

Quarter One: Uniting Heaven & Earth: Christ in Philippians & Colossians

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Lesson 1—Persecuted but Not Forsaken

Sunday: Paul, the Prisoner of Jesus Christ

December 28, 2025

- **Last Week:** Finished Joshua 24
 - Final address of Joshua: covenant renewal ceremony
- **This Quarter, 2026, Q1:** “Uniting Heaven & Earth: Christ in Philippians & Colossians”
 - **Author:** Paul, the apostle
 - **Prison Epistles**
 - Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon: AD 61 – 62 (written during 1st imprisonment of Paul in Rome, under house arrest)
 - Discussion about whether Philippians written from Caesarea (discuss later)
 - **Pastoral Epistles**
 - 1 Timothy, Titus written between Paul’s 1st & 2nd imprisonment
 - 2 Timothy: AD 66 – 67 (written during 2nd imprisonment of Paul, shortly b4 death)
 - **Philippians** (4 chapters)
 - Audience: addressed to Christians in Philippi
 - Philippi = city of 5 – 10,000, became a “small copy of Rome”
 - Enjoyed the privileged status of a Roman colony
 - Evangelized by Paul, Silas, Timothy, Luke (2nd missionary journey)
 - Two early, prominent converts:
 - Lydia, seller of purple
 - City jailer
 - **Colossians** (4 chapters)
 - Audience: addressed to Christians in Colossae that Paul had not met
 - Church in Colossae founded by one of Paul’s converts, Epaphras
 - Colossae overshadowed by neighboring city of Laodicea
 - Colossians & Ephesians are similar
 - Written from similar outline; treating same topics from different vantage point
 - **Themes:**
 - **Philippians**
 - Rejoicing
 - Joy when imprisoned
 - Joy when facing difficult circumstances
 - Humility
 - Christ as our example of love & humility

- Christ = central theme
 - Knowing Christ intimately & totally is the first goal
 - Christ = the content of the gospel
 - Christ = the foundation & assurance of salvation
 - Christ = the reason Christians can rejoice
- **Colossians**
 - Christ = central theme of book
 - Christ is central to Paul's prayer and work
 - Christ is more important than any heresy
 - Christ is central when offering pastoral counsel of how to live & work
 - Dealt with heresy – Paul correcting erroneous teachers at Colossae
 - Who were they?
 - One catalog suggests more than 40 differing opinions
- **Lesson outline:**
 - Christ as uniting Heaven & Earth
 - Plan of salvation is reconciliation back to the Father
 - Jesus = the Ladder stretching from Heaven to earth
 - As Son of man, He redeems us from sin
 - As Son of God, He intercedes for us
 - Our commission, as His disciples, to unite with Heaven in proclaiming this last day message of Rev 14, the three angels' messages.
 - Study chronologically
 - Begin simultaneously in both books
 - Then study Philippians through to end
 - Then Colossians
- **Lesson Author:** Dr. Clinton Wahlen: associate director of the BRI (Spouse, Gina)
- **This Week:** “Persecuted but Not Forsaken”
 - Phil 1:1 – 3 & Col 1:1, 2
 - *Story from lesson: Adventist pastor, imprisoned on false charges, spent 2 years in prison
 - Prison = God-given mission field
 - Preached, passed out literature, conducted communion, baptized prisoners

Memory Text: Phil 4:4 – “**Rejoice** in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!”

The week in brief:

- 1. **Sunday:** Paul, the Prisoner of Jesus Christ (Jill)
 - Various Scriptures – where Paul was imprisoned during Prison Epistles; how to understand God's purpose
- 2. **Monday:** Paul in Chains (John D)

- 2 Cor 4:7 – 12 – how Paul endured trials – even prison
- 3. **Tuesday:** Paul in Philippi (SQ)
 - Acts – Paul’s 2nd missionary journey to evangelize Philippi
- 4. **Wednesday:** Paul and Colossae (James)
 - Col – Paul never evangelized Colossae; his convert, Epaphras brought them the gospel; Philemon also a convert of that city
- 5. **Thursday:** The Churches of Philippi and Colossae (John L)
 - Phil 1:1 – 3 & Col 1:1, 2 – Paul’s address to churches - & early church leadership & organizational structure; Timothy assisted with writing of both epistles

Sunday: Paul, the Prisoner of Jesus Christ

Eph 3:1, Phil 1; Acts 28:16; Eph 6:20; Phil 1:20, Phil 2:17; Phil 1:13; Phil 4:22

- **Prison epistles**
 - Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon
 - Written during 1st imprisonment of Paul in Rome
 - 2 Timothy
 - Written just before Paul’s death, 2nd imprisonment in Rome
- **Location** of Paul’s imprisonment for Prison Epistles
 - Some suggest Ephesus
 - Not much Biblical support for that
 - Caesarea
 - Paul imprisoned there for 2 years (AD 59 – 60)
 - Rome
 - Paul imprisoned there twice (AD 61 – 62 & 66 – 67)
- Paul wrote prison epistles from Rome
 - Lesson, Andrews Bible Commentary, Study Bible, Christian tradition & EGW in Acts of the Apostles identify Paul’s location as Rome
 - **Biblical reasons for Rome:**
 - The Praetorium
 - Phil 1:13 – “so that it has become evident to the whole palace guard, and to all the rest, that my chains are in Christ”
 - The whole palace guard became familiar with the gospel
 - Palace guard = 9,000 elite soldiers in Rome who protected the Emperor & guarded his prisoners
 - Caesar’s household
 - Phil 4:22 – “All the saints greet you, but especially those who are of Caesar’s household.”
 - Indicates Paul was in Rome & in contact with those who served Caesar’s household
 - Threat to Paul’s life
 - Phil 1:20 – “According to my earnest expectation & hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death.”

- Phil 2:17 – “Yes, and if I am being poured out as a drink offering on the sacrifice and service of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all.”
 - Apparent threat to Paul’s life indicates he’s in Rome as no threat existed in Caesarea
- **How did Paul see the big picture, even when in trials?**
 - Eph 3:1 – “For this reason, I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you Gentiles—”
 - Paul wasn’t a prisoner of circumstances or fate or jealousy or backstabbing or from some other person
 - Paul was a prisoner of **Christ Jesus**
 - **Takeaway #1: Recognize Jesus in everything**
 - It’s not about other people
 - It’s not about myself
 - It’s not about circumstances outside of my control
 - It’s not even about Satan & his trials or temptations or attack
 - It’s about Jesus
 - Phil 4:4 – “**Rejoice** in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!”
 - Rejoice = Gk, *khah’-ee-ro* =
 - Occurs 29 times in Paul’s letters; about 1/3 of them in Philippians
 - Theme of Philippians = joy
 - How can we “rejoice always,” even in trials?
 - Our spouse dies
 - Children leave the Lord
 - Lose our job
 - Suffer tremendous, chronic pain
 - **Takeaway #2: Rejoice in Christ**
 - Not the pain & suffering
 - Not our present circumstances
 - Rejoice in Christ –
 - He is our Savior & Redeemer
 - He is our soon-coming King
 - 2 Cor 4:17 – “For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.”