armor we need in verses 13-20.

Even as we put on those pieces of spiritual armor, let’s not forget the goal of the armor: keeping us focused on the hope of the gospel (Col. 1:15-28; lesson 11) and rooted in Christ (2:6-19; lesson 12).

Finally, one of the primary ways we imitate Christ is by forgiving one another (Phm. 1:4-21; lesson 13). When Paul asks Philemon to forgive his runaway slave by receiving him back as a brother, he expects that Philemon will do even more than he asks (vs. 21). When we truly understand how much God has forgiven us, we will gladly forgive one another as well (cf. Matt. 18:21-35).

SCRIPTURE LESSON TEXT

PHIL. 1:12 But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things *which happened* unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel;

13 So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places;

14 And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.

15 Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will:

16 The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds:

17 But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel.

18 What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.

19 For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your

prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,

20 According to my earnest expectation and *my* hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but *that* with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether *it be* by life, or by death.

21 For to me to live *is* Christ, and to die *is* gain.

22 But if I live in the flesh, this *is* the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not.

23 For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better:

24 Nevertheless to abide in the flesh *is* more needful for you.

25 And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith;

26 That your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me by my coming to you again.

NOTES

To Live Is Christ

Lesson Text: Philippians 1:12-26

Related Scriptures: Acts 28:11-16, 30-31; I Corinthians 3:5-9;
II Corinthians 5:1-9; II Timothy 4:6-8

TIME: A.D. 60-61

PLACE: from Rome

GOLDEN TEXT—“In nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death” (Philippians 1:20).

Lesson Exposition

PUTTING CHRIST'S CAUSE BEFORE COMFORT—Phil. 1:12-14

New ministry for Paul (Phil. 1:12-13). As Paul wrote to the Philippian church, he desired to motivate them to faithful Christian living and service. He pointed to the example of his own life. It is easy for Christians to get discouraged when life gets difficult. Paul knew all about those kinds of pressures and temptations.

As Paul was visiting Jerusalem, he was arrested and imprisoned. Even though the Roman authorities acknowledged that he was innocent, they did not release the apostle. Eventually Paul appealed his case to Caesar, the Roman emperor. After a long voyage to Rome, during which he nearly lost his life, Paul arrived at the capital. There he was placed under house arrest (Acts 21—28).

In looking back on the whole unjust, humiliating ordeal, Paul could easily have become disillusioned and bitter. Instead, he looked past his personal pain to the progress that the gospel had made through his suffering. Instead of using his own comfort as the standard for evaluating his situation, Paul mea-

sured his experiences in terms of how they furthered the cause of Christ.

As Paul examined the circumstances of his confinement, he realized that the Lord had opened up for him an exciting and strategic new ministry that he never could have anticipated. The soldiers who guarded Paul were members of the elite Praetorian Guard, who were assigned to the imperial palace. Paul thus had a mission field in his own house, a captive audience of strategically positioned men who took turns monitoring the apostle.

Paul used the opportunity to tell the soldiers about Christ, thus reaching an audience that the Christian congregations most likely would never have encountered.

New motivation for the brethren (Phil. 1:14). No doubt the first reaction of other Christians to the news of Paul's imprisonment was discouragement. If this leader of the church, the indomitable pioneer missionary, was no longer able to lead, what future did the church have?

As word of Paul's impact on Rome began to circulate, discouragement gave way to renewed courage. Other