

**Superina Paolo**

**PAUL'S THOUGHT**

**From Paul's letters:  
1&2 Thessalonians, Galatians, 1&2 Corinthians,  
Romans, Ephesians, Colossians,  
Philippians, Philemon, 1&2 Timothy, Titus.  
And from the letter to the Hebrews.**



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**THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH  
AND  
THE UNIVERSAL COMMUNION**

**In the Name of the Father and of His Son, Jesus Christ**



**As, at the beginning, there was perfect harmony between Yahweh and His whole creation, so it will be at the end, when all will live a new life of full spiritual communion with Yahweh and with each other**



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**Philippians, Philemon, 1&2 Timothy, Titus.**  
**And from the letter to the Hebrews.**

**Paul's thought made clear and understandable  
by merging all his letters into one.**

**Text based on:**

The Holy Bible. New International Version

**Notes and explanations based on:**

The Study Bible. New International Version

The Daily Study Bible. William Barclay

Thoughts. Superina Paolo

The Gospel of Jesus Christ. Superina Paolo

**PERSONAL INTRODUCTION:** What follows is not intended and does not want to be a new or original study of the New Testament books, but simply what I have learned from them and of them, then put in writing.

### **Foreword**

When we want to learn and understand the ideas of the apostle Paul, we have to go through many books of the Bible:

- 1- The 13 letters of Paul we know (1&2 Thessalonians, Galatians, 1&2 Corinthians, Romans, Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians, Philemon, 1&2 Timothy, Titus.)
- 2- The letter to the Hebrews (which, even if not written by Paul, is so much an expression of his thought that for many centuries it was attributed to Paul himself.)
- 3- The Acts of the Apostles (which, by supplying an account of Paul's life, allow to define -even if with plenty of doubts- the chronological order of his letters.)

It is clear that the fact of having to read so many books does not help understanding Paul's thought and its development. The aim of the present work is to facilitate that task by merging all the letters into a long one, which would contain most of Paul's ideas in an order congruent with their development.

The main characteristics of this merged version are:

- 1- The text is taken from "The Holy Bible. New International Version."  
Few alterations were necessary because of some of my personal beliefs (as they are expressed in my work "Thoughts,") or other problems:
  - a- To God is given back His Name: Yahweh.
  - b- NIV's "Holy Spirit" is always changed into "Holy Spirit of Yahweh," or "Spirit of Yahweh" or "Yahweh."
  - c- Some words and phrases of not immediate understanding are given differently.
  - d- The word "Lord" is always accompanied by "Yahweh" or by "Jesus Christ," for a better understanding.
  - e- The word "love" (and its derivatives: to love, loved, etc.) is used in many situations and takes on many, even deeply different meanings. In this book it is used only in two cases: 1) In the man-woman relationship. 2) In the parents-children relationship. In all other cases, other words are used, depending on the context: affection, fondness, benevolence, goodwill, to be fond of, to cherish, to like, etc.
- 2- Notes and explanations are mainly taken from:
  - a- The Study Bible, New International Version.
  - b- The Daily Study Bible, William Barclay.
  - c- Thoughts. Superina Paolo.
  - d- The Gospel of Jesus Christ. Superina Paolo.

**Note:** For a proper comprehension of some New Testament passages and concepts which do not appear to be "Christian" or "Good News," is important to remember that:

- 1) We usually don't realize how near Christianity was to becoming only another kind of Judaism. All the first Christians were Jews and all their traditions would have convinced them to keep the Good News for themselves, excluding completely the Gentiles.
- 2) All New Testament writers viewed the whole period beginning with Jesus Christ's birth as "the last days." They understood this period to be the "last" of the days because neither former prophecy nor new revelation concerning the history of salvation indicated the coming of another era before the return of Jesus Christ.
- 3) The actual meaning of what they wrote is still too often concealed by considerations derived from Old Testament ideas -it could not have been easy, for the writers of the New Testament Books, to detach themselves immediately and completely from the ideas they grew up with.

**GENERAL INDEX**

	Page
<b>General introduction:</b>	
Foreword	2
Old and New Testament Books	9
Introduction to Paul and his thought:	10
Paul, the man of the two worlds	10
Paul, the Jew	10
Paul, the bridge to the gentiles	10
Paul's theology	10
Paul's thought about Yahweh	10
Paul's thought about Jesus Christy	11
The pre-existence	11
The incarnation	11
The death on the cross	11
The resurrection	12
Timeline of Paul's life	12
The letters of Paul: Introduction and short summaries:	13
First letter to the Thessalonians	13
Second letter to the Thessalonians	14
Letter to the Galatians	14
First letter to the Corinthians	15
Second letter to the Corinthians	16
Letter to the Romans	16
Letter to the Ephesians	17
Letter to the Colossians	18
Letter to Philemon	19
Letter to the Philippians	19
First letter to Timothy	19
Letter to Titus	20
Second letter to Timothy	20
Letter to the Hebrews	20
<b>Paul's merged letters:</b>	
Introduction	(see detailed index) 22
Introduction of himself	(see detailed index) 26
Thanksgiving and prayer	(see detailed index) 31
Praise to Yahweh	(see detailed index) 37
<b>Paul's thought</b>	(see detailed index) 40
Particular addresses	(see detailed index) 163
Benediction and final greetings	(see detailed index) 233

**Alpha-numerical index****Detailed index**

<b>Introduction:</b>	Verses	Page
To the Thessalonians	[1 Th 1:1] [2 Th 1:1-2]	22
To the Galatians	[Gal 1:1-5]	22
To the Corinthians	[1 Co 1:1-3] [2 Co 1:1-2]	22
To the Romans	[Ro 1:1-7]	22
To the Ephesians	[Eph 1:1-2]	22
To the Colossians	[Col 1:1-2]	22
To Philemon	[Phm 1:1-3]	23
To the Philippians	[Php 1:1-2]	23
To Timothy	[1 Ti 1:1-2] [2 Ti 1:1-2]	23
To Titus	[Tit 1:1-4]	23
 <b>Introduction of himself:</b>		
Paul called by Yahweh	[Gal 1:11-24]	26
Paul accepted by the apostles	[Gal 2:1-10]	27
Paul opposes Peter	[Gal 2:11-21]	28
The Lord Yahweh's grace to Paul	[1 Ti 1:12-17]	29
 <b>Thanksgiving and prayer:</b>		
To the Thessalonians	[1 Th 1:2-10] [2 Th 1:3-12]	31
To the Corinthians	[1 Co 1:4-9]	32
To the Romans	[Ro 1:8-10]	33
To the Ephesians	[Eph 1:15-23]	33
To the Colossians	[Col 1:3-14]	34
To Philemon	[Phm 1:4-7]	35
To the Philippians	[Php 1:3-11]	35
To Timothy	[2 Ti 1:3]	36
 <b>Praise to Yahweh:</b>		
To the Corinthians: [Yahweh] the God of all comfort	[2 Co 1:3-11]	37
To the Romans	[Ro 11:33-36][Ro 16:25-27]	37
To the Ephesians: Spiritual blessings in Jesus Christ	[Eph 1:3-14] [Eph 3:20-21]	38
 <b>Paul's thought:</b>		
Yahweh's punishment of the wicked	[Ro 1:18-32]	40
Yahweh's righteous judgment	[Ro 2:1-16]	41
The Jews and the law	[Ro 2:17-29]	42
Yahweh's faithfulness	[Ro 3:1-8]	43
No one is righteous	[Ro 3:9-20]	44
Righteousness through faith	[Ro 3:21-31]	44
Abraham justified by faith	[Ro 4:1-25]	45
Peace and joy	[Ro 5:1-11]	47
Death through Adam, life through Jesus Christ	[Ro 5:12-21]	48
Dead to sin, alive in Jesus Christ	[Ro 6:1-14]	49
Slaves to righteousness	[Ro 6:15-23]	50
An illustration from marriage	[Ro 7:1-6]	51



	Verses	Page
Struggling with sin	[Ro 7:7-25]	52
Life by means of Yahweh's Spirit	[Ro 8:1-17]	54
Future glory	[Ro 8:18-27]	55
More than winners	[Ro 8:28-39]	56
Yahweh's sovereign choice	[Ro 9:1-29]	57
Israel's unbelief	[Ro 9:30-33;10:1-21]	60
The remnant of Israel	[Ro 11:1-10]	62
Ingrafted branches	[Ro 11:11-24]	63
All Israel will be saved	[Ro 11:25-32;12:1-2]	64
The Son superior to angels	[Heb 1:1-14]	65
Warning to pay attention	[Heb 2:1-4]	67
Jesus Christ made like his brothers	[Heb 2:5-18]	67
Jesus Christ greater than Moses	[Heb 3:1-6]	69
Warning against unbelief	[Heb 3:7-19]	70
A Sabbath-Rest for the people of Yahweh	[Heb 4:1-13]	70
Jesus Christ the great high priest	[Heb 4:14-16;5:1-10]	72
The certainty of Yahweh's promise	[Heb 6:13-20]	73
Melchizedek the priest	[Heb 7:1-10]	74
Jesus Christ like Melchizedek	[Heb 7:11-28]	74
The high priest of a new covenant	[Heb 8:1-13]	76
Worship in the earthly tabernacle	[Heb 9:1-10]	77
The blood of Jesus Christ	[Heb 9:11-28]	78
Jesus Christ's sacrifice once for all	[Heb 10:1-18]	80
A call to persevere	[Heb 10:19-39]	81
By faith	[Heb 11:1-40]	83
Yahweh disciplines His sons	[Heb 12:1-13]	86
The resurrection of Jesus Christ	[1 Co 15:1-11]	87
The resurrection of the dead	[1 Co 15:12-34]	88
The resurrection body	[1 Co 15:35-58]	90
The glory of the new covenant	[2 Co 3:7-18]	92
Treasures in jars of clay	[2 Co 4:1-18]	93
Our heavenly dwelling	[2 Co 5:1-10]	95
The ministry of reconciliation	[2 Co 5:11-21;6:1-2]	96
Do not be yoked with unbelievers	[2 Co 6:14-18;7:1]	97
Made alive in Jesus Christ	[Eph 2:1-10]	98
One in Jesus Christ	[Eph 2:11-22]	99
Paul the preacher to the Gentiles	[Eph 3:1-13]	100
A prayer for the believers	[Eph 3:14-19]	101
Unity in the Body of Jesus Christ	[Eph 4:1-16]	102
Spiritual gifts	[1 Co 12:1-11]	103
One body, many parts	[1 Co 12:12-31]	104
Affection	[1 Co 13:1-13]	106
Gifts of prophecy and tongues	[1 Co 14:1-25]	107
Orderly worship	[1 Co 14:26-40]	109
Living as children of light	[Eph 4:17-32;5:1-20]	110
Warning against refusing Yahweh	[Heb 12:14-29]	113
The coming of the Lord Jesus Christ	[1 Th 4:13-18;5:1-11]	115

	Verses	Page
The rebellion before Jesus Christ's coming	[2 Th 2:1-12]	116
Jesus Christ the wisdom and power of Yahweh	[1 Co 1:18-31;2:1-5]	118
Wisdom from the Spirit of Yahweh	[1 Co 2:6-16]	119
The supremacy of Jesus Christ	[Col 1:15-23]	121
Freedom from human regulations...	[Col 2:6-23]	122
Rules for holy living	[Col 3:1-17]	124
Imitating Jesus Christ's humility	[Php 2:1-11]	125
Living to please Yahweh	[1 Th 4:1-12]	126
Warnings from Israel's history	[1 Co 10:1-13]	127
Idol feasts and the Lord Jesus Christ's Supper	[1 Co 10:14-22]	129
The armor of Yahweh	[Eph 6:10-18]	130
Different talents by grace	[Ro 12:3-8]	130
Exhortation to affection	[Ro 12:9-21]	131
You must be fond, for the day is near	[Ro 13:8-14]	133
Exhortations	[Heb 13:1-17]	133
Request for prayer	[2 Th 3:1-5]	135
Forgiveness for the sinner	[2 Co 2:5-11]	135
The weak and the strong	[Ro 14:1-23;15:1-13]	136
Food sacrificed to idols	[1 Co 8:1-13]	139
The believer's freedom	[1 Co 10:23-33;11:1]	141
The rights of an apostle	[1 Co 9:1-27]	142
Instructions on worship	[1 Ti 2:1-15]	144
Propriety in worship	[1 Co 11:2-16]	146
Overseers and deacons	[1 Ti 3:1-16]	147
What must be taught to various groups	[Tit 2:1-15] [1 Ti 6:1-2]	148
Doing what is good	[Tit 3:1-11]	150
Advice about widows and elders	[1 Ti 5:1-22;24-25]	151
Rules for Christian households:		
Wives and husbands	[Eph 5:21-33] [Col 3:18-19]	153
Children and parents	[Eph 6:1-4] [Col 3:20-21]	154
Slaves and masters	[Eph 6:5-9] [Col 3:22-25;4:1]	154
Submission to the authorities	[Ro 13:1-7]	155
Marriage	[1 Co 7:1-40]	156
Expel the immoral brother	[1 Co 5:1-13]	159
Sexual immorality	[1 Co 6:12-20]	160
Lawsuits among believers	[1 Co 6:1-11]	161
<b>Particular addresses</b>		
<b>To the Thessalonians:</b>		
Paul's ministry in Thessalonica	[1 Th 2:1-16]	163
Paul's longing to see the Thessalonians	[1 Th 2:17-20;3:1-5]	164
Timothy's encouraging report	[1 Th 3:6-13]	165
Stand firm	[2 Th 2:13-17]	166
Final instructions	[1 Th 5:12-22]	166
Warning against idleness	[2 Th 3:6-15]	167

	Verses	Page
<b>To the Galatians:</b>		
No other Gospel	[Gal 1:6-10]	168
Faith or observance of the law	[Gal 3:1-14]	168
The law and the promise	[Gal 3:15-25]	169
Sons of Yahweh	[Gal 3:26-29;4:1-7]	170
Paul's concern for the Galatians	[Gal 4:8-20]	171
Hagar and Sarah	[Gal 4:21-31]	173
Freedom in Jesus Christ	[Gal 5:1-15]	174
Life by the Spirit of Yahweh	[Gal 5:16-26]	175
Doing good to all	[Gal 6:1-10]	176
Not circumcision but a new creation	[Gal 6:11-17]	177
<b>To the Corinthians:</b>		
Divisions in the Church	[1 Co 1:10-17]	178
On divisions in the Church	[1 Co 3:1-23]	178
Apostles of Jesus Christ	[1 Co 4:1-21]	180
The Lord Jesus Christ's Supper	[1 Co 11:17-34]	182
The collection for Yahweh's people	[1 Co 16:1-4]	184
Personal requests	[1 Co 16:5-18]	184
Paul's change of plans	[2 Co 1:12-24;2:1-4]	186
Ministers of the new covenant	[2 Co 2:12-17;3:1-6]	187
Paul's hardship	[2 Co 6:3-13]	189
Paul's joy	[2 Co 7:2-16]	189
Paul's defense of his ministry	[2 Co 10:1-18]	191
Paul and the false apostles	[2 Co 11:1-15]	192
Paul boasts about his sufferings	[2 Co 11:16-33]	194
Paul's vision and his thorn	[2 Co 12:1-10]	195
Paul's concern for the Corinthians	[2 Co 12:11-21]	196
Generosity encouraged	[2 Co 8:1-15]	198
Titus sent to Corinth	[2 Co 8:16-24;9:1-5]	199
Sowing generously	[2 Co 9:6-15]	200
Final warnings	[2 Co 13:1-10]	201
<b>To the Romans:</b>		
Paul's longing to visit Rome	[Ro 1:11-17]	202
Paul the minister to the Gentiles	[Ro 15:14-22]	203
Paul's plan to visit Rome	[Ro 15:23-33;16:1-2,17-20]	204
<b>To the Ephesians:</b>		
Final instructions	[Eph 6:19-22]	205
<b>To the Colossians:</b>		
Paul's labor for the Church	[Col 1:24-29;2:1-5]	206
Further instructions	[Col 4:2-9,16]	207
<b>To Philemon:</b>		
Paul's plea for Onesimus	[Phm 1:8-22]	208
<b>To the Philippians:</b>		
Paul's chains advance the Gospel	[Php 1:12-30]	209
Shining as stars	[Php 2:12-18]	211
Timothy and Epaphroditus	[Php 2:19-30]	211
No confidence in the flesh	[Php 3:1-11]	212

	Verses	Page
Pressing on toward the goal	[Php 3:12-21;4:1]	213
Exhortations	[Php 4:2-9]	215
Thanks for their gifts	[Php 4:10-20]	216
<b>To Timothy:</b>		
Warning against false teachers of the law	[1 Ti 1:3-11,18-20]	217
Instructions to Timothy	[1 Ti 4:1-16]	218
Greed for money	[1 Ti 6:3-10]	219
Paul's charge to Timothy	[1 Ti 6:11-21;5:23]	220
Further instructions to Timothy	[2 Ti 1:4-18;2:1-13]	221
A workman approved by Yahweh	[2 Ti 2:14-26]	224
Godlessness in the last days	[2 Ti 3:1-9]	225
Paul's charge to Timothy	[2 Ti 3:10-17;4:1-8]	226
Personal remarks	[2 Ti 4:9-18]	227
<b>To Titus:</b>		
Titus' task on Crete	[Tit 1:5-16]	228
Final remarks	[Tit 3:12-14]	229
<b>To the Hebrews:</b>		
Warning against falling away	[Heb 5:11-14;6:1-12]	230
Final exhortations	[Heb 13:18-23]	232
 <b>Benediction and final greetings:</b>		
To the Thessalonians	[1 Th 5:23-28] [2 Th 3:16-18]	233
To the Galatians	[Gal 6:18]	233
To the Corinthians	[1 Co 16:19-24] [2 Co 13:11-14]	233
To the Romans	[Ro 16:3-16,21-24]	233
To the Ephesians	[Eph 6:23-24]	234
To the Colossians	[Col 4:10-15,17-18]	234
To Philemon	[Phm 1:23-25]	234
To the Philippians	[Php 4:21-23]	234
To Timothy	[2 Ti 4:19-22]	234
To Titus	[Tit 3:15]	234
To the Hebrews	[Heb 13:24-25]	234

**Old Testament Books**

Genesis	Ge	Song of Songs	Ss
Exodus	Ex	Wisdom	Wis
Leviticus	Le	Sirach	Sir
Numbers	Nu	Isaiah	Isa
Deuteronomy	Dt	Jeremiah	Jer
Joshua	Jos	Lamentations	La
Judges	Jdg	Baruch	Bar
Ruth	Ru	Ezekiel	Eze
1 Samuel	1Sa	Daniel	Da
2 Samuel	2Sa	Hosea	Hos
1 Kings	1Ki	Joel	Joel
2 Kings	1Ki	Amos	Am
1 Chronicles	1Ch	Obadiah	Ob
2 Chronicles	2Ch	Jonah	Jnh
Ezra	Ezr	Micah	Mic
Nehemia	Ne	Nahum	Na
Tobias	Tob	Habakkuk	Hab
Judit	Jud	Zephaniah	Zep
Esther	Est	Haggai	Hag
Job	Job	Zechariah	Zec
Psalms	Ps	Malachi	Mal
Proverbs	Pr	1 Maccabees	1Mac
Ecclesiastes	Ecc	2 Maccabees	2Mac

**New Testament Books**

Gosp. Mark	Mk	Philippians	Php
Gosp. Matthew	Mt	1 Timothy	1Ti
Gosp. Luke	Lk	2 Timothy	2Ti
Gosp. John	Jn	Titus	Tit
Acts	Ac	Hebrews	Heb
1 Thessalonians	1Th	James	Jm
2 Thessalonians	2Th	1 Peter	1Pe
Galatians	Gal	2 Peter	2Pe
1 Corinthians	1Co	1 John	1Jn
2 Corinthians	2Co	2 John	2Jn
Romans	Ro	3 John	3Jn
Ephesians	Eph	Jude	Jd
Colossians	Col	Revelatio n	Rev
Philemon	Phm		

**Introduction to Paul and his thought****Paul, the man of the two worlds**

From the beginning of Christianity it was clear that its message was meant for and to be delivered to all men all around the world. But at its beginning Christianity was essentially a Jewish matter so, clearly, one thing was necessary -a man who could somehow be a bridge between the Jewish and the Gentile Greek-Roman worlds. And Yahweh provided this man, Paul, a Jew who was to be the apostle to the Gentiles.

**Paul, the Jew.** In 2 Co 11:22, Paul says, "Are they *Hebrews*? So am I. Are they *Israelites*? So am I. Are they *Abraham's descendants*? So am I." Now, a *Hebrew* was a Jew who could still speak Hebrew in contradistinction to the Jews of the Dispersion who had forgotten their native language for that of their new countries. An *Israelite* was specifically a member of Yahweh's chosen nation. An *Abraham's descendant* was a man of absolute racial purity. Paul's claim was that nobody could claim to be a purer Jew than he. No one could say that Paul had abandoned Judaism because he did not understand it, or did not fully realize what it was. No one could say that Paul was opposed to the principles of Jewish religion because he had misunderstood them or knew them only from the outside.

**Paul, the bridge to the Gentiles.** Paul was brought up in a Gentile city -Tarsus, in the Roman province of Cilicia- and was a proud Roman citizen. He grew up in an atmosphere in which he was as familiar with Greek and Roman thought as he was with the Jewish thought of his own nation. He was a man completely Jewish, and also a man who knew the Romans and the Greeks as few Jews knew them. He was the man prepared by Yahweh to be the bridge by which the Gentiles might come to Yahweh.

**Paul's theology**

Paul's life as an apostle of Jesus Christ was absolutely dynamic for he was involved in continuously changing situations, moving from place to place, facing one error after another, dealing with one heresy after another. He was living in days when the Church was in ferment, long before it had worked out an institutional orthodoxy. As a consequence, his "theology" was not the result of a careful study -an intellectually fully satisfactory system. His theology, his knowledge of Yahweh and of Jesus Christ, was continuously developing, deepening and widening to meet the new situations which the life of the growing Church brought to him.

**Paul's thought about Yahweh**

As a Jew, in a world which believed in many gods, Paul believed in One God, the Creator of everything. Furthermore, for Paul, this One God was Yahweh, the Father. The first statement assures us of Yahweh's power, but says nothing of any interest He can have in men. The second statement assures us of Yahweh's affection towards us, His children.

Paul also believed that Yahweh's act of creation was also an act of self-revelation. In other terms, that Yahweh put so much of Himself into the world that by studying it men -if they have "eyes to see and hearts to understand" (Isaiah 6:9-10)- are able to arrive at Him.

Paul believed that Yahweh's interest in the world did not end with the work of creation, he believed that Yahweh's creation was still going on in the process of the natural world. Creation is the prerogative of Yahweh; the secret of life is with Yahweh; Yahweh doesn't leave things going, left to themselves, He is continually active and at work in the universe which He made.

As such, Paul saw Yahweh's intervention in his own spiritual formation; he saw his life as planned and designed by Yahweh, who set him apart for a special purpose, to become an apostle of Jesus Christ.

In the case of Jesus Christ and his life, Paul saw Yahweh behind every single act of Jesus Christ's life, beginning with his Conception and ending with his Cross and Resurrection. In other terms, Paul saw that Yahweh, with His affection, was behind the whole process of salvation and redemption.

### **Paul's thought about Jesus Christ**

At the beginning of all his letters Paul always clearly refers to Jesus Christ as the Son of Yahweh, showing that he believed that Jesus Christ stood in a unique relationship with Yahweh. And, in his letters, Paul often equates the affection, the gospel, the grace and the work of Jesus Christ and of Yahweh, but he never identifies Jesus Christ and Yahweh.

By writing that "In Jesus Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form" (Col 2:9), Paul clearly states that Jesus Christ is a different person than Yahweh, a person having both a physical, human body -from his mother, a woman- and the divine nature -from Yahweh, his Father.

Further than that, Paul always declares that Jesus Christ is subordinate to Yahweh. He writes, "The head of every man is Jesus Christ, and the head of Jesus Christ is Yahweh" (1 Co 11:3). And, "You are of Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ is of Yahweh" (1 Co 3:23). And, in his picture of the end of things, "When... the Son himself will be made subject to Him [Yahweh]" (1 Co 15:28). The work of the Son is always done in obedience to the Father. Yahweh stands behind every word, action and event in the life of Jesus Christ.

**The pre-existence.** A very important concept in Paul's thought, a concept which is often badly misunderstood, is the so called "pre-existence" of the Son. When he writes of "His [Yahweh's] eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus" (Eph 3:11), Paul actually says that even before the creation of time and of the world, the work of Jesus Christ was in the mind, was part of the plan and the purpose of Yahweh. This means that Yahweh did not begin the redemption of men when Jesus Christ came into this world, but that His redeeming action had been at work throughout all ages; in other terms, that Yahweh did never condemn men but had always been fond of them.

**The incarnation.** Another very important concept in Paul's thought, again too often badly misunderstood, is the so called "incarnation" of the Son. "Incarnation" means that in Jesus Christ Yahweh came into this world, into the physical life of man. The actual explanation is that, apart from Yahweh's genetic contribution in His Son's Conception, when Jesus Christ lived on Earth, between Father and Son developed a very deep spiritual communion, which allowed Yahweh to "see" the world through His Son's human eyes.

**The death on the Cross.** It is clear that for Paul the death of Jesus Christ on the Cross stood at the center of the Christian faith. Paul was certain that Jesus Christ died on behalf of all men, that his death achieved something for men that men by themselves could never have achieved. Paul is clear that it was the death of Jesus Christ which brought reconciliation between men and Yahweh, restoring the lost relationship of intimacy and affection. He writes, "In him [Jesus Christ] we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins" (Eph 1:7). And, "Jesus Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures" (1 Co 15:3). Furthermore, for Paul, Jesus Christ's death was clearly a sacrifice, as "Jesus Christ was fond of us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to Yahweh" (Eph 5:2). The idea here is that the physical death of

Jesus Christ was the fact that saved men from the spiritual death in which their sins had involved them. Jesus Christ's death was an act of Yahweh Himself, by which Yahweh made it possible for the sinner to come home to Him, and for Himself to accept the sinner when he came.

**The Resurrection.** It is obvious that Jesus Christ's Resurrection was for Paul, as it was and is for all Christians, central to the Christian faith. By reading the Gospels, we find that Jesus Christ never foretold his death without foretelling his rising again. He never thought of the shame without the triumph. The humiliation of the Cross and the glory of the Resurrection were integrally and inseparably connected. And Paul thought of Jesus Christ as the Savior who died and the Lord who rose again. He mentions specifically this connection in all his letter. Furthermore, for Paul, the Resurrection was an act of Yahweh, who raised Jesus Christ from the dead; a demonstration of Yahweh's power and of His decision of redeeming all men; the final proof that Jesus Christ was Yahweh's Messiah. To a Jew the Resurrection was the demonstration that, in spite of the way in which the Cross contradicted the accepted idea of Messiahship, Jesus Christ was really and truly The Anointed One of Yahweh.

### **Timeline of Paul's life**

This timeline is derived mainly from the book of Acts (which supplies an account of Paul's life from which is possible to learn the setting for his letters) and shows the sequence of the events, limited to the indication of the year, since exact dating is difficult (at times even the year is not surely known).

Saul at Stephen's martyrdom. AD 35 (Ac 8:1a).  
 Saul persecutes the Church. AD 35 (Ac 8:3).  
 Conversion of Saul/Paul. AD 35 (Ac 9:1-19a).  
 Three years in Arabia. AD 35-38 (Gal 1:17-18; Ac 9:22).  
 Return to Damascus. AD 38 (Gal 1:17).  
 Two-week visit in Jerusalem. AD 38 (Ac 9:26-29; Gal 1:18).  
 Ministry in Syria and Cilicia. AD 38-43 (Ac 9:30; Gal 1:21).  
 From Tarsus to Syrian Antioch. AD 43 (Ac 11:25-26).  
 To Jerusalem with help for the famine. AD 43/44 (Ac 11:30).  
 Herod's death. AD 44, between the trips to and from Jerusalem (Ac 12:19-23).  
 Return from Jerusalem to Syrian Antioch. AD 44 (Ac 12:25).  
 First missionary journey. AD 46-48 (Ac 13:2-14:28).  
 The council at Jerusalem. AD 49/50 (Ac 15:1-29; Gal 2:1-10).  
 Second missionary journey. AD 50-52 (Ac 15:40-18:22).  
 Writing of **1 Thessalonians [1Th]** from Corinth. AD 51.  
 Writing of **2 Thessalonians [2Th]** from Corinth. AD 51/52.  
 Appearance before Gallio. AD 51/52 (Ac 18:12-17).  
 Return to Jerusalem and Syrian Antioch. AD 52 (Ac 18:22).  
 Writing of **Galatians [Gal]** from Syrian Antioch. AD 53.  
 Third missionary journey. AD 53-57 (Ac 18:23-21:16).  
 At Ephesus. AD 53-55 (Ac 19:1-20:1).  
 Writing of **1 Corinthians [1Co]** from Ephesus. AD 55.  
 Writing of **2 Corinthians [2Co]** from Macedonia. AD 55.  
 Writing of **Romans [Ro]** from Corinth. AD 57.  
 Return to Jerusalem. AD 57 (Ac 21:17).



Arrest in Jerusalem. AD 57 (Ac 21:33).  
 Cesarean imprisonment. AD 57-59 (Ac 23:23-26:32).  
 Shipwreck voyage to Rome. AD 59 (Ac 27:1-28-28:16).  
 First Roman imprisonment. AD 59-61/62 (Ac 28:16-31).  
 Writing of **Ephesians [Eph]** from Rome. AD 60.  
 Writing of **Colossians [Col]** from Rome. AD 60.  
 Writing of **Philemon [Phm]** from Rome. AD 60.  
 Writing of **Philippians [Php]** from Rome. AD 61.  
 Release from Roman imprisonment. AD 62.  
 Fourth missionary journey. AD 62-67 (Tit 1:5).  
 Writing of **1 Timothy [1 Ti]** from Philippi. AD 65.  
 Writing of **Titus [Tit]** from Philippi. AD 65.  
 Second Roman imprisonment. AD 67/68 (2 Ti 4:6-8).  
 Writing of **2 Timothy [2 Ti]** from the Mamertime dungeon. AD 67 (2 Ti 4:6-8).  
 Trial and martyrdom of Paul and Peter. AD 67/68.  
 Barnabas or Apollos writes **Hebrews [Heb]** before the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70.

### **The letters of Paul: Introduction and short summaries**

The thirteen letters written by Paul and the letter to the Hebrews -clearly written by a person very close to him- reveal very much about Paul's thought.

Paul's letters were written immediately, openly and sincerely to face some particular and threatening situation. As such, they are absolutely not to be considered moral, religious or theological treatises. Furthermore, it is evident that Paul was thinking only of the people he was writing to and that he had no idea that one day his letters would become fundamental part of Christian Scripture.

Being letters, it is sometimes difficult to understand them. We do not fully know the circumstances and the problems Paul was dealing with. It is only from the letters themselves that we can deduce the actual situation. So, to understand Paul's letters and his thought, we always must first try to understand the situation he was dealing with.

All of Paul's letters, being letters, follow the standard pattern of letters: Greetings, thanksgiving and prayer, main topic, particular addresses and personal greetings.

Paul did not normally write personally his letters but dictated them to a secretary, and only then added his own signature. This fact explains most of the incongruities, as the grammatical mistakes, the strange constructions, the sentences which begin and do not end.

### **First letter to the Thessalonians [1 Th]**

This letter is the first one Paul wrote. He sent it from Corinth (Ac 18:1,11) in the year AD 51 to the Church that he had started in Thessalonica (Ac 16:1-9). Paul had to leave Thessalonica abruptly (Ac 17:5-10) after a brief stay. Recent converts from paganism were thus left with little spiritual support in the middle of persecution. Because he had not been allowed to return to that city, and yet he heard that the Christians there were suffering persecution, Paul wanted them to know of his deep affection and concern for them. Paul's purpose in writing this letter was to encourage the new converts in their trials (vv. 3:3-5), to give instructions concerning godly living (vv. 4:1-8), to urge some not to neglect their daily work (vv. 4:11-12) and to give assurance concerning the future of the believers who die before Jesus Christ returns. Certain perplexing questions about

Christians who have died led Paul to reflect on the Christian's hope. And, in his typical fashion, he spread various instructions on Christian living throughout the letter.

In the first half of this letter, Paul outlines both his joy and deep concern for the Thessalonian Church. In the second half, he discusses their Christian life and he answers their questions about the second coming of Jesus Christ.

The teaching we can get from this letter is: (1) We ought to be happy and enthusiastic about our faith as the Christians in Thessalonica were. (2) The intense affection that Paul showed for these Christians is a model for all pastors to follow. (3) The first question we need to ask in everything we do is: Are we pleasing Yahweh in this? (4) One of the most comforting truths for Christians is that when we die, we fall asleep in Jesus Christ's arms. (5) We should eagerly look forward to the victorious return of our Lord Jesus Christ.

### **Second letter to the Thessalonians [2 Th]**

Paul wrote this brief letter to the Christians in Thessalonica from Corinth (Ac 18:11) in the year AD 51/52, approximately six months after his first letter to them. As the situation in the Thessalonian Church had not changed substantially, Paul's purpose in writing is very much the same as in his first letter to them. He had also to correct some misunderstandings regarding the Christians' hope that had resulted from his first letter. Furthermore, problems concerning the daily work of Christians, evident earlier (1 Th 4:11-12), had intensified and required an answer from Paul.

Most of ch.s 1 and 3 of this letter recall what Paul had written in his first letter to the Thessalonians. Ch. 2, however, is significantly different; it teaches that before Jesus Christ returns, the "man of lawlessness" -the Antichrist- will be revealed.

The teaching we can get from this letter is: (1) Knowing that Jesus Christ is going to return again and defeat all his enemies ought to inspire us to remain firm in the faith. (2) Paul's prediction that there will be opposition to Jesus Christ and his Church until he comes again helps us understand why we experience resistance to the Gospel. (3) Until Jesus Christ returns, we should be diligent in our daily work.

### **Letter to the Galatians [Ga]**

Paul wrote this letter from Syrian Antioch (Ac 18:22) in the year AD 53, to the Churches in the Roman Province of Galatia (Antioch, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe) founded on his first missionary journey (Ac 13:13-14). There were Jew-Christians who believed, among other things, that a number of Jewish ceremonial practices were still binding for the Christian Church. They insisted that Gentile converts to Christianity abide to Jewish rites, especially circumcision. They may have been motivated by a desire to avoid the persecution of Zealot Jews who objected their fraternizing with Gentiles (v. 6:12). They argued that Paul was not an authentic apostle and that he had removed from the Gospel certain legal requirements in order to make the message more appealing to the Gentiles. Paul answered by clearly establishing his apostolic authority and, so, substantiating the Gospel he preached. By introducing additional requirements for justification, his adversaries had perverted the Gospel of grace and were pushing the Gentile converts into the bondage of legalism. It is only by Yahweh's grace through faith in Jesus Christ that men are justified, and it is by faith alone that they are to live their new life in spiritual freedom. The heart of Paul's preaching was that Yahweh justifies us by His grace through our faith in Jesus Christ, not by any works of the law. In fact, Jesus Christ has set us

free from the (rabbinic) law, so that we can serve Yahweh spontaneously under His spiritual guidance. Because some Jew-Christians challenged the content of his preaching, Paul used this letter to defend his message.

The letter to the Galatians is divided in three parts. In the first two chapters, Paul told the story of certain events that changed his life and led to his belief that only through faith we can be restored to a right relationship with Yahweh. Galatians teaches the essential truth that man is justified by faith in Jesus Christ -by nothing less and by nothing more- and that he is sanctified not by legalistic works but by the obedience that comes from faith in the power of Jesus Christ. In the next two chapters, he primarily used the Old Testament to defend that doctrine. In the last two chapters, he discussed the radical implications that teaching ought to make in the Christian's life.

The teaching we can get from this letter is: (1) In order for Yahweh to accept us as sinless and therefore fit for Heaven, we must simply believe in the Lord Jesus Christ; we can never earn our own way into Heaven. (2) If we believe in Jesus Christ, we must consider ourselves as channels through which Jesus Christ acts. (3) We, believers, have the right to call Yahweh our Father. (4) Rigidly following rules and regulations (the way of legalism) in an attempt to become righteous through works, will only lead in the end to the bondage of fear and despair; true freedom comes when we joyfully accept Yahweh's gift of grace and surrender to His spiritual guidance, which produces His fruit within us.

### **First letter to the Corinthians [1 Co]**

When Paul was working out of Ephesus on his third missionary journey (Ac 19), there was regular communication by letters and personal messengers between him and the Church he had started in Corinth (Ac 18:1-17; 1 Co 16:8). Because a number of knotty problems had developed in that Church, Paul sent this letter written about the year AD 55 toward the end of his three years residency in Ephesus, to give instruction and advice.

Paul had received information from several sources concerning the conditions existing in the Church at Corinth: Of the factions that had developed, and of serious moral irregularities. Immorality had plagued the Corinthian assembly almost from the beginning. From vv. 5:9-10 appears that Paul had written previously concerning moral laxness. He had urged believers "not to associate with sexually immoral people." And now he finds necessary to clarify his instructions (vv. 5:10-11) and to urge immediate and drastic action (vv. 5:3-5,13). His chief goal was to encourage unity and affection within the Corinthian believers. Such qualities will never occur without humility and discipline. In addition, as the spiritual father of that young, immature congregation, Paul felt he had to insist on their obedience.

In this letter Paul deals, one by one, with the problems that had developed in the Church at Corinth. Some of them he had heard about from messengers; others had been communicated to him in a letter (1 Co 7:1). The issues being discussed are: Division in the Church, Church discipline, sexual standards, marriage, Christian freedom, women in the Church, spiritual gifts, and doubts concerning the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The teaching we can get from this letter is: (1) The most important quality for a Church is unity among its members. Squabbles and infighting are signs of spiritual immaturity. (2) Unity can never be achieved without an affection that seeks the good of others. (3) No Christian ought to think that he is better than others. Boasting what one has received from Yahweh destroys rather than builds up. (4) Yahweh is not pleased

with a haphazard manner of doing things in the Church; there should be order in the way the Church operates. (5) The Church ought to be concerned about its reputation in society; in its testimony it must bring glory to Jesus Christ, the head of the Church.

### **Second letter to the Corinthians [2 Co]**

Paul sent this letter from Macedonia in the year AD 55, several months after writing his first letter to the Corinthians, after he had left Ephesus for Macedonia (Ac 20:1; 2 Co 7:5; 9:2-4). From 1 Co 16:5-8 we conclude that 1 Co was written from Ephesus before Pentecost (in the spring) and from 2 Co 2:13; 7:5 that 2 Co was written from Macedonia later the same year before the onset of winter. During the interval between the two letters, controversy had grown against Paul, with the “false teachers” challenging his integrity and his authority as an apostle. Because he had announced a change in his itinerary, with the result that he would now pay one long visit instead of two short visits, these adversaries were asserting that his word was not to be trusted. They were also saying that he was not a genuine apostle and that he was pocketing the money they had collected for the poverty-stricken believers in Jerusalem. Part of this second letter, therefore, is Paul’s self-defense. For the Corinthians who accepted his authority he summarized his ministry as well as how much suffering he was enduring for Jesus Christ’s sake. And in two chapters of this letter Paul attempted to raise money for the Church in Jerusalem, a Church experiencing poverty and hardship.

This letter divides into three sections. In the first seven chapters, Paul described both the glory of the Gospel’s message and his experience as a minister of Jesus Christ. In ch.s 8 and 9, Paul attempted to raise money for the poverty-stricken Church in Jerusalem. In the last four chapters, he defended himself against those in the Church of Corinth who did not recognize his authority as an apostle and Church leader.

The teaching we can get from this letter is: (1) Serving Jesus Christ and his Church requires great dedication; it may even involve suffering. However, in each moment of our lives, Yahweh provides the gift of grace to enable us to persevere. (2) Nothing is more glorious than the Gospel of Jesus Christ; yet Yahweh chooses men, as weak and vulnerable as they are, to be channels of that message. (3) Yahweh challenges every one of us to proclaim the message of His affection, revealed in Jesus Christ. (4) The Church should be a community of people who freely share, where those who have been given much give generously to those who have little.

### **Letter to the Romans [Ro]**

Paul wrote this letter in the spring of the year AD 57, when visiting Corinth at the end of his third missionary journey (Ac 20:2-3) and was ready to return to Jerusalem with the offerings from the Gentile Churches for the poverty-stricken believers in Jerusalem (vv. 15:25-28). In this letter, which is a letter of self-introduction to the Christians in Rome, whom he hoped to visit soon (vv. 1:13; 15:23-24), he explained the basic message of the Gospel.

The primary theme of this letter -which is a careful and systematic theological introduction to his ministry- is the Gospel, Yahweh’s plan of salvation for all mankind, Jew and Gentile alike (vv. 1:16-17). It tells also of the right relation with Yahweh (v. 1:17), which includes justification by faith, and of some related ideas as guilt and sanctification. After a brief introduction, Paul wrote the first section (vv. 1:18-3:20) to demonstrate that all men -Jew and Gentile alike- are sinners -condemned before Yahweh- and, so, in need of salvation. Salvation that Yahweh has provided by sending His Son Jesus

Christ to die on the Cross for the sins of all men (vv. 3:21-8:39). This is the principle of Yahweh's grace, by which He regards to be righteous in His sight all who believe in Jesus Christ and in his action of salvation. It is a provision, however, that must be accepted and received by faith -a principle by which Yahweh has always dealt with mankind, as the example of Abraham shows. Therefore, we must accept this gift of Yahweh with faith and live a Christian life. And this grand message of salvation must be proclaimed everywhere, in a program of worldwide mission extended to both Jew and Gentile. Since salvation is only the beginning of the Christian experience, Paul moves on to show that the believers are free from the bondage of sin, law and death -a provision made possible by their spiritual communion with Jesus Christ and Yahweh. Paul then shows that Israel too, though presently in a state of unbelief, has a place in Yahweh's redemptive plan, and that the time will come when "all Israel will be saved" (v. 11:26). After struggling with the problem of the salvation of the Jews (ch.s 9-11), Paul writes down a number of practical suggestions on how to live a Christian life (vv. 12:1-15:13). Then he ends his letter with his travel plans and a chapter of greetings to those Christians in Rome whom he knew.

The teaching we can get from this letter is: (1) We all struggle with the reality of sin in our lives, and none of us can obtain eternal life by anything we do. (2) Yahweh has provided the way of deliverance from sin's bondage by sending His Son Jesus Christ to die on the Cross; through faith in Jesus Christ we receive the gift of eternal life. (3) By Jesus Christ's death and resurrection and by the spiritual help of Yahweh, we can be set free from the power of sin and spiritual death. (4) We as Christians must express gratitude to Yahweh for His saving grace by serving Him in every area of our lives and by being fond of our fellow men. (5) We ought to be particularly concerned about weak Christians, reaching out to them with understanding, support and affection.

### **Letter to the Ephesians [Eph]**

Paul wrote this letter in the year AD 60, when imprisoned in Rome (Ac 24:27; 28:30), to the Church he had started in Ephesus (Ac 19), of which he made a center for evangelism for about three years, and the Church there flourished for some time, but later needed some warnings (Rev 2:1-7). As he lay in chains, he did reflect on Yahweh's plan to rescue the entire humankind from the power of sin and Satan. It is in Jesus Christ and by the power of his Resurrection that Yahweh is accomplishing this plan; He uses that power to give us new life in Jesus Christ and to unite us into one family in the Church.

This letter does not address any particular error or heresy. Paul wrote it to explain in a better way Yahweh's eternal purpose and grace so his readers might appreciate the high goals Yahweh has for the Church. Paul emphasizes that we have been saved, not only for personal benefit, but also to bring praise and glory to Yahweh. The climax of Yahweh's purpose, "when the times will have reached their fulfillment," is to bring all things in the universe together under Jesus Christ (v. 1:10). Then Paul explains the steps towards the fulfillment of Yahweh's purpose. First, Yahweh has reconciled all individuals to Himself saving them with an act of His grace (vv. 2:1-10). Second, Yahweh has reconciled all these saved individuals to each other, through the death of Jesus Christ (vv. 2:11-22), and has united all of them in one body, the Church [This is a "mystery" not fully known until it was revealed to Paul (vv. 3:7-13)].

Even if the Christian's global existence is not merely on an earthly plane, this life is lived out on Earth, where the practical daily life of the believers has to be in accordance with the purposes of Yahweh. The new life of purity and mutual deference stands in

contrast to the old way of life without Jesus Christ (vv. 4:17-6:9). Those who are “strong in the Lord Yahweh” have spiritual victory over the evil one, especially through the power of prayer (vv. 6:10-20).

This letter divides in two major sections. In the first three chapters, Paul outlines his teaching about election, Jesus Christ, salvation and the Church, and concludes with a summary prayer. The last three chapters apply Paul’s doctrinal teachings to the Christian’s personal life.

The teaching we can get from this letter is: (1) Yahweh’s affection for us begun even before the world was created. (2) Jesus Christ is head over the entire world, where there is no power greater than his. (3) We receive salvation from Yahweh by grace alone. (4) In the Church Yahweh expects us to live at peace with each other, demonstrating to the world that we do not bear the hostility that the world does. (5) Yahweh wants our Christian principles to be applied in all our social relationships, especially within the home. (6) By depending on Yahweh, we can win our personal battle against Satan and his hosts.

### **Letter to the Colossians [Col]**

Paul wrote this letter to the Church in Colosse in the year AD 60, during his first imprisonment in Rome, where he spent at least two years under house arrest (Ac 24:27; 28:16-31). He had heard about certain false teachers who were influencing the Church, and he used this letter as a defense of his Gospel.

Paul never explicitly describes the false teaching he opposes in the Colossian letter. The nature of the heresy must be inferred from the statements he made in opposition to the false teachers. Some of the elements of this heresy were: *Ceremonialism* (strict rules about the kind of permissible food, drink, religious festivals and circumcision), *Asceticism* (“Do not do” rules), *Angel worship*, and *Reliance on human wisdom and tradition*. From these elements we can understand that the Colossian heresy was a mixture of an extreme form of Judaism and an early stage of Gnosticism.

Paul’s basic answer to the Colossians heresy revolved around the glorious Jesus Christ, who defeated the powers of darkness by his Cross. To refute the Colossian heresy, he exalts Jesus Christ as the very image of Yahweh (vv. 1:15-17), the head of the Church (v. 1:18), the first to be resurrected (v. 1:18), having the full divine and human nature (vv. 1:19; 2:9), the reconciler (vv. 1:20-22). Jesus Christ is completely adequate (v. 2:10) when, on the contrary, the Colossian heresy is inadequate, a deceptive philosophy (v. 2:8), lacking any ability to restrain the old sinful nature (v. 2:23). Paul concluded this letter with some practical suggestions on Christian living, suggestions that come from the reality of having spiritually “died and being raised” with Jesus Christ.

In the first two chapters of this letter, Paul presents his vision of the Glorious Jesus Christ as his answer to the false views of the heretics in Colosse. The last two chapters outline the practical implications of this vision for everyday Christian living.

The teaching we can get from this letter is: (1) When we believe in Jesus Christ, we are putting our faith in the power of Yahweh, the One God who has made and sustains the entire creation. (2) Faith in Jesus Christ is the only way to true knowledge and wisdom. (3) The Christian life consists not of rigidly following certain practices, but of letting Jesus Christ’s power work through us. (4) Jesus Christ has something to say about our relationships and about every aspects of our life.

**Letter to Philemon [Phm]**

Paul wrote this letter while imprisoned in Rome (Ac 24:27; 28:30), at the same time he wrote Colossians, that is, in the year AD 60. Onesimus, a runaway slave, had contacted Paul in prison, through him had become a Christian and was now willing to return to his master. Paul therefore wrote to the owner, Philemon, a Christian, pleading with him to forgive Onesimus, to take him back without the usual harsh punishment such slaves received and to accept him as a Christian brother.

The teaching we can get from this letter is: Even though we can have the right and the desire to treat someone harshly, a far better way is the road of forgiveness.

**Letter to the Philippians [Php]**

Paul wrote this letter in the year AD 61, when detained under house arrest in Rome (Ac 24:27; 28:30), to the Church he had started in Philippi (Ac 16:11-40). Paul's frequent references to joy that fill the letter show the positive relationship that he enjoyed with this Church. He wrote to encourage the Philippians in their Christian life, giving particular attention to the concept of selfless sacrifice that stands at the center of the Christian faith.

Paul begins this letter by describing his personal circumstances. He continues with numerous exhortations, based on Jesus Christ's example and Paul's own example. He concludes the letter by expressing thanks to the Philippians for having sent him gifts on a couple of occasions.

The teaching we can get from this letter is: (1) Of all the people in the world, Christians have the greatest reason to be happy. (2) Christians ought to follow the example of Jesus Christ and be willing to put aside their own interests in order to meet the needs of others. (3) We should not look back at the mistakes that we have made, but keep looking ahead, with our eyes fixed on Jesus Christ. (4) The gift of Jesus Christ living in our hearts is all we really need to be content. (5) We can achieve any victory through the strength we receive from Jesus Christ.

**First letter to Timothy [1 Ti]**

After Paul was released from prison in Rome (Ac 28:30), he continued his missionary work, traveling part of the time with Timothy and Titus. Paul left behind Timothy as pastor in Ephesus (1 Ti 1:3) while he went to Macedonia, and some time later, in the year AD 65, wrote this letter to encourage Timothy in his pastoral duties, to instruct him how to supervise the growing Ephesian Church and to warn him about false heretic doctrines infiltrating the Church, doctrines that combined Gnosticism, decadent Hebraism and false asceticism. Paul's instructions centered around Church conduct and the establishment of proper order in the Church.

The teaching we can get from this letter is: (1) There is danger of false doctrine today just as there was in Paul's day; we must be sure that it does not gain a foothold in the Church. (2) Church order is important for the Church; Yahweh is not pleased with a haphazard approach to Church conduct. (3) Selecting officers for the Church is a serious business; but those who become elders (overseers) and deacons ought to consider such service a privilege and fulfill their duty responsibly. (4) There is no greater danger to the well-being of the Church than materialism; Yahweh has given us money and possessions to share with others and to use in that part of His Kingdom which is on Earth, not to hoard for our own selfish purposes.

**Letter to Titus [Tit]**

After Paul was released from prison in Rome (Ac 28:30), he continued his missionary work, traveling part of the time with Timothy and Titus. Paul left behind Titus as pastor in Crete (Tit 1:5) to oversee the organization of the Church there. To help accomplish this task, in the year AD 65, from Philippi, Paul wrote this letter of pastoral advice, where Paul gives Titus personal authorization and guidance in meeting opposition, instructions about faith and conduct, and warnings about false teachers. Paul also informed Titus of his future plans for him.

The teaching we can get from this letter is: (1) Yahweh wants people of the highest spiritual character to serve as leaders in His Church. (2) Leaders in the Church should serve as examples for others. (3) Every Christian should be self-controlled in his or her life, eager to oppose sin and to please the Lord Jesus Christ.

**Second letter to Timothy [2 Ti]**

This is Paul's last letter, written shortly before his death (2 Ti 4:6-8), in the year AD 67 in Rome from the Mamertine dungeon. In it Paul warned Timothy of the hard times ahead, due to increasing persecution and the proliferation of false teachers infiltrating the Church. But Paul went on encouraging Timothy to persevere in the Christian faith and in his work as pastor.

The teaching we can get from this letter is: (1) We can be confident that Yahweh's power will enable us to remain firm in the faith, regardless of how strong the opposition may be. We must depend on Him for moral strength. (2) A secure foundation for our faith lies in the inspired Word of Yahweh. Only the Bible gives an adequate basis for knowing the truth of Yahweh and for living a Christian life. (3) We as Christians do not need to fear death, for Yahweh has a crown of righteousness waiting for us.

**Letter to the Hebrews [Heb]**

Though for many centuries this letter was commonly called "The epistle of Paul to the Hebrews," it is clear that Paul was not the author. Even if there is no disharmony between the teaching of Hebrews and Paul's letters, the specific emphases and the writing styles are markedly different. Contrary to Paul's practice, the author of Hebrews does not identify himself. Moreover, v. 2:3 indicates that the author had neither been with Jesus Christ nor received special revelation from the Risen Lord, as had Paul. From the letter itself it is clear that the writer had authority in the Church and was a Jew-Christian well versed in the Old Testament. Probably the author was either Barnabas (suggested by Tertullian in his "De pudicitia" v. 20, written about the year AD 200), the man who accompanied Paul in his first missionary journey, or Apollos, who was associated with Paul in the early years of the Church in Corinth.

Clearly, Hebrews was written before the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in AD 70. In effect, had it been written later, there would have been mention of the Temple's destruction and of the end of the Jewish sacrificial system. Furthermore, the author uses the present tense when speaking of the Temple and of the priestly activities.

This letter was written to a group of Jewish Christians who, because of persecution, were tempted to revert to Hebraism. The author therefore wrote to encourage them to persevere in their faith and to find maturity through dependence on Yahweh the Lord. He reminded his readers of Jesus Christ, who came as the fulfillment of the Old Testament. No person and no institution of the Old Testament is greater than Jesus Christ, for he is the only man Son of Yahweh and he answers to all our needs.



The message of the letter is: (1) All that we need for salvation is found in Jesus Christ and in him alone. We can be confident that he will meet all our needs. (2) Our faith can never stand still; Yahweh wants us to grow and mature in Jesus Christ. If we make no effort to do so, we will certainly slip back into old patterns of thought and behavior. (3) It is a frightening thing to fall away from Jesus Christ, for Yahweh's judgment on the rebellious is severe. (4) Persevering in the Christian faith may be difficult at times, but we receive encouragement through Jesus Christ, through the example of the saints who have preceded us, and through other struggling Christians who testify to the experience of divine grace enabling them to hold fast. (5) If we do experience painful times as Christians, we can be encouraged that Yahweh intends them for our good.

**Merged letters to the Thessalonians, Galatians, Corinthians, Romans, Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians, Hebrews and to Philemon, Timothy and Titus**

**Introduction**

**To the Thessalonians** [1 Th 1:1] [2 Th 1:1-2]

*(1Th 1:1)(2Th 1:1)Paul, Silas and Timothy,*

*To the Church of the Thessalonians in Yahweh the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:*

*Grace and peace to you from Yahweh the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

**To the Galatians** [Gal 1:1-5]

*(Gal 1:1)Paul, an apostle -sent not from men nor by man, but by Jesus Christ and Yahweh the Father, who raised him from the dead- (2)and all the brothers with me,*

*To the Churches of Galatia:*

*(3)Grace and peace to you from Yahweh our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, (4) who gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age, according to the will of [Yahweh] our God and Father, (5)to Whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.*

**To the Corinthians** [1 Co 1:1-3] [2 Co 1:1-2]

*(1Co 1:1-2)(2Co 1:1)Paul, called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of Yahweh, and our brother Sostenes, and Timothy our brother,*

*To the Church of Yahweh in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be holy, together with all the saints throughout Achaia, together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ -their Lord and ours:*

*(1Co 1:3)(2Co 1:2)Grace and peace to you from Yahweh our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

**To the Romans** [Ro 1:1-7]

*(Ro 1:1)Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle and set apart for the Gospel of Yahweh (2)-the Gospel He promised beforehand through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures (3)regarding His Son, who as to his human nature was a descendant of David, (4)and who as to his holy spirit was declared to be the mighty Son of Yahweh by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord. (5)Through him and for his name's sake, we received grace and apostleship to call people from among all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith. (6)And you also are among those who are called to belong to Jesus Christ.*

*(7)To all in Rome who are cherished by Yahweh and called to be saints:*

*Grace and peace to you from Yahweh our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.*

**To the Ephesians** [Eph 1:1-2]

*(Eph 1:1)Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of Yahweh,*

*To the saints in Ephesus, the faithful in Christ Jesus:*

*(2)Grace and peace to you from Yahweh our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

**To the Colossians** [Col 1:1-2]

*(Col 1:1)Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of Yahweh, and Timothy our brother,*

*(2)To the holy and faithful brothers in Jesus Christ at Colosse:*

*Grace and peace to you from Yahweh our Father.*

**To Philemon** [Phm 1:1-3]

**(Phm 1:1)** Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother,

To Philemon our dear friend and fellow worker, **(2)** to Apphia our sister, to Archippus our fellow soldier and to the Church that meets in your home:

**(3)** Grace to you and peace from Yahweh our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

**To the Philippians** [Php 1:1-2]

**(Php 1:1)** Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus,

To all the saints in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons:

**(2)** Grace and peace to you from Yahweh our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

**To Timothy** [1 Ti 1:1-2] [2 Ti 1:1-2]

**(1Ti 1:1)(2Ti 1:1)** Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will and command of Yahweh our Savior and according to the promise of life that is in Christ Jesus our hope,

**(1Ti 1:2)(2Ti 1:2)** To Timothy my dear true son in the faith:

Grace, mercy and peace from Yahweh the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

**To Titus** [Tit 1:1-4]

**(Tit 1:1)** Paul, a servant of Yahweh, and an apostle of Jesus Christ for the faith of Yahweh's elect and the knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness **(2)**-a faith and knowledge resting on the hope of eternal life, which Yahweh, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time, **(3)** and at His appointed season He brought His Word to light through the preaching entrusted to me by the command of Yahweh our Savior,

**(4)** To Titus, my true son in our common faith:

Grace and peace from Yahweh the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior.

**Thessalonians** (1Th 1:1; 2Th 1:1-2)

*Paul.* In ancient times the Greek custom was to begin a letter with the author's name. *Silas.* A leader in the Church of Jerusalem, a Roman citizen. He accompanied Paul on most of his second missionary journey. *Timothy.* He was converted by Paul during his first visit to Lystra (in modern Turkey). Both he and Silas helped Paul found the Thessalonian Church (Ac 17:1-14). To note that they are not co-authors of the letters with Paul. *Church... in Yahweh...* The "in" indicates the spiritual communion that all Christians have with Jesus Christ and Yahweh. *Grace and peace.* A double greeting, as "grace" was the common Greek form of greetings and "peace" the Hebrew one.

**Galatians** (Gal 1:1-5)

*Apostle -sent... by Jesus Christ and Yahweh.* A man specially commissioned by Jesus Christ, that is, by Yahweh, sent on a mission with full authority of representation; an ambassador. Paul uses this title in almost all his letters to establish his authority as Jesus Christ's messenger -an authority that had been challenged (he had not been one of the Twelve, had been a persecutor of the Church and held no official appointment from the leaders of the Church). In other letters he reinforces his authority by adding "by the will" and "by the command of Yahweh," that is, by divine initiative. *Raised him from the dead.* Jesus Christ's Resurrection is the central affirmation of the Christian faith, and it is because Paul had seen the risen Jesus Christ that he was qualified to be an apostle. *Brothers.* All Christians believers are "brothers in Jesus Christ." *Galatia.* The Roman province and an additional area to the south, through which Paul traveled on his first missionary journey (Ac 13:14-14:23). *Present evil age.* The present period of the world's history (characterized by wickedness), in contrast to the age to come. *According to the will of [Yahweh] our God.* The salvation of mankind through Jesus Christ's work is an initiative of Yahweh. *Amen.* The Hebrew form of "Shall it be."

**Corinthians** (1Co 1:1-3; 2Co 1:1-2)

*Our brother Sostenes.* A fellow believer, a brother in Jesus Christ. Perhaps the Synagogue ruler at Corinth who was assaulted by the Greeks (Ac 18:17). If so, he obviously became a Christian -possibly while Paul preached at Corinth (Ac 18:18) or during Apollos' ministry there (Ac 19:1). *Church of Yahweh.* The "assembly," the "community" of believers; each one Church being the local representative of the Universal Church. *Sanctified.* All Christians are saints because they are "set apart" by Yahweh and are "made holy" by being in spiritual communion with Jesus Christ and Yahweh. In spite of the fact that Paul found much in the Corinthian Christians to criticize, he still called them "sanctified" -not because of their conduct, but because they had believed and professed their faith in Jesus Christ's atoning death on the Cross. *Holy.* The believers are declared holy in the sight of Yahweh because of Jesus Christ's substitutionary death for all men and because of the spiritual work of Yahweh. *Saints* [throughout Achaia]. "Saints" is another term for Yahweh's people. The basic idea of the Greek form is "holiness." It means "those who have been set apart as holy to the Lord Yahweh." "Saints" is a designation, not of individual moral purity, but of spiritual union with Jesus Christ and Yahweh. *Achaia.* Greece, distinct from Macedonia in the north. This letter was not intended only for Corinth, but for all Christians around Greece. *All those everywhere.* The Christians belong to a community whose boundaries include Earth and Heaven. *Their Lord and ours.* Jesus Christ is the Master of all men. No man, no Church has exclusive possession of Jesus Christ.

**Romans** (Ro 1:1-7)

*Paul.* When Paul wrote to the Romans he was writing to a Church which he did not know personally and in which he had never been. Because of this he began by giving his own credentials and by setting out in its most essential outline the Gospel he preached. *Servant of Jesus Christ.* The Greek for the word "servant" means both a "slave" who completely belongs to his owner, and a "servant" who willingly chooses to fully serve his master. *Set apart for the Gospel of Yahweh.* For every man Yahweh has a plan. And Yahweh sent Paul into the world to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles. *Beforehand through His prophets.* All the writers of all the Old Testament books prophesied about Jesus Christ. *Holy Scriptures.* The Old Testament. *His human nature... descendant of David.* Jesus Christ was a physical descendant of David through his mother, Mary. *His... spirit... Son of Yahweh.* Jesus Christ was conceived in Mary by the Spirit of Yahweh. His Resurrection is the proof of his divine descent.

**Ephesians** (Eph 1:1-2)

*By the will of Yahweh.* Here Paul not only stresses his authority under Yahweh, but also anticipates the strong emphasis he will make later on Yahweh's sovereign plan and purpose. *Ephesus.* Paul made Ephesus a center for his evangelism for more than two years (Ac 19:10). Again, this letter was intended as a circular letter to several Churches, including the one at Ephesus.

**Colossians** (Col 1:1-2)

*Faithful brothers.* Fellow believers, brothers in Jesus Christ. *Colosse.* A city in Asia Minor (present-day Turkey), evangelized by Epaphras (converted by Paul during his ministry in Ephesus).

**Philemon** (Phm 1:1)

*Prisoner of Christ Jesus.* Twice Paul was imprisoned in Rome, because of his obedience to Jesus Christ. *Philemon.* A Christian living in Colosse or nearby and the owner of the slave Onesimus. *Apphia. Archippus.* Probably Philemon's wife and son. *Church that meets in your home.* Clearly, Philemon's house was the meeting place of local believers.

**Philippians** (Php 1:1-2)

*Philippi.* A prosperous Roman colony. Many of the Philippians were retired military men who had been given land in the vicinity. This explains why there were not enough Jews there to allow the establishment of a synagogue and why Paul does not quote the Old Testament in this letter. *Overseers and deacons.* The only place in Paul's writings where Church officers as a group are singled out as recipients of a letter. The word "overseer" refers to a man who oversees a congregation. The equivalent word from the Jewish background is "elder." The word "deacon" refers to a man who takes charge of the practical necessities of the Church.

**Timothy** (1Ti 1:1-2; 2Ti 1:1-2)

*Yahweh our Savior.* This was a new way of speaking. It was because Yahweh was so much fond of the world that He sent Jesus Christ into the world, for the spiritual salvation of all men. *Christ Jesus our hope.* It is Jesus Christ who in time of distress and suffering gives men the strength to live and, if necessary, to die; the hope of victory over physical death. *According to the promise of life.* Paul, as an apostle, was appointed to preach and explain the good news that eternal spiritual life is available to all who will receive that promise. *True son in the faith* A spiritual disciple of Paul. *Mercy.* Timothy was young, and he had a hard task in battling against the heresies that were threatening the Church. By this word, added to the usual "grace and peace," Paul wishes Timothy to always receive the help of Yahweh in time of need.

**Titus** (Tit 1:1-4)

*For the faith... and the knowledge...* Paul's appointed mission as Yahweh's servant and Jesus Christ's apostle, explained in the following verse. *Hope of eternal life.* Properly the only one being in the whole universe to whom the word "eternal" correctly applies is Yahweh. The offer made to the Christians is nothing less than the offer to share the life of Yahweh, to live for ever in spiritual communion with Him. *Yahweh, who does not lie.* In contrast to the Cretans heretics, who were promoting a false kind of Christianity, going back to Jewish legalism. *Promised before the beginning of time.* Even before the creation of time and of the world, the work of Jesus Christ was part of Yahweh's salvation plan. *His appointed season.* Crucial events in Yahweh's program occur at designated times in history. *His Word.* Yahweh's authoritative message that centers in Jesus Christ. *Titus, my true son.* Titus, like Timothy, was a spiritual son, having being converted by Paul. After introducing Christianity in Crete, Paul left Titus there, to organize the local Church. *Our common faith.* The faith shared by all true believers.

**Introduction of himself****Paul called by Yahweh [Gal 1:11-24]**

**(Gal 1:11)** *I want you to know, brothers, that the Gospel I preached is not something that man made up. (12) I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ.*

**(13)** *For you have heard of my previous way of life in Judaism, how intensely I persecuted the Church of Yahweh and tried to destroy it. (14) I was advancing in Judaism beyond many Jews of my own age and was extremely zealous for the traditions of my fathers. (15) But when Yahweh, who set me apart from birth and called me by His grace, was pleased (16) to reveal His Son in me so that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not consult any man, (17) nor did I go up to Jerusalem to see those who were apostles before I was, but I went immediately into Arabia and later returned to Damascus.*

**(18)** *Then after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to get acquainted with Peter and stayed with him fifteen days. (19) I saw none of the other apostles -only James, the Lord Jesus Christ's brother. (20) I assure you before Yahweh that what I am writing you is no lie. (21) Later I went to Syria and Cilicia. (22) I was personally unknown to the Churches of Israel that are in Jesus Christ. (23) They only heard the report: "The man who formerly persecuted us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy." (24) And they praised Yahweh because of me.*

**(Gal 1:11-12)** *The Gospel I preached.* That salvation is for all men and is received by faith in Jesus Christ. *Not something man made up... I received it by revelation.* Paul strongly affirms that the Gospel he was preaching came to him directly from Jesus Christ. That was a big claim to make and it demanded some proof. For that proof Paul had the courage to point to himself and to the radical change in his own life.

**(1:13-14)** *My previous life in Judaism.* The Jewish faith and way of life, which Paul had strictly followed. *I persecuted...* Paul had been a strong persecutor of the Christian Church.

**(1:15)** *But when Yahweh...* Paul had been a fanatic of the law, a persecutor of those who were leaving the Jewish traditions, until Yahweh's intervention in his life. *Yahweh... set me apart from birth...* Yahweh's intervention was part of His plan of salvation.

**(1:16-17)** *So that I might preach...* Paul knew that he had been chosen for a particular task, to bring Christianity to the Gentiles. And he always thought of himself as chosen not for honor but for service. *I did not consult... nor did I go up to Jerusalem...* By these words Paul defends and proves the Gospel he was preaching. He did not get it from men (not even from the Twelve); he got all of his knowledge directly from Yahweh through Jesus Christ. *I went... into Arabia.* Here Paul does not speak of his blindness and of how he got his sight back (Ac 9:12-22), he only says that for a while he went away -to Arabia- to be alone, to have the possibility of thinking about what had happened, and of speaking with Yahweh before to begin and speak to men. *Later returned to Damascus.* Paul had been on his way from Jerusalem to Damascus to wipe out the Church there when Yahweh stopped him (Ac 9:1-9). And later he began his missionary work there, in Damascus, in a very difficult place, where all people knew what he had been.

**(1:18-20)** *After three years, I went up to Jerusalem.* Three years after his conversion, Paul went to the most dangerous place, Jerusalem (Ac 9:26-30). There, his former Jewish friends would be out for his blood, because to them he was a renegade. And the Christians, his former victims, would ostracize him, unable to believe that he was a

changed man. Anyway, after having been introduced to Peter and James by Barnabas (initially the only one who believed to him), Paul went all around Jerusalem, preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ and making everybody aware that his life had changed (Ac 9:26-30).

**(1:21-23)** *Later I went to Syria and Cilicia.* By his preaching in Jerusalem Paul put his life in serious danger, so much that his new friends had to help him escape, and he went to Tarsus, his native hometown (Ac 9:26-30). *Unknown to the Churches of Israel...* Paul did not have the time nor the possibility of visiting all the Christian Churches which were developing in Israel.

**(1:24)** *They praised Yahweh.* So doing, Peter and James recognized Paul's right of preaching the Gospel.

**Paul accepted by the apostles** [Gal 2:1-10]

**(Gal 2:1)** *Fourteen years later I went up again to Jerusalem, this time with Barnabas. I took Titus along also. (2)I went in response to a revelation and set before them the Gospel that I preach among the Gentiles. But I did this privately to those who seemed to be leaders, for fear that I was running or had run my race in vain. (3)Yet not even Titus, who was with me, was compelled to be circumcised, even though he was a Greek. (4)This matter arose because some false brothers had infiltrated our ranks to spy on the freedom we have in Christ Jesus and to make us slaves. (5)We did not give in to them for a moment, so that the truth of the Gospel might remain with you.*

**(6)** *As for those who seemed to be important -whatever they were makes no difference to me; Yahweh does not judge by external appearance- those men added nothing to my message. (7)On the contrary, they saw that I had been entrusted with the task of preaching the Gospel to the Gentiles, just as Peter had been to the Jews. (8)For Yahweh, who was at work in the ministry of Peter as an apostle to the Jews, was also at work in my ministry as an apostle to the Gentiles. (9)James, Peter and John, those reputed to be pillars, gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship when they recognized the grace given to me. They agreed that we should go to the Gentiles, and they to the Jews. (10)All they asked was that we should continue to remember the poor, the very thing I was eager to do.*

**(Gal 2:1)** *Fourteen years later.* From the date of Paul's conversion. *Barnabas.* The name means "one who encourages." His given name was Joseph, a Levite from the island of Cyprus (Ac 4:36). He was Paul's companion during his first missionary journey (Ac 13:1-14:28). *Titus.* A Gentile-Christian who served as Paul's delegate to Corinth and later was left in Crete to oversee the Church there (Tit 1:5).

**(2:2)** *The Gospel that I preach among the Gentiles.* In the first part of his self-introduction Paul did prove the truthfulness of his Gospel. Now he is concerned to prove that his Gospel is not schismatic and sectarian. *Those who seemed to be leaders.* Probably referring to Peter, James and John. Paul recognized their authority, he respected them and treated them properly, but he remained inflexible, certain to have the approval of Yahweh.

**(2:3-6)** *False brothers.* Jews-Christians who held that Gentile converts should be circumcised and obey the traditional Jewish laws. From the beginning the real leaders of the Church accepted Paul's position. But there were those who accepted Christianity but believed that Yahweh never gave any privilege to a man who was not a Jew; and that therefore, before a man could become Christian, he had to be circumcised and re-

spect all Jewish customs. These Judaizers, as they are called, made of Titus a test case. It is clear that there was a battle and it is likely that the leaders of the Church urged Paul, for the sake of peace, to give in, at least in the case of Titus. But Paul knew that to compromise would be to accept the slavery of the law and to refuse the freedom given by the grace of Jesus Christ.

**(2:7-8)** *On the contrary.* In the end Paul's determination won. It was accepted in principle that his work was mainly in the non-Jewish world, and the work of Peter and James was mainly among the Jews. The same Gospel, to be brought to two different worlds, needed different people specially qualified for the specific task.

**(2:9-10)** *Pillars.* A common metaphor for those who represent and support an institution. *Right hand of fellowship.* A common practice among both Hebrews and Greeks, indicating a pledge of friendship.

***Paul opposes Peter*** [Gal 2:11-21]

**(Gal 2:11)** *When Peter came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he was clearly in the wrong. (12) Before certain men came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But when they arrived, he began to draw back and separate himself from the Gentiles because he was afraid of those who belonged to the circumcision group. (13) The other Jews joined him in his hypocrisy, so that by their hypocrisy even Barnabas was led astray.*

**(14)** *When I saw that they were not acting in line with the truth of the Gospel, I said to Peter in front of them all, "You are a Jew, yet you live like a Gentile and not like a Jew. How is it, then, that you force Gentiles to follow Jewish customs?"*

**(15)** *We who are Jews by birth and not (16) 'Gentile sinners' know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Jesus Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified.*

**(17)** *If, while we seek to be justified in Jesus Christ, it becomes evident that we ourselves are sinners, does that mean that Jesus Christ promotes sin? Absolutely not! (18) If I rebuild what I destroyed, I prove that I am a lawbreaker. (19) For through the law I died to the law so that I might live for Yahweh. (20) I have been crucified with Jesus Christ and I no longer live, but Jesus Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of Yahweh, who had been fond of me and gave himself for me. (21) I do not set aside the grace of Yahweh, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Jesus Christ died for nothing!"*

**(Gal 2:11)** *Antioch.* The leading city of Syria and the third of the Roman Empire (after Rome and Alexandria). From it Paul went out on his missionary journeys (Ac 13:1-3; 14:26). *Clearly in the wrong.* For surrendering to the pressure of the circumcision party (the Judaizers), thus going against what he knew to be right.

**(2:12)** *James.* The brother of Jesus Christ (Ac 15:13). *Used to eat with the Gentiles.* With Gentile-Christian converts (Ac 11:3). *Afraid of... the circumcision group.* A demonstration of Peter's weakness, when confronted by strong-willed Judaizers, who believed that circumcision was necessary for salvation (Ac 10:45; 11:2).

**(2:13)** *Other Jews... even Barnabas.* Jew-Christian converts not associated with the circumcision party but who were led astray by Peter's behavior.



**(2:14)** *You live like a Gentile.* Peter was not observing Jewish customs, especially dietary restrictions (Ac 10:28). *How is it, then... you force Gentiles...?* The fundamental point of Paul's opposition to Peter in this particular matter.

**(2:15-16)** *We... know... not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ.* Nobody can be justified (that is, made right in the eyes of Yahweh) by following the requirements of the scribal law, but only by having faith in Jesus Christ's salvation (Righteousness through faith. Ro 3:21-31). *We... have put our faith in Christ Jesus... because by observing the law no one will be justified.* Essentially, a repetition of the previous verse.

**(2:17)** *Evident that we... are sinners...* All Christians had clearly realized -before and after their conversion- that they were sinners (at that time practically all Christians were adult converts.) *Jesus Christ promotes sin?* Not at all, as a doctor does not promote illness.

**(2:18)** *If I rebuilt... I am a lawbreaker.* Had a man decided to go back, from faith in Jesus Christ to observance of the law, he would only have obtained to fall again under the power -and the condemnation- of the law.

**(2:19)** *Died to the law.* In "Dead to sin, alive in Jesus Christ" (Ro 6:1-14) Paul has affirmed that the Jew-Christians "died to sin." Here, and in "An illustration from marriage" (Ro 7:1-6), that they "died to the law." The result was that the law had no more hold on them, that the law's power to condemn no longer threatened the Christians. *That I might live for Yahweh.* After dying to the law, the Jew-Christians convert were totally free to have faith in Jesus Christ' salvation, which made them right in the eyes of Yahweh, that is, spiritually alive.

**(2:20)** *Crucified with Jesus Christ... Jesus Christ lives in me.* After dying to sin by having faith in Jesus Christ, the believers entered in spiritual communion with him and Yahweh. *The Son of Yahweh... gave himself for me.* Jesus Christ's sacrifice was for the spiritual salvation of all men.

**(2:21)** *If righteousness could be gained through the law, Jesus Christ died for nothing!* To mingle legalism with grace distorts grace and makes a mockery of the Cross.

### **The Lord Yahweh's grace to Paul** [1 Ti 1:12-17]

**(1Ti 1:12)** *I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength, that he considered me faithful, appointing me to his service. (13)Even though I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man, I was shown mercy because I acted in ignorance and unbelief. (14)The grace of Yahweh our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and affection that are in Christ Jesus.*

**(15)** *Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners -of whom I am the worst. (16)But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life.*

**(17)** *Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, [Yahweh] the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen.*

**(1Ti 1:12)** *I thank...* Paul thanked Jesus Christ because he chose him. Paul never had the feeling that he had chosen Jesus Christ, but always that Jesus Christ had chosen him. Again, Paul thanked Jesus Christ for trusting him. It was a wonder to Paul that he, the persecutor, had been chosen as the missionary of Jesus Christ. He was not only forgiven, he was trusted. Again, Paul thanked Jesus Christ for appointing and empowering

him to his service. And Paul knew that Jesus Christ does not appoint a man to a task without giving him the power to perform it.

**(1:13)** *I acted in ignorance...* Paul's sins had been committed in the days before he knew Jesus Christ and his affection. And for this reason he felt that there was mercy for him.

**(1:14)** *The grace of Yahweh...* Paul always declares that it was Yahweh who took the initiative. *Along with the faith and the affection...* Paul was helped by the faith and the affection of the members of the Church like Ananias, who opened his eyes and called him brother (Ac 9:10-19), and Barnabas, who stood by him when the rest of the Church regarded him with suspicion (Ac 9:26-28).

**(1:15-17)** *Here is a trustworthy saying.* A clause used to identify a key saying. *I am the worst.* The thing that stands out in this passage is Paul's insistence on remembering his own sins, that he had taken every means open to him under the Jewish law to persecute and annihilate the Christian Church. *But... I was shown mercy.* Paul never forgot that he was a forgiven sinner and always showed his gratitude to Yahweh and Jesus Christ. *An example for those...* The memory of Paul's sins was to be a constant encouragement to others. Paul says that if it was possible to save someone like him, there was hope for every man.

**Thanksgiving and prayer****To the Thessalonians** [1 Th 1:2-10] [2 Th 1:3-12]

**(1Th 1:2)** *We always thank Yahweh for all of you, mentioning you in our prayers. (3) We continually remember before Yahweh our Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by devotion, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.*

**(4)** *For we know, brothers cherished by Yahweh, that He has chosen you, (5) because our Gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with the power of Yahweh's Holy Spirit and with deep conviction. You know how we lived among you for your sake. (6) You became imitators of us and of the Lord Jesus Christ; in spite of severe suffering, you welcomed the message with the joy given by Yahweh's Holy Spirit. (7) And so you became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia. (8) The Lord Yahweh's message rang out of you not only in Macedonia and Achaia - your faith in Yahweh has become known everywhere. Therefore we do not need to say anything about it, (9) for they themselves report what kind of reception you gave us. They tell how you turned to Yahweh from idols to serve the living and true God, (10) and to wait for His Son from Heaven, whom He raised from the dead - Jesus Christ, who rescues us from the coming wrath.*

**(2Te 1:3)** *We ought always to thank Yahweh for you, brothers, and rightly so, because your faith is growing more and more, and the affection every one of you has for each other is increasing. (4) Therefore, among Yahweh's Churches we boast about your perseverance and faith in all the persecutions and trials you are enduring.*

**(5)** *All this is evidence that Yahweh's judgment is right, and as a result you will be counted worthy of the Kingdom of Yahweh, for which you are suffering. (6) Yahweh is just: He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you (7) and give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus Christ is revealed from Heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. (8) He will punish those who do not know Yahweh and do not obey the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. (9) They will be punished with complete ruin, shut out from the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ and from the majesty of his power (10) on the day he comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed. This includes you, because you believed our testimony to you.*

**(11)** *With this in mind, we constantly pray for you, that [Yahweh] our God may count you worthy of His calling, and that by His power He may fulfill every good purpose of yours and every act prompted by your faith. (12) We pray this so that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of [Yahweh] our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

**(1Th 1:2)** *We... thank Yahweh for all of you... in our prayers.* Prayers of joyful thanksgiving for the acceptance of the Gospel are an hallmark of the opening sentences of Paul's letters.

**(1:3)** *Work produced by faith.* Faith always produces action. *Labor prompted by devotion.* Work in favor of others, following Jesus Christ's commandment to be fond of all men. *Endurance inspired by hope.* The hope which is firm confidence in the Lord Jesus Christ.

**(1:4)** *We know... Yahweh... has chosen you.* It is always Yahweh who takes the initiative with the offer of His grace and affection, which each man can accept or reject.

**(1:5) Our Gospel.** The Gospel preached by Paul, Silas and Timothy, which they had received by Yahweh. *With the power of Yahweh's Holy Spirit.* To those who accept His offer of grace, Yahweh gives the power which comes by being in spiritual communion with Him and Jesus Christ. *With deep conviction.* Clearly, who is in spiritual communion with Yahweh is deeply convinced of the Gospel's message.

**(1:6) Imitators.** Good Christians, following the example of Paul and of Jesus Christ. *Severe suffering.* Opposition and persecution.

**(1:7-8) Macedonia and Achaia.** The two Roman provinces into which Greece was divided. *Your faith... known everywhere.* The news of their acceptance of the Gospel had spread all around.

**(1:9) How you turned to Yahweh...** A true conversion is marked by few steps: Turning from idols, serving Yahweh and, finally, waiting for Jesus Christ's return.

**(1:10) Coming wrath.** Yahweh's final judgment at the end of time.

**(2Th 1:3) Your faith is growing... affection... is increasing.** Paul is recording these facts as an answer to his prayer.

**(1:4) We boast...** It was unusual for the founder of a Church to boast about it, but the Thessalonians were so outstanding that Paul departed from normal practice.

**(1:5) Evidence that Yahweh's judgment is right.** The evidence is in the way the Thessalonians endured trials. Yahweh did not leave them alone. He provided strength to endure, and this in turn did strengthen their spiritual and moral character.

**(1:6) Yahweh is just.** The justice of Yahweh brings punishment on unrepentant sinners, and that may be now here on Earth as well after death.

**(1:7) Give relief.** Retribution not only involves punishment of the evil but also relief for the righteous. *Us as well.* Paul was suffering just as they were. *Revealed.* Jesus Christ is now hidden, and many people even deny his existence. But at his second coming he will be seen by everyone. *Blazing fire.* A traditional indication of great power.

**(1:8) Do not know Yahweh.** It does not refer to those who have never heard of [Yahweh] the true God but to those who knowingly refuse to recognize Him. *Do not obey.* The Gospel invites acceptance, and rejection is disobedience to a divine invitation.

**(1:9) Complete ruin.** Not annihilation, since salvation implies the resurrection of the body. Here it means being shut out from Jesus Christ and Yahweh's presence till the acceptance of Jesus Christ' offer of salvation (Thoughts. At the end of time everybody will be with Yahweh).

**(1:10) The day.** The Day of the Lord. The expression goes back to the Old Testament in which it is a time when Yahweh will come and intervene with judgment and/or blessing. In the New Testament it is also the "day of redemption" and the "last day." *Glorified in his holy people.* Jesus Christ's glory is seen in the believers' faith. *Our testimony to you.* The preaching of the Gospel.

**(1:11) Good purpose.** Yahweh initiates every good purpose and every act prompted by faith. Accordingly, Paul prays that He will bring them to fulfillment.

**(1:12) The name of our Lord Jesus Christ.** Paul looks for glory to be ascribed to Jesus Christ for everything he will do in the lives of the Christians.

### ***To the Corinthians [1 Co 1:4-9]***

**(1Co 1:4)** *I always thank Yahweh for you because of His grace given you in Christ Jesus. (5) For in him you have been enriched in every way -in all your speaking and in all your knowledge- (6) because our testimony about Jesus Christ was confirmed in you. (7) Therefore you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus*

*Christ to be revealed. (8)Yahweh will keep you strong to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. (9)Yahweh, Who has called you into fellowship with His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful.*

**(1Co 1:4-5)** *Enriched in all your speaking and... knowledge.* Enriched by the spiritual gifts of Yahweh.

**(1:6)** *Our testimony... confirmed in you.* Paul's preaching about Jesus Christ had been accepted by the Corinthians, and they had confirmed it by living accordingly.

**(1:7)** *Spiritual gift.* A spiritual gift is a manifestation of the grace of Yahweh enabling a person to minister, in one of the possible ways, to the needs of the Church.

**(1:8)** *Yahweh will keep you strong to the end.* Yahweh will always and continuously help all believers to remain faithful. *The day of our Lord Jesus Christ.* His second coming.

**(1:9)** *Yahweh... is faithful.* Yahweh can be fully trusted to do what He has promised, that is, to keep the believers "strong to the end."

#### **To the Romans** [Ro 1:8-10]

**(Ro 1:8)** *First, I thank [Yahweh] my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is being reported all over the world. (9)Yahweh, whom I serve with my whole heart in preaching the Gospel of His Son, is my witness how constantly I remember you (10)in my prayers at all times; and I pray that now at last by Yahweh's will the way may be opened for me to come to you.*

**(Ro 1:8)** *I thank [Yahweh] my God through Jesus Christ.* The Christian must go through Jesus Christ not only for requests to Yahweh but also to give thanks. *All over the world.* Every place where the Gospel has been preached.

**(1:9)** *The Gospel of His Son.* The same as the "Gospel of Yahweh."

**(1:10)** *The way may be opened... to come to you.* For a long time Paul had wished to go to Rome, at the end going there as a prisoner.

#### **To the Ephesians** [Eph 1:15-23]

**(Eph 1:15)** *For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your affection for all the saints, (16)I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. (17)I keep asking that [Yahweh] the God of our Lord Christ Jesus, the glorious Father, may give you spiritual wisdom and revelation, so that you may know Him better. (18)I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which He has called you, the riches of His glorious inheritance in the saints, (19)and the incomparable greatness of His power for us who believe. That power will work as the mighty strength (20)which He exerted in Jesus Christ when He raised him from the dead and seated him at His right hand in the heavenly realms, (21)far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age, but also in the one to come. (22)And Yahweh placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the Church, (23)which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.*

**(Eph 1:15-16)** *Ever since I heard.* This phrase sounds strange from one who had spent a few years in Ephesus. But most probably this was intended to be a circular letter, and so Paul was referring to news from the whole area, only part of which he had visited.

**(1:17)** [*Yahweh*] *God of our Lord Jesus Christ*. Distinguishing between Yahweh, the Father, and His Son, who is divine but not God. *Wisdom and revelation*. These gifts of Yahweh allow for a better understanding of Him and His ways.

**(1:18)** *Eyes of your heart*. Meaning your mind, your understanding, your inner awareness. *The hope to which...* The assurance of eternal spiritual life, guaranteed by the present spiritual communion with Yahweh and Jesus Christ. *His glorious inheritance in the saints*. Their future eternal life in the Kingdom of Yahweh.

**(1:19)** *His... great power*. Here Paul emphasizes the divine power by which Jesus Christ was raised from the dead, the same power that will work in the believers.

**(1:20)** *His right hand*. The symbolic place of highest honor and authority.

**(1:21)** *Above all rule... every title that can be given*. Including whatever supernatural beings his contemporaries might conceive of, for in his days many people believed not only in the existence of angels and demons, but also in that of other beings. Anyway, Jesus Christ is above them all. *The present age... the one to come*. Like the teachers of the law of his days, Paul distinguished between the present age, which is evil, and the future age when the Messiah will establish his Kingdom and there will be a completely righteous society.

**(1:22)** *Under his feet*. Ultimately the Son of Man will rule over everything. *Head*. Jesus Christ is not only the head of the Church, but also head over everything, having been put in charge of everything.

**(1:23)** *His body*. Jesus Christ has given his body for the salvation of all men, who are the body of the Church. *Fullness... fills*. The Church is the fullness of Jesus Christ in the sense that it represents the full result of his sacrifice on the Cross and of his Resurrection.

### **To the Colossians** [Col 1:3-14]

**(Col 1:3)** *We always thank Yahweh, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, (4)because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the affection you have for all the saints (5)-the faith and affection that springs from the hope that is stored up for you in Heaven and that you have already heard about in the Word of Truth, the Gospel (6)that has come to you. All over the world this Gospel is bearing fruit and growing, just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and understood Yahweh's grace in all its truth. (7)You learned it from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ Jesus on our behalf, (8)and who also told us of your spiritual affection.*

**(9)For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking Yahweh to fill you with the knowledge of His will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding. (10)And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord Jesus Christ and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of Yahweh, (11)being strengthened with all power according to His glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully (12)giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the Kingdom of Light. (13)For He has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the Kingdom of the Son He loves, (14)in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.**

**(Col 1:3-4)** *Your faith in Christ Jesus and... the affection you have.* Here we have the essence of the Christian life. The Colossians were showing two great qualities in their lives, faith in Jesus Christ and affection for their fellow-men.

**(1:5)** *Word of truth.* The Gospel.

**(1:6)** *All over the world.* Hyperbolic, pointing to the rapid spread of the Gospel in every part of the Roman Empire within three decades from the Pentecost. In refutation of the charge of the false teachers, Paul insists that the Christian faith is not merely local or regional, but worldwide.

**(1:7)** *Epaphras.* A native of Colosse, probably the founder of the Church there and an evangelist in nearby Laodicea and Hierapolis. Epaphras was the one who told Paul at Rome about the problems of the Colossian Church.

**(1:8)** *Your spiritual affection.* For Paul, for Jesus Christ and for all the Christians.

**(1:9-11)** *The knowledge of His will.* Biblical knowledge is not only the understanding of facts. Rather, knowledge and wisdom in the Bible are practical, having to do with godly living. Knowledge, wisdom and understanding result in a life worthy of the Lord.

**(1:12)** *Kingdom of Light.* In the Bible, light symbolizes holiness, truth, affection, glory and life. The "Kingdom of Light" is the opposite of the "dominion of darkness."

**(1:13)** *Kingdom of the Son.* The Christians are no longer under the dominion of evil but under the kind rule of Yahweh's Son.

**(1:14)** *Redemption.* The substitutionary death of Jesus Christ brought deliverance and freedom from the penalty of sin.

#### **To Philemon** [Phm 1:4-7]

**(Phm 1:4)** *I always thank [Yahweh] my God as I remember you in my prayers, (5) because I hear about your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and your affection for all the saints. (6) I pray that you may be active in sharing your faith, so that you will have a full understanding of every good thing we have in Jesus Christ. (7) Your affection has given me great joy and encouragement, because you, brother, have refreshed the hearts of the saints.*

**(Phm 1:4-7)** *Your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and your affection for all the saints.* To have faith in Jesus Christ means to be believers (in him and in his action). To be fond of all men means to follow the one commandment left by Jesus Christ (to be fond of all men).

#### **To the Philippians** [Php 1:3-11]

**(Php 1:3)** *I thank [Yahweh] my God every time I remember you. (4) In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy (5) because of your partnership in the Gospel from the first day until now, (6) being confident of this, that He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.*

**(7)** *It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, since I have you in my heart; for whether I am in chains or defending and confirming the Gospel, all of you share in Yahweh's grace with me. (8) Yahweh can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus.*

**(9)** *And this is my prayer: that your affection may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, (10) so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ Jesus, (11) filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ - to the glory and praise of Yahweh.*

**(Php 1:3-5)** *Your partnership in the Gospel.* The basis of Paul's thanksgiving is not only their reception of the Gospel but also their active support of his ministry. *From the first day until now.* From when Paul first came to Philippi to the moment of writing this letter, towards the close of Paul's first Roman imprisonment (Ac 28:16-31).

**(1:6)** *Good work in you.* Not only of what Yahweh has done "for" the Philippians in forgiving their sins, but also of what He has done "in" them, making them spiritually righteous. *Until the day of Christ Jesus.* It is Yahweh who initiates the process of salvation, who continues it and who will one day (before the Last Day) bring it to completion.

**(1:7)** *Share in Yahweh's grace.* Not even imprisonment and persecution can change such sharing. Even during Paul's imprisonment they willingly identified themselves with Paul by sending Epaphroditus and their financial gifts. They had become one with (spiritually united to) Paul in his persecution.

**(1:8-9)** *Abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight.* Growing affection gives more knowledge and more practical discernment and sensitivity, that is, better comprehension of other people.

**(1:10)** *Discern what is best.* Christians are to approve and practice what is morally and ethically superior. *Pure and blameless.* The goal of Christians in this life is to be without evil.

**(1:11)** *Filled with the fruit of righteousness.* To conduct the kind of life which is expected of all Christians. *Through Jesus Christ.* Produced by Jesus Christ (by being in spiritual communion with him and with Yahweh.) *To the glory and praise of Yahweh.* The ultimate goal of all that Yahweh does in the believers.

**To Timothy** [2 Ti 1:3]

**(2Ti 1:3)** *I thank Yahweh, Whom I serve, as my forefather did, with a clear conscience, as night and day I constantly remember you in my prayers.*

**(2Ti 1:3)** *Whom I serve... with a clear conscience.* Paul was absolutely certain of fully doing Yahweh's work.



**Praise to Yahweh****To the Corinthians: [Yahweh] the God of all comfort [2 Co 1:3-11]**

*(2Co 1:3) Praise be to [Yahweh] the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, (4) who comfort us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from Yahweh. (5) For just as the sufferings of Jesus Christ flow over into our lives, so also through Jesus Christ our comfort overflows. (6) If we are distressed, it is for your comfort and salvation; if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which produces in you patient endurance of the same sufferings we suffer. (7) And our hope for you is firm, because we know that just as you share in our sufferings, so also you share in our comfort.*

*(8) We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about the hardships we suffered in the province of Asia. We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired even of life. (9) Indeed, in our hearts we felt the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on Yahweh, who raises the dead. (10) He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and He will deliver us. On Him we have set our hope that He will continue to deliver us, (11) as you help us by your prayers. Then many will give thanks on our behalf for the gracious favor granted us in answer to the prayers of many.*

**(2Co 1:3-4)** *[Yahweh] the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.* Clearly distinguishing between Yahweh the Father and His Son, who is divine but is not God. *Father of compassion.* Having had compassion of men, Yahweh sent His Son for their spiritual salvation. *God of all comfort.* Yahweh's comfort flows to the believers when they suffer for Jesus Christ's sake, and it equips them to be able and comfort others who are in trouble.

**(1:5)** *Just as the suffering of Jesus Christ... so...* Jesus Christ's life and action is the highest example of that "comfort."

**(1:6)** *If we are... it is...* Paul was extremely anxious for the situation at the Corinthian Church, and for the faith and the salvation of the believers there.

**(1:7)** *Our hope for you is firm.* Because at least part of the Corinthian believers were following his Gospel.

**(1:8)** *Hardships we suffered in Asia.* Asia was the Roman province of that name in western Asia Minor, now Turkish territory. Paul does not tell where nor what he had to suffer.

**(1:9-10)** *We felt the sentence of death.* We have no information at all about this terrible experience (illness, injury?) of Paul. But it is clear that his life was in serious danger and that he regarded his survival and recovery as equivalent to being raised from the dead. *Rely... on Yahweh.* A key principle of this letter. Our weakness is precisely the opportunity for Yahweh's grace to be displayed and to work in us.

**(1:11)** *You help us by your prayers.* Paul asked for the prayers of the Corinthians, sure that the prayers of so many people would be heard by Yahweh.

**To the Romans [Ro 11:33-36] [Ro 16:25-27]**

**(Ro 11:33)** *Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of Yahweh! How unsearchable His judgments, and His paths beyond tracing out!*

*(34) "Who has known the mind of the Lord Yahweh? Or who has been His counselor?"*

*(35) "Who has ever given to Yahweh, that Yahweh should repay him?"*

*(36) For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him the glory for ever! Amen!*

*(Ro 16:25) Now to Him who is able to establish you by my Gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past, (26) but revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of [Yahweh] the eternal God, so that all nations might believe and obey Him (27) - to [Yahweh] the only wise God be glory for ever through Jesus Christ! Amen.*

**(Ro 11-33)** *Oh, the depth...* This praise to Yahweh shows Paul's gratitude to Yahweh, whose wisdom and knowledge brought about His plan for the salvation of both Jews and Gentiles.

**(11-34)** *Who has known...* A quotation from Isaiah 40:13.

**(11-35)** *Who has ever given...* A quotation from Job 41:11.

**(11-36)** *For from him and...* Only Yahweh is at the origin of everything and everybody.

**(16:25)** *My Gospel.* Not a Gospel different from that preached by others, but the one Paul received by direct revelation. *Proclamation of Jesus Christ.* A description of the Gospel, which is about Jesus Christ. *Mystery.* Paul uses this word to refer to something formerly not known or not understood but now revealed by Yahweh for all to know and understand. Here the word is used for the plan of Yahweh by which both Jews and Gentiles will by His mercy be accepted in His Kingdom.

**(16:26)** *Revealed and made known through the prophetic writings.* All the books of the Old Testament prophesied about Jesus Christ. *All nations.* The Gospel is universal, for all men of every time and nationality.

**(16:27)** *To [Yahweh]... be glory.* The ultimate purpose of all created things is to glorify Yahweh.

### **To the Ephesians: Spiritual blessings in Jesus Christ [Eph 1:3-14] [Eph 3:20-21]**

**(Eph 1:3)** *Praise be to [Yahweh] the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Jesus Christ. (4) For He chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in His sight. (5) In affection He predestined us to be adopted as His sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with His pleasure and will (6) - to the praise of His glorious grace, which He has freely given us in Jesus Christ, the One He loves. (7) In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of Yahweh's grace (8) that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding. (9) And He made known to us the mystery of His will according to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Jesus Christ, (10) to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment - to bring all things in Heaven and on Earth together under one head, under Christ.*

**(11)** *In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of Him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of His will, (12) in order that we, who were the first to hope in Jesus Christ, might be for the praise of His glory. (13) And you also were included in Jesus Christ when you heard the Word of Truth, the Gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit of Yahweh, (14) who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are Yahweh's possession - to the praise of His glory.*

**(Eph 3:20)** *Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us, (21) to Him be glory in the Church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.*

**(Eph 1:3)** *Blessed... blessing.* The Jews used the word “bless” to express both Yahweh’s kindness to us and our thanks or praise to Him. *Heavenly realms.* For Paul the exaltation of Jesus Christ (his Resurrection and his enthronement at the right hand of Yahweh) and the union of the Christians (their spiritual communion) with the exalted Jesus Christ are issues pertaining to the divine realm.

**(1:4)** *He chose.* Divine election is a constant theme in Paul’s letters. *Before the creation of the world.* Even before the creation of time and of the world, the work of Jesus Christ was part of Yahweh’s salvation plan (see, “The pre-existence” page 11). *Holy and blameless.* Holiness is the result -not the basis- of Yahweh’s choosing.

**(1:5)** *He predestined us.* Yahweh wants (and knows that, at the end of time, it will be so) all men to be in spiritual communion with Him and Jesus Christ. *Adopted as His sons.* Christians are already Yahweh’s children, but this is a reference to the full realization of our inheritance in Jesus Christ.

**(1:6)** *To the praise.* Election is for Yahweh’s glory.

**(1:7-8)** *In him we have redemption.* The death of Jesus Christ was the payment of the ransom necessary to free all sinners from the bondage of sin and of the resulting curse imposed by the law.

**(1:9-10)** *To bring... under one head.* At the end of time everything will be brought under the headship of Jesus Christ.

**(1:11)** *In him.* Jesus Christ is the center of Yahweh’s plan. It is only in relation to him that there is a meaningful future destiny.

**(1:12)** *We, who were the first to hope in Jesus Christ.* A reference to those Jews who, like Paul, had become believers before many Gentiles had.

**(1:13)** *You also.* This refers to the majority of the Ephesians, who were Gentile converts. *Marked... with a seal.* In those days a seal denoted ownership. *Promised Holy Spirit of Yahweh.* The spiritual communion of all believers with Yahweh and Jesus Christ.

**(1:14)** *Deposit.* The Christian’s access to this spiritual communion is not only evidence of his present salvation but is also the down payment on that future inheritance.

**(3:20)** *Immeasurably more.* Men cannot even imagine what the powers of Yahweh are. *To Him be glory.* The ultimate goal of our existence.

**(3:21)** *In the Church and in Christ Jesus.* A remarkable parallel. Yahweh has called the Church to an extraordinary position and vocation.

**Paul's thought****Yahweh's punishment of the wicked [Ro 1:18-32]**

**(Ro 1:18)** *The punishment of Yahweh is being revealed from Heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, (19) since what may be known about Yahweh is plain to them, because Yahweh has made it plain to them. (20) For since the creation of the world Yahweh's invisible qualities -His eternal power and divine nature- have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.*

**(21)** *For also they knew Yahweh, they neither glorified Him as God nor gave thanks to Him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. (22) Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools (23) and exchanged the glory of Yahweh the immortal God for images made to look like mortal men, birds, four-footed animals and reptiles.*

**(24)** *Therefore Yahweh gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. (25) They exchanged the truth of Yahweh for a lie, and worshipped and served created things rather than the Creator -who is forever praised. Amen.*

**(26)** *Because of this, Yahweh gave them over to shameful lust. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. (27) In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion.*

**(28)** *Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of Yahweh, He gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done. (29) They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, (30) slanderers, Yahweh-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; (31) they are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless. (32) Although they know Yahweh's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things, but also approve of those who practice them.*

**(Ro 1:18-19)** *The punishment of Yahweh.* Not due to a burst of anger but a just action against what is contrary to Yahweh and opposes His will. *Is being revealed.* Yahweh's punishment is not limited to the judgment of the wicked at the end of time. Here it consists in the abandonment of the wicked to their sins during their lives on Earth. *The truth.* The truth of Yahweh's existence revealed by the existence of the world.

**(1:20)** *Men are without excuse.* No one -not even one who has not heard of the Bible or of Jesus Christ- has an excuse for not honoring Yahweh, because the whole created world reveals Him.

**(1:21)** *They knew Yahweh.* From seeing His revelation of Himself in the world. The Pagans, who were idolaters, knew Yahweh only through the created world. *Gave thanks.* For earthly blessings, such as sun, rain and crops.

**(1:22-23)** *Glory.* Yahweh's uniqueness, of which fallen mankind had lost sight and for which had substituted deities of human devising, patterned after various creatures.

**(1:24-25)** *Yahweh gave them over.* Yahweh allowed sin to run its course as an act of punishment. *Amen.* This word can have two meanings, either "Yes, indeed it is so" or "So be it."

**(1:26)** *Natural relations... unnatural...* Homosexual practice is condemned as sinful both in the Old and the New Testament.

**(1:27)** *Received in themselves the due penalty.* Not only from a physical point of view, with the obvious sexual diseases, but also from the moral one, losing the concept of good and evil.

**(1:28)** *Gave them over to a depraved mind.* As they refused -using the free-will Yahweh has given men- to recognize His existence, Yahweh allowed them to become depraved.

**(1:29-31)** *Also they know.* Their outrageous conduct was not due to total ignorance of what Yahweh required but to their will and rebellion. *Deserve death.* The spiritual "death" which consists of not being in spiritual contact with Yahweh.

**(1:32)** *They... also approve.* In this way, committing the sin of applauding, rather than regretting, the sins of others.

### ***Yahweh's righteous judgment [Ro 2:1-16]***

**(Ro 2:1)** *You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge the other, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things. (2) Now we know that Yahweh's judgment against those who do such things is based on truth. (3) So when you, a mere man, pass judgment on them and yet do the same things, do you think you will escape Yahweh's judgment? (4) Or do you show contempt for the riches of His kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that Yahweh's kindness leads you toward repentance?*

**(5)** *But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up penalty against yourself for the day of Yahweh's judgment, when His righteous judgment will be revealed. (6) Yahweh will give to each person according to what he has done. (7) To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality, He will give eternal life. (8) But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be severe punishment. (9) There will be trouble and distress for every human being who does evil: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile; (10) but glory, honor and peace for everyone who does good: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. (11) For Yahweh does not show favoritism.*

**(12)** *All who sin apart from the law will also perish apart from the law, and all who sin under the law will be judged by the law. (13) For it is not those who hear the law who are righteous in Yahweh's sight, but it is those who obey the law who will be declared righteous. (14) Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are the law for themselves, even though they do not have the law. (15) They show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their inner thoughts now accusing, now defending them. (16) This will take place on the day when Yahweh will judge men's secrets through Jesus Christ, as my Gospel declares.*

**(Ro 2:1)** *No excuse.* Paul's teaching about judging other people fully corresponds to that of Jesus Christ, who did condemn hypocritical judging, not judging in itself. *You who pass judgment.* A warning that had special relevance for the Jews, who were inclined to look down on Gentiles because of their ignorance of Yahweh's revelation in the Old Testament.

**(2:2)** *We know.* An expression Paul frequently used which assumed that the person addressed agreed with the following statement.

**(2:3)** *So when you... do the same things.* This is a very bad case of hypocritical judgment.

**(2:4)** *Or do you show contempt...?* The purpose of Yahweh's kindness is to give opportunity for repentance. But the Jews had come to consider His patience as a lack of intent to judge.

**(2:5)** *Day of Yahweh's punishment.* The final judgment that will take place at the end of time.

**(2:6-8)** *Yahweh will give...* Here Paul is not contradicting his continual emphasis that a person is saved not by what he does but by faith in what Jesus Christ has done for men. Rather, he is discussing the principle of judgment according to deeds. If anyone persists in doing good deeds (by living a perfect life), he will receive eternal life. Now, no one can do this, but if anyone could, Yahweh would give him eternal life, since Yahweh judges according to what a person does. Next, Paul sets forth the principles that govern Yahweh's judgment. Yahweh judges according to truth, to deeds, and to the law a person has. These principles lay the ground-work for the discussion of the guilt of the Jews (The Jews and the Law. Ro 2:17-29).

**(2:9-10)** *First for the Jew.* With spiritual privilege comes spiritual responsibility.

**(2:11)** *Yahweh does not show favoritism.* A basic teaching of both the Old and the New Testament.

**(2:12)** *All who sin apart from the law.* The law is the Mosaic law and this phrase refers to the Gentiles. Yahweh judges according to the revelation available to people. The Gentiles will not be condemned for not obeying a law they did not possess. Their judgment will be on other grounds.

**(2:13)** *Will be declared righteous.* At Yahweh's pronouncement of acquittal on judgment day.

**(2:14)** *By nature.* By natural impulse without the external constraint of the Mosaic law. *Things required by the law.* This does not mean that the Pagans fulfilled the requirements of the Mosaic law but it refers to practices in pagan society that agreed with the law, such as caring for the sick and elderly, honoring parents and condemning adultery. *Law for themselves.* The moral nature of Pagans, enlightened by conscience, functioned for them as the Mosaic law did for the Jews.

**(2:15)** *Thoughts now accusing, now defending them.* Depending on their thoughts, and their actions, following or not the "things required by the law."

**(2:16)** *This will take place...* The universal judgment at the end of time.

### **The Jews and the law** [Ro 2:17-29]

**(Ro 2:17)** *Now you, if you call yourself a Jew, if you rely on the law and brag about your relationship to Yahweh; (18)if you know His will and approve of what is superior because you are instructed by the law; (19)if you are convinced that you are a guide for the blind, a light for those who are in the dark, (20)an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of infants, because you have in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth (21)-you, then, who teach others, do you not teach yourself? You who preach against stealing, do you steal? (22)You who say that people should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? (23)You who brag about the law, do you dishonor Yahweh by breaking the law? (24)As it is written: "Yahweh's Name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you."*

**(25)** *Circumcision has value if you observe the law, but if you break the law, you have become as though you have not been circumcised. (26)If those who are not circumcised*

keep the law's requirements, will they not be regarded as though they were circumcised? (27)The one who is not circumcised physically and yet obeys the law will condemn you who, even though you have the written code and circumcision, are a law-breaker.

(28)A man is not a Jew if he is only one outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. (29)No, a man is a Jew if he is only inwardly; and circumcision is the spiritual circumcision of the heart, not by the written code. Such a man's praise is not from men, but from Yahweh.

**(Ro 2:17-18)** *If you call yourself a Jew.* Paul knew how a strictly observant Jew thought, for he had been one himself. He cites one advantage after another that Jews considered to be assets. But those assets became liabilities when there was no correspondence between profession and practical life.

**(2:19-20)** *The blind... infants.* Gentiles. The Jews regarded themselves as superior because they possessed the Mosaic law. They were sure that Yahweh regarded them with special favor simply and solely because of their national descent from Abraham and of their physical circumcision.

**(2:21)** *You, then...* Here Paul applies to the Jews the principles of Yahweh's judgment set forth earlier in: "Yahweh's righteous judgment" (Ro 2:1-16).

**(2:22-23)** *Do you rob temples?* Thieves, even Jews, were attracted by the riches stored in pagan temples.

**(2:24)** *Yahweh's Name...* A quotation from Isaiah 52:5.

**(2:25-26)** *Circumcision has value if...* Circumcision was a sign of the covenant that Yahweh made with Israel. But the Jews had come to regard circumcision itself as a guarantee of Yahweh's favor.

**(2:27)** *The one... not circumcised...* If a Gentile's deeds excelled those of a Jew in righteousness, that very fact condemned the Jew, who had an immeasurably better set of moral standards in the law of Moses.

**(2:28-29)** *A man is not a Jew if...* The true sign of belonging to Yahweh is not given by an external mark on the physical body, but by the man's spiritual attitude -what Paul called "circumcision of the heart."

### **Yahweh's faithfulness** [Ro 3:1-8]

**(Ro 3:1)** *What advantage, then, is there in being a Jew, or what value is there in circumcision? (2)Much in every way! First of all, they have been entrusted with the very words of Yahweh.*

**(3)What if some did not have faith? Will their lack of faith nullify Yahweh's faithfulness? (4)Not at all! Let Yahweh be true, and every man a liar. As it is written:**

*"So that You may be proved right when You speak and prevail when You judge."*

**(5)But if our unrighteousness brings out Yahweh's righteousness more clearly, what shall we say? That Yahweh is unjust in bringing His punishment on us? (I am using a human argument.) (6)Certainly not! If that were so, how could Yahweh judge the world? (7)Someone might argue, "If my falsehood enhances Yahweh's truthfulness and so increases His glory, why am I still condemned as a sinner? (8)Why not say -as we are being slanderously reported as saying and some claim that we say- 'Let us do evil that good may result?'" Their condemnation is deserved.**

**(Ro 3:1-2)** *First of all.* Only the Jews had received the Tables of the Law by Moses and

the Words of Yahweh by the prophets. Paul will discuss other advantages of being a Jew in: "Yahweh's sovereign choice" (Ro 9:4-5).

**(3:3-4)** *Yahweh's faithfulness.* Yahweh is faithful to His promises and would punish Israel for its unbelief. *So that you may...* A quotation from Psalm 51:4.

**(3:5)** *If our... brings out Yahweh's righteousness.* It is a just consequence of Yahweh's righteousness that, when the Jews are not faithful and righteous, He will punish them. *Human argument.* "Human" in the sense of its absurdity.

**(3:6)** *Judge the world.* The judgment of each man during his life and of all men at the end of time.

**(3:7-8)** *Someone might argue...* This argument -that sin gives Yahweh a chance to show at once His justice and His mercy, and is therefore a good thing- shows men's ingenuity in justifying their sins. When a man sins, the need is not for ingenuity to justify his sin, but for humility to confess it in penitence.

**No one is righteous** [Ro 3:9-20]

**(Ro 3:9)** *What shall we conclude then? Are we any better? Not at all! We have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under sin. (10)As it is written:*

*"There is not one righteous, not even one;*

**(11)***there is no one who understands, no one who seeks Yahweh.*

**(12)***All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one."*

**(13)***"Their throats are open graves; their tongues practice deceit."*

*"The poison of vipers is on their lips."*

**(14)***"Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness."*

**(15)***"Their feet are swift to shed blood; (16)ruin and misery mark their ways,*

**(17)***and the way of peace they do not know."*

**(18)***"There is no fear of Yahweh before their eyes."*

**(19)***Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to Yahweh.*

**(20)***Therefore no one will be declared righteous in His sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin.*

**(Ro 3:9)** *Are we any better? Not at all!* Definitely the Jews are not better than the Gentiles in the sight of Yahweh. *All under sin.* Under its power and condemnation.

**(3:10-18)** *As it is written:...* A collection of Old Testament quotations that underscores the power of sin. *No one who understands.* Nobody can really know Yahweh and what is right. *Open graves.* Words expressing the corruption of the heart.

**(3:19-20)** *Whatever the law says.* It is the law that makes a man aware of sin. It is only when a man knows the law and tries to satisfy it that he realizes his incapacity of satisfying it. *Every mouth... whole world.* Jews as well as Gentiles.

**Righteousness through faith** [Ro 3:21-31]

**(Ro 3:21)***But now a righteousness from Yahweh, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. (22)This righteousness from Yahweh comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, (23)for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of Yahweh, (24)and are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. (25)Yahweh presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He, Yahweh, did this to demonstra-*



te His justice, because in His forbearance He had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished (26)-He did it to demonstrate His justice at the present time, so as to be just and the One who justifies those who have faith in Jesus Christ.

(27)Where, then, is boasting? It is excluded. On what principle? On that of observing the law? No, but on that of faith. (28)For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law. (29)Is Yahweh the God of Jews only? Is He not the God of Gentiles too? Yes, of Gentiles too, (30)since there is only One God, Who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through the same faith. (31)Do we, then, nullify the law by this faith? Not at all! Rather, we uphold the law.

**(Ro 3:21)** *But now a righteousness from Yahweh.* Having shown that all (both Jews and Gentiles) are sinners, Paul begins to show that Yahweh has provided a righteousness for mankind. The contrast is between the righteousness gained by observing the law (actually impossible) and the righteousness provided by Yahweh (to note that “a righteous man” is a man who lives in a right relationship with Yahweh). *The Law and the Prophets testify.* The righteousness credited to Abraham (Ge 15:6), the forgiveness of Yahweh toward those who with integrity confess their sins (Psalm 32:1), the faith of the righteous (Hab 2:4).

**(3:22)** *There is no difference.* Between Jews and Pagans, because all are sinners and to all who believe in Jesus Christ Yahweh gives the gift of righteousness.

**(3:23)** *Fall short of the glory of Yahweh.* The glory that man had before the fall, the believers will have through Jesus Christ.

**(3:24)** *Justified.* It means “declared righteous in the sight of Yahweh.” The term describes what happens when someone believes in Jesus Christ as his Savior. The guilt of a person’s sins is canceled and the righteousness from Yahweh is credited to him. This because Jesus Christ’s righteousness (his obedience to Yahweh and his sacrificial death on behalf of all men) will be credited to all believers as their own. *Redemption.* Deliverance from the slavery to sin, because Jesus Christ by his death paid the ransom for all.

**(3:25-26)** *Sacrifice of atonement.* A sacrifice which satisfies the justice of Yahweh. *Faith in his blood.* Faith in the fact that Jesus Christ died for the salvation of men.

**(3:27-29)** *Boasting. It is excluded.* Nobody can achieve righteousness by observing the law.

**(3:30)** *Only One God.* As stated by the first article of Jewish faith, “The Lord [Yahweh] is One” (Dt 6:4).

**(3:31)** *Nullify the law? Not at all!* A man must try to be good and keep Yahweh’s law, not because he fears His punishment, but because Yahweh is fond of him.

### **Abraham justified by faith** [Ro 4:1-25]

**(Ro 4:1)** *What then shall we say about Abraham, our forefather, in this matter? (2)If, in fact, Abraham was justified by works, he had sometimes to boast about -but not before Yahweh. (3)What does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed Yahweh, and it was credited to him as righteousness.”*

**(4)** *Now when a man works, his wages are not credited to him as a gift, but as an obligation. (5)However, to the man who does not depend on work but trusts Yahweh Who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness. (6)David says the same thing when he speaks of the blessedness of the man to whom Yahweh credits righteousness apart from works:*

(7) *“Blessed are they whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered.*

*(8) Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will never count against him.”*

*(9) Is this blessedness only for the circumcised, or also for the uncircumcised? We have been saying that Abraham’s faith was credited to him as righteousness. (10) Under what circumstances was it credited? Was it after he was circumcised, or before? It was not after, but before! (11) And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness that he had received by faith while he was still uncircumcised. So then, he is the father of all who believe but have not been circumcised, in order that righteousness might be credited to them. (12) And he is also the father of the circumcised who not only are circumcised but who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised.*

*(13) It was not through law that Abraham and his offspring received the promise that he would be heir of the world, but through the righteousness that comes by faith. (14) For if those who live by law are heirs, faith has no value and the promise is worthless, (15) because law brings judgment. And where there is no law there is no transgression.*

*(16) Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham’s offspring -not only to those who are of the law but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all. (17) As it is written: “I have made you a father of many nations.” He is our father in the sight of Yahweh, in whom he believed -the God who gives life to the dead and calls to existence things that are not.*

*(18) Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, “So shall your offspring be.” (19) Without weakening his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead -since he was about a hundred years old- and that Sarah’s womb was also dead. (20) Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of Yahweh, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to Yahweh, (21) being fully persuaded that Yahweh had power to do what He had promised. (22) This is why “it was credited to him as righteousness.” (23) The words “it was credited to him” were written not for him alone, (24) but also for us, to whom Yahweh will credit righteousness -for us who believe in Him who raised Jesus Christ our Lord from the dead. (25) He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.*

**(Ro 4:1-2) Abraham, our forefather.** The great patriarch of the Jewish nation, the true example of a justified person. The Jews of Jesus Christ’s time used Abraham as an example of justification by works, but Paul considers him a shining example of righteousness by faith.

**(4:3) Abraham believed Yahweh, and... was credited** The reference is to Ge 15:6, where nothing is mentioned about works. Abraham had kept no law, rendered no service and performed no ritual that earned credit to him before Yahweh. It was his belief in Yahweh, in His promises, that was credited to him as righteousness.

**(4:4-8) David says.** A quotation from Psalm 32:1-2. In other terms, Yahweh does not continue to credit unrighteousness to the sinner who repents, but forgives him when he confesses.

**(4:9) The circumcised... the uncircumcised.** The Jews and the Gentiles.

**(4:10) Not after, but before!** Actually, Abraham was declared righteous (Ge 15) some 14 years before he was circumcised (Ge 17).

**(4:11)** *Sign.* Circumcision was, among other things, the outward sign -the seal- of the righteousness that Yahweh had credited to Abraham for his faith. *So then.* Abraham is the “father” of all Gentile believers (the uncircumcised), because he believed and was justified before the rite of circumcision (the mark of the Jews) was instituted.

**(4:12)** *Father of the circumcised.* Abraham is also the father of all Jew-Christians. His story shows that both Jews and Gentiles have only one way to justification -the way of faith.

**(4:13)** *Not through law.* The promise was not conditioned to the observance of the law. *His offspring.* All those of whom Abraham is said to be father, that is, both Jew and Gentile believers. *Heir of the world.* The full realization of the promise to Abraham that he and his offspring would “inherit the Earth” awaits the instauration of the Messianic Kingdom at Jesus Christ’s second coming.

**(4:14-15)** *Law brings judgment.* The law, because it reveals the existence of sin, produces judgment and condemnation, not promise. *Transgression.* The overstepping of a line clearly defined by a law. Where there is no law there is still sin, but it does not have the character of transgression.

**(4:16)** *Therefore...* A summary of the thought already expressed. *Those who are of the law.* The Jew-Christians. *Those who are of the faith of Abraham.* Gentile-Christians who have faith as Abraham but who, like Abraham at that time, did not possess the law.

**(4:17)** *I have made you...* A quotation from Ge 17:5. *In the sight of Yahweh.* Yahweh considers Abraham the father of Jew and Gentile believers, not matter how others (especially the Jews) may see him. *The God who gives life to the dead.* An allusion to Jesus Christ’s Resurrection. *Calls... things that are not.* Yahweh is the Creator of everything out of nothingness.

**(4:18)** *Against all hope... in hope believed.* When all hope, by human standard, was useless, Abraham placed his hope in Yahweh. *So shall... be.* A quotation from Ge 17:5.

**(4:19)** *Faced the fact.* Faith does not refuse to face reality but looks beyond all difficulties to Yahweh.

**(4:20-22)** *Gave glory to Yahweh.* By believing to His promise.

**(4:23-24)** *Not for him alone, but...* As justification by faith was true for Abraham, so it is for all believers.

### ***Peace and joy [Ro 5:1-11]***

**(Ro 5:1)** *Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with Yahweh through our Lord Jesus Christ, (2)through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of Yahweh. (3)Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; (4)perseverance, character; and character, hope. (5)And hope does not disappoint us, because Yahweh has poured out His affection into our hearts by His Holy Spirit, whom He has given to us.*

**(6)** *You see, at just the right time, when we were still helpless, Jesus Christ died for the ungodly. (7)Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. (8)But Yahweh demonstrates His own affection for us in this: While we were still sinners, Jesus Christ died for us.*

**(9)** *Since we have been now justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from Yahweh’s punishment through him! (10)For if, when we were Yahweh’s enemies, we were reconciled to Him through the death of His Son, how much more, having been*

*reconciled, shall we be saved through his life. (11)Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in Yahweh through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.*

**(Ro 5:1)** *Peace with Yahweh.* Not merely a subjective feeling (peace of mind) but an objective status, a new relationship with Yahweh.

**(5:2)** *Access.* Jesus Christ guides us into the presence of Yahweh, having removed the separation (symbolized by the curtain at the Jerusalem Temple) between man and Yahweh. *Hope of the glory of Yahweh.* The Christian's confidence that the purpose for which Yahweh created him will be realized.

**(5:3-4)** *Rejoice in our sufferings.* Not "because of" but "in." Not looking for but accepting our sufferings. A Christian can rejoice in suffering because he knows that one of Yahweh's purposes for it is to produce fortitude of character in His children.

**(5:5)** *Hope does not disappoints us.* Hope is not unfounded optimism but the assurance that our future destiny is based on Yahweh's affection, revealed to us by the possibility to be in spiritual communion with Jesus Christ and Yahweh.

**(5:6-8)** *The right time.* The appointed moment in Yahweh's redemptive plan. *Ungodly...still sinners.* Jesus Christ died for us even if we were unworthy of Yahweh's grace.

**(5:9)** *Justified by his blood.* By the laying down of his life as an expiatory sacrifice.

**(5:10-11)** *Reconciled.* When mankind was hostile to Yahweh, He took the initiative of the reconciliation which, like justification, is a present reality for Christians and is something to rejoice about.

#### **Death through Adam, life through Jesus Christ [Ro 5:12-21]**

**(Ro 5:12)***Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned (13) -for before the law was given, sin was in the world. But sin is not taken into account when there is no law. (14)Nevertheless, death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, even over those who did not sin by breaking a command, as did Adam, who was a pattern of the One to come.*

**(15)***But the gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died for the trespass of the one man, how much more did Yahweh's grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many! (16)Again, the gift of Yahweh is not like the result of the one man's sin: The judgment followed one sin and brought condemnation, but the gift followed many trespasses and brought justification. (17)For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through the one man, how much more will Yahweh's abundant grace and the gift of righteousness reign in the life of those who receive them through the one man, Jesus Christ.*

**(18)***Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of the one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men. (19)For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.*

**(20)***The law was added, and so the trespass had to increase. But where sin increased, grace increased all the more, (21)so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

**(Ro 5:12)** *Sin entered into the world.* Adam and Eve (to note that here Paul totally ignores Eve) did not obey to the command given them by Yahweh and were banished from

the Garden of Eden (Ge 3). By not obeying they introduced sin in the human race (“in the world”); by being banished, and not allowed any more to eat from the tree of life, they introduced physical death (in the human race). *All sinned*. Not that the sin of Adam and Eve is the sin of all mankind, but that all mankind has to suffer the consequences of what they had done and has to live -and die- out of the Garden of Eden.

**(5:13)** *Sin is not taken into account when...* Paul’s opinion is that when there was no (Mosaic) law, sin (“breaking a command”) was not charged against men. And this is in open contrast with Yahweh sent punishments as the Flood and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.

**(5:14)** *Nevertheless, death...* All men, good or bad, have always to go through physical death. *Adam... a pattern of the One to come*. The analogy is one of contrast. As one man (Adam) brought universal ruin on the human race, so one man (Jesus Christ) brought universal blessing.

**(5:15)** *The many*. The same meaning as “all men.” *How much more*. Yahweh’s grace is infinitely greater for good than is Adam’s sin for evil.

**(5:16)** *Gift of Yahweh*. Universal spiritual salvation. *Many trespasses*. The sins of all men.

**(5:17)** *Will... reign in life*. The future reign of believers, the Kingdom of Heaven, with Jesus Christ.

**(5:18)** *Life for all men*. Salvation is available to all men, as soon as each one decides to accept this gift of Yahweh.

**(5:19)** *Made righteous*. A reference to a moral status before Yahweh, not to a change in character.

**(5:2021)** *Law was added*. To point to the need for redemption, revealing what sin is. *Where sin increased, grace increased all the more*. Yahweh’s grace -spiritual salvation- is given to each man -even to the worst sinner- who wants to accept it.

### **Dead to sin, alive in Jesus Christ [Ro 6:1-14]**

**(Ro 6:1)** *What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase?*

**(2)** *By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? (3) Or don’t you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?*

**(4)** *We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Jesus Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.*

**(5)** *If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. (6) For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin (7)-because anyone who has died has been freed from sin.*

**(8)** *Now if we died with Jesus Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. (9) For we know that since Jesus Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. (10) The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to Yahweh.*

**(11)** *In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to Yahweh in Christ Jesus. (12) Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. (13) Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to Yahweh, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to Him as instruments of righteousness. (14) For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace.*

**(Ro 6:1)** *Shall we go on sinning...?* This question arises from what Paul has just said at the end of ch. 5. Clearly, some people objected to Paul's teaching of justification by faith alone because they thought it would lead to moral irresponsibility.

**(6:2-4)** *We died to sin... buried... raised... may live a new life...* This explains the when and how -in Paul's opinion- of the Christian's death to sin. At the beginning of Christianity baptism and conversion were parts of one event (Ac 2:38), and baptism made official the Christian's spiritual communion with Jesus Christ, obtained by faith. As men fell into sin and became subject to death through Adam, so they have now died and been raised again through Jesus Christ -and this is what baptism symbolizes. *Through the glory of the Father.* By the power of Yahweh.

**(6:5-7)** *Our old self... the body of sin... freed from sin.* The self in its pre-Christian state is dominated by sin. The old self is personified as a "body" that can be put to death so that it can no longer enslave us to sin.

**(6:8-9)** *Now... we believe that...* As Jesus Christ's resurrection followed his death, so the believer who dies with Jesus Christ is raised to a new quality of moral life.

**(6:10)** *He died to sin once for all.* Jesus Christ's death was for the salvation of all men. *To Yahweh.* For the glory of Yahweh.

**(6:11)** *Dead to sin but alive to Yahweh in Christ Jesus.* In spiritual communion with Jesus Christ and Yahweh.

**(6:12)** *Therefore...* A call for the Christians to put in practice what explained before.

**(6:13)** *Offer the parts of your body to Him.* Putting all personal capacities at the service of Yahweh.

**(6:14)** *Sin shall not be your master.* Paul conceived of sin as a power that enslaves and, so, personified it. *Not under the law, but under grace.* The meaning is not that the Christians have been freed from all moral authority, but that they can resist the power of sin by the power of Yahweh.

### **Slaves to righteousness** [Ro 6:15-23]

**(Ro 6:15)** *What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means!* **(16)** *Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey -whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness?* **(17)** *But thanks be to Yahweh that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were entrusted.* **(18)** *You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness.*

**(19)** *I put this in human terms because you are weak in your natural selves. Just as you used to offer the parts of your body in slavery to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness, so now offer them in slavery to righteousness leading to holiness.* **(20)** *When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the control of righteousness.* **(21)** *What benefit did you reap at that time from the things you are now ashamed of? Those things result in death!* **(22)** *But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to Yahweh, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life.* **(23)** *For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of Yahweh is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

**(Ro 6:15-16)** *What then?... Don't you know...?* The question raised here comes from those who are afraid that the doctrine of justification by faith alone will remove all mo-

ral restraints. Paul rejects this objection and shows that a Christian does not throw morality to the winds.

**(6:17)** *Wholeheartedly obeyed.* Christian obedience is not forced or legalistic, but willing. *Form of teaching.* The teaching of Jesus Christ that was given to new converts in the early Church.

**(6:18)** *Slaves to righteousness.* The Christian convert has changed master. Whereas he was formerly a slave to sin, he now becomes a slave (a willing servant) to righteousness.

**(6:19-22)** *I put this in human terms.* An apology for using an imperfect analogy. The word “slavery” can’t be properly applied to the Christians, who are free in Jesus Christ. *Holiness.* Total dependence from Yahweh -slavery- produces holiness and, at the end, eternal life.

**(6:23)** *Wages of sin... gift of Yahweh.* Two kinds of servitude are contrasted here. One brings death; the other results in eternal life, which is not earned or merited, but a gift of Yahweh.

### ***An illustration from marriage [Ro 7:1-6]***

**(Ro 7:1)** *Do you not know, brothers, -for I am speaking to men who know the law- that the law has authority over a man only as long as he lives? (2)For example, by law a married woman is bound to her husband as long as he is alive, but if her husband dies, she is released from the law of marriage. (3)So then, if she marries another man while her husband is still alive, she is called an adulteress. But if her husband dies, she is released from that law and is not an adulteress, even though she marries another man.*

**(4)So, my brothers, you also died to the law through the body of Jesus Christ, that you might belong to another, to him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit to Yahweh. (5)For when we were controlled by the sinful nature, the sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in our bodies, so that we bore fruit for death. (6)But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new spiritual way, and not in the old way of the written code.**

**(Ro 7:1)** *Do you know...* The basic thought of this passage is founded on the legal maxim that death cancels all contracts. *The law.* Not only the Mosaic law but, more in general, all the rules of social life.

**(7:2-3)** *By law a married woman...* These verses illustrate the principle set down in the previous one. The physical death of a person decisively changes the relationship of other persons to the law.

**(7:4)** *So... you also...* Paul draws this conclusion from the principle previously stated and illustrated. *Died to the law.* In: “Dead to sin, alive in Jesus Christ” (Ro 6:1-14) Paul has affirmed that the Christians “died to sin.” Here that they “died to the law.” The result is that the law has no more hold on them, that the law’s power to condemn no longer threatens the Christians. *Through the body of Jesus Christ.* Because of Jesus Christ’s physical death on the Cross. By baptism the Christians share in the death of Jesus Christ. That means that, having died, they are discharged from the obligations to the law, are free and then can “marry” not the law but Jesus Christ. *Belong to another.* To the resurrected Jesus Christ, as already affirmed in: “Dead to sin, alive in Jesus Christ” (Ro 6:1-14), “united... in his death... united... in his resurrection.” The purpose of this union is to produce the fruit of holiness. When men “marry,” that is, they accept Jesus Christ, Christian obedience becomes not an externally imposed obedience, but an inner

spiritual loyalty to Jesus Christ. *Bear fruit to Yahweh.* The believers' spiritual life, in communion with Jesus Christ and Yahweh.

**(7:5)** *Controlled by the sinful nature.* Before to know Jesus Christ and become Christian men tried to rule life by the obedience to the written code of the law. *Aroused by the law.* The law not only reveals sin, it also stimulates it as the natural tendency in man is to desire the forbidden thing. *Fruit for death.* Physical death and, beyond that, spiritual death -separation from Yahweh- were the fruit of being controlled by the law.

**(7:6)** *What once bound us.* The law. *Released from the law.* Released from the condemnation of the law. *New spiritual way.* The way dictated by the Christians' spiritual communion with Jesus Christ and Yahweh. Now not law, but affection is at the center of the Christians' life; and the inspiration of affection can make them able to do what the restraint of the law was powerless to help them doing. *Old way of the written code.* The Old Testament law.

### ***Struggling with sin*** [Ro 7:7-25]

**(Ro 7:7)** *What shall we say, then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! Indeed I would not have known what sin was except through the law. For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, "Do not covet." (8)But sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, produced in me every kind of covetous desire. For apart from the law, sin is dead. (9)Once I was alive apart from law; but when the commandment came, sin sprang to life and I died. (10)I found that the very commandment that was intended to bring life actually brought death. (11)For sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, deceived me, and through the commandment put me to death. (12)So then, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good.*

**(13)** *Did that which is good, then, become death to me? By no means! But in order that sin might be recognized as sin, it produced death in me through what was good, so that through the commandment sin might become absolutely sinful.*

**(14)** *We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. (15)I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. (16)And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. (17)As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. (18)I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. (19)For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do -this I keep on doing. (20)Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.*

**(21)** *So I find this principle at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. (22)For in my inner being I delight in Yahweh's law; (23)but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members. (24)What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? (25)Thanks be to Yahweh -through Jesus Christ our Lord!*

*So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to Yahweh's law, but in the sinful nature a slave to the law of sin.*

**(Ro 7:7)** *Is the law sin?* This question was occasioned by the remarks about the law in the previous verses. Paul is dealing with the paradox of the law which, in itself, is a fine



thing, meant to make a man good. And yet the fact remains that the same law is the very thing through which sin -Satan- gains entry into a man. *I would not have known what sin was.* Here, the “I” applies not only to Paul, but to each man. The law fulfilled the important function of revealing the existence of sin.

**(7:8)** *Opportunity afforded by the commandment.* As already seen, the law not only reveals sin, but also stimulates it as the natural tendency in man is to desire the forbidden thing. *Apart from the law, sin is dead.* Not non-existent but not fully perceived and understood.

**(7:9)** *Once I was alive apart from law.* The reference is to the time before Paul’s conversion, after which the true rigor of the law became clear to him and he realized that he stood guilty before the law. *When the commandment came.* At the moment of his conversion, Paul understood his guilt. *I died.* Because, as seen in: “Slaves to righteousness” (Ro 6:15-23), after the law has revealed sin, “sin’s wages is death.”

**(7:10-11)** *I found that... intended to bring life... brought death... put me to death.* In Paul’s experience, instead of giving life, the law brought condemnation; instead of producing holiness, it stimulated sin.

**(7:12)** *The law is holy.* Despite the despicable use that sin -Satan- made of the law, the law is not to blame. The law is Yahweh’s and as such the law and its commands are perfectly good.

**(7:13)** *That which is good... became death...?* Sin -Satan- used a holy thing -the law- for an unholy end -spiritual death. *In order that.* The bad effect -spiritual death- of the -good- law revealed the evil nature of sin.

**(7:14)** *The law is spiritual.* Because the law has its origin in Yahweh. *I am unspiritual.* In Paul’s experience, it is a true fact of life that even a believer has always the seed of rebellion in his heart. *Sold as a slave to sin.* This phrase points out the failure even of Christians to meet the ethical and moral radical demands of the Gospel. It also points to the persistent activity of sin -of Satan.

**(7:15)** *I do not understand.* The spiritual struggle creates tension, ambivalence and confusion.

**(7:16)** *I agree that the law is good.* Even when Paul is rebellious and disobedient, the action of the Spirit of Yahweh reveals him the essential goodness of the law.

**(7:17)** *No longer I myself who do it.* Not an attempt to escape moral responsibility but a statement of the great control sin -Satan- can have over a Christian’s life.

**(7:18-19)** *Nothing good lives in me.* A reference to man’s fallen nature. Paul is not saying that no goodness exists in Christians, but that they are continuously under the attack of sin -of Satan.

**(7:20)** *Sin... does it.* Practically, a repetition of a previous phrase, again not an attempt to escape moral responsibility but a statement of the great control sin -Satan- can have over a Christian’s life.

**(7:21-22)** *I delight in Yahweh’s law.* Paul, as a Christian, had this inner feeling.

**(7:23)** *Another law.* A principle or force at work in Paul preventing him from giving obedience to Yahweh’s law. *Law of my mind.* His desire to obey Yahweh. *Law of sin.* Essentially the same as the “another law” mentioned above.

**(7:24)** *Body of death.* Figuratively for the “body of sin” already mentioned, from which Paul could not gain freedom.

**(7:25)** *Through Jesus Christ.* Deliverance can come, not through legalistic effort, but through faith in Jesus Christ. *I myself.* The real self -the inner being that delights in Yahweh’s law.

**Life by means of Yahweh's Spirit [Ro 8:1-17]**

**(Ro 8:1)** Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, **(2)** because through Christ Jesus the law of Yahweh's Spirit of Life set me free from the law of sin and death. **(3)** For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, Yahweh did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so He condemned sin in sinful man, **(4)** in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fulfilled in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to His Spirit.

**(5)** Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with Yahweh's Spirit have their minds set on what Yahweh's Spirit desires. **(6)** The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by Yahweh's Spirit is life and peace. **(7)** The sinful mind is hostile to Yahweh. It does not submit to Yahweh's law, nor can it do so. **(8)** Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please Yahweh.

**(9)** You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by Yahweh's Spirit, if the Spirit of Yahweh lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Jesus Christ, he does not belong to Jesus Christ. **(10)** But if Jesus Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness. **(11)** And if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus Christ from the dead is living in you, He who raised Jesus Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit, who lives in you.

**(12)** Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation -but it is not to it- to live according to the sinful nature. **(13)** For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by Yahweh's Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, **(14)** because those who are led by the Spirit of Yahweh are sons of Yahweh. **(15)** For you did not receive a Spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by this we cry, "Abba, Father." **(16)** Yahweh's Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are Yahweh's children. **(17)** Now if we are children, then we are heirs -heirs of Yahweh and co-heirs with Jesus Christ- if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

**(Ro 8:1)** *No condemnation.* The law brought condemnation pointing out and stimulating sin. But the Christians are no longer "under law," they are "under grace." *In Christ Jesus.* The believers are in spiritual communion with Jesus Christ and Yahweh.

**(8:2)** *The law of Yahweh's Spirit of life.* The power of the Spirit of Yahweh, who is life-giving. *Law of sin and death.* The power of sin -Satan- which ultimately gives spiritual death. To note that Paul gives several different meanings to the word "law" -to mean, for ex-ample, a controlling power; a principle; the Mosaic law; Yahweh's law in general; the Old Testament as a whole.

**(8:3)** *Powerless to do.* The law was not able to overcome sin -Satan. It could point out, condemn and even stimulate sin, but could not remove it. *Yahweh did.* Yahweh, with His affection, is behind the whole process of salvation and redemption. *In the likeness of sinful man.* Jesus Christ, the Son of Yahweh, was truly a man (Thoughts. Jesus Christ, the Son of Yahweh, a man). *To be a sin offering.* Jesus Christ died on the Cross on behalf of all men, and his death achieved something for men that men could never have achieved by themselves: reconciliation between men and Yahweh, restoring the lost relationship of intimacy and affection.

**(8:4)** *Righteous requirement of the law.* The law still plays a role in the believers' life -not as a means of salvation but as a moral and ethical guide. *Fulfilled.* So that the believers might be enabled to live observing the true intentions of the law. *According to His Spirit.* The Christians, helped by being in spiritual communion with Jesus Christ and Yahweh, can actually meet the spirit of Yahweh's law.

**(8:5-8)** *According to the sinful nature... in accordance with Yahweh's Spirit.* Two kinds of life: the first leads to spiritual death; the second leads to spiritual life and peace.

**(8:9)** *Controlled... by Yahweh's Spirit, if...* It is essential, to live a Christian life, to be in spiritual communion with Jesus Christ and Yahweh.

**(8:10)** *Your body is dead because of sin.* A Christian's body is subjected to physical death, which is the consequence of Adam and Eve's sin. *Your spirit is alive.* He who is in spiritual communion with Jesus Christ and Yahweh is spiritually alive. *Because of righteousness.* Jesus Christ's action -his death on the Cross- has put all believers in a condition of right relationship with Yahweh (Righteousness through faith. Ro 3:21-31).

**(8:11)** *If the Spirit of Him... is living in you...* Jesus Christ's physical resurrection is the proof of the future physical resurrection of all believers -those who have faith in Jesus Christ and who, as a consequence, are in spiritual communion with him and Yahweh.

**(8:12-13)** *Therefore...* The logical conclusion of what Paul has said above is that men have to live following the will of Yahweh. Only in this way they will be in condition of earning eternal spiritual life.

**(8:14)** *Sons of Yahweh.* Yahweh is the Father of all in the sense that He has created all. But not all are His children (Jesus Christ said to the unbelieving Jews of his time, "You belong to your father, the devil" [The Gospel of Jesus Christ. The children of the devil. Jn 8: 44]). Men become children of Yahweh by believing in His Son Jesus Christ and by being -as a consequence of their faith- in spiritual communion with Jesus Christ and Yahweh.

**(8:15)** *Spirit of sonship.* Adopted sons, a status which granted them all the privileges of a natural son, including inheritance rights. *Abba, Father.* Expressive of a specially close relationship to Yahweh.

**(8:16)** *Testifies with our spirit.* The inner testimony coming from the Christians' spiritual communion with Jesus Christ and Yahweh.

**(8:17)** *Heirs... and co-heirs with Jesus Christ.* The believers have already entered, at least in part, in the possession of their share of the inheritance (eternal spiritual life), as such becoming co-heirs with Jesus Christ. *If indeed we share in his suffering.* The Christians will surely share Jesus Christ's glory. But, before, they have to share his suffering -that is, they have to "take their cross."

### **Future glory** [Ro 8:18-27]

**(Ro 8:18)** *I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. (19)The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of Yahweh to be revealed. (20)For the creation was subjected to frustration -not by its own choice, but by the will of the One who subjected it- but in hope (21)that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of Yahweh.*

**(22)** *We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. (23)Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of Yahweh's Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. (24)For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no*

hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? (25) But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we have to wait for it patiently.

(26) In the same way, Yahweh's Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit of Yahweh Himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. (27) And Yahweh, who searches our hearts, knows what to say by His Spirit, because His Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with His will.

**(Ro 8:18)** *I consider...* Paul was sure that the final prize -sharing Jesus Christ's glory in his Kingdom- is worthy all the sufferings that Christians have to endure on Earth.

**(8:19)** *The creation waits.* The whole creation of Yahweh, both animate and inanimate, waits for the realization of men's full potential. *Sons of Yahweh to be revealed.* Christians are already sons of Yahweh, but the full manifestation of all that it means will not come until their resurrection.

**(8:20)** *Frustration.* Yahweh's curse that did affect humankind after Adam and Eve's sin (Ge 3:17-19). *In hope.* An allusion to the promise of the final defeat of Satan (Ge 3:15).

**(8:21)** *Will be liberated from its bondage to decay.* To the Jews, the physical universe was not destined for destruction but for renewal. And no longer subjected to death and decay, as presently.

**(8:22)** *Has been groaning.* Creation is personified as a woman in labor waiting for the birth of her child.

**(8:23)** *Firstfruits of Yahweh's Spirit.* The Christians' spiritual communion with Jesus Christ and Yahweh is evidence and pledge of their salvation -eternal life. *Adoption as sons.* As seen in: "Life through the Spirit of Yahweh" (Ro 8:1-17), the Christians have "received the Spirit of sonship." That is, they are adopted sons, a status granting them all the privileges of a natural son, including inheritance rights. *Redemption of our bodies.* The resurrection, as the final stage of our adoption.

**(8:24-25)** *In this hope.* We are saved by faith, not hope; but hope accompanies salvation, giving the strength necessary for living as Christians.

**(8:26)** *In the same way.* As hope sustains the believers in their sufferings, so their spiritual communion with Yahweh helps them in praying properly. *With groans that word cannot express.* As we wait for our full adoption as Yahweh's sons, He, through our spiritual communion with Him, gives us His spiritual suggestions. And it is almost impossible to describe this by words.

**(8:27)** *Yahweh... knows what to say by His Spirit.* The spiritual suggestions Yahweh is giving to the Christians -the saints, who are in spiritual communion with Him.

### **More than winners** [Ro 8:28-39]

**(Ro 8:28)** *And we know that in all things Yahweh works for the good of those who are fond of Him, who have been called according to His purpose. (29) For those Yahweh foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of His Son, that he might be the first-born among many brothers. (30) And those He predestined, He also called; those He called, He also justified; those He justified, He also glorified.*

**(31)** *What, then, shall we say in response to this? If Yahweh is for us, who can be against us? (32) He who did not spare His own Son, but gave him up for us all -how will He not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? (33) Who will bring any charge against those whom Yahweh has chosen? It is Yahweh who justifies. (34) Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died -more than that, who was raised to life- is at the*

right hand of Yahweh and is interceding for us. (35) Who shall separate us from the affection of Jesus Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? (36) As it is written:

“For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.”

(37) No, in all these things we are more than winners through him who had been fond of us. (38) For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, (39) neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the affection of Yahweh that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

**(Ro 8:28-30)** *The good... called.* Only Yahweh knows what is good for the spiritual life of a believer (a “called” one.) *Foreknew...* From ever Yahweh knows who are those who by faith would become His people. *Called... predestined.* Yahweh wants (and knows that, at the end of time, it will be so) all men to be in spiritual communion with Him and Jesus Christ. *The firstborn among many brothers.* Jesus Christ holds the highest position in Yahweh’s great family. *Glorified.* Those who accept Yahweh’s call will become His adoptive sons.

**(8:31-32)** *If Yahweh is for us... how will He not...?* If Yahweh gave the supreme gift of His Son to save men, He will certainly also give men whatever they need to reach spiritual salvation.

**(8:33-34)** *Who will bring... who is he who condemns?* The picture is that of a court of law. No Christian will be condemned as Yahweh -because of Jesus Christ’s intercession- has already pronounced a verdict of absolution.

**(8:35)** *Who shall separate...?* Here Paul wants to show his readers that suffering does not separate believers from Jesus Christ but, actually, carries them along toward their ultimate destination.

**(8:36)** *For your sake...* A quotation from Psalm 44:22, to show that suffering has always been part of the experience of Yahweh’s people.

**(8:37)** *Winners through him who...* Jesus Christ, who died on the Cross for all men, has “won” salvation.

**(8:38-39)** *Neither... nor... in all creation....* Nothing can get the believers beyond Yahweh’s affection.

### **Yahweh’s sovereign choice** [Ro 9:1-29]

**(Ro 9:1)** *I speak the truth in Jesus Christ -I am not lying, my conscience confirms it in the Holy Spirit of Yahweh-* **(2)** *I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart.* **(3)** *For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Jesus Christ for the sake of my brothers, those of my own race,* **(4)** *the people of Israel. Theirs is the adoption as sons; theirs the divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of the law, the Temple worship and the promises.* **(5)** *Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of Jesus Christ, who is Son of Yahweh over all, forever praised! Amen.*

**(6)** *It is not as though Yahweh’s word had failed. For not all who are descended from Israel are Israel.* **(7)** *Nor because they are his descendants are they all Abraham’s children. On the contrary, “It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned.”* **(8)** *In other words, it is not the natural children who are Yahweh’s children, but it is the children of the promise who are regarded as Abraham’s offspring.* **(9)** *For this was how the promise was stated: “At the appointed time I will return, and Sarah will have a son.”*

**(10)**Not only that, but Rebekah's children had one and the same father, our father Isaac. **(11)**Yet, before the twins were born or had done anything good or bad -in order that Yahweh's purpose in election might stand: **(12)**Not by works but by Him who calls-she was told, "The older will serve the younger." **(13)**Just as it is written:

"Jacob, I had been fond of, but Esau I hadn't been fond of."

**(14)**What then shall we say? Is Yahweh unjust? Not at all! **(15)**For He says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion."

**(16)**It does not, therefore, depend on man's desire or effort, but on Yahweh's mercy.

**(17)**For the Scripture says to Pharaoh: "I raised you up for this very purpose, that I might display My power in you and that My Name might be proclaimed in all the Earth." **(18)**Therefore Yahweh has mercy on whom He wants to have mercy, and He hardens whom He wants to harden.

**(19)**One of you will say to me: "Then why does Yahweh still blames us? For who resists His will?" **(20)**But who are you, O man, to talk back to Yahweh? "Shall what is formed say to Him who formed it, 'Why did you make me like this?'" **(21)**Does not the potter have the right to make out of the same lump of clay some pottery for noble purposes and some for common use?

**(22)**What if Yahweh, choosing to show His wrath and make His power known, bore with great patience the objects of His wrath -prepared for destruction? **(23)**What if He did this to make the riches of His glory known to the objects of His mercy, whom He prepared in advance for glory- **(24)**even us, whom He called, not only from the Jews but also from the Gentiles? **(25)**As He says in Hosea:

"I will call them 'My people' who are not My people;

And I will call 'My cherished one' who is not My cherished one."

**(26)**And,

"It will happen that in the very place where it was said to them, 'You are not My people,' they will be called 'sons of [Yahweh] the living God.'"

**(27)**Isaiah cries out concerning Israel:

"Though the number of the Israelites be like the sand by the sea, only the remnant will be saved.

**(28)**For the Lord Yahweh will carry out His sentence on Earth with speed and finality."

**(29)**It is just as Isaiah said previously:

"Unless Yahweh the Lord Almighty had left us descendants, we would have become as Sodom, we would have been like Gomorrah."

**(Ro 9:1-2)** *I speak.* Paul begins -in sorrow, not in anger- to explain the Jewish rejection of Jesus Christ. *The truth... in the Holy Spirit of Yahweh.* The truth of his words is confirmed by Paul's spiritual communion with Jesus Christ and Yahweh.

**(9:3-4)** *People of Israel.* The Jews used this title to indicate that they were the chosen people of Yahweh. *Theirs is... theirs...* Here Paul points to the special relationship Yahweh had with the Jews, enumerating the privileges they received from Him. Then he will show that, despite their unbelief and disobedience, Yahweh's promises are still valid.

**(9:5)** *Human ancestry of Jesus Christ, who is Son of Yahweh.* The culmination of the privileges Yahweh accorded to the Jews. From them came the Messiah, the Anointed

One of Yahweh, the One who was not only a man but also His Son. And yet when he came they rejected him.

**(9:6)** *Yahweh's word.* Yahweh's promises are still valid and His plan of salvation is still going on. Paul is not denying the election of Israel as a nation but stating that within Israel there is a separation, between unbelieving and believing Israelites -in effect, not all the Jews did reject Jesus Christ; and all the early followers were Jews.

**(9:7-9)** *Descendants... Abraham's children...* If we go back through the history of Israel, we can see again and again a process of selection at work indicating that not all the Jews were part of Yahweh's design. Mere physical descent from Abraham is not sufficient; only those who have faith are Yahweh's children -"children of the promise." *On the contrary...* To prove his case -that not all physical descendants from Abraham are part of the chosen people- Paul cites two well known instances from Jewish history. *It is through Isaac... At the appointed time... Sarah.* Quotations from Ge 21:12 and Ge 18:10,14. Abraham had two sons, but only Isaac and his descendants were sons of the promise -all Abraham's descendants through Ishmael were not.

**(9:10-13)** *Not by works but by Him who calls. The older will serve the younger.* A quotation from Ge 25:23. Before Rebecca's children were even born, Yahweh made a choice -a choice obviously not based on works. *Jacob I had been fond of...* A quotation from Mal 1:2-3. Equivalent to "Jacob I chose, but Esau I rejected." Only Jacob's descendants were to be the chosen people.

**(9:14)** *Is Yahweh unjust? Not at all!* Again, to prove his case -that Yahweh is not unjust to elect on the basis of His sovereign freedom- Paul cites two well known instances from Jewish history.

**(9:15)** *I will have mercy...* A quotation from Ex 33:19. Yahweh answers to Moses that His mercy is not for all -for the faithful only.

**(9:16)** *It does not...* Yahweh's choice is not controlled by man, even if Israel's rejection was based on unbelief.

**(9:17)** *I raised you up...* A quotation from Ex 9:16. The defeat of the Pharaoh showed Yahweh's power.

**(9:18)** *Yahweh has mercy... hardens....* Yahweh's mercy is for the believers, but He opposes -hardens- the unbelievers.

**(9:19)** *One of you will say...* A very natural objection; if Yahweh accepts or rejects men following His will, how can He blame the men who have rejected Him?

**(9:20-21)** *Who are you...? Does not the potter...?* No man has any right to argue with Yahweh. Paul's answer is blunt. But the analogy of the potter -which looks so bad when it compares a human being to a lump of inanimate clay- was written by Paul with "great sorrow and unceasing anguish" in his heart.

**(9:22-24)** *What if...* Paul goes on to say that this rejection by the Jews had happened in order that the door might be opened to the Gentiles. Anyway, the emphasis is on Yahweh's mercy and great patience even towards those who oppose Him. The purpose of His patience is to bring about their repentance.

**(9:25-26)** *I will call... It will happen that...* Quotations from Hos 2:23 and 1:10. In the original context they refer to the spiritual restoration of Israel. But Paul finds in them the principle that Yahweh is a saving and forgiving God, who takes those "not My people" -Gentiles- and make them "My people" -Christians.

**(9:27-29)** *Though the number... Unless the Lord...* Quotations from Isa 10:22-23 and 1:9. They indicate that only a small remnant will survive from the great multitude of Israelites.

***Israel's unbelief [Ro 9:30-33;10:1-21]***

**(Ro 9:30)** *What then shall we say? That the Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have obtained it, a righteousness that is by faith; (31)but Israel, who pursued a law of righteousness, has not attained it. (32)Why not? Because they pursued it not by faith but as if it were by works. They stumbled over the “stumbling stone.” (33)As it is written:*

*“See, I lay in Zion a stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame.”*

**(10:1)** *Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to Yahweh for the Israelites is that they may be saved. (2)For I can testify about them that they are zealous for Yahweh, but their zeal is not based on knowledge. (3)Since they did not know the righteousness that comes from Yahweh and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to Yahweh's righteousness. (4)Jesus Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.*

**(5)** *Moses describes in this way the righteousness that is by the law: “The man who does this things will live by them.” (6)But of the righteousness that is by faith he says: “Do not say in your heart, ‘Who will ascend into Heaven?’” (that is, to bring Jesus Christ down) (7)“or ‘Who will descend into the deep?’” (that is, to bring Jesus Christ up from the dead). (8)But what does he say? “The Word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart,” that is, the Word of faith we are proclaiming: (9)That if you confess with your mouth, “Jesus Christ is Lord,” and believe in your heart that Yahweh raised him from the dead, you will be saved. (10)For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. (11)As the Scripture says, “Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame.” (12)For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile -the same Lord Jesus Christ is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, (13)for, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ will be saved.”*

**(14)** *How, then, can they call on the One they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the One of whom they have not heard? (15)And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!”*

**(16)** *But not all the Israelites accepted the good news. For Isaiah says, “Lord Yahweh, who has believed our message?” (17)Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message heard carries the Word of Jesus Christ. (18)But I ask: Did they not hear? Of course they did:*

*“Their voice has gone out into all the Earth, their words to the end of the world.”*

**(19)** *Again I ask: Did Israel not understand? First, Moses says,*

*“I will make you envious by those who are not a nation; I will make you angry by a nation that has no understanding.”*

**(20)** *And Isaiah boldly says:*

*“I was found by those who did not seek Me; I revealed Myself to those who did not ask for Me.”*

**(21)** *But concerning Israel he says,*

*“All day long I have held out My hands to a disobedient and obstinate people.”*

**(Ro 9.30)** *What then...? A new step in Paul's argument: The rejection of the Jews as a nation was caused by their failure in understanding the spirit of Yahweh's law, a law which was pointing to Jesus Christ. They pursued the letter of the law, trying to obtain*



salvation not by faith but by works. On the contrary, the Gentiles, very simply, believed to the Gospel and had faith in Jesus Christ.

**(9:31)** *Law of righteousness.* A law that prescribed the way to a right relationship with Yahweh. Paul does not reject obedience to the law but the possibility of reaching such a condition by works -that is, by following the letter (the “do” and “do not do” rules) and not the spirit of the law.

**(9:32)** *Not by faith.* The Israelites pursued the right thing -to be in a right relationship with Yahweh- but they tried to merit Yahweh’s favor rather than having faith in His grace. *Stumbling stone.* Yahweh’s Messiah, Jesus Christ, who applies to himself Psalm 118: 22, “The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone” (The Gospel of Jesus Christ. The parable of the tenants. Mk 12:10-11; Mt 21:42; Lk 20:17). Yahweh’s rejection of Israel was not arbitrary but based on Israel’s rejection of His way of gaining righteousness -the way of faith.

**(9:33)** *See, I lay in Zion... the one who...* Two passages from Isaiah (Isa 8:14 and 28:16), here combined in one, which were commonly used by early Christians in defense of Jesus Christ’s Messiahship.

**(10:1)** *My... desire...* Paul always desired and prayed Yahweh for the salvation of all Israelites.

**(10:2)** *Zealous for Yahweh.* The Jews’ zeal for Yahweh was commendable in that Yahweh was its object, but it was flawed because it was not based on right knowledge about Yahweh’s way of salvation.

**(10:3)** *Righteousness that comes from Yahweh.* The state of being “in the right” in relation to Yahweh, which comes from Yahweh Himself as a gift and cannot be earned by men’s works. *Their own.* Righteousness based on mere human effort.

**(10:4)** *Jesus Christ is the end of the law.* Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of the law, in the sense that he brought it to completion by obeying perfectly its true demands. *Righteousness for everyone.* Jesus Christ has freed all believers from the condemnation of the law so that all Christians can stand righteous before Yahweh.

**(10:5)** *Righteousness... by the law.* The purpose of quoting Lev 18:5 (“The man who...”) is to demonstrate that the law is the way of life for the believers -who have already received righteousness by Yahweh-, not the way of salvation for the unbelievers.

**(10:6-7)** *Righteousness... by faith.* The purpose of quoting Dt 30:12-13 (“Do not say...”) is to explain the nature of righteousness by faith. It does not require heroic feats such as bringing Jesus Christ down from Heaven or up from the grave.

**(10:8)** *The Word is near you.* A quotation from Dt 30:14, where the “Word” is the Word of Yahweh. Paul applies this passage to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, “the Word of faith” -the main point being the accessibility of the Gospel. Righteousness is by faith and readily available to all believers, who will receive it freely from Yahweh through Jesus Christ.

**(10:9)** *Jesus Christ is Lord.* The earliest Christian confession of faith. *In your heart.* The heart was considered to be not only the seat of the emotions and affections, but also of the intellect and will. *Yahweh raised him from the dead.* An essential truth, at the center of the apostolic preaching. *Will be saved.* Spiritually saved for ever. Nothing more is required to gain salvation.

**(10:10)** *With your heart... with your mouth...* Salvation involves inward belief as well as out-ward confession.

**(10:11)** *Anyone who trusts.* A quotation from Isa 28:16. Yahweh will never reject he who has faith in Jesus Christ.

**(10:12)** *No difference between Jew and Gentile.* In the sense that salvation is opened to all men.

**(10:13)** *Everyone who calls...* A quotation from Joel 2:32. All who believe in Jesus Christ will be spiritually saved.

**(10:14)** *How... can...?* Here Paul, by means of a series of rhetorical questions, states (in reverse order) the conditions necessary for calling on Jesus Christ and be saved: A preacher, sent from Yahweh, proclaims the message, which is heard, and believed.

**(10:15)** *How beautiful.* A quotation from Isa 52:7, here applied to the Gospel preachers.

**(10:16)** *Lord Yahweh, who has...?* A quotation from Isa 53:1, used to show that it always happened that only part of the Jews believed to Yahweh sent messages.

**(10:17)** *Word of Jesus Christ.* The Gospel of Jesus Christ, preached by his messengers.

**(10:18)** *Their voice...* A quotation from Psalm 19:4, which refers to the testimony of the Heavens to the glory of Yahweh. Here it is applied to Gospel preachers and used to show that the Jews had ample opportunity to hear the message of redemption.

**(10:19)** *I will make you...* A quotation from Dt 32:21, which answers the question, "Did Israel not understand?" by suggesting that if the Gentiles -considered to be spiritually unenlightened- understood the message, surely the Jews could have. *Those who are not a nation.* The Gentiles, who are not a nation formed by Yahweh, as Israel was.

**(10:20)** *I was found by...* A quotation from Isa 65:1, here referred to the Gentiles.

**(10:21)** *All day long...* A quotation from Isa 65:2, stating that the responsibility for Israel's rejection as a nation rested with the nation itself. Israel had failed to meet Yahweh's requirements, namely, to have faith.

### **The remnant of Israel** [Ro 11:1-10]

**(Ro 11:1)** *I ask then: Did Yahweh reject His people? By no means! I am an Israelite myself, a descendant from Abraham, from the tribe of Benjamin. (2)Yahweh did not reject His people, whom He foreknew. Don't you know what the Scripture says in the passage about Elijah -how he appealed to Yahweh against Israel: (3)"Lord Yahweh, they have killed Your prophets and torn down Your altars; I am the only one left, and they are trying to kill me"? (4)And what was Yahweh's answer to him? "I have reserved for Myself seven thousand who have not bowed the knee to Baal." (5)So too, at the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace. (6)And if by grace, then it is no longer by works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace.*

**(7)What then? What Israel sought so earnestly it did not obtain, but the elect did. The others were hardened, (8)as it is written:**

*"Yahweh gave them a spirit of lethargy, eyes so that they could not see and ears so that they could not hear, to this very day."*

**(9)And David says:**

*"May their table become a snare and a trap, a stumbling block and a retribution for them. (10)May their eyes be darkened so they cannot see, and their backs be bent forever."*

**(Ro 11:1)** *Did Yahweh reject...?* Not all of them, as there has always been a faithful remnant among the Jewish people.

**(11:2)** *Whom He foreknew.* From ever Yahweh knows who are those who by faith would be His people.

**(11:3-4)** *Lord Yahweh, they have killed... I have reserved...* Quotations from 1 Kings 19:10-14 and 1 Kings 19:18.

**(11:5-6)** *Remnant chosen by grace.* As it was in Elijah's day, so it was in Paul's. Despite widespread lack of faith, a few faithful Jews remained. Yet not because of their good works but of Yahweh's grace.

**(11:7)** *What Israel sought so earnestly.* A righteous standing before Yahweh, which eluded the great part of Israel. *Were hardened.* Yahweh's mercy is for the believers; He opposes -hardens- the unbelievers.

**(11:8)** *Yahweh gave them... to this very day.* A quotation from Dt 29:4 and Isa 29:10. The spiritual dullness of the Jews had continued from Isaiah's days to Paul's.

**(11:9)** *May their...* A quotation from Psalm 69:22-23, originally something that David said concerning his enemies. Paul uses it to describe the result of divine hardening.

**Ingrafted branches** [Ro 11:11-24]

**(Ro 11:11)** *Again I ask: Did they stumble so as to fall beyond recovery? Not at all! Rather, because of their transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles to make Israel envious. (12) But if their transgression means riches for the world, and their loss means riches for the Gentiles, how much greater riches will their fullness bring!*

**(13)** *I am talking to you Gentiles, since I am the apostle to the Gentiles. I make much of my ministry (14) in the hope that I may somehow arouse my own people to envy and save some of them. (15) For if their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead? (16) If the part of the dough offered as firstfruits is holy, then the whole batch is holy; if the root is holy, so are the branches.*

**(17)** *If some of the branches have been broken off, and you, though a wild olive shoot, have been grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing sap from the olive root, (18) do not boast over those branches. If you do, consider this: You do not support the root, but the root supports you. (19) You will say then, "Branches were broken off so that I could be grafted in." (20) Granted. But they were broken off because of unbelief, and you stand by faith. Do not be arrogant, but be afraid. (21) For if Yahweh did not spare the natural branches, He will not spare you either.*

**(22)** *Consider therefore the kindness and sternness of Yahweh: sternness to those who fell, but kindness to you, provided that you continue in His kindness. Otherwise, you also will be cut off. (23) And if they do not persist in unbelief, they will be grafted in, for Yahweh is able to graft them again. (24) After all, if you were cut out of an olive tree that is wild by nature, and contrary to nature were grafted into a cultivated olive tree, how much more readily will these, the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree!*

**(Ro 11-11)** *Their transgression.* The Jews' rejection of the Gospel. *Make Israel envious.* The salvation given to the Gentiles would push the Jews to accept the Gospel.

**(11:12)** *Riches for the world.* Israel's refusal of the Gospel has enriched the Gentiles opening them the door to salvation, as it caused the apostles to turn to the Gentiles (Ac 13:46-48; 18:6). *Their loss.* The loss of Yahweh's salvation through Jesus Christ. *How much greater riches...* When the affection of Yahweh will gather in His Kingdom both all Jews and Gentiles.

**(11:13)** *Apostle to the Gentiles.* Yahweh sent Paul to preach to the Gentiles (Introduction to the Romans. Ro 1:1-7).

**(11:14)** *In the hope... that...* Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles, but he could never forget his own people.

**(11:15)** *Rejection... reconciliation of the world... life from the dead.* Israel's rejection leads to the salvation of the Gentiles, which leads to the jealousy and envy of Israel, which -the hardening of their hearts removed- leads to faith, that is, to spiritual resurrection.

**(11:16)** *Part of the dough.* The part made from the first of the harvested grain (firstfruit) was offered to Yahweh. This consecrated all the bread made with the whole harvest. *Firstfruit... batch. Root... branches.* In both examples, the patriarchs and the Jewish people. *Holy... so... the branches.* Not all the Jews were righteous, but Yahweh, at the end, will save all of them (Thoughts. At the end of time, everybody will be with Yahweh).

**(11:17)** *Branches... broken off - wild olive shoot.* The unbelieving Jews, in opposition to the Gentile Christians. *Grafted in.* In agriculture, the "contrary to nature" grafting of a wild olive branch into the cultivated olive tree is never performed, as it would serve no useful purpose. Not so for the Gentiles (wild branches) who are included in Yahweh's family (cultivated olive tree).

**(11:18)** *The root supports you.* Salvation of Gentile Christians depends on Yahweh's covenants with the patriarchs -who are "the root." In effect, Christianity grew from the "root" of Jewish faith.

**(11:19-21)** *Be afraid.* A conventional phrase, in the sense of having reverential trust in Yahweh and His will.

**(11:22)** *Kindness and sternness of Yahweh.* Yahweh is a kind (to those who have faith) but stern (He disciplines the unfaithful -for them to repent) Father.

**(11:23)** *Yahweh is able to graft them again.* Paul is sure that Yahweh can -and will- have back to Him all the Jews.

**(11:24)** *Will... more readily... be grafted...* Paul is sure that all unbelieving Jews, at the end, will be brought back into Yahweh's family.

**All Israel will be saved** [Ro 11:25-32;12:1-2]

**(Ro 11:25)** *I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. (26)And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written:*

*"The deliverer will come from Zion; he will turn godlessness away from Jacob. (27)And this will be My covenant with them when I take away their sins."*

**(28)** *As far as the Gospel is concerned, they are enemies of Yahweh on your account; but as far as election is concerned, they are cherished on account of the patriarchs, (29)for Yahweh's gift and His call are irrevocable. (30)Just as you who were at one time disobedient to Yahweh have now received mercy as a result of their disobedience, (31)so they too have now become disobedient in order that they too may receive mercy as a result of Yahweh's mercy to you. (32)For Yahweh has bound all men over to disobedience so that He may have mercy on them all.*

**(12:1)** *Therefore I urge you, brothers, in view of Yahweh's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to Yahweh -this is your spiritual act of worship. (2)Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what Yahweh's will is -His good, pleasing and perfect will.*

**(Ro 11:25)** *Mystery.* In the sense of something formerly hidden or obscure but now revealed by Yahweh for all to know and understand. Here, Yahweh's decision to sum up

all men in Jesus Christ, including both Jews and Gentiles in the Christian Church. *So that you may not be conceited.* Yahweh's decision to include the Gentiles in His plan of salvation should humble them, not fill them with arrogance. *Hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles...* Israel's hardening is partial and temporary; and will end only when all Gentiles are saved.

**(11:26-27)** *And so all Israel will be saved.* After that -and because of that- all the Jews -of every generation- will be accepted in Yahweh's Kingdom (Thoughts. At the end of time, every-body will be with Yahweh). *The deliverer...* A quotation from Isa 59:20-21; 27:9. A reference to the coming of the Messiah, who "takes away the sins of the world."

**(11:28-29)** *Enemies of Yahweh on your account.* Presently, the unbelieving Jews were enemies of Yahweh -but this was for the sake of the Gentile Christians. *Cherished on account of the patriarchs.* Yahweh in His affection chose the people of Israel, and His choice was irrevocable because of His pact -the Old Testament- with the patriarchs.

**(11:30-32)** *Just as... so they too... Yahweh has bound all men...* There has been a period of disobedience for both groups (Jews and Gentiles) in order that Yahweh may have mercy on them all.

**(12:1)** *Therefore...* This appeal concludes what Paul has said previously. *Living sacrifices.* In contrast to animal sacrifices, which implied their killing. *Spiritual act of worship.* Not mere ritual activity but involvement of mind and soul.

**(12:2)** *Pattern of this world.* With all its evil and corruption. *Renewing.* Of thought and will. *Then...* After their spiritual renewing, they will understand what really Yahweh wants from the believers.

### **The Son superior to angels** [Heb 1:1-14]

**(Heb 1:1)** *In the past Yahweh spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, (2)but in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son Jesus Christ, whom He appointed heir of all things, and for whom He made the world. (3)The Son is the radiance of Yahweh's glory and the exact representation of His being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty of Yahweh in Heaven. (4)So he became as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is superior to theirs.*

**(5)** *For to which of the angels did Yahweh ever say,*

*"You are My Son; today I have become your Father"?*

*Or again,*

*"I will be His Father, and he will be My Son"?*

**(6)** *And again, when Yahweh brings His firstborn into the world, He says,*

*"Let all Yahweh's angels worship him."*

**(7)** *In speaking of the angels He says,*

*"He makes His angels winds, His servants flames of fire."*

**(8)** *But about the Son He says,*

*"Your throne, O Lord Jesus Christ, will last for ever and ever, and righteousness will be the scepter of your kingdom. (9)You have liked righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore Yahweh, your God, has set you above all companions by anointing you with the oil of joy."*

**(10)** *He also says,*

*"In the beginning I, the Lord Yahweh, laid the foundations of the Earth, and the Heavens are the work of My hands. (11)They will perish, but you remain. They will all*

wear out like a garment; (12)you will roll them up like a robe, like a garment they will be changed. But you remain the same, and your years will never end.”

(13)To which of the angels did Yahweh ever say,

“Sit at My right hand that I make your enemies a footstool for your feet”?

(14)Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?

**(Heb 1:1)** *In the past.* In the Old Testament time, in preparation of Jesus Christ's coming. *Yahweh spoke.* Yahweh is the ultimate author, the inspirer, behind all of the Old Testament books. *Through the prophets.* All Old Testament writers are here viewed as prophets in that their testimony was preparation for the coming of Jesus Christ. *At many times and in various ways.* The Old Testament revelation of Jesus Christ's coming was fragmentary and occasional, lacking fullness and finality.

**(1:2)** *In this last days He has spoken.* Beginning the Messianic era with the conception of His human Son Jesus Christ who, by preaching and acting, revealed to men the true essence of Yahweh. *His Son Jesus Christ.* The superiority of the Son's revelation (that is, of the New Testament over the Old Testament) is demonstrated by seven statements about him:

1. *Appointed heir of all things.* Having performed the work of redemption, after his death and resurrection, Jesus Christ was given the responsibility of the whole world (Thoughts. Who is second only to the Father...).

2. *For whom He made the world.* Yahweh -the Creator of everything and everybody- has created this world for His Son Jesus Christ, the “heir of all things.”

**(1:3)** 3. *Radiance of Yahweh's glory.* Jesus Christ's glory (the miracles he performed and his resurrection) derives directly from his Father's glory (The Gospel of Jesus Christ. The Son of Yahweh. Jn 1:14).

4. *Exact representation of His being.* Jesus Christ has said: “Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father” (The Gospel of Jesus Christ. Jesus the way to the Father. Jn 14:9).

5. *Sustaining all things.* Having been “appointed heir of all things” Jesus Christ was given the power (“his powerful word”) for taking care of all that has been created by Yahweh.

6. *Provided purification for sins.* Through his redeeming death on the Cross.

7. *Sat down at the right hand of the Majesty of Yahweh in Heaven.* As such, indicating that Jesus Christ is actively ruling with Yahweh as Lord of all (Thoughts. Who is second only to the Father...).

**(1:4)** *Superior to the angels.* To the Jews the angels were exalted beings, especially revered because they were directly involved in Yahweh's activity and allowed to His presence. At the time most of the Jews considered the angels as intermediaries between Yahweh and man and believed that the archangel Michael would be the supreme figure in the Messianic Kingdom. *The name he has inherited.* To the Jews the name stood for the full character of a person in all he was and did. The section that follows indicates that Jesus Christ's name was “Son” -a name to which no angel could lay claim.

**(1:5)** *For to which of the angels...* Jesus Christ's superiority to angels is documented by seven Old Testament quotations, showing that he is Yahweh's Son, that he is worshiped by angels and that, though he inherited the divine nature by his Father, he is an independent being, distinct from his Father:

1. *You are My Son...* A quotation from Psalm 2:7.

**(1:6)** 2. *I will be his Father...* A quotation from 2 Sa 7:14.

3. *Let all Yahweh's angels...* A quotation from Psalm 29:1-2, here applied to Jesus Christ as Son of Yahweh.

**(1:7)** 4. *He makes His angels winds...* A quotation from Psalm 104:4, which speaks of the storm winds and the lightning as personalized agents of Yahweh's purposes.

**(1:8-9)** 5. *Your throne, O Lord Jesus Christ...* A quotation from Psalm 45:6-7, here applied to Jesus Christ as Son and "heir" of Yahweh, superior to all angels ("companions").

**(1:10-12)** 6. *In the beginning I, the Lord Yahweh...* A quotation from Psalm 102:25-27, to confirm Jesus Christ's eternal role in Yahweh's Kingdom.

**(1:13)** 7. *Sit at My right hand...* A quotation from Psalm 110:1.

**(1:14)** *Ministering spirits.* Jesus Christ reigns; angels follow his and Yahweh's orders. *To serve those who...* Angels are serving men ("those who will inherit salvation") in the sense that their actions, ordered by Jesus Christ and by Yahweh, help men to reach salvation.

#### **Warning to pay attention** [Heb 2:1-4]

**(Heb 2:1)** *We must pay more careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away. (2)For if the message spoken by angels was binding, and every violation and disobedience received its just punishment, (3)how shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation? This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord Jesus Christ, was confirmed to us by those who heard him. (4)Yahweh also testified to it by signs, wonders and various miracles, and gifts of His Holy Spirit distributed according to His will.*

**(Heb 2:1)** *What we have heard.* The message of the Gospel, mostly that of Jesus Christ's redemptive work on the Cross. *We do not drift away.* From Yahweh's greater revelation given through His Son.

**(2:2)** *Message spoken by angels.* The Old Testament many times shows the angels delivering Yahweh's messages.

**(2:3)** *Such a great salvation.* The Gospel is greater than the Old Testament law. Thus, if disregard for the law brought its just punishment, disregard for the Gospel will bring even greater punishment. *Confirmed to us by those who heard him.* The eyewitnesses, chiefly the apostles, had given their confirmation to the Gospel preached by Paul.

**(2:2)** *Signs, wonders and various miracles.* Yahweh added His confirmation to the Gospel message through supernatural acts such as the healing of the sick. *Gifts of His Holy Spirit distributed according to His will.* Every member of the Christian community has been given some spiritual or physical gift. And Yahweh sovereignly determines which gift or gifts each believer should have.

#### **Jesus Christ made like his brothers** [Heb 2:5-18]

**(Heb 2:5)** *It is not to angels that He [Yahweh] has subjected the world to come, about which we are speaking. (6)But there is a place where someone has testified:*

*"What is man that You are mindful of him? Or the Son of Man that You care for him? (7)You made him a little lower than the angels, You crowned him with glory and honor (8)and put everything under his feet."*

*In putting everything under him, Yahweh left nothing that is not subject to him. Yet at present we do not see everything subject to him. (9)But we see that Jesus Christ, who*

*was made a little lower than the angels, is now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of Yahweh he might taste death for everyone.*

**(10)***In bringing many sons to glory, it was fitting that Yahweh, for Whom and through Whom everything exists, should make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering. (11)Both the one who makes men holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus Christ is not ashamed to call them brothers. (12)He says,*

*“I will declare Your Name to my brothers; in the presence of the congregation I will sing Your praises.”*

*And again,*

*“I will put my trust in Him.”*

**(13)***And again he says,*

*“Here am I, and the children Yahweh has given me.”*

**(14)***Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death -that is, the devil- (15) and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. (16)For surely it is no angels he helps, but Abraham descendants. (17)For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to Yahweh, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. (18)Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.*

**(Heb 2:5)** *It is not to angels He [Yahweh] has subjected the world to come. Jesus Christ, the Son of Yahweh, the bearer of the new revelation, is clearly superior to the angels, who follow his and Yahweh's orders.*

**(2:6-7)** *There is a place... A quotation from Psalm 8:4-6, to show Jesus Christ's superiority over the angels. What is man... Awed by the immensity of Yahweh's created universe, the psalmist marvels at the high dignity Yahweh has conferred to man by entrusting him with dominion over the other creatures (Ge 1:26-28). The Son of Man that... You made him a little lower... Here (but not in the original Psalm 8) referred to Jesus Christ who, as the human Son of Yahweh, is both the representative of all men and the one in whom man's appointed destiny will be fully realized.*

**(2:8)** *Putting everything under his feet... Yet at present... Yahweh's purpose from the beginning was that man should be sovereign over the Earth, subject only to Him. Due to Adam and Eve's disobedience, that purpose of Yahweh will be fully realized, through Jesus Christ, only in “the world to come.”*

**(2:9)** *Jesus Christ... now crowned with glory and honor. Psalm 8 is here applied to Jesus Christ. He was made lower than the angels -during his terrestrial life- but then, because of what he did, he was seated at Yahweh's right hand in Heaven. By his perfect life, death on the Cross and resurrection, he has made possible the fulfillment of Psalm 8 in the future kingdom (the world to come), when man will regain sovereignty over creation (Thoughts. Jesus Christ life, purpose and message).*

**(2:10)** *Many sons to glory. All those who believe in Jesus Christ are made Yahweh's children through him. Perfect through suffering. Jesus Christ had not been morally or spiritually imperfect but, to be fully in condition of helping and redeeming men, he had to experience physical suffering and spiritual anguish (Thoughts. Jesus Christ, the Son of Yahweh, a man).*

**(2:11)** *Who makes men holy... who are made holy. Men's brotherhood with Jesus Christ is spiritual, due to the full spiritual communion of the Redeemer with the redeemed.*



**(2:12)** *I will declare Your Name to my brothers.* A quotation from Psalm 22:22, describing the suffering and the triumph of Yahweh's righteous servant. The key phrase is "my brothers," here pronounced by the triumphant Messiah. *I will put my trust in Him.* A quotation from Isa 8:17, expressing the true dependence on Yahweh, which is perfectly exemplified in Jesus Christ. In him humanity is seen as it was intended to be.

**(2:13)** *Here am I, and the children Yahweh has given me.* The believers -the Father's children- are given to the Son to be his brothers.

**(2:14)** *Him who holds the power of death.* Satan holds the power of spiritual death when he induces people to sin and to come under sin's penalty, which is spiritual death.

**(2:15)** *Free those who...* All the Jews who, by trying to follow the traditional rabbinic law (which did not lead them to spiritual salvation) were actually slaves of the law's condemnation.

**(2:16)** *Abraham's descendants.* Actually, all men.

**(2:17)** *A merciful and faithful high priest... make atonement.* Jesus Christ could represent mankind before Yahweh and sacrifice himself in behalf of all men only because he was fully a man.

**(2:18)** *Suffered when he was tempted.* Jesus Christ's temptations were real, and he had to fight to overcome them (The Gospel of Jesus Christ. The temptation of Jesus. Mk 1:12-13; Mt 4:1-11; Lk 4:1-13).

### **Jesus Christ greater than Moses [Heb 3:1-6]**

**(Heb 3:1)** *Therefore, holy brothers, who share in the heavenly calling, fix your thoughts on Jesus Christ, the apostle and high priest whom we confess. (2)He was faithful to the One who appointed him, just as Moses was faithful in all Yahweh's house. (3)Jesus Christ has been found worthy of greater honor than Moses, just as the builder of a house has greater honor than the house itself. (4)For every house is built by someone, but Yahweh is the builder of everything. (5)Moses, who was faithful as a servant in all Yahweh's house, has testified to what would be said in the future. (6)But Jesus Christ, who is faithful as a son, is over Yahweh's house. And we are His house, if we hold on to our courage and the hope of which we boast.*

**(Heb 3:1)** *Brothers, who share in the heavenly calling.* All Christians share the invitation which comes from Heaven and leads to Heaven. *Apostle.* The word means "one who is sent." Jesus Christ, the supreme apostle, repeatedly spoke of himself as having been sent into the world by the Father.

**(3:2)** *He was faithful... just as Moses was...* A comparison of Jesus Christ and Moses, both sent by Yahweh to lead His people to salvation.

**(3:3-4)** *The builder... has greater honor... Yahweh is the builder of everything.* Here Jesus Christ, as Son of Yahweh, is equated to Yahweh Himself, making it beyond question that he is greater than Moses. Jesus Christ is the actual builder of the house (the Christian community), whereas Moses was simply a part of it (the Jewish people).

**(3:5-6)** *Moses... servant. Jesus Christ... son.* A comparison stressing the superiority of Jesus Christ over Moses. *We are his house.* The house is made up of Yahweh's people, His household. *If we hold on to our courage and the hope.* Perseverance is the hallmark of Yahweh's children, whereas failure to persevere reveals that a person is actually not a child of Yahweh.

**Warning against unbelief** [Heb 3:7-19]

**(Heb 3:7)** So, as Yahweh's Holy Spirit says:

"Today, if you hear his voice, **(8)** do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion, during the time of testing in the desert, **(9)** where your fathers tested and tried Me; and for forty years saw what I did. **(10)** That is why I was angry with that generation, and I said, 'Their hearts are always going astray, and they have not known My ways.' **(11)** So I declared on oath in My anger, 'They shall never enter My Rest.'"

**(12)** See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from [Yahweh] the living God. **(13)** But encourage one another day by day, as long as it is still "today," so none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness. **(14)** We have come to share in Jesus Christ, if we hold firmly till the end the confidence we had at first. **(15)** As has just been said:

"Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion."

**(16)** Who were they who heard and rebelled? Were they not all those Moses led out of Egypt? **(17)** And with whom was He angry for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the desert? **(18)** And to whom did Yahweh swear that they would never enter His Rest if not to those who disobeyed? **(19)** So we see that they were not able to enter, because of their unbelief.

**(Heb 3:7-10)** Today... A quotation from Psalm 95:7-11, which summarizes the inglorious history of Israel in the desert. The example of Israel under Moses was used by the psalmist to warn the Israelites of his day against unbelief and disobedience. Here it is applied to the recipients of this letter.

**(3:11)** My rest. Here, the Kingdom of Yahweh, the place of peace where the Christians will live in spiritual communion with Jesus Christ and Yahweh.

**(3:12)** That none of you... turns away from [Yahweh] the living God. To turn away from Yahweh is to turn away from spiritual life and to choose spiritual death, just as did some of the Israelites who came out of Egypt.

**(3:13)** As long as it is still "today." This is still the "day" of divine grace and opportunity to trust Yahweh, a period of time which will not last indefinitely.

**(3:14)** To share in Jesus Christ. To belong to him and participate in the blessing. Hold firmly till the end the confidence we had at first. Salvation is evidenced by faithfully continuing to the end. Such perseverance reveals those who "share in Jesus Christ."

**(3:15)** Today... A quotation from Psalm 95:7, as at the beginning of this paragraph.

**(3:16-19)** Who were...? The argument is pursued with a series of rhetorical questions. The point is that the Israelites who failed to enter Canaan were the ones who had heard Yahweh's promise concerning the Promised Land and did not hold on to their confidence in Yahweh, an action described as rebellion, sin and disobedience. And the Jew-Christians of the time faced a similar spiritual punishment.

**A Sabbath-Rest for the people of Yahweh** [Heb 4:1-13]

**(Heb 4:1)** Therefore, since the promise of entering His Rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it. **(2)** For we also have had the Gospel preached to us, just as they did; but the message they heard was of no value to them, because those who heard did not combine it with faith. **(3)** And now we, who have believed, enter that Rest, just as Yahweh has said,

*“So I declared on oath in My anger, ‘They shall never enter My rest.’”*  
*And truly His work has been finished since the creation of the world, (4)for somewhere He has spoken about the seventh day in these words: “And on the seventh day Yahweh rested from all His work.” (5)And again in the passage above He says, “They shall never enter My rest.”*

*(6)It still remains that some will enter His Rest, but those who formerly had the Gospel preached to them did not go in, because of their disobedience. (7)Therefore Yahweh again set a certain day, calling it “today,” when a long time later He spoke through David, as was said before:*

*“Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts.”*

*(8)For if Joshua had given them rest, Yahweh would not have spoken later about another day. (9)There remains, then, a Sabbath-Rest for the people of Yahweh; (10)for anyone who enters Yahweh’s Rest also rests from his own work, just as Yahweh did from His. (11)Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that Rest, so that no one will fall by following their example of disobedience.*

*(12)For the Word of Yahweh is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. (13)Nothing in all creation is hidden from Yahweh’s sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.*

**(Heb 4:1) Rest.** In this passage the word “rest” is used (sometimes with two contemporary meanings) as: “Peace of Yahweh” or “Eternal Life in Heaven” (Sabbath-Rest), “Promised Land of Canaan” and “Rest of Yahweh at the end of creation.” *The promise of entering His Rest still stands.* Salvation (Peace of Yahweh in Heaven) is still available -and, because of Jesus Christ’s action, will always be. This Rest is the Eternal Life in Heaven, in spiritual communion with Jesus Christ and Yahweh. *Be careful...* Not to lose Yahweh’s salvation offered to all men by Jesus Christ.

**(4:2) We also have had the Gospel preached... but...** To be effective, Jesus Christ’s message (his Gospel of universal salvation), has to be received and accepted with faith, just as entering the Promised Land of Canaan demanded faith in Yahweh’s promise.

**(4:3) We... enter that Rest.** In the Eternal Life in Heaven. *So I declared...* A quotation from Psalm 95:11. To note that the Promised Land was called “the place where Yahweh will give His people rest,” that is, possession of the land under His protection. *His work has been finished since...* Yahweh rested from His work on the seventh day of creation, and from that moment His Rest (The Peace of Yahweh in Heaven) is open to all men.

**(4:4) On the seventh day...** A quotation from Ge 2:2.

**(4:5) And again...** Again, a quotation from Psalm 95:11.

**(4:6) It still remains...** Even if by the double quotation of Psalm 95:11 it seems that nobody will ever enter Yahweh’s rest in Heaven, in reality some will enter it at the end of their terrestrial life, and some will not (Thoughts. At the end of time everybody will be with Yahweh). *Those who formerly had...* The Israelites.

**(4:7) Calling it “today”...** A declaration that, at the time of David, Yahweh had set another “day,” a period of divine grace, giving another opportunity to trust Him. *Today...* The third quotation from Psalm 95:7-8 (other two in: “Warning against unbelief.” Heb 3:7-19).

**(4:8) For, if Joshua...** Israel going into Canaan under Joshua signed the beginning of the

possibility of entering Yahweh's Rest in Heaven, a chance the Israelites wasted because of their disobedience.

**(4:9)** *There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest.* Yahweh's Rest in Heaven may be still entered by having faith in His Son.

**(4:10)** *Rests from his own work.* The true believer ceases his efforts to gain salvation by his own works and "rests" in the work accomplished by Jesus Christ on the Cross.

**(4:11)** *Make every effort...* Not a call to earn salvation by works, but an exhortation to enter salvation-rest by faith and not to follow Israel's sad example.

**(4:12)** *Word of Yahweh.* Yahweh's truth revealed by Jesus Christ. Here the Word of Yahweh is described as a living power that judges with an all-seeing eye, penetrating a person's innermost being.

**(4:13)** *Nothing in all creation is hidden from Yahweh's sight.* A declaration that Yahweh, as a judge, knows everything.

**Jesus Christ the great high priest** [Heb 4:14-16;5:1-10]

**(Heb 4:14)** *Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone into the Heavens, Jesus Christ the Son of Yahweh, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. (15)For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are -yet he was without sin. (16)Let us then approach the Throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.*

**(5:1)** *Every high priest is selected from among men and is appointed to represent them in matters related to Yahweh, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. (2)He is able to deal gently with those who are ignorant and are going astray, since he himself is subject to weakness. (3)This is why he has to offer sacrifices for his own sins, as well as for the sins of the people.*

**(4)** *No one takes this honor upon himself; he must be called by Yahweh, just as Aaron was. (5)So Jesus Christ also did not take upon himself the glory of becoming a high priest. But Yahweh said to him,*

*"You are My Son; today I have become your Father."*

**(6)** *And He says in another place,*

*"You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek."*

**(7)** *During the days of Jesus Christ's life on Earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the One who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. (8)Although he was Son, he learned obedience from what he suffered (9)and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him (10)and was designated by Yahweh to be high priest in the order of Melchizedek.*

**(Heb 4:14)** *Great high priest.* This is the beginning of an extended discussion of the superior priest-hood of Jesus Christ. *Into Heaven.* As the high priest on the Day of Atonement entered the Most Holy Place (Lev 16:15,17), so Jesus Christ ascended into Heaven, his work of atonement accomplished. *Hold firmly to the faith we profess.* The recipients of this letter, because of the persecution they were suffering, were thinking of abandoning their new faith, reverting to Hebraism.

**(4:15)** *Has been tempted in every way, just as we are.* This phrase stresses the parallel between Jesus Christ's temptations and men's. Jesus Christ's temptations were real, and

he had to fight to overcome them (The Gospel of Jesus Christ. The temptation of Jesus. Mk 1: 12-13; Mt 4:1-11; Lk 4:1-13). *Yet was without sin.* Jesus Christ was always able to overcome all his temptations, so he never sinned.

**(4:16)** *Let us then approach...* Because Jesus Christ has experienced human temptation, he stands ready to give immediate and sympathetic help when men are tempted.

**(5:1)** *Every high priest is selected from among men.* Thus being able to represent men before Yahweh.

**(5:2-3)** *Those who are ignorant and are going astray.* The unintentional sinners, not those who are defiantly rebelling against Yahweh.

**(5:4)** *No one takes this honor upon himself.* Thus condemning the family that in Jesus Christ's days had bought control of the high-priestly office.

**(5:5)** *Jesus Christ also did not...* The Son was appointed by the Father. *You are My Son...* A quotation from Psalm 2:7.

**(5:6)** *You are a priest... in the order of Melchizedek.* A quotation from Psalm 110:4. Melchizedek was both king and high priest, whereas Aaron was only priest.

**(5:7)** *The days of Jesus Christ's life on Earth.* The principal reference here is to Jesus Christ's agony in the Garden of Gethsemane. *The One who could save him from death.* The Father. Also if Jesus Christ asked that the cup of suffering might be taken from him, he did not waver in his determination to fulfill the Father's will. *He was heard.* His prayer was granted by the Father, who saved him from death -through resurrection.

**(5:8-10)** *He learned obedience from what he suffered.* He was made "perfect" through his final suffering, learning to obey to an extent he had never before experienced. And it is because of his perfect obedience that he could become the Savior of all men.

### **The certainty of Yahweh's promise [Heb 6:13-20]**

**(Heb 6:13)** *When Yahweh made His promise to Abraham, since there was no one greater for Him to swear by, He swore by Himself, (14)saying, "I will surely bless you and give you many descendants." (15)And so after waiting patiently, Abraham received what was promised.*

**(16)** *Men swear by someone greater than themselves, and the oath confirms what is said and puts an end to all arguments. (17)Because Yahweh wanted to make the unchanging nature of His purpose very clear to the heirs of what was promised, He confirmed it with an oath. (18)Yahweh did this so that, by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for Yahweh to lie, we who have fled to take hold of the hope offered to us may be greatly encouraged. (19)We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, (20)where Jesus Christ, who went before us, has entered on our behalf. He has become a high priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.*

**(Heb 6:13-14)** *When Yahweh made His promise to Abraham.. He swore.* The promise of many descendants. Ordinarily Yahweh does not need to swear. His swearing to Abraham was a condescension to the human situation, in which a man's word is not always trustworthy.

**(6:15)** *After waiting patiently, Abraham received what was promised.* Abraham had to wait 25 years for the birth of his son Isaac.

**(6:16-18)** *Two unchangeable things.* Yahweh's promise, which in itself is absolutely trustworthy, and Yahweh's oath confirming that promise. *We who have fled to...* The

Jew-Christian converts. *May be greatly encouraged.* Since we can look back on the fulfillment of the promise that Abraham saw only in anticipation.

**(6:19)** *As an anchor for the soul, firm and secure.* Like an anchor holding a ship safely in position, our hope in Jesus Christ guarantees our safety. *Inner sanctuary behind the curtain.* The Christians are spiritually “moored” to Yahweh Himself.

**(6:20)** *A high priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.* The grand theme of the king-high priest, which will be developed in the following passages.

**Melchizedek the priest** [Heb 7:1-10]

**(Heb 7:1)** *This Melchizedek was king of Salem and priest of Yahweh Most High. He met Abraham returning from the defeat of the kings and blessed him, (2) and Abraham gave him a tenth of everything. First, his name means “king of righteousness;” then also, “king of Salem,” which means “king of peace.” (3) Without father and mother, without genealogy, without beginning of days or end of life, like the Son of Yahweh he remains a priest forever.*

**(4)** *Just think how great he was: Even the patriarch Abraham gave him a tenth of the plunder! (5) Now the law requires the descendants of Levi who become priests to collect a tenth from the people -that is, their brothers- even though their brothers are descended from Abraham. (6) This man, however, did not trace his descent from Levi, yet he collected a tenth from Abraham and blessed him who had the promises. (7) And without doubt the lesser person is blessed by the greater. (8) In the one case, the tenth is collected by men who die; but in the other case, by him who is declared to be living. (9) One might even say that Levi, who collects the tenth, paid the tenth through Abraham, (10) because when Melchizedek met Abraham, Levi was still in the body of his ancestor.*

**(Heb 7:1)** *Melchizedek was king... and priest.* Of particular significance is the fact that Melchizedek held both offices.

**(7:2)** *King of righteousness... king of peace.* Messianic titles.

**(7:3)** *Without father... without genealogy, without beginning of days or end of life.* Ge 14:18-20, contrary to the practice in the early chapters of Genesis, does not mention Melchizedek’s parentage and children, or his birth and death. Therefore, from a rabbinic point of view, his life and his priesthood are everlasting. Melchizedek’s kingship and priesthood anticipates Jesus Christ’s eternal existence and unending priesthood.

**(7:4-6)** *Think how great he was.* Melchizedek collected a tithe from Abraham, the founder of the Jewish nation, who “gave him a tenth of everything.” Now, he who collects a tithe is greater than the one who pays it, so Melchizedek was greater than Abraham.

**(7:7)** *The lesser... blessed by the greater.* Another demonstration that Melchizedek was greater than Abraham.

**(7:8)** *Men who die.* The ordinary Levitical priests. *Him who is declared to be living.* Melchizedek, the death of whom is not mentioned in the Scripture.

**(7:9-10)** *One might even say... A typical rabbinic argument.*

**Jesus Christ like Melchizedek** [Heb 7:11-28]

**(Heb 7:11)** *If perfection could have been attained through the Levitical priesthood (for on the basis of it the law was given to the people), why was there still need for another priest to come -one in the order of Melchizedek, not in the order of Aaron? (12) For when there is a change of the priesthood, there must also be a change of the law. (13) He of whom these things are said belonged to a different tribe, and no one from*

that tribe has ever served at the altar. (14)For it is clear that our Lord Jesus Christ descended from Judah, and in regard to that tribe Moses said nothing about priests. (15)And what we have said is even more clear if another priest like Melchizedek appears, (16)one who has become a priest not on the basis of a regulation as to his ancestry but on the basis of the power of an indestructible life. (17)For it is declared:

(18)“You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.”

The former regulation is set aside because it was weak and useless (19)(for the law made nothing perfect), and a better hope is introduced, by which we draw near to Yahweh.

(20)And it was not without an oath! Others became priests without any oath, (21)but he became a priest with an oath when Yahweh said to him:

“The Lord Yahweh has sworn and will not change His mind: ‘You are a priest forever.’”

(22)Because of this oath, Jesus Christ has become the guarantee of a better covenant.

(23)Now there have been many of those priests, since death prevented them from continuing in office; (24)but because Jesus Christ lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood. (25)Therefore he is able to save for ever those who come to Yahweh through him, because he always lives and intercedes for them.

(26)Such a high priest meets our need -one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the Heavens. (27)Unlike the other high priests, he does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people. He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself. (28)For the law appoints as high priests men who are weak; but the oath, which came after the law, appointed the Son, who has been made perfect forever.

**(Heb 7:11)** On the basis of it the law was given. The law of Moses and the Levitical priesthood went together. All men without exception were sinners, subject to the condemnation of the law, and thus in need of a priestly system to mediate between them and Yahweh. In the order of Melchizedek, not in the order of Aaron. This implies that the Aaronic (or Levitical) priesthood was imperfect, whereas the priesthood of Melchizedek was perfect. The announcement of the coming of the one who would be priest for ever (Psalm 110:4) meant that the old system was to give way to a better one.

**(7:12-16)** Change of the priesthood... change of the law. One who has become a priest not on the basis of a regulation as to his ancestry but... In the law of Moses the priestly function was restricted to the tribe of Levi (Dt 18:1), but Jesus Christ came from the non-priestly tribe of Judah. The power of an indestructible life... You are a priest forever. According to Psalm 110:4, the priest in the order of Melchizedek is “a priest forever.”

**(7:127-19)** The former regulation... was weak and useless... the law made nothing perfect. The law is holy and good (Struggling with sin. Ro 7:12), but is not able to make right those who sin by breaking it, nor can give the power necessary to fulfill its demands. Better hope. The new covenant is better because it assures all men of complete redemption and brings them into the very presence of Yahweh.

**(7:20-22)** It was not without an oath! No divine oath was associated with the establishment of the Levitical priesthood. But the priesthood pledged in Psalm 110:4 (“You are a priest for ever”) is superior because it was divinely confirmed by an oath.

**(7:23)** Death prevented them from continuing in office. Impermanence was a further evidence of the imperfection of the Levitical order.

**(7:24-25)** *Jesus Christ... is able to save for ever.* Jesus Christ is the perfect high priest; so he can bring to spiritual salvation all men of all times.

**(7:26)** *Meets our need.* Of salvation from sin and its consequences.

**(7:27)** *Sacrifices day after day.* A reference to the endless repetition of the sacrifices offered in the Temple, evidence of the fact that those sacrifices had never and finally dealt with sin. *First for his own sins.* Jesus Christ's priesthood is superior because he has no personal sins for which a sacrifice must be made. *Once for all... he offered himself.* The Levitical priests had to bring daily offerings to Yahweh, whereas Jesus Christ offered and sacrificed himself once for all, the perfect substitute for all men.

**(7:28)** *Men who are weak.* Because they are mortal, sinful and can only offer animals, which can never provide a genuine substitute for man, who is made in the image of Yahweh. *Made perfect forever.* Jesus Christ faced temptation without succumbing to sin and always perfectly obeyed the Father, in that way establishing his eternal perfection.

**The high priest of a new covenant** [Heb 8:1-13]

**(Heb 8:1)** *The point of what we are saying is this: We do have such a high priest, who sat down at the right hand of the Throne of the Majesty of Yahweh in Heaven, (2)and who serves in the Sanctuary, the true Tabernacle set up by the Lord Yahweh, not by man.*

**(3)** *Every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices, and so it was necessary for this one also to have something to offer. (4)If he were on Earth, he would not be a priest, for there are already men who offer the gifts prescribed by the law. (5) They serve at a sanctuary that is a copy and shadow of what is in Heaven. This is why Moses was warned when he was about to build the tabernacle: "See to it that you make everything according to the pattern shown you on the mountain." (6)But the ministry Jesus Christ has received is as superior to theirs as the covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one, and it is founded on better promises.*

**(7)** *For if there had been nothing wrong with that first covenant, no other would have been sought for. (8)But Yahweh found fault with the people and said:*

*"The time is coming, declares the Lord Yahweh, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. (9)It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they did not remain faithful to My covenant, and I turned away from them, declares the Lord Yahweh. (10)This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time, declares the Lord Yahweh. I will put My laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be My people. (11)No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord Yahweh,' because they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest. (12)For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more."*

**(13)** *By calling this covenant "new," He has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and aging will soon disappear.*

**(Heb 8:1)** *The point... is...* A point already developed at the beginning of: "The Son superior to Angels" (Heb 1:1-14).

**(8:2)** *True Tabernacle.* In contrast to the tabernacle erected by Moses, which was an imperfect and impermanent copy of the heavenly one. *Set up by the Lord Yahweh, not by man.* The heavenly sanctuary built by Yahweh, in which Jesus Christ -the great high



priest- dwells eternally as the intercessor of all men. To it corresponds the Most Holy Place of Moses' tabernacle, into which the high priest entered with the blood of atonement once a year (Lev 16:13-15,34).

**(8:3)** *Every high priest... this one also.* All high priests had to offer sacrifices, first for their own sins, and then for the sins of the Israelites. Jesus Christ, who was sinless, offered and sacrificed himself for the sins of all men.

**(8:4)** *He would not be a priest.* Jesus Christ belonged to the tribe of Judah, which was not the priestly tribe. *Men who offer the gifts prescribed.* The Jewish priests, all members of the tribe of Levi.

**(8:5)** *A copy and shadow of what is in Heaven.* In Heaven there is the Sanctuary of Yahweh's Presence, into which Jesus Christ entered with his own blood, not with the blood of animals. *Make everything according to the pattern.* Yahweh had shown Moses the real Tabernacle in Heaven, of which the earthly one is only a shadow-copy. Both the earthly tabernacle and its ministry were symbolical illustrations of the only way sinners may approach Yahweh and find forgiveness.

**(8:6)** *The ministry Jesus Christ has received is as superior.* Because, by bringing men to spiritual salvation, he leads them to the presence of Yahweh. *The covenant of which he is mediator is superior.* Because it has brought final reconciliation between men and Yahweh, the new covenant that Jesus Christ mediated is clearly superior to the covenant Yahweh made through Moses at Mount Sinai. *Founded on better promises.* The new covenant is better because it assures all men of complete redemption and brings them into the presence of Yahweh.

**(8:7)** *If there had been nothing wrong with that first covenant.* There was nothing essentially "wrong" with the Mosaic covenant, but its law was not able to make right those who sinned by breaking it, nor could give the strength necessary to fulfill its demands.

**(8:8-12)** *The time is coming...* A quotation from Jer 31:31-34 containing a prophetic announcement with the definition of the new covenant, which was to be different in quality and kind from the Mosaic one. With it Yahweh's laws will become inner principles that enable His people doing His will, Yahweh and His people will have intimate fellowship, and forgiveness of sins will be an everlasting reality.

**(8:13)** *Obsolete and aging.* The very fact that the Scripture speaks of a new covenant shows that the old one was not fully satisfactory and clearly proves its impermanence.

### **Worship in the earthly tabernacle** [Heb 9:1-10]

**(Heb 9:1)** *Now the first covenant had regulations for worship and also an earthly sanctuary. (2)A tabernacle was set up. In its first rooms were the lampstand, the table and the consecrated bread; this was called the Holy Place. (3)Behind the second curtain was a room called the Most Holy Place, (4)which had the golden altar of incense and the gold-covered ark of the covenant. This ark contained the gold jar of manna, Aaron's staff that had budded, and the stone tablets of the covenant. (5)Above the ark were the cherubim of the Glory, overshadowing the mercy seat. But we cannot discuss these things in detail now.*

**(6)** *When everything had been arranged like this, the priests entered regularly into the outer room to carry on their ministry. (7)But only the high priest entered the inner room, and that only once a year, and never without blood, which he offered for himself and for the sins the people had committed in ignorance. (8)Yahweh's Holy Spirit was showing by this that the way into the Most High Place had not yet been disclosed as*

long as the first tabernacle was still standing. **(9)** This illustration is for the present time, indicating that the gifts and sacrifices being offered were not able to clear the consciences of the worshippers. **(10)** For they were only a matter of food and drink and various ceremonial washings - external regulations applying until the time of the new order.

**(Heb 9:1)** The first covenant had regulations for worship and also an earthly sanctuary. As reported in many chapters of Exodus and Leviticus.

**(9:2)** A tabernacle was set up. The tabernacle set by Moses, not the Temple in Jerusalem.

**(9:3-4)** The golden altar of incense. The tabernacle was divided in two parts and, actually, this altar stood in the Holy Place, not in the Most Holy Place.

**(9:5)** Mercy seat. The ark was regarded as the place of residence of Yahweh and of His mercy among His people. *We cannot discuss...* The recipients of this letter well knew all the details of Moses' tabernacle.

**(9:6-7)** Only the high priest entered... only once a year. Only the high priest could enter into the Most Holy Place, and that only on the Day of Atonement (Lev 16). *Not without blood, which he offered...* The whole system of sacrifices existed to make atonement for sin and to restore the relationship between man and Yahweh which sin had broken. On the Day of Atonement the high priest offered a sacrifice to cleanse all Israel of all sins, even the involuntary ones.

**(9:8)** The way into the Most Holy Place had not yet been disclosed. As long as the Mosaic system with its imperfect priesthood and sacrifices remained in effect.

**(9:9-10)** This illustration is from the present time... until the time of the new order. Anyway the Mosaic system, though superseded, still had a symbolic significance, and was a reminder to the recipients of this letter that returning to the old system was useless since it could not deal effectively with sin.

### **The blood of Jesus Christ** [Heb 9:11-28]

**(Heb 9:11)** When Jesus Christ came as high priest of the good things that are already here, he went through the greater and more perfect Tabernacle that is not man-made, that is to say, not a part of this creation. **(12)** He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption. **(13)** The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. **(14)** How much more, then, will the blood of Jesus Christ, who by means of the eternal Spirit of Yahweh offered himself unblemished to Yahweh, cleanse our consciences from useless rituals, so that we may serve [Yahweh] the living God!

**(15)** For this reason Jesus Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance - now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant.

**(16)** In the case of a will, it is necessary to prove the death of the one who made it, **(17)** because a will is in force only when somebody has died; it never takes effect while the one who made it is living. **(18)** This is why even the first covenant was not put into effect without blood. **(19)** When Moses had proclaimed every commandment of the law to all people, he took the blood of calves, together with water, scarlet wool and branches of hyssop, and sprinkled the scroll and all the people. **(20)** He said, "This is the blood of the covenant, which Yahweh has commanded you to keep." **(21)** In the same

way, he sprinkled with the blood both the tabernacle and everything used in its ceremonies. (22) In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood; and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.

(23) It was necessary, then, for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these sacrifices, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. (24) For Jesus Christ did not enter a man-made sanctuary that was only a copy of the true one; but he entered Heaven itself, to appear for us in Yahweh's presence. (25) Nor did he enter Heaven to offer himself again and again, the way the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood that is not his own. (26) Then Jesus Christ would have had to suffer many times since the creation of the world. But now he has appeared once for all till the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself. (27) Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, (28) so Jesus Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of all people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.

**(Heb 9:11)** *The good things that are already here.* The new covenant, with the cancellation of the ritual law on Earth and the admission to the presence of Yahweh in Heaven, was already effective, for all men of the present, the future and the past (Thoughts. At the end of time everybody will be with Yahweh). *Not part of this creation.* Not the earthly tabernacle, but the Sanctuary of Yahweh in Heaven.

**(9:12)** *He entered... once for all.* Not repeatedly year after year as did the Levitical high priest. Jesus Christ's sacrifice was perfect, completely effective and, as such, did not need to be repeated. With it, Jesus Christ had obtained eternal redemption for all men.

**(9:13)** *The blood... the ashes... sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean.* Such sprinkling -as that prescribed in Nu 19 for those who became ceremonially unclean as result of contact with a corpse- could not cleanse a person from sin, since it was only external.

**(9:14)** *Offered himself.* Jesus Christ was the one who offered the sacrifice, and he was the sacrifice itself. *Unblemished.* Jesus Christ was absolutely sinless, as he had always done the will of the Father. *Cleanse our consciences.* By removing the inner, spiritual defilement.

**(9:15)** *Mediator of a new covenant.* On the basis of Jesus Christ's atoning death, this covenant has become effective for all who believe in him. *Died as a ransom.* Jesus Christ gave his life to release all men from bondage to sin and spiritual death.

**(9:16-17)** *A will.* The Greek word used here -the same used elsewhere for covenant- in this case takes the sense of last will and testament. The beneficiaries of a will have no claim until the testator dies. So, since Jesus Christ's death has been duly attested, "the promised eternal inheritance" is available to its beneficiaries, that is, to all men.

**(9:18)** *Not... without blood.* The old covenant required the death of the calves from which Moses took blood to seal it.

**(9:19-21)** *When Moses had proclaimed...* Moses' ceremony is described in Ex 24:4-8 and Lev 8: 10,19,30.

**(9:22)** *The law requires...* The request of animal sacrifices will be superseded only by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

**(9:23)** *It was necessary, then...* As it was necessary to purify the earthly sanctuary with animal sacrifices, so the sacrifice of Jesus Christ himself was necessary to open the door of the heavenly Sanctuary to all men.

**(9:24)** *To appear for us in Yahweh's presence.* As the mediator between all men and Yahweh.

**(9:25)** *Nor... to offer himself again and again.* A very important concept, repeated many times in this letter to make sure that all readers would understand it.

**(9:26)** *Now he has appeared...* Jesus Christ's coming has begun the Messianic era, which will last till the end of the world.

**(9:27)** *Just as man is destined to die once... so Jesus Christ was sacrificed once.* He could die only once, as he was a man, and he died as the perfect sacrifice for all sins of all men.

**(9:28)** *He will appear a second time.* Jesus Christ's second coming at the end of time. *Salvation to those who are waiting for him.* At the end of time all men will be waiting for Jesus Christ's second coming (Thoughts. At the end of time everybody will be with Yahweh).

### **Jesus Christ's sacrifice once for all [Heb 10:1-18]**

**(Heb 10:1)** *The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming -not the things themselves. For this reason it can never, by the same sacrifice repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship. (2)If it could, would they not have stopped being offered? For the worshipers would have been cleansed once for all, and would no longer have felt guilty for their sins. (3)But those sacrifices are an annual reminder of sins, (4)because it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.*

**(5)Therefore, when Jesus Christ came into the world, he said:**

*"Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, but a body You prepared for me; (6)with burnt offerings and sin offerings You were not pleased. (7)Then I said, 'Here I am -it is written about me in the scroll- I have come to do Your will, O Yahweh.'"*

**(8)First he said,** *"Sacrifices and offerings, burnt offerings and sin offerings You did not desire, nor were You pleased with them"* (although the law required them to be made).

**(9)Then he said,** *"Here I am, I have come to do Your will."* He sets aside the first to establish the second. **(10)And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.**

**(11)Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. (12)But when this priest has offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of Yahweh. (13)Since that time he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool, (14)because by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.**

**(15)Yahweh's Holy Spirit also testifies to us about this. First He says:**

**(16)"This is the covenant I will make with them after that time, says the Lord Yahweh. I will put My laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds."**

**(17)Then He adds:**

*"Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more." (18)And where these have been forgiven, there is no longer any sacrifice for sin.*

**(Heb 10:1-3)** *The law is only a shadow... the same sacrifice repeated... an annual reminder of sins.* The sacrifices prescribed by the law prefigured Jesus Christ's ultimate sacrifice. Their annual repetition bore testimony that the perfect, sin-removing sacrifice had not yet been offered.

**(10:4)** *It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.* An animal cannot possibly be an adequate substitute for a human being, who is made in Yahweh's image.

**(10:5-6)** *Sacrifice and offering...* A quotation from Psalm 40:6-8. The words of this Psalm of David express Jesus Christ's obedient submission to the Father. From the moment of Jesus Christ's sacrifice on the Cross, all the Mosaic sacrifices are replaced by obedience to the will of Yahweh. *You did not desire.* These offerings were only preparatory and temporary, looking forward to the one perfect and final offering -that of the Son of Yahweh.

**(10:7)** *To do Your will.* Jesus Christ always followed the will of the Father.

**(10:8-9)** *He sets aside the first to establish the second.* Jesus Christ's perfect sacrifice, offered in complete submission, supersedes all previous sacrifices.

**(10:10)** *We have been made holy.* Justified and made acceptable in the sight of Yahweh.

**(10:11-12)** *Day after day every priest stands... But when this priest... sat down at the right hand of Yahweh.* A contrast between the Levitical priests, who "stood" because their work was never finished, and the great high priest Jesus Christ who "sat down" because his work was completed. His one sacrifice atoned for all sins of all times, making any further sacrifice unnecessary.

**(10:13-14)** *His enemies to be made his footstool.* A quotation from Jos 10:24.

**(10:15-17)** *This is the covenant... Their sins... I will remember no more.* Quotations from Jer 31:33 and 31:34, already seen in: "The high priest of the new covenant" (Heb 8:1-13).

**(10:18)** *Where these have been forgiven...* The new covenant guarantees that all sins will be effectively and completely forgiven, with the result that no additional sacrifice for sins is needed.

#### **A call to persevere [Heb 10:19-39]**

**(Heb 10:19)** *Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus Christ, (20)by a new and living way opened to us through the curtain, that is, his body, (21)and since we have a great priest over the House of Yahweh, (22)let us draw near to Yahweh with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. (23)Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for He who promised is faithful. (24)And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward fondness and good deeds. (25)Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another -and all the more as you see the Day approaching.*

**(26)** *If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sin is left, (27)but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of Yahweh. (28)Anyone who rejected the law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. (29)How much more severely do you think a man deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of Yahweh under foot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified him, and who has insulted Yahweh's spiritual grace? (30)For we know Him who said, "It is Mine to avenge; I will repay," and again, "The Lord Yahweh will judge His people." (31)It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of [Yahweh] the living God.*

**(32)** *Remember those earlier days after you had received the light, when you stood your ground in a great struggle in the face of suffering. (33)Sometimes you were publi-*

*cly exposed to insult and persecution; at other times you stood side by side with those who were so treated. (34)You sympathized with those in prison and joyfully accepted the confiscation of your property, because you knew that you yourselves had better and lasting possessions.*

*(35)So do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded. (36)You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of Yahweh, you will receive what He has promised. (37)For in just a very little while,*

*“He who is coming will come and will not delay. (38)But My righteous will live by faith. And if he shrinks back, I will not be pleased with him.”*

*(39)But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who believe and are saved.*

**(Heb 10:19)** *We have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place.* The way into the Sanctuary of Yahweh's Presence -that is, Heaven- was closed to men under the former covenant because the blood of animal sacrifices could never atone for their sins. Now, however, Christian believers can come to the presence of Yahweh since Jesus Christ, the perfect high priest, has offered the perfect sacrifice, himself, atoning for all sins once for all.

**(10:20)** *The curtain, that is, his body.* When Jesus Christ died, the curtain separating the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place in Jerusalem Temple was “torn in two from top to bottom.” Here, the curtain symbolizes the body of Jesus Christ, which was torn to open the way to the divine presence.

**(10:21-22)** *Let us draw near to Yahweh.* To be near to Yahweh -that is, to be in spiritual communion with Jesus Christ and Yahweh- men need to have faith in Jesus Christ and in the effect of his work. *Hearts sprinkled... bodies washed...* Figuratively, for the inner cleansing resulting from the new covenant.

**(10:23)** *Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess.* Some of the Jew-Christian readers of this letter were tempted to give up the struggle of being Christians and turn back to their former religion.

**(10:24)** *Spur one another on toward fondness and good deeds.* To be fond of all men and to help them in their needs is the essence of the Christian religion.

**(10:25)** *Let us not give up meeting together...* For the new Christian converts it was important to continue meeting each other and those who had introduced them to the Christian faith, to keep and consolidate it. *Let us encourage one another.* Mutual encouragement is very important in a difficult situation. *The Day approaching.* The second coming of Jesus Christ which, at the time, was thought to be imminent.

**(10:26)** *If we deliberately keep on sinning...* A warning to those who were deserting the Christian assembly and reverting to their former religion. *No sacrifice for sin is left.* To reject the Christian religion is to reject Jesus Christ's sacrifice for all sins, the one sacrifice that has canceled all other sacrifices.

**(10:27)** *Judgment and... raging fire.* He who refuses Jesus Christ's offer of salvation is subject to judgment and is condemned to the punishment of hell, here depicted in the usual terms of consuming fire (Thoughts. In the... punishment of sins...).

**(10:28)** *Anyone who rejected the law of Moses...* The event described in Dt 17:2-7.

**(10:29)** *How much more severely...* The punishment of those who, after knowing it, rejected the Mosaic law, was really severe. Therefore the punishment of those who, after knowing it, reject the work of Jesus Christ, has to be much more severe. *Trampled the*

*Son of Yahweh... treated as an unholy thing... insulted Yahweh's spiritual grace.* Apostasy is a terrible thing, and is described in terrible terms.

**(10:30)** *It is Mine to avenge...* A quotation from Dt 32:35. *The Lord Yahweh will judge His people.* A quotation from Dt 32:36 and Psalm 135:14.

**(10:31)** *It is a dreadful thing...* Because there is no way to avoid Yahweh's judgment at the end of physical life.

**(10:32)** *Those earlier days.* At the time when they had enthusiastically responded to the Gospel, becoming Christians, they had endured persecution and confiscation and had been deeply concerned for each other.

**(10:33-34)** *Better and lasting possessions.* Spiritual salvation and admission to Yahweh's presence.

**(10:35)** *Do not throw away...* Confidence in Jesus Christ will bring spiritual salvation.

**(10:36)** *What He has promised.* Spiritual salvation, that is, admission to Heaven.

**(10:37)** *He who is coming...* A quotation from Hab 2:3, here referred to the second coming of Jesus Christ.

**(10:38)** *My righteous will live by faith.* A quotation from Hab 2:4. To be spiritually alive, the Christians need to have faith in Jesus Christ and in the effect of his work. *If he shrinks back...* Yahweh can't be happy if some of the new Christians will revert to their former religion.

**(10:39)** *We are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed.* The author of the letter is confident that those to whom he is writing will be, for the most part, among the saved.

#### ***By faith [Heb 11:1-40]***

**(Heb 11:1)** *Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. (2) This is what the ancients were commended for.*

**(3)** *By faith we understand that the universe was formed by Yahweh's Word, so that what is seen was not made out of what is visible.*

**(4)** *By faith Abel offered Yahweh a better sacrifice than Cain did. By faith he was commended as a righteous man, when Yahweh spoke well of his offerings. And by faith he still speaks, even though he is dead.*

**(5)** *By faith Enoch was taken from this life, so that he did not experience death; he could not be found, because Yahweh had taken him away. For before he was taken, he was commended as one who pleased Yahweh. (6) And without faith it is impossible to please Yahweh, because anyone who comes to Him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him.*

**(7)** *By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family. By his faith he condemned the world and became heir of that righteousness that comes by faith.*

**(8)** *By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. (9) By faith he made his home in the Promised Land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. (10) For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is Yahweh.*

**(11)** *By faith Abraham, even though he was past age -and Sarah herself was barren- was enabled to become a father because he considered Him faithful who had made the*

promise. (12)And so from this one man, and he was good as dead, came descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sand on the seashore.

(13)All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance. And they admitted that they were strangers and sojourners on Earth. (14)People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own. (15)If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. (16)Instead, they were longing for a better country -a heavenly one. Therefore Yahweh is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.

(17)By faith Abraham, when Yahweh tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had received the promise was about to sacrifice his one and only son, (18)even though Yahweh had said to him, "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned." (19)Abraham reasoned that Yahweh could raise the dead, and figuratively speaking, he did receive Isaac back from death.

(20)By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau in regard to their future.

(21)By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of Joseph's sons, and prayed as he leaned on the top of his staff.

(22)By faith Joseph, when his end was near, spoke about the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt and gave instructions about his bones.

(23)By faith Moses' parents hid him for three months after he was born, because they saw he was not ordinary child, and they were not afraid of the king's edict.

(24)By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. (25)He chose to be mistreated along with the people of Yahweh rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time. (26)He regarded disgrace for the sake of the Messiah as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward. (27)By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the king's anger; he persevered because he saw Him who is invisible. (28)By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of blood, so that the destroyer would not touch the firstborn of Israel.

(29)By faith the people passed through the Red Sea as on dry land; but when the Egyptians tried to do so, they were drowned.

(30)By faith the walls of Jericho fell, after the people had marched around them for seven days.

(31)By faith the prostitute Rahab, because she welcomed the spies, was not killed with those who were unbelieving.

(32)And what more shall I say? I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel and the prophets, (33)who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised; who shut the mouths of lions, (34)quenched the fury of the flames, and escaped the edge of the sword; whose weakness was turned to strength; and who became powerful in battle and routed foreign armies. (35)Women received back their dead, raised to life again. Other were tortured and refused to be released, so that they might gain a better resurrection. (36)Some faced jeers and flogging, while still others were chained and put in prison. (37)They were stoned; they were sawed in two; they were put to death by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated (38)-the world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains, and in caves and holes in the ground.



(39) *These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised. (40) Yahweh had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect.*

**(Heb 11:1)** *Faith is...* A clear definition, to avoid possible misunderstandings.

**(11:2)** *The ancients.* Some men of the Old Testament, who were particularly faithful to Yahweh.

**(11:3)** *The universe was formed by Yahweh's Word.* First and foremost, it is necessary to believe in Yahweh the Creator of everything and everybody. *What is seen was not made out of what is visible.* The universe was created from nothingness, not by rearranging already existing matter.

**(11:4)** *Abel.* The main reason for the acceptance of Abel's sacrifice was that he had offered it with faith. It is implied that Cain's sacrifice was rejected because he had offered it without faith, making of it a mere formality (Ge 4:3-4). *By faith he still speaks...* Through the Scripture, which speaks of Abel's faith in Yahweh.

**(11:5)** *Enoch.* Taken directly from physical life to Yahweh's presence (Ge 5:24).

**(11:6)** *Without faith it is impossible to please Yahweh.* Only faith can assure men of Yahweh's existence. Reason can't.

**(11:7)** *Noah.* His faith in Yahweh's words made him to build the ark in a dry, landlocked region (Ge 5:28-9:29).

**(11:8-9)** *Abraham... called to go to a place...* The Old Testament outstanding example of those who "live by faith" and the "father of all who believe" (Ge 12:1-9).

**(11:10)** *City with foundations.* The Heavenly New Jerusalem. "With foundations" speaks of permanence in contrast with the temporariness of the tents in which Abraham lived.

**(11:11-12-)** *Abraham... enabled to become a father.* Abraham waited faithfully for 25 years the birth of his son Isaac. He was 75 years old at the moment of Yahweh's promise and 100 when Isaac was born (Ge 12:4; 21:5). *He was past age.* Too old to conceive a son.

**(11:13-16)** *All these people.* Abel, Enoch, Noah and Abraham. *Did not receive... saw them and welcomed them from a distance.* Even if the Old Testament seems to speak only of earthly rewards for their faith, it is clear that their true reward was eternal spiritual life in the Kingdom of Yahweh, of which the "ancients" had only a faint idea. *Strangers and sojourners on Earth... longing for a better country.* Their true home was to be in Heaven. *Yahweh... has prepared a city for them.* The Heavenly New Jerusalem. To note that the terms city and country are interchangeable in this letter.

**(11:17-18)** *Abraham... offered Isaac.* The supreme test of Abraham's faith (Ge 22:1-18).

**(11:19)** *Abraham... did receive Isaac back...* Figuratively, when the substitute ram was sacrificed (Ge 22:13).

**(11:20)** *Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau.* Isaac's faith (even if deceived by Jacob) is shown by the words of the blessings he gave to his children (Ge 27:27-40).

**(11:21)** *Jacob... blessed each of Joseph's sons.* Jacob's faith is shown by the words of his blessing (Ge 48:15-20).

**(11:22)** *Joseph... spoke about the exodus.* Joseph's faith is shown by his words. (Ge 50:24-25).

**(11:23)** *Moses' parents...* They showed their faith in Yahweh's intervention by hiding him for three months and then by leaving him in a basket among the reeds of the Nile (Ex 2:2-3).

**(11:24-27) Moses... not fearing...** The book of Exodus indicates that Moses was afraid (Ex 2:14) but does not expressly say of whom. And it tells that he fled from Pharaoh when Pharaoh tried to kill him (Ex 2:15) but does not expressly say that Moses fled out of fear. The author of this letter capitalizes on these features of the account to highlight the fact that, in his fleeing from Pharaoh, Moses was sustained by his faith that Yahweh would liberate Israel and that he would have some part in it. *Pleasures of sin for a short time.* A life of luxury and prestige in Egypt's royal palace. *For the sake of the Messiah.* Although Moses' understanding of the details of the Messianic hope was at best extremely limited, he chose to be associated with the people through whom that hope was to be realized. *Persevered.* By living for 40 years in Midian (Ex 2:15; Ac 7:30).

**(11:28) Kept the Passover.** Following faithfully Yahweh's orders (Ex 12).

**(11:29) Passed through the Red Sea.** Only Moses' faith in Yahweh allowed the Israelite to pass (Ex 14-15).

**(11:30) Walls of Jericho.** Under Joshua -who followed Moses as leader- the first great obstacle to the conquest of the Promised Land was captured by faith without a battle (Jos 6).

**(11:31) The prostitute Rahab.** In spite of not being Jew, Rahab believed in Yahweh (Jos 2:8-11; 6:22-25).

**(11:32-38) I do not have time...** There were many more heroes of faith before the coming of Jesus Christ. The following verses give a list of names and facts taken from the Old Testament and well known by all the Israelites.

**(11:39) All commended for their faith, yet none of them...** All those heroes of the faith did not see Jesus Christ during their earthly life.

**(11:40) Yahweh had planned something better for us.** The readers of this letter -the Christians- can enjoy the fulfillment of Yahweh's promise in Jesus Christ. *Only together with us would they be made perfect.* Made "perfect" means made "fully acceptable in the sight of Yahweh." Only with Jesus Christ's death and resurrection all men -of the past, present and future- can have access to the Kingdom of Yahweh (Thoughts. Who went to preach...).

### **Yahweh disciplines His sons** [Heb 12:1-13]

**(Heb 12:1)** *Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. (2) Let us fix our eyes on Jesus Christ, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the Cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the Throne of Yahweh. (3) Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.*

**(4)** *In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. (5) And you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons:*

*"My son, do not make light of the Lord Yahweh's discipline, and do not lose heart when He rebukes you, (6) because the Lord Yahweh disciplines those He is fond of, and He punishes everyone He accepts as a son."*

**(7)** *Endure hardship as discipline; Yahweh is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? (8) If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons. (9) Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more*

*should we submit to the Father of our spirits and live! (10)Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but Yahweh disciplines us for our good, that we may share in His holiness. (11)No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.*

*(12)Therefore, strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees. (13)“Make level paths for your feet,” so that the lame may not be disabled, but rather healed.*

**(Heb 12:1)** *Surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses.* The “ancients” who have been mentioned in: “By faith” (Heb 11:1-40). Their inspiring example bears testimony to the power of faith and to Yahweh’s faithfulness. *Run with perseverance.* The Christian life is pictured as a long-distance race. Some of the Jew-Christians were tempted to drop out of the contest because of persecution.

**(12:2)** *Fix our eyes on Jesus Christ.* Just as a runner concentrates on the finish line, the Christians have to concentrate on Jesus Christ, the objective of their faith. *Author and perfecter of our faith.* Jesus Christ has founded the Christian religion and, with his death and resurrection, has made it perfect, that is, capable of leading men to Yahweh’s presence. *For the joy set before him...* When Jesus Christ endured the physical, moral and spiritual suffering of the Cross, he was well aware of the results of his sacrifice: the eternal redemption of all men and his glorification at the right hand of Yahweh (Thoughts. Jesus Christ, Life, purpose, and message).

**(12:3)** *Consider him who...* Jesus Christ’s great and encouraging example has to give courage to all who are weary and discouraged.

**(12:4)** *Not yet resisted to the point...* Though the recipients of this letter had suffered persecution and loss of possessions, they had not had to die for their faith.

**(12:5-6)** *My son...* A quotation from Prov 3:11-12. Suffering and persecution should be seen as corrective and instructive training for the Christians’ spiritual development as Yahweh’s children.

**(12:7-10)** *Yahweh is treating you as sons.* Yahweh’s discipline is evidence that the Christians are His children. Far from being a reason for despair, discipline is basic for the development of courage and perseverance.

**(12:11)** *It produces a harvest of righteousness.* When received submissively, discipline is beneficial.

**(12:12-13)** *Make level paths...* A quotation from Prov 4:26. A call for upright conduct that will spiritually and morally help, rather than hinder, the “lame” who wavers in the Christian faith.

### **The resurrection of Jesus Christ** [1 Co 15:1-11]

**(1Co 15:1)** *Now, brothers, I want to remind you of the Gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. (2)By this Gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the Word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain.*

**(3)** *For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Jesus Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, (4)that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, (5)and that he appeared to Peter and then to the Twelve. (6)After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. (7)Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, (8)and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.*

*(9) For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the Church of Yahweh. (10) But by the grace of Yahweh I am what I am, and His grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them -yet not I, but the grace of Yahweh that was with me. (11) Whether, then, it was I or they, this is what we preach, and this is what you believed.*

**(1Co 15:1)** *The Gospel I preached to you.* Teaching that salvation is open to all men and is received by faith in Jesus Christ. *Which you received and...* They had accepted Paul's preaching about Jesus Christ and their acceptance had been confirmed by them living accordingly.

**(15:2)** *If you hold firmly...Otherwise...* Salvation is possible only by faithfully continuing to the end.

**(15:3-4)** *What I received I passed on to you as of first importance.* In what follows, Paul links himself with early Christian tradition, to what he had learned from other Christian leaders. *That Jesus Christ...* What follows is the heart of the Gospel: Jesus Christ died for the sins of all men, he was buried and then raised from the dead.

**(15:5-6)** *He appeared...* The appearances of Jesus Christ after his death are mentioned to help bolster the faith of those who evidently had some doubts about his resurrection.

**(15:7)** *James.* Since this James is listed in addition to the Apostles, he is not James son of Zebedee or James son of Alphaeus. This James is the half-brother of Jesus (The Gospel of Jesus Christ. A prophet without honor. Mk 6:3-4; Mt 13:55-57), who did not believe in him before his resurrection but afterwards joined the apostolic group (Ac 1:14). Anyway, it is not clear in Scripture when and where this appearance to James occurred.

**(15:8)** *Last of all... to me.* This appearance to Paul came some years after the Resurrection (Ac 9:1-8). *One abnormally born.* Paul was not part of the original group of the apostles. And he had not lived with Jesus Christ as the others had. His entry into the apostolic office was not "normal."

**(15:9)** *I am the least of the apostles... by the grace of Yahweh...* Paul had been entrusted with an office for which he was not worthy.

**(15:10)** *I worked harder than all of them.* Even if he considers himself unworthy, he was well aware that he had labored very hard for the diffusion of the faith.

**(15:11)** *Whether... it was I or they...* Paul did not regard himself as isolated and with a unique message. The Gospel he preached was the same preached by the other apostles.

### **The resurrection of the dead** [1 Co 15:12-34]

**(1Co 15:12)** *But if it is preached that Jesus Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? (13) If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Jesus Christ has been raised. (14) And if Jesus Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. (15) More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about Yahweh, for we have testified about Yahweh that He raised Jesus Christ from the dead. But He did not raise him if in fact the dead are not raised. (16) For if the dead are not raised, then Jesus Christ has not been raised either. (17) And if Jesus Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. (18) Then those also who have fallen asleep in Jesus Christ are lost. (19) If only for this life we have hope in Jesus Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men.*

**(20)** *But Jesus Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. (21) For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the*

*dead comes also through a man. (22)For as in Adam all die, so in Jesus Christ all will be made alive. (23)But each in his own turn: Jesus Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him. (24)Then the end will come, when he hands over the Kingdom to Yahweh the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. (25)For he must reign until He has put all his enemies under his feet. (26)The last enemy to be destroyed is death. (27)For He "has put everything under his feet." Now when it says that "everything" has been put under him, it is clear that this does not include Yahweh Himself, who put everything under Jesus Christ. (28)When He has done this, then the Son himself will be made subject to Him who put everything under him, so that Yahweh may be all in all.*

*(29)Now if there is no resurrection, what will those do who are baptized for the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why are people baptized for them? (30)And as for us, why do we endanger ourselves every hour? (31)I die every day -I mean that, brothers- just as surely as I glory over you in Christ Jesus our Lord. (32)If I fought wild beasts in Ephesus for merely human reasons, what have I gained? If the dead are not raised,*

*"Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die."*

*(33)Do not be misled: "Bad company corrupts good character." (34)Come back to your senses as you ought, and stop sinning; for there are some who are ignorant of Yahweh -I say this to your shame.*

**(1Co 15:12-13)** *If... Jesus Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say... Some people were saying that there is no resurrection of men's body, and Paul draws a number of conclusions from their false assertion. If the dead do not rise from the grave, then "not even Jesus Christ has been raised;" "our preaching is useless;" "so is your faith;" the Christians are "false witnesses" that Yahweh raised Jesus Christ from the dead. This point is very important because the Christian religion is based on Jesus Christ's physical death and subsequent physical resurrection. To deny one, or both, means to deny the whole Christian religion.*

**(15:14-19)** *If Jesus Christ has not been raised... Paul draws another set of conclusions from this second false argument. "Your faith is futile;" "you are still in your sins" and still carry the guilt and condemnation of sin; "those also who have fallen asleep (have died) in Jesus Christ are lost;" "we are to be pitied if only for this life we have hope in Jesus Christ" and for this hope have to stand hardship and persecution.*

**(15:20)** *But Jesus Christ has indeed been raised. Paul's categorical conclusion is based on his evidence set forth in "The resurrection of Jesus Christ" (1 Co 15:1-11). Firstfruits. The first sheaf of the harvest was sacrificed to Yahweh (Le 23:10-11,17,20), a symbol and a reminder that all the harvest belonged to Him. So Jesus Christ who, after his sacrifice, has been raised, is the symbol and the guarantee of the resurrection of all men.*

**(15:21-22)** *Death came through a man. Adam (Ge 3:17-19). To note that Eve is not mentioned. Resurrection... comes also through a man. Jesus Christ (Thoughts. The physical resurrection...).*

**(15:23)** *Each in his own turn. Jesus Christ was raised on the third day following his death. The Christians will be raised at his second coming (Thoughts. At the end of time everybody will be with Yahweh).*

**(15:24)** *The end. Jesus Christ's second coming and all the events accompanying it. This includes his handing over the Kingdom to the Father, following the elimination of all the forces who oppose Him.*

**(15:25)** *For he must reign until...* Jesus Christ -the “King” of the Christian Church- will reign over the course of human history in the lives of his people. *All his enemies under his feet.* At the end of time Jesus Christ’s offer of salvation will be accepted by all (Thoughts. At the end of time everybody will be with Yahweh).

**(15:26)** *The last enemy... is death.* This destruction of death will occur at the end of the second coming events, with the Universal Resurrection of all men.

**(15:27)** *Has put everything under his feet.* A quotation from Psalm 8:6. Yahweh has given total responsibility to His Son, Jesus Christ.

**(15:28)** *The Son himself will be made subject to Him.* In the sense that, after the Universal Resurrection, when all men have accepted Jesus Christ’ offer of salvation, his mission will be totally accomplished and everybody will live in spirit and resurrected body in the Kingdom of Yahweh. *So that Yahweh may be all in all.* In the Kingdom of Yahweh all men will be in spiritual communion with Jesus Christ and with Yahweh.

**(15:29)** *Those... who are baptized for the dead.* An obscure passage. It seems that living believers were baptized for believers who died before being baptized.

**(15:30)** *Why we do endanger ourselves every hour?* If there is no resurrection, why should the Christians suffer persecution and privation for Jesus Christ every day?

**(15:31)** *I die every day.* Suffering for the faith and for its diffusion has always been part of the experience of Yahweh’s people.

**(15:32)** *I fought wild beasts in Ephesus.* The meaning is that Paul’s enemies in Ephesus were as ferocious as wild beasts. In effect, the Scripture gives no evidence of Paul suffering imprisonment and having to face wild animals in Ephesus. *Let us eat and drink...* A Quotation from Isa 22:13. A fitting philosophy of life if there is no resurrection.

**(15:33)** *Bad company corrupts good character.* A quotation from the Greek comedy “Thais” written by the poet Menander, well known at the time. Here, those who are teaching that there is no resurrection are the “bad company” and are corrupting the “good character” of those who believe properly.

**(15:34)** *Stop sinning.* The sin of denying that there is a resurrection and thus doubting even of Jesus Christ’s resurrection. *Some who are ignorant of Yahweh.* Some of the Christians didn’t actually know the basic points of their faith.

### **The resurrection body** [1 Co 15:35-58]

**(1Co 15:35)** *But someone may ask: “How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come?”* **(36)** *How foolish! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies.* **(37)** *When you sow, you do not sow the plant that will be, but just a seed, perhaps of wheat or of something else.* **(38)** *But Yahweh gives it a body as He has determined; to each kind of seed He gives its own body.* **(39)** *All bodies are not the same: Men have one kind of flesh, animals have another, birds another and fish another.* **(40)** *There are also heavenly bodies and there are earthly bodies; but the splendor of the heavenly bodies is one kind, and the splendor of the earthly bodies is another.* **(41)** *The sun has one kind of splendor, the moon another and the stars another; and star differs from star in splendor.*

**(42)** *So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, and it is raised imperishable; (43)it is sown in dishonor, and it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, and it is raised in power; (44)it is sown a natural body, and it is raised a spiritual body.*

*As there is a material body, there is also a spiritual body. (45)So it is written: “The first man Adam became a living being;” the last Adam, a life-giving spirit. (46)The spi-*

*ritual did not come first, but the material, and after that the spiritual. (47)The first man was of the dust of the Earth, the second man from Heaven. (48)As was the earthly man, so are those who are of the Earth; and as is the man from Heaven, so also are those who are of Heaven. (49)And just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from Heaven.*

*(50)I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of Yahweh, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. (51)Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all die, but we will all be changed (52)-in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. (53)For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. (54)When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: "Death has been swallowed up in victory."*

*(55)"Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death is your sting?"*

*(56)The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. (57)But thanks be to Yahweh! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

*(58)Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, because you know that your labor in the Lord Jesus Christ is not vain.*

**(1Co 15:35)** *With what kind of body...?* In discussing the nature of the resurrected body, Paul resorts to a comparison, which everybody could understand, with plant life (Thoughts. Soul, Body, Resurrection).

**(15:36-37)** *When you sown...* The seed is related to the plant that will sprout, which has a different and completely new body than the seed.

**(15:38-39)** *All bodies are not the same.* Although much is similar in the fleshly beings, each species is different.

**(15:40-41)** *Heavenly bodies... earthly bodies.* The sun, moon and stars have different characteristics than the mountains, rivers and seas, because Yahweh can take similar materials and organize them differently.

**(15:42-43)** *So... with the resurrection.* In the case of the resurrection from the dead, Yahweh will take a physical, perishable body and resurrect it "spiritual" and imperishable.

**(15:44)** *Spiritual body.* Not a non-material body but a physical one, similar to the present yet radically different in that it will be fit to live eternally with Yahweh.

**(15:45)** *The first man Adam...* A quotation from Ge 2:7. *The last Adam...* Jesus Christ who, with his death and resurrection, has assured the eternal life of all men.

**(15:46-48)** *The spiritual did not come first...* Adam and his descendants' bodies and souls were earthly. Jesus Christ's body and soul were both earthly and heavenly (Thoughts. Jesus Christ...).

**(15:49)** *Just as we have...* As Jesus Christ's resurrected body was similar yet different than the earthly one, so men will receive resurrected bodies similar yet different than the earthly ones.

**(15:50)** *I declare to you...* Paul's final argument about the resurrection of the body: at resurrection men will receive new imperishable bodies to live eternally with.

**(15:51)** *Mystery.* Things about the resurrected body that previously were not understood but are now revealed. *We will not all die, but...* All believers, whether alive when Jesus Christ comes again or in the grave, will receive new, imperishable bodies.

**(15:52-53)** *In a flash.* The change to an imperishable body will occur instantly, at the end of the human race's existence on Earth. *We will be changed.* Paul lived in anticipation of Jesus Christ's return.

**(15:54)** *Death has been swallowed...* A quotation from Isa 25:8.

**(15:55)** *Where, O death...* A quotation from Hos 13:14.

**(15:56)** *The sting of death is sin.* It was sin that brought men under death's power. *The power of sin is the law.* The law gives sin its power, for it reveals men's sins and condemns them because of their sins.

**(15:57)** *Victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.* Victory over the condemnation for sin that the law brought and over spiritual death, through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

**(15:58)** *Therefore...* Because of Jesus Christ's and everybody's resurrection, men know that serving him is not an empty and useless activity. *Your labor in the Lord Jesus Christ is not in vain.* Men's effort, invested in Jesus Christ's winning cause, will be rewarded by him at his second coming.

### **The glory of the new covenant** [2 Co 3:7-18]

**(2Co 3:7)** *Now if the ministry that brought death, which was engraved in letters on stone, came with glory, so that the Israelites could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of its glory, fading though it was, (8) will not the spiritual ministry be even more glorious? (9) If the ministry that condemns men was glorious, how much more glorious is the ministry that brings righteousness! (10) For what was glorious has no glory now in comparison with the surpassing glory. (11) And if what was fading away came with glory, how much greater is the glory of that which lasts!*

**(12)** *Therefore, since we have such a hope, we are very bold. (13) We are not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face to keep the Israelites from gazing at it while the radiance was fading away. (14) But their minds were made dull, for to this day the same veil remains when the old covenant is read. It has not been removed, because only in Jesus Christ is it taken away. (15) Even to this day when Moses is read, a veil covers their hearts. (16) But whenever anyone turns to the Lord Jesus Christ, the veil is taken away. (17) Now the Lord Yahweh is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord Yahweh is, there is freedom. (18) And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord Jesus Christ's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord Yahweh, who is the Spirit.*

**(2Co 3:7)** *The ministry that brought death.* The ministry of Moses, who mediated the old covenant. *Engraved in letters on stone.* The old covenant law was engraved on stone tables, the "Tables of the Law." *Came with glory.* The law of the old covenant given to Moses at Sinai was in no way bad or evil; on the contrary, Paul considers it holy, righteous, good and spiritual (Struggling with sin. Ro 7:7-25). The evil is in the hearths and deeds of people who, by breaking the law, bring upon themselves the condemnation of the law; a condemnation that the law engraved on stone could not clear away. *Its glory.* The glory of Yahweh surrounded the giving of the law and was reflected on the face of Moses when he descended from the mountain (Ex 34:29-30).

**(3:8-9)** *The spiritual ministry... brings righteousness.* Giving life instead of death. "Righteousness" is here seen as justification and sanctification.



**(3:10-11)** *For what was glorious... what was fading...* There is no comparison between the temporary and inadequate character of the old covenant and the permanent and effective character of the new covenant.

**(3:12)** *Such a hope.* The faith in Jesus Christ and in the spiritual salvation of all men.

**(3:13)** *Moses... a veil over his face.* The purpose of the veil was to prevent the Israelites from seeing the fading of the glory reflected on Moses' face (Ex 34:33-35).

**(3:14-15)** *To this day the same veil remains.* That veil was still there, preventing the Jews from recognizing the temporary and inadequate character of the old covenant.

**(3:16)** *Whenever anyone turns to the Lord Jesus Christ.* Only those who have accepted Jesus Christ can see how the new covenant has transcended and replaced the old one.

**(3:17)** *Where the Spirit of the Lord Yahweh is, there is freedom.* Only by turning to Jesus Christ and to Yahweh men can be free from the condemnation of the old covenant law.

**(3:18)** *Transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory.* Jesus Christ is the "radiance of Yahweh's glory" (The Son superior to the angels. Heb 1:1-14). The believers are made partakers of this glory by being gradually sanctified -that is, transformed into the likeness of Jesus Christ.

#### **Treasures in jars of clay** [2 Co 4:1-18]

**(2Co 4:1)** *Therefore, since through Yahweh's mercy we have this ministry, we do not lose heart. (2) Rather, we have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the Word of Yahweh. On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of Yahweh. (3) And even if our Gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. (4) The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the Gospel of the glory of Jesus Christ, who is the image of Yahweh. (5) For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus Christ's sake. (6) For Yahweh, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made His light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the Glory of Yahweh in the face of Jesus Christ.*

**(7)** *But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from Yahweh and not from us. (8) We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; (9) persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. (10) We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus Christ, so that the life of Jesus Christ may also be revealed in our body. (11) For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus Christ's sake, so that his life may be revealed in our mortal body. (12) So then, death is at work in us, but life is at work in you.*

**(13)** *It is written: "I believed; therefore I have spoken." With that same spirit of faith we also believe and therefore speak, (14) because we know that [Yahweh] the One God who raised the Lord Jesus Christ from the dead will also raise us with Jesus Christ and present us with you in His presence. (15) All this is for your benefit, so that the grace that is reaching more and more people may cause thanksgiving to overflow, to the glory of Yahweh.*

**(16)** *Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. (17) For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. (18) So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.*

**(2Co 4:1)** *We have this ministry, we do not lose heart.* When Yahweh calls and commissions His servants, He also supplies the strength they need to persevere in the face of hardship and persecution.

**(4:2)** *We have renounced secret and shameful ways.* Paul is referring to the so many false teachers. By contrast, he can declare his integrity in the sight of Yahweh, because he always set forth the truth plainly, that is, without veiling it or resorting to deception.

**(4:3)** *If our Gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those...* Not understood by those who don't accept the new covenant and who, for that reason, will not enter the Kingdom of Yahweh immediately after physical death.

**(4:4)** *The god of this age.* The devil, Satan, who is the unseen power behind all unbelief and ungodliness, is the actual god of all those who do not follow Jesus Christ's morality. *Jesus Christ, who is the image of Yahweh.* Jesus Christ said, "Anyone who has seen me, has seen the Father" (The Gospel of Jesus Christ. Jesus, the way to the Father. Jn 14:9).

**(4:5)** *We do not preach ourselves, but... as your servants.* Paul does not put himself in a position of command, as did the false teachers, who were full of self-importance.

**(4:6)** *Let light shine out of darkness.* A quotation from Ge 1:3. These words, which Yahweh said at the creation, will be said again at the Universal Resurrection, when the darkness of sin is dispelled by the light of the Gospel. *The light of the knowledge of the Glory of Yahweh.* With Jesus Christ the Light has come into the world (The Gospel of Jesus Christ. Jesus teaches Nicodemus. Jn 3:19) and this Light shows the Glory of Yahweh (The Gospel of Jesus Christ. The Son of Yahweh. Jn 1:14).

**(4:7)** *This treasure in jars of clay.* At the time, it was customary to conceal treasures in jars of clay, which had little value or beauty and did not attract attention to themselves and their precious content. Here the treasure represents the Gospel and the jars of clay represent Paul's human frailty and unworthiness. *This all-surpassing power is from Yahweh and not from us.* This expresses the idea that the absolute insufficiency of man reveals the total sufficiency of Yahweh.

**(4:8-9)** *We are hard pressed... perplexed... persecuted... struck down...* References to the hardships and persecutions Paul had to endure for the sake of the Gospel.

**(4:10)** *We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus Christ.* Through all those hardships and persecutions Paul was sharing in Jesus Christ's suffering.

**(4:11)** *That his life may be revealed in our mortal body.* Paul's hardships were so life-threatening that he regarded his survival as equivalent to being raised from the dead (Paul's praise to Yahweh. 2 Co 1:3-11).

**(4:12)** *Death is at work in us, but life... in you.* Paul was well aware that if a man wants to share the life of Jesus Christ he has to share his suffering and death. He was convinced that through his suffering and trials other people could be brought to the light and life of the Christian faith.

**(4:13-15)** *I believed... A quotation from Psalm 116:10. We also believe and therefore speak... reaching more and more people...* To have faith leads to the necessity of testifying. This is the reason why Paul tirelessly labored and journeyed to spread the message of the Gospel.

**(4:16)** *Therefore we do not lose heart.* Paul was called by Yahweh, who supplied him the strength he needed to persevere in the face of hardship and persecution. *Outwardly... wasting away, inwardly... renewed.* Even if Paul's body was wearing, his spirit was fortified.

**(4:17)** *Light and momentary troubles... eternal glory.* Seen in the perspective of eternity, the Christians' difficulties, whatever they may be, diminish in importance. The eternal glory is far greater than all the sufferings one may face in this life.

**(4:18)** *What is seen... what is unseen.* Men do not have to fix their eyes on the so often negative experiences and circumstances of this present life, which would cause them to lose heart. By contrast, the unseen positive realities of the next eternal life, which are no less real for being invisible, have to fill their hearts with hope.

**Our heavenly dwelling** [2 Co 5:1-10]

**(2Co 5:1)** *Now we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from Yahweh, an eternal house in Heaven, not built by human hands. (2) Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, (3) because when we are clothed, we will not be found naked. (4) For while we are in this tent, we groan and we are burdened, because we do not wish to be unclothed but to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. (5) Now it is Yahweh who has made us for this very purpose and has given us His Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.*

**(6)** *Therefore we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord Jesus Christ. (7) We live by faith, not by sight. (8) We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord Jesus Christ. (9) So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it. (10) For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Jesus Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.*

**(2Co 5:1)** *Earthly tent we live in.* The physical body. As a tent is a temporary dwelling, so is the frail and vulnerable physical body. *A building from Yahweh, an eternal house in Heaven.* A permanent dwelling. This is one of the eternal realities of the previous passage which are yet unseen (Treasures in jars of clay. 2 Co 4:1-18). *Not built by human hands.* Built by Yahweh, therefore perfect and permanent.

**(5:2)** *Meanwhile.* Waiting for Jesus Christ's second coming. *We groan.* Longing for the perfection of the resurrected body.

**(5:3)** *Naked.* Without the clothing of a body, which is the condition of the dead before resurrection.

**(5:4)** *What is mortal.* The physical body. *Swallowed up by life.* Here Paul reverses the classical imagery of death and the grave being the great swallower (Psalm 69:15; Pr 1:12).

**(5:5)** *Yahweh... has given us His Spirit as a deposit...* The spiritual communion with Yahweh (made possible by Jesus Christ's action of salvation which assures the believers' resurrection and life in the Kingdom of Yahweh) is something the believers already possess in this life (even though it is only a first installment of the full spiritual communion the believers will have with Jesus Christ and Yahweh in the next life).

**(5:6)** *At home in the body... away from the Lord Jesus Christ.* Anyway, still living in the physical body does not mean that the believers are deprived of Jesus Christ's spiritual presence.

**(5:7)** *We live by faith, not by sight.* True life is living by having faith in Jesus Christ and his action of salvation.

**(5:8)** *Away from the body... at home with the Lord Jesus Christ.* This is the situation of the Christians after death and before resurrection, when they are no longer living in their “earthly tent.” Anyway, the believers who have died are at home with Jesus Christ, and that is preferable to the present life in the physical body.

**(5:9)** *Whether we are at home in the body or away from it.* Whether the believer will be alive or will have already died at Jesus Christ’s second coming.

**(5:10)** *Appear before the judgment seat of Jesus Christ.* This personal judgment at death has nothing to do with justification, which is credited to the Christians fully and forever through faith in Jesus Christ; instead it refers to the balance of everything a man has done during his life. *Things done while in the body.* The Christians -and the non-Christians as well- are responsible of their actions while in the physical body.

**The ministry of reconciliation** [2 Co 5:11-21;6:1-2]

**(2Co 5:11)** *Since, then, we know that we have to fear the Lord Jesus Christ, we try to persuade men. What we are is plain to Yahweh, and I hope it is also plain to your conscience. (12)We are not trying to commend ourselves to you again, but are giving you an opportunity to take pride in us, so that you can answer those who take pride in what is seen rather than in what is in the heart. (13)If we are out of our mind, it is for the sake of Yahweh; if we are in our right mind, it is for you. (14)For Jesus Christ’s affection compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. (15)And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.*

**(16)** *So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Jesus Christ in this way, we do so no longer. (17)Therefore, if anyone is in Jesus Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! (18)All this is from Yahweh, who reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: (19)For Yahweh has reconciled the world to Himself in Jesus Christ, not counting men’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. (20)We are therefore Jesus Christ’s ambassadors, as though Yahweh were making His appeal through us. We implore you on Jesus Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to Yahweh. (21)Yahweh made him who had no sin to be a sin offering for all of us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of Yahweh*

**(6:1)** *As Yahweh’s fellow workers we urge you not to receive Yahweh’s grace in vain. (2)For He says,*

*“In the time of My favor I heard you, and in the day of salvation I helped you.”  
I tell you, now is the time of Yahweh’s favor, now is the day of salvation.*

**(2Co 5:11)** *To fear the Lord Jesus Christ.* Because he is the one who will have to judge each single man at his physical death, and all of them at the Universal Judgment at the end of time. *We try to persuade men.* Paul did want to persuade his readers that he, not any of the false teachers, was their authentic apostle. *What we are is plain to Yahweh.* Paul calls Yahweh as witness of his true position.

**(5:12)** *Take pride in what is seen rather than...* The false teachers’ actual concern was not with spiritual matters, but with money, popularity and self-importance.

**(5:13)** *Out of our mind... in our right mind.* Probably Paul’s adversaries were asserting that he was suffering from religious mania, pointing both to his claim to have experienced a “sensational” conversion on the road to Damascus and to his life “obsessed” by religion. If this is to be out of mind, Paul does not deny it. But there was nothing that

could be considered senseless in his presentation of the Gospel, for in this he was always avoiding any flowing rhetoric and all forms of sensationalism.

**(5:14)** *Jesus Christ's affection... one died for all.* Jesus Christ's affection is shown by his death for the salvation of all men. *Therefore all died.* Because Jesus Christ died for all, he has involved all in his death. And, for those who believe in him, his death is their death to sin.

**(5:15)** *Those who live... no longer live for themselves.* The believers are not alone, as they live in spiritual communion with Jesus Christ, Yahweh, and all other Christians.

**(5:16)** *From now on... we once regarded Jesus Christ in this way.* Paul sincerely admits that before his conversion he held views of Jesus Christ that were "worldly," that is, based on purely human considerations.

**(5:17)** *In Jesus Christ.* In spiritual communion with Jesus Christ, having faith in him and commitment to his Gospel. *New creation.* Jesus Christ's redemption is the restoration and fulfillment of Yahweh's purposes for mankind.

**(5:10-20)** *All this is from Yahweh.* Yahweh takes the initiative in redemption, and He helps bringing it to completion. *Ministry of reconciliation... We are... Jesus Christ's ambassadors.* All believers, who are the recipients of divine reconciliation, have to spread the message of reconciliation -the Gospel- throughout the world.

**(5:21)** *Him who had no sin... a sin offering for all of us.* A summary of the Gospel and its logic. Jesus Christ, the only perfectly righteous man, took all sins of all men upon himself and endured the punishment men deserve, that is, the spiritual death of being separated from Yahweh. Thus he made it possible for all men to freely receive his righteousness and be reconciled to Yahweh.

**(6:1)** *Not to receive Yahweh's grace in vain.* Therefore, to live in accordance with the Gospel working for it.

**(6:2)** *In the time of My favor... in the day of salvation...* A quotation from Isaiah 49:8. Here the day of salvation is the day in which Jesus Christ brought in salvation for the whole mankind.

**Do not be yoked with unbelievers** [2 Co 6:14-18;7:1]

**(2Co 6:14)** *Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? (15) What harmony is there between Jesus Christ and Belial? What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? (16) What agreement is there between the temple of Yahweh and idols? For we are the temple of [Yahweh] the living God. As Yahweh has said:*

*"I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be My people."*

**(17)** *"Therefore come out from them and be separate," says the Lord Yahweh.*

*"Touch no unclean things, and I will receive you."*

**(18)** *"I will be a Father to you, and you will be My sons and daughters," says Yahweh the Lord Almighty.*

**(7:1)** *Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for Yahweh.*

**(2Co 6:14)** *Do not be yoked together with unbelievers.* The Christians do not have to believe to and cooperate with the false teachers -who are in reality servants of Satan- destroying the harmony and fellowship that unite them in Jesus Christ.

**(6:15)** *Belial*. An Hebrew term used to designate Satan.

**(6:16)** *What agreement... between the temple of Yahweh and idols?* There can be no compromise with the idolatry the Christians have forsaken for the Gospel. *We are the temple of [Yahweh] the living God*. A temple built with “living stones,” the Christian believers. *I will live with them...* A quotation from Lev 26:12; Jer 32:38; Eze 37:27.

**(6:17)** *Therefore come out from them... Touch no...* A quotation from Isa 52:11.

**(6:18)** *I will be a Father to you...* A quotation from 2 Sam 7:14. *These promises...* Yahweh’s promises to accept all men and to consider them as His sons.

**(7:1)** *Let us purify... perfecting holiness*. Men have to keep themselves pure and holy -that is, acceptable in the sight of Yahweh- by turning away from sin.

**Made alive in Jesus Christ [Eph 2:1-10]**

**(Eph 2:1)** *Now to you, who were dead in your transgressions and sins, (2)in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. (3)All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of judgment. (4)But because of His great affection for us, Yahweh, who is rich in mercy, (5)made us alive with Jesus Christ even when we were dead in transgressions -it is by grace you have been saved. (6)And Yahweh raised us up with Jesus Christ and seated us with Him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, (7)in order that in the coming ages He might show the incomparable riches of His grace, expressed in His kindness to us in Christ Jesus. (8)For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith -and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of Yahweh- (9)not by works, so that no one can boast. (10)For we are Yahweh’s workmanship, created to do good works in Christ Jesus, which Yahweh prepared in advance for us to do.*

**(Eph 2:1)** *You, who were dead...* A description of men’s past moral and spiritual condition, separated from Yahweh.

**(2:2)** *Ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who...* Satan, who is not a mere earth-bound enemy, but who is a powerful spiritual being.

**(2:3)** *All of us*. Both Jew and Gentile converts. *Objects of judgment*. Yahweh’s judgment and punishment is never due to a burst of anger but is a just action against what opposes Him and His will.

**(2:4-5)** *Because of His great affection... Yahweh... made us alive with Jesus Christ...* Practically, a repetition of the concepts already expressed in “Dead to sin, alive in Jesus Christ” (Ro 6:1-14).

**(2:6)** *Yahweh raised up us with Jesus Christ and seated us with Him in the heavenly realms*. The exaltation of Jesus Christ (his Resurrection and his enthronement at the right hand of Yahweh) has caused the union of all Christians (their spiritual communion with him and Yahweh) in Heaven.

**(2:7)** *In the coming ages*. First, till the “last day” on Earth; then, in all eternity, in Heaven.

**(2:8)** *It is by grace you have been saved*. The spiritual salvation brought by Jesus Christ comes from Yahweh’s grace. *Through faith*. Faith in Jesus Christ is the only necessary means of being made right with Yahweh. *Not from yourselves*. No human effort can contribute to salvation, which is the gift of Yahweh.

**(2:9)** *Not by works.* Men cannot earn salvation by “observing the law.” Paul always condemns and denies that such a legalistic approach to salvation (or sanctification) is possible.

**(2:10)** *We are Yahweh’s workmanship.* Man was created by Yahweh in His own image. *Good works in Christ Jesus.* Those works done in spiritual communion with Jesus Christ. *Prepared in advance.* Jesus Christ’s work and the Christians’ “good works” were always in the mind and were always part of Yahweh’s plans.

**One in Jesus Christ** [Eph 2:11-22]

**(Eph 2:11)** *Therefore, remember that you who are Gentiles by birth and formerly called “uncircumcised” by those who call themselves “the circumcision” -that done in the body by the hands of men-, (12)remember that at that time you were separate from Jesus Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without Yahweh in the world. (13)But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Jesus Christ.*

**(14)** *For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, (15)by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, (16)and in this one body to reconcile both of them to Yahweh through the Cross, by which he put to death their hostility. (17)He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. (18)For through him we both have access to the Father in the unity of His Spirit.*

**(19)** *Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with Yahweh’s people and members of Yahweh’s household, (20)built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. (21)In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple of the Lord Yahweh. (22)And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which Yahweh lives by His Spirit.*

**(Eph 2:11)** *Gentiles by birth.* Most of the Christians at the time were Gentile converts. *Uncircumcised... the circumcision.* Circumcision (“done in the body by the hands of men”), of which Jewish people were proud, was a clear mark of distinction between Jews and Gentiles.

**(2:12)** *At that time.* Before their conversion to Christianity. *Separate from Jesus Christ... without Yahweh.* All these expressions emphasize the spiritual distance of the Gentiles from both Hebraism and Christianity. *Covenants of the promise.* With the old covenant, Yahweh had promised His blessing to all Jews and, with the new one, to all men.

**(2:13)** *But now... brought near through the blood of Jesus Christ.* Jesus Christ has shed his blood and given his life for the spiritual salvation of all men.

**(2:14)** *He... has made the two one.* All believers, Jew and Gentile converts, are united in their new faith. *The barrier, the dividing wall.* The religious difference between Jews and Gentiles was total.

**(2:15)** *Abolishing in his flesh the law.* By his physical death, Jesus Christ has canceled all the ritual laws of the old covenant, especially those requesting the separation of Jews from Gentiles. *One new man.* The Christian, who is such with no regard to his origins.

**(2:16)** *This one body.* The united “body” of believers, the Christian Church.

**(2:17)** *Preached peace to you... far away... near. Gentiles and Jews respectively.*

**(2:18)** *Through him we both have access to the Father.* With his sacrifice on the Cross, Jesus has opened to all men -Jews and Gentiles- the way to the presence of Yahweh. *In the unity of His Spirit.* In spiritual communion with Jesus Christ and Yahweh.

**(2:19)** *Consequently.* The unity of Jews and Gentiles is based on what Jesus Christ has realized by his death. *You are... citizens... household.* The Gentiles too are members of Yahweh's family.

**(2:20)** *Foundation of the apostles and prophets.* Referred to the founding work of the apostles and to what, earlier, the Old Testament prophets wrote about Yahweh and Jesus Christ's coming. *Cornerstone.* Clearly, Jesus Christ is the founding block, the cornerstone of the Christian religion.

**(2:21)** *In him... joined together.* All believers are in spiritual communion among themselves and with Jesus Christ and Yahweh. *Holy temple.* The Christian Church, which is the community of all believers.

**(2:22)** *You too...* The Gentiles, too, as soon as they accept Jesus Christ, become part of the Christian Church. *Dwelling in which Yahweh lives by His Spirit.* Because of the spiritual communion of all believers with Jesus Christ and Yahweh, Yahweh spiritually "lives" in the Church.

### **Paul the preacher to the Gentiles [Eph 3:1-13]**

**(Eph 3:1)** *For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles...*

**(2)** *Surely you have heard about the administration of Yahweh's grace that was given to me for you, (3)that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly. (4)In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Jesus Christ, (5)which was not made known to men in other generations as it has now been revealed by His Spirit to Yahweh's holy apostles and prophets. (6) This mystery is that through the Gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Jesus Christ.*

**(7)** *I became a servant of this Gospel by the gift of Yahweh's grace given to me through the working of His power. (8)Although I am less than the least of all Yahweh's people, this grace was given to me: to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Jesus Christ, (9)and to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in Yahweh, who created all things. (10)His intent was that now, through the Church, the manifold wisdom of Yahweh should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, (11)according to His eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord. (12)In him and through faith in him we may approach Yahweh with freedom and confidence. (13)I ask you, therefore, not to be discouraged because of my sufferings for you, which are your glory.*

**(Eph 3:1)** *For this reason.* Because of all that Yahweh has done, as explained in the preceding passage. *Prisoner of Christ Jesus.* At the time Paul was prisoner, under house arrest, in Rome. And this was because he always obeyed Jesus Christ.

**(3:2)** *Surely you have heard.* All readers of Paul's letters knew of him and of his conversion. *Administration of Yahweh's grace.* Paul's apostolic ministry. He had been given a significant responsibility in the execution of Yahweh's plan for the development of the Christian Church.

**(3:3)** *The mystery made known to me by revelation.* Paul always affirmed that the Gospel he was preaching came to him directly by Jesus Christ's revelation. *Already writ-*



*ten briefly.* In: “Spiritual blessing in Jesus Christ” (Eph 1:3-14). *Not made known... in other generations.* Yahweh is working out His plan and revealing it stage by stage. *Revealed by His Spirit to Yahweh’s holy apostles and prophets.* When Yahweh’s revelation comes to His chosen people (apostles, in new testament time; prophets, in old testament time), they are in spiritual communion with Him.

**(3:4-6)** *This mystery is...* Here the mystery -which is a truth known only by divine revelation- is the equality that the Gentiles have with the Jews in the Christian Church -the “one body” of believers.

**(3:7)** *I became...* Another reference to his conversion and to his work for the Gospel.

**(3:8-9)** *Less than the least.* Paul always and genuinely considered himself unworthy of the task assigned to him. *To preach to the Gentiles... and to make plain...* A concise description of the task Yahweh had assigned him.

**(3:10)** *Now.* In this moment and by this stage of Yahweh’s plan. *Through the Church.* The reconciliation and union of Jews and Gentiles is displayed in the Church. *Wisdom of Yahweh... made known... in the heavenly realms.* Paul’s thought here is that the angels in Heaven can see Yahweh’s wisdom in the Christian Church and in the spiritual communion of all believers among themselves and with Jesus Christ and Yahweh.

**(3:11)** *Eternal purpose.* The headship of Jesus Christ over the Christian Church is in preparation to his headship over the new world, after the end of time and the Universal Resurrection.

**(3:12)** *In him...* Jesus Christ is the “way to the Father.”

**(3:13)** *My sufferings for you.* At the time, his imprisonment in Rome.

#### *A prayer for the believers* [Eph 3:14-19]

**(Eph 3:14)** *For this reason I knell before the Father,* **(15)** *from whom all fatherhood in Heaven and on Earth derives its name.* **(16)** *I pray that out of the riches of His glory He may strengthen you with His power through His Spirit in your inner being,* **(17)** *so that Jesus Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in affection,* **(18)** *may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the affection of Jesus Christ,* **(19)** *and to know this affection that surpasses knowledge -that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of Yahweh.*

**(Eph 3:14)** *For this reason.* Resuming his initial thought, interrupted at the first verse of the preceding passage.

**(3:15)** *All fatherhood... derives its name.* Yahweh, the Creator of everything and everybody, is the Father of everything and everybody, so everything and everybody are His family.

**(3:16)** *I pray.* Paul’s prayer grows out of his awareness of all that Yahweh is doing in believers. Yahweh’s key gifts are “faith” and “affection.” *Power through His Spirit.* The spiritual power that comes from being in spiritual communion with Yahweh.

**(3:17)** *Jesus Christ may dwell...* That there may be spiritual communion between the believers and Jesus Christ.

**(3:18)** *To grasp... the affection of Jesus Christ.* Who had been so much fond of men that he gave his life for their salvation.

**(3:19)** *Surpasses knowledge.* So great that it cannot be completely known. *Fullness.* Yahweh allows believers to draw on His immense resources -in this case, His inexhaustible affection.

**Unity in the body of Jesus Christ** [Eph 4:1-16]

**(Eph 4:1)** *As a prisoner for the Lord Jesus Christ, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. (2) Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in affection. (3) Make every effort to keep the spiritual unity through the bond of peace. (4) There is one body and one spiritual unity -just as you were called to one hope when you were called. (5) There is one Lord Jesus Christ, one faith, one baptism; (6) One God, [Yahweh], Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.*

**(7)** *But to each one of us grace has been given as Jesus Christ apportioned it. (8) This is why it says:*

*“When he ascended on High, he led captives in his train and gave gifts to men.”*

**(9)** *(What does “he ascended” mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions? (10) He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the Heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.) (11) It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, (12) to prepare Yahweh’s people for works of service, so that the body of Jesus Christ may be built up (13) until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of Yahweh and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Jesus Christ.*

**(14)** *Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by the wind of every teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. (15) Instead, speaking the truth in affection, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Jesus Christ. (16) From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in affection, for each part does its work.*

**(Eph 4:1)** *Prisoner for the Lord Jesus Christ.* At that time Paul was prisoner, under house arrest, in Rome. *Calling.* They had received, and accepted, the call to become Christian.

**(4:2)** *Humble... gentle... patient... bearing in affection.* The Christians have to live and work in harmony.

**(4:3)** *Keep the spiritual unit.* It is the responsibility of the Christians to keep the spiritual unity made possible by the reconciling death of Jesus Christ. *Bond of peace.* Peace among all Christians, both Jew and Gentile converts, united in their new faith.

**(4:4)** *One body.* The “body” which unites all believers, the Christian Church. *One spiritual unity.* The spiritual communion among all believers. *One hope.* The certainty of a life in Heaven, in spiritual communion with Jesus Christ and Yahweh.

**(4:5)** *One faith.* The faith in Jesus Christ, the Son of Yahweh, the spiritual Savior of all men. *One baptism.* The term “baptism” refers to both the inner spiritual conversion and the public ceremony marking a new conversion.

**(4:6)** *Over... through... in all.* Yahweh, the Creator of everything and everybody, is spiritually present in all men.

**(4:7)** *Grace has been given.* First, the grace to become Christian; second, the grace to be given a certain degree of responsibility in the execution of Yahweh’s plan for the development of the Christian Church.

**(4:8)** *When he ascended on high...* A quotation from Psalm 68:18. Here Paul applies it to Jesus Christ’s triumphal Resurrection, when he led out of Hades in the Kingdom of

Yahweh the souls of all those who did believe in him (Thoughts. Who went to preach... Whom Yahweh resurrected...).

**(4:9-10)** *Ascended... descended.* After death, Jesus Christ went to preach to the souls of the dead and brought with him all who believed in him (Thoughts. At the end of time, everybody will be with Yahweh...).

**(4:11)** *It was he who gave some...* Yahweh's gifts -in this case gifts relevant to pastoral care- are given to the Christians by Jesus Christ, who is their Lord. *Apostles.* Those whose authority run throughout the whole Church. Further than the Twelve, also Barnabas (Ac 14:1-14), James (1 Co 15:7; Ga 1:19), Silas (1 Th 1:1; 2 Th 1:1), Andronicus and Junias (Ro 16:7) were apostles. *Prophets.* Those to whom Yahweh made known a message appropriate to the particular need or situation of His people. *Evangelists.* Practically, they correspond to the modern missionaries, who bring the Gospel to the Pagans. *Pastors and teachers.* Those who, with their teaching, provided the spiritual "food" of the Scriptures.

**(4:12)** *To prepare Yahweh's people... so that the body... may be built up.* All of Yahweh's people -not only those mentioned in the previous verse- have to work for the diffusion of the Christian faith, that is, to build up the Church, the community of all believers, the "body of Jesus Christ."

**(4:13)** *Unity in the faith.* The true faith in Jesus Christ as taught by the apostles, not by the false teachers. *Knowledge of the Son of Yahweh.* Unity is also a matter of truly understanding Yahweh's Son. *Mature... fullness of Jesus Christ.* The Christian target of maturity is not a doctrinal maturity, nor a personal maturity that gives the ability to relate well to other people, but the kind of global maturity which is characteristic of Jesus Christ.

**(4:14)** *Infants, tossed...* A picture depicting the spiritual instability of those who are not strong Christians. *Wind of every teaching.* Paul had to fight against many distorted teachings and heresies that would have easily thrown the immature out of the true faith.

**(4:15)** *Grow up... into... the Head.* It has been Paul who has introduced the imagery of Jesus Christ as the Head of the body, which is the Church.

**(4:16)** *From him...* Further details of the imagery of the body growing under the direction of the Head. The parts of the body help each other in the growing process, symbolizing the mutual ministry of all believers. *In affection.* Maturity and unity are impossible without affection.

### ***Spiritual gifts [1 Co 12:1-11]***

**(1Co 12:1)** *Now about spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be ignorant. (2) You know that when you were Pagans, somehow or other you were influenced and led astray to mute idols. (3) Therefore I tell you that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of Yahweh says, "Jesus Christ be cursed," and no one can say, "Jesus Christ is Lord," except by Yahweh's Holy Spirit.*

**(4)** *There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit of Yahweh. (5) There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord Jesus Christ. (6) There are different kinds of working, but the same Lord Yahweh works all of them in all men.*

**(7)** *Now to each one the manifestation of Yahweh's Spirit is given for the common good. (8) To one there is given through Yahweh's Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit of Yahweh, (9) to another faith by the same Spirit of Yahweh, to another gifts of healing by the Spirit of [Yahweh] the One God, (10) to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another*

*distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. (11) All these are the work of the One and Same Spirit of Yahweh, and He gives them to each one, just as He determines.*

**(1Co 12:1)** *Spiritual gifts.* A spiritual gift is a manifestation of the grace of Yahweh enabling a person to minister, in one of the possible ways, the needs of the Church.

**(12:2)** *Led astray to mute idols.* Before to become Christian, the Gentiles had been led by various influences to worship idols, but now they are spiritually led by Yahweh.

**(12:3)** *Speaking by the Spirit of Yahweh.* A Christian, being in spiritual communion with Yahweh, is under His influence. *Jesus Christ be cursed... Jesus Christ is Lord.* A man who is in spiritual communion with Yahweh cannot pronounce a curse on Jesus Christ; rather, he can only recognize Jesus Christ as his Lord.

**(12:4-6)** *Different kinds of gifts... of service... of working.* Every member of the Christian community has been given some spiritual or physical gift to be able and carry on his assigned service or work. And all those gifts come from Yahweh, who sovereignly determines which gift or gifts each believer should have.

**(12:7)** *For the common good.* All the gifts are intended to build up the Christian community. They are not to be used for selfish advantage, as some people were doing.

**(12:8)** *To one... is given... to another...* Not everyone has the same gift, and nobody has all the gifts. *Message of wisdom... knowledge.* Gifts the Christian community needs to make decisions and to choose proper courses of action.

**(12:9)** *Faith.* Not the faith in Yahweh and in Jesus Christ, which all Christians have, but the certainty to be working on a specific need within the Church. *Healing.* Healing all kinds of illnesses was a very important activity in Jesus Christ's ministry.

**(12:10)** *Miraculous powers.* In Scripture a miracle is an action that cannot be explained by natural means. It is an act of Yahweh intended as evidence of His power and purpose. *Prophecy.* A message of Yahweh imparted to a believer. It may be a prediction or an indication of the will of Yahweh in a given situation. *Distinguishing between spirits.* Since there can also be false prophecies, coming from evil spirits and false teachers, the gift is necessary in order to distinguish the true from the false. *Different kinds of tongues.* Here the term "tongues" refers to both earthly and heavenly languages, including ecstatic languages of praise and prayer. *Interpretation of tongues.* The "translation" in current language of a message spoken in an ecstatic tongue so that hearers can understand and be edified.

**(12:11)** *As He determines.* Yahweh sovereignly determines which gift or gifts each believer should have.

### **One body, many parts** [1 Co 12:12-31]

**(1Co 12:12)** *The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Jesus Christ. (13) For we were all baptized by the Spirit of [Yahweh], the One God, into one body -whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free- and we were all given the Spirit of [Yahweh], the One God, to drink.*

**(14)** *Now the body is not made up of one part but of many. (15) If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. (16) And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. (17) If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? (18) But in fact Yahweh has arran-*

ged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as He wanted them to be. (19)If they were all one part, where would the body be? (20)As it is, there are many parts, but one body.

(21)The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" And the head cannot say to the feet, "I don't need you!" (22)On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, (23)and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, (24)while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But Yahweh has combined the members of the body and has given greater honor to the parts that lacked it, (25)so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. (26)If one part suffers, every part will suffer with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.

(27)Now you are the body of Jesus Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. (28)And in the Church Yahweh has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, also those having gifts of healing, those able to help others, those with gifts of administration, and those speaking in different kinds of tongues. (29)Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? (30)Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? (31)Do all interpret? But you are eagerly desiring the greater gifts.

**(1Co 12:12)** *A unit... many parts.* This passage illustrates the unity of the Christians in the Church and the diversity of the spiritual gifts given to them.

**(12:13)** *All baptized by the Spirit of [Yahweh], the One God, into one body.* Spiritually baptized, regenerated by the spiritual communion with Yahweh and united with Jesus Christ as parts of his Church. *All given the Spirit of [Yahweh], the One God.* All Christians are given the possibility of being in spiritual communion with Yahweh. *To drink.* Jesus has called the Spirit of Yahweh "Living Water" (The Gospel of Jesus Christ. Is Jesus the Christ? Jn 7:38-39).

**(12:14)** *Now the body...* These verses were mainly addressed to those who considered that their gifts were less important and felt inferior to those who had more spectacular gifts.

**(12:15-20)** *If the... should say... As He wanted them to be.* As the human body must have diversity to work effectively, so the members of the Christian Church must have diverse gifts, the use of which can help the accomplishment of Yahweh's plan.

**(12:21)** *The eye cannot say...* The principle here is the interdependence of the parts in the whole of the body. The Christians in the Church are mutually dependent as they exercise their distinctive functions.

**(12:22)** *Weaker are indispensable.* The Christians who seem to have less important functions in the Church are actually indispensable.

**(12:23)** *The parts... less honorable... special honor... unpresentable... special modesty.* The Christians who in the Church have ordinary or obscure functions are to be given honor and respect.

**(12:24-25)** *Presentable parts... no special treatment.* Christians with more spectacular gifts or prominent functions do not have to be given special honor. *Yahweh has combined... no division...* All the gifts are intended for the good of the Christian community. They are not to be used for selfish advantage.

**(12:26)** *If one part suffers... if... honored...* When a Christian suffers or rejoices, all the members of the Church should suffer or rejoice with him.

**(12:27)** *You are the body of Jesus Christ.* All believers, each one of them, are part of the Christian Church.

**(12:28)** *Apostles. Prophets. Teachers.* Gifts of particular importance for the development of the Church. *Then...* Other -not all- gifts follow, in a random list which does not rank them in order of importance (Paul has already insisted that all gifts are important).

**(12:29-30)** *Are all apostles?...* Christians have different gifts, and nobody should expect a particular gift.

**(12:31)** *But you are eagerly desiring the greater gift.* Some of the Christians were seeking status through the exercise of the gifts that were considered more important.

**Affection** [1 Co 13:1-13]

**(1Co 13:1)** *And now I will show you the most excellent way. If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have no affection, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. (2)If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have no affection, I am nothing. (3)If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have no affection, I am nothing.*

**(4)** *Affection is patient, affection is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. (5)It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. (6)Affection does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. (7)It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.*

**(8)** *Affection never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. (9)For we know in part and we prophesy in part, (10a)but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears.*

**(10b)** *When I was a child, I talked like a child, I reasoned like a child. (11)When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me. (12)Now we see but a poor reflection in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.*

**(13)** *And now these three remain: faith, hope and affection. But the greatest of these is affection.*

**(1Co 13:1)** *The most excellent way.* Paul declares that even the most important and impressive gifts mean nothing unless motivated by Christian fondness (The Gospel of Jesus Christ. The greatest- commandment. Mk 12:31; Mt 22:39). *Tongues of.. angels.* An hyperbole. If a man does not speak in affection, it would be nothing but noise.

**(13:2)** *All mysteries and all knowledge.* A second hyperbole. Even if a man's gift is unlimited knowledge, if he does not possess and exercise it in affection, the gift is worth nothing. *Faith that can move mountains.* Another hyperbole. Jesus has spoken of such a faith (The Gospel of Jesus Christ. The healing of a boy with an evil spirit. Mk 9:29; Mt 17:20-21). But even such great faith is worth nothing if it is not accompanied by the man's affection.

**(13:3)** *All... to the poor... my body to the flames.* Dedicating completely himself to the Church, till martyrdom at the stake. Even the supreme sacrifice, if it is not motivated by affection, accomplishes nothing.

**(13:4-7)** *Affection is... It does not... it is not... It always...* Here Paul describes the characteristics of Christian affection, as he sees them.

**(13:8-10a)** *Affection never fails. But... the imperfect disappears.* Prophecies, tongues and knowledge (imperfect in nature), will become unnecessary at the second coming of Jesus Christ (“when perfection comes”).

**(13:10b-11)** *When I was... I... When I became... I...* Examples, to express the contrast between the partial (the imperfect) and the complete (the perfect).

**(13:12)** *A poor reflection.* The image in a mirror of the time, of polished bronze, was only an imperfect reflection. *Know fully... fully known.* The Christians will fully know the Lord Jesus Christ as he fully knows them. This will be true when Jesus Christ returns, that is, at his second coming.

**(13:13)** *Remain: faith, hope and affection.* Faith in Jesus Christ, confidence in him and selfless concern for the others will remain forever, even in Heaven. *The greatest... is affection.* Even when the other gifts are no longer necessary, affection will always be the governing principle that controls all of Yahweh’s people.

### **Gifts of prophecy and tongues** [1 Co 14:1-25]

**(1Co 14:1)** *Follow the way of affection and eagerly desire spiritual gifts, especially the gift of prophecy. (2)For anyone who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to Yahweh. Indeed, no one understands him; he utters mysteries with his spirit. (3)But everyone who prophesies speaks to men for their strengthening, encouragement and comfort. (4)He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but he who prophesies edifies the Church. (5)I would like every one of you to speak in tongues, but I would rather have you prophesy. He who prophesies is greater than one who speaks in tongues, unless he interprets, so that the Church may be edified.*

**(6)Now, brothers, if I come to you and speak in tongues, what good will I be to you, unless I bring you some revelation or knowledge or prophecy or word of instruction? (7)Even in the case of lifeless things that make sounds, such as the flute or harp, how will any one know what tune is being played unless there is a distinction in the notes? (8)Again, if the trumpet does not sound a clear call, who will get ready for battle? (9)So it is with you. Unless you speak intelligible words with your tongue, how will anyone know what you are saying? You will just be speaking into the air. (10)Undoubtedly there are all sorts of languages in the world, yet none of them is without meaning. (11)If then I do not grasp the meaning of what someone is saying, I am a foreigner to the speaker, and he is a foreigner to me. (12)So it is with you. Since you are eager to have spiritual gifts, try to excel in gifts that build up the Church.**

**(13)For this reason anyone who speaks in a tongue should pray that he may interpret what he says. (14)For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful. (15)So what shall I do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will also pray with my mind; I will sing with my spirit, but I will also sing with my mind. (16)If you are praising Yahweh with your spirit, how can one who finds himself among those who do not understand say “Amen” to your thanksgiving, since he does not know what you are saying? (17)You may be giving thanks well enough, but the other man is not edified.**

**(18)I thank Yahweh that I speak in tongues more than all of you. (19)But in the Church I would rather speak five intelligible words to instruct others than ten thousand words in a tongue.**

**(20)Brothers, stop thinking like children. In regard to evil be infants, but in your thinking be adults. (21)In the Law is written: “Through men of strange tongues and through the lips of foreigners I will speak to this people, but even then they will not listen to Me,” says the Lord Yahweh.**

(22) *Tongues, then, are a sign, not for believers but for unbelievers; prophecy, however, is for believers, not for unbelievers. (23) So if the whole Church comes together and everyone speaks in tongues, and some who do not understand or some unbelievers come in, will they not say that you are out of your mind? (24) But if an unbeliever or someone who does not understand comes in while everybody is prophesying, he will be convinced by all that he is a sinner and will be judged by all, (25) and the secrets of his heart will be laid bare. So he will fall down and worship Yahweh, exclaiming, "Yahweh is really among you!"*

**(1Co 14:1)** *The way of affection...* It is by Christian affection -concern for the others- that all spiritual gifts are to be employed.

**(14:2)** *Who speaks in a tongue... with his spirit.* In this case, an ecstatic, not a foreign language. A highly regarded gift, supposed to be due to the direct influence of Yahweh's Spirit. In the early Church it happened quite often that someone would fall into ecstasy pouring out a torrent of unintelligible sounds which only sometimes could be interpreted, by a person having the gift of interpretation, for usually who speaks in a tongue is not conscious of what he is saying.

**(14:3)** *Who prophesies...* The speaker is conscious of what he is saying, therefore he can bring comfort to his listeners.

**(14:4)** *Who speaks in a tongue edifies himself.* A personal, emotive edification, which does not involve the mind since even the speaker does not understand what he is saying.

**(14:5)** *I would like... you to speak in tongues.* Paul was not opposed to tongue-speaking if practiced properly. *He who prophesies is greater.* Because the speaker serves the common good more effectively since what he says can be understood and thus edifies the Church. *Unless he interprets.* Tongue-speaking -having also the gift of interpretation- is as beneficial as prophesying.

**(14:6)** *What good will I be...?* It would be useless for a person to speak in tongues unless, by interpretation, he brings to the Church something understandable and edifying.

**(14:7)** *Flute or harp.* Instruments well known at the time. For a person to understand and appreciate the tune, there must be a variety of notes so arranged as to create a pleasant melody.

**(14:8)** *The trumpet... ready for battle.* All people were acquainted with the use of trumpets for battle signals.

**(14:9)** *Speak intelligible words.* The hearers have to understand what the person who speaks says.

**(14:10-11)** *All sort of languages... a foreigner...* The gift of tongues can also involve the use of unlearned foreign languages (The Gospel of Jesus Christ. The Spirit of Yahweh at Pentecost. Ac 2:4-11).

**(14:12)** *Excel in gifts that build up the Church.* The basic principle of the present chapter.

**(14:13)** *For this reason...* For the reason given in the preceding verse.

**(14:14)** *My mind is unfruitful.* A person who speaks or prays in tongues cannot understand his own words.

**(14:15)** *Pray with my spirit... with my mind... sing with my spirit... with my mind.* The best is to pray and sing wishing and knowing it.

**(14:16-17)** *If... praising Yahweh with your spirit... the other man is not edified.* Here there is the basic principle that whatever is done in the Church must set a good example to all, especially to the unbelievers.



**(14:18-19)** *I thank Yahweh... but in the Church...* The same basic principle of the previous verse.

**(14:20)** *In regard to evil be infants.* Infants -small children- don't have evil desires or wrong motives. *In your thinking be adults.* Adults -grown men- have to behave properly, knowing what they do.

**(14:21)** *Through men...* A quotation from Isa 28:11-12, where the prophet declares that the foreign language of the Assyrians was a sign to unbelieving Israel that Yahweh's judgment was coming on them.

**(14:22)** *Tongues, then...* From what above, Paul deduced that tongues were a sign for the unbelievers.

**(14:23)** *Some who do not understand or some unbelievers.* There is nothing good these people can get from hearing those who speak in tongues, as the visitors will be repulsed by the confusion, and what was considered to be an impressive sign will have a negative effect on them.

**(14:24)** *While everybody is prophesying...* Prophecy, spoken in the local language and understood by all, will have a positive effect on unbelievers because what they hear is good and makes good sense.

**(14:25)** *Will... worship Yahweh.* Because those unbelievers will easily understand that what is spoken in the Church is for "the common good" and is, actually, the Word of Yahweh.

#### **Orderly worship** [1 Co 14:26-40]

**(1Co 14:26)** *What then shall we say, brothers? When you come together, everyone has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. And all of these must be done for the strengthening of the Church. (27)If anyone speaks in a tongue, two -or at most three- should speak, one at a time, and someone must interpret. (28)If there is no interpreter, the speaker should keep quiet in the Church and speak to himself and Yahweh.*

**(29)** *Two or three prophets should speak, and the others should weigh carefully what is said. (30)And if a revelation comes to someone who is sitting down, the first speaker should stop. (31)For you can all prophesy in turn so that everyone may be instructed and encouraged. (32)The spirits of prophets are subject to the control of prophets. (33a)For Yahweh is not a God of disorder but of peace.*

**(33b)** *As in all the congregations of the saints, (34)women should remain silent in the Churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the Law says. (35)If they want to inquire about something, they should ask their own husband at home; for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the Church.*

**(36)** *Did the Word of Yahweh originate with you? Or are you the only people it has reached? (37)If anybody thinks he is a prophet or spiritually gifted, let him acknowledge that what I am writing to you is the Lord Jesus Christ's command. (38)If he ignores this, he himself will be ignored.*

**(39)** *Therefore, my brothers, be eager to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues. (40)But everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way.*

**(1Co 14:26)** *Then... everyone has...* Every member of the congregation had the possibility to take active part in the service, not just the appointed leaders. *A hymn... an interpretation.* All elements that made up the worship service and have to be edifying ("strengthening") to the Church.

**(14:27-28)** *If anyone speaks in a tongue...* Paul placed four restrictions on speaking in a tongue “in the Church.” Only two or three should do so in a meeting. They should speak one at a time. There must be interpretation. In absence of interpretation nobody should speak.

**(14:29)** *Two or three prophets should speak.* In turn as the tongue-speakers, to have an orderly service. *Should weigh carefully.* The participants to the service had to meditate on what the prophets were saying.

**(14:30-31)** *If a revelation comes...* The prophecy referred to could come through any member of the Church. It could be a prediction, a divine directive, or a message to strengthen and comfort.

**(14:32)** *Control of prophets.* Prophecy (and tongues as well) was not to be an uncontrollable emotional ecstasy.

**(14:33a)** *Not a God of disorder.* Disorderly and unregulated worship would bring discredit on the Name of Yahweh.

**(14:33b)** *In all the congregations of the saints.* An expression stressing the universality of the Church on Earth.

**(14:34-35)** *Women should...* Here Paul took into account the accepted social practices of that time and society. But there were occasions, even in that culture, for women to speak in Church (Propriety in worship. 1 Co 11:2-16). His actual purpose was not to define the role of women but to establish a “fitting and orderly way” of worship. What he was forbidding was disorderly speaking.

**(14:36)** *Did...? Are you...? Rhetorical and sarcastic questions.*

**(14:37)** *If anybody... the Lord Jesus Christ's command.* In a situation where so much emphasis was given to gifts, it was important that any genuinely gifted person would recognize Paul's Yahweh-given authority.

**(14:38)** *If... he... will be ignored.* In other terms, such a disobedient person would be regarded as an unbeliever.

**(14:39-40)** *Do not forbid speaking in tongues. But...* The solution to the problem of the tongues was not to forbid the tongues (Paul never questioned the reality of the gift), but to correct the improper use of the gift.

### **Living as children of light** [Eph 4:17-32;5:1-20]

**(Eph 4:17)** *So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord Jesus Christ, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. (18)They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of Yahweh because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. (19)Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more.*

**(20)** *You, however, did not come to know of Jesus Christ that way, (21)as surely you heard of him and were taught about him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus Christ. (22)You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; (23)to be made new in the attitude of your minds; (24)and to put on the new self, created to be like Yahweh in true righteousness and holiness.*

**(25)** *Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body. (26)“In your anger do not sin”:* *Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, (27)and do not give the devil a foothold. (28)He who*

*has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need.*

*(29) Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. (30) And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of Yahweh, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. (31) Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. (32) Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Jesus Christ Yahweh forgave you.*

*(5:1) Be imitators of Yahweh, therefore, as dearly cherished children (2) and live a life of affection, just as Jesus Christ had been fond of us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to Yahweh.*

*(3) But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for Yahweh's holy people. (4) Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving. (5) For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person - such a man is an idolater - has any inheritance in the Kingdom of Jesus Christ and of Yahweh. (6) Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things Yahweh's judgment comes on those who are disobedient. (7) Therefore do not be partners with them.*

*(8) For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord Jesus Christ. Live as children of light (9) (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) (10) and find out what pleases the Lord Yahweh. (11) Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. (12) For it is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret. (13) But everything exposed by the light becomes visible, (14) for it is light that makes everything visible. This is why it is said:*

*"Wake up, O sleeper, rise from the dead, and Jesus Christ will shine on you."*

*(15) Be very careful, then, how you live - not as unwise but as wise, (16) making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. (17) Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord Yahweh's will is. (18) Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with Yahweh's Spirit, (19) addressing to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord Yahweh, (20) always giving thanks to Yahweh the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

**(Eph 4:17)** *So... no longer live as the Gentiles do.* After their conversion to Christianity, the new Christians have to live in a new, proper way. *Futility of their thinking.* The Gentiles, as pagans, worshipped idols thinking they were alive and powerful.

**(4:18)** *Darkened in their understanding.* The Gentiles, too, had the possibility of knowing Yahweh - even if only through the created world. But, "due to the hardening of their hearts," they cut themselves from "the life of Yahweh."

**(4:19)** *Have given themselves over.* Their sinful way of life was not due to ignorance of what Yahweh required but to their own will and choice.

**(4:20)** *You, however...* Addressed to the Gentile converts, who had Jesus Christ's Gospel preached to them.

**(4:21)** *The truth that is in Jesus Christ.* During his earthly life Jesus Christ always gave a true testimony to Yahweh (The Gospel of Jesus Christ. The validity of Jesus' testimony. Jn 8:12-30).

**(4:22)** *Put off your old self.* The Gentile converts had renounced their old sinful life-style.

**(4:23)** *Be made new in... your minds.* Rejecting the evil thoughts of unbelievers.

**(4:24)** *New self, created to be like Yahweh.* The spiritual communion of a new believer with Jesus Christ produces a new kind of person, righteous and holy in the sight of Yahweh.

**(4:25)** *Must put off falsehood and speak truthfully.* A consequence of being part of the Christian Church.

**(4:26)** *In your anger...* A quotation from Psalm 4:4. *Do not let the sun go down.* Christians do not lose their emotions at conversion, but have to control them. Any quarrel has to be mended within a really short time.

**(4:27)** *Do not give the devil a foothold.* Satan can use personal sins -usually due to evil desires rather than to direct tempting by the devil- to bring out greater evil.

**(4:28)** *Steal no longer... work... have something to share.* It is not enough to stop sinning; Christians must do good, helping who is in need.

**(4:29)** *Let... only what is helpful.* An exhortation parallel to the previous one. The new Christians not only have to stop saying detrimental things; they also have to begin saying things that could actually help other people.

**(4:30)** *Do not grieve.* By committing some sins. Yahweh is always grieved by the sins of His people. *Sealed.* By the seal of Yahweh's ownership which characterizes the Christians. *Day of redemption.* The day of the Universal Judgment, at the second coming of Jesus Christ.

**(4:31)** *Get rid of... bitterness... malice.* As such things grieve Yahweh. *Kind and compassionate.* As such things please Yahweh.

**(4:32)** *Forgiving.* The basic Christian attitude, which is a result of being forgiven by Yahweh because of Jesus Christ.

**(5:1)** *Be imitators.* Forgiving with Christian spirit, that is, acting "just as" Jesus Christ did.

**(5:2)** *Fragrant offering.* In the Old Testament a sacrifice accepted by Yahweh was described as a "pleasing aroma."

**(5:3)** *Sexual immorality... impurity... greed.* Not only sexual sins but all kinds of excessive desires as well.

**(5:4)** *Obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking.* The context and the word "obscurity" indicate that it is not humor as such but dirty jokes and the like that are out of place.

**(5:5)** *Immoral, impure or greedy.* Kinds of excessive desires already seen earlier. *Idolater.* The greedy person wants riches -things- more than he wants Yahweh, thereby committing idolatry. Such a person, by excluding Yahweh, excludes himself from His Kingdom.

**(5:6-7)** *Let no one... do not be partners.* Although Christians live in normal social relationships with other people, as did Jesus Christ, they are not to participate in the sinful life-style of unbelievers.

**(5:8)** *Darkness... light.* This passage emphasizes the contrast between moral light and darkness, showing that those who belong to Jesus Christ -who is "the Light of the World" (The Gospel of Jesus Christ. Jesus teaches Nicodemus. Jn 3:1-21)- have their lives "enlightened" by him.

**(5:9-11)** *Fruit of the light... fruitless deeds of darkness... expose them.* Those who live in Yahweh's Light produce the fruit of moral and ethical character, while those who li-

ve in darkness do not. As the light, by its nature, exposes what is hidden in darkness, so this moral light shows sin for what it really is.

**(5:12)** *Shameful... to mention.* Christians should not think at length about the evils their lives are exposed to.

**(5:13)** *Everything... visible.* By the repetition of these words, Paul was stressing the all-pervasive nature of the Light of Yahweh and its inevitable effects.

**(5:14)** *Wake up, O sleeper... Most probably this was an hymn used by the early Christians, ex-pressing concepts found in Isa 26:19 and 60:1. Sleeper... dead.* Two images that describe a sinner. *Jesus Christ will shine on you.* With his life-giving Light. Jesus Christ is “the Light of the world” (The Gospel of Jesus Christ. Jesus teaches Nicodemus. Jn 3:1-21).

**(5:15)** *Unwise... wise.* After having emphasized the contrasts between light and darkness, Paul turned to the contrast between wisdom and foolishness.

**(5:16)** *Opportunity.* The foolish person has no strategy for his life and so misses the opportunities he has to live for Yahweh in the evil environment existing on Earth.

**(5:17)** *Foolish... understand.* The contrast continues. The foolish person not only misses opportunities to make wise use of time; he doesn't even understand what are Yahweh's purposes for mankind and for Christians.

**(5:18)** *Do not get drunk... be filled with Yahweh's Spirit.* Another contrast, between a completely physical and a completely spiritual influence. The effect of being filled with wine is obvious. The effect of being in spiritual communion with Jesus Christ and Yahweh is to be empowered for service and testimony.

**(5:19-20)** *Psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music...* Every kind of appropriate song could provide a means for praising and thanking Yahweh and Jesus Christ.

### **Warning against refusing Yahweh [Heb 12:14-29]**

**(Heb 12:14)** *Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord Yahweh. (15) See to it that no one misses the grace of Yahweh and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many. (16) See that no one is sexually immoral, or is godless like Esau, who for a single meal sold his inheritance rights as the oldest son. (17) Afterwards, as you know, when he wanted to inherit his blessing, he was rejected. He could bring about no change of mind, though he sought the blessing with tears.*

**(18)** *You have not come to a mountain that can be touched and that is burning with fire; to darkness, gloom and storm; (19) to a trumpet blast or to a voice speaking such words that those who heard it begged that no further word be spoken to them, (20) because they could not bear what was commanded: “Even an animal, if it touches the mountain, must be stoned.” (21) The sight was so terrifying that Moses said, “I am trembling with fear.”*

**(22)** *But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of [Yahweh] the living God. You have come to thousand upon thousand of angels in joyful assembly, (23) to the Church of the firstborn, whose names are written in Heaven. You have come to Yahweh, the judge of all men, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, (24) to Jesus Christ the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks of a better Word than the blood of Abel.*

**(25)** *See to it that you do not refuse him who speaks. If they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on Earth, how much less will we, if we turn away from*

him who warns us from Heaven? **(26)** *At that time Yahweh's voice shook the Earth, and now He has promised, "Once more I will shake not only the Earth but also the Heavens."* **(27)** *The words "once more" indicate the removing of what can be shaken -that is, created things- so that what cannot be shaken may remain.*

**(28)** *Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and worship Yahweh acceptably with reverence and awe, (29)for our "Yahweh is a consuming fire."*

**(Heb 12:14)** *Make every effort...* A call for upright conduct that will help them reaching the condition of holiness -of being right in the sight of Yahweh.

**(12:15)** *See to it that...* A double call. First, to be active in helping and guiding those who are not strong in faith. Second, to avoid any pride, animosity, rivalry or anything else harmful to others.

**(12:16)** *Godless like Esau.* Esau "despised his birthright" by valuing food highly than his birth-right (Ge 25:29-34). In so doing he proved himself to be "godless" -that is, a sinner- since the covenant promises, that Isaac had inherited from Abraham, were usually "inherited" from firstborn to firstborn.

**(12:17)** *His blessing.* The blessing usually reserved to the firstborn, the material and spiritual "inheritance" from the old to the new head of the family. Many Jew-Christian converts were thinking of compromising their faith in order to gain relief from persecution. But to trade their "spiritual birthright" for temporary ease in this world would deprive them of Jesus Christ's blessing. *No change of mind.* Esau regretted his loss, but did never repent of his sin (Ge 27:41).

**(12:18-19)** *You have not come to...* These verses describe the occasion when the Law was given to Moses at Mount Sinai (Ex 19:10-25; Dt 4:11; 5:22-26), a description focusing on the old covenant's tangible mountain, on its ordinances, terrifying warnings and severe penalties. But the believers in Jesus Christ are not subject any more to such a threatening covenant, and should not considering returning to it.

**(12:20)** *Even an animal, if...* A quotation from Ex 19:12-13.

**(12:21)** *I am trembling...* A quotation from Dt 9:19.

**(12:22)** *Mount Zion.* Not the literal Mount Zion (on which lies Jerusalem), but the heavenly City of Yahweh.

**(12:23)** *Church of the firstborn.* The community of all believers, all heirs of the Kingdom together with Jesus Christ. *Spirits of righteous men made perfect.* The souls of pre-Christian believers as Abel, Noah and Abraham who are "spirits" because they are waiting for physical resurrection, and "righteous" because Yahweh -recognizing their special faith- has accepted them in His Kingdom -making them "perfect."

**(12:24)** *A better Word than the blood of Abel.* The "word" of Abel's blood cried out for justice and retribution, whereas the "Word" of Jesus Christ's blood shed on the Cross -the Gospel- speaks of forgiveness and reconciliation.

**(12:25)** *Him who speaks.* Jesus Christ who has brought to men the Good News. *Him who warned them on Earth.* Moses, at Mount Sinai. *Him who warns us from Heaven.* Jesus Christ, who is in Heaven. Since the Christians have received a greater revelation, they have a greater responsibility if they reject it.

**(12:26)** *At that time... shook the Earth.* As described in Ex 19:18. *Once more...* A quotation from Hag 2:6. The great disruptions at Jesus Christ's second coming.

**(12:27)** *What cannot be shaken... a kingdom that cannot be shaken.* The Kingdom of Yahweh in Heaven.

**(12:28-29)** *Yahweh is a consuming fire.* A quotation from Dt 4:24.

**The coming of the Lord Jesus Christ** [1 Th 4:13-18;5:1-11]

**(1Th 4:13)** Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. **(14)** We believe that Jesus Christ died and rose again and we believe as well that Yahweh will bring with Jesus Christ those who have fallen asleep in him. **(15)** According to the Lord Jesus Christ's own words, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. **(16)** For the Lord Jesus Christ himself will come down from Heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of Yahweh, and the dead in Jesus Christ will rise first. **(17)** After that, those of us who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord Jesus Christ in the air. And so we will be with the Lord Jesus Christ for ever. **(18)** Therefore encourage each other with these words.

**(5:1)** Now, brothers, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, **(2)** for you know very well that the Day of the Lord Jesus Christ will come like a thief in the night. **(3)** While people are saying, "Peace and safety," destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.

**(4)** But you, brothers, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief. **(5)** You are all sons of the light and sons of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness. **(6)** So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be alert and self-controlled. **(7)** For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night. **(8)** But since we belong to the day, let us be self-controlled, putting on faith and affection as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet. **(9)** For Yahweh did not appoint us to suffer punishment but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. **(10)** He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him. **(11)** Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.

**(1Th 4:13)** *Those who fall asleep.* For the Christians, sleep is a particularly apt metaphor for death, since death's finality and horror are removed by the certainty of resurrection. *Who have no hope.* The Pagans don't have the hope of a resurrection.

**(4:14)** *We believe that... those who have fallen asleep in him.* To believe in Jesus Christ's death and resurrection and in everybody's resurrection at the end of time was and is central to the Christian faith (Thoughts. At the end of time everybody will be with Yahweh).

**(4:15)** *According to the Lord Jesus Christ's own word.* The doctrine which follows is a particular one, not recorded in the Gospels. *We who are still alive.* The Christians alive at the time of Jesus Christ's return.

**(4:16)** *The Lord Jesus Christ himself... with the voice of the archangel...* Jesus Christ's second coming will be announced by the voice of an archangel and by the blast of angelic trumpets. *The dead in Jesus Christ.* Before the resurrection of believers mentioned in the next verse.

**(4:17-18)** *We... will be caught up...* This verse describes the resurrection -actually, the ascension to Heaven- of those who will be still alive on Earth at Jesus Christ's second coming.

**(5:1)** *Times and dates.* The date of Jesus Christ's return is totally unknown (The Gospel of Jesus Christ. The commission confirmed. Ac 1:7).

**(5:2-3)** *The Day... a thief in the night... as labor pains....* The day of Universal Judgment will come totally unexpected (The Gospel of Jesus Christ. The day and hour unknown. Mk 13:32-33; Mt 24:36,42-43; Lk 12:39) and the destruction of the old world will be very painful.

**(5:4)** *You... are not in darkness...* Believers do expect Jesus Christ's second coming; as such they will not be taken unprepared.

**(5:5)** *Sons of the light... of the day.* Jesus has said that Christians are "the light of the world" (The Gospel of Jesus Christ. The light of the world. Mk 4:21; Mt 5:14-16; Lk 8:16). *We do not belong...* Christians belong to the Light (to Jesus Christ), not to darkness (to Satan).

**(5:6)** *Asleep... alert.* Unbelievers are spiritually "asleep." Believers, instead, "keep watch."

**(5:7)** *Sleep... get drunk at night.* The unbelievers -who are "asleep"- belong to the night, to darkness. And night is the time of "orgies and drunkenness" (You must be fond, for the day is near. Ro 13:13).

**(5:8)** *We belong to the day.* Christians are "sons of the light." *Breastplate... helmet.* A pictorial image of the defensive action of faith, affection and hope.

**(5:9)** *Yahweh did not appoint us...* Yahweh's appointment, not man's choice, is the significant point.

**(5:10)** *Whether awake or asleep...* Jesus Christ died to save all men, both the believers (who, at his second coming, can be either physically alive -"awake"- or dead -"asleep"), and the unbelievers (who are, either alive or dead, spiritually "asleep"). With his death and resurrection he made all men enter a relationship that nothing can destroy.

**(5:11)** *Encourage one another...* To give comfort and help in case of difficulty is always very important.

### **The rebellion before Jesus Christ's coming** [2 Th 2:1-12]

**(2Th 2:1)** *Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him, we ask you, brothers, (2)not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by some prophecy, report or letter supposed to have come from us, saying that the day of the Lord Jesus Christ has already come. (3)Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. (4)He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called god or is worshipped, so that he sets himself up in Yahweh's Temple, proclaiming himself to be God.*

**(5)** *Don't you remember that when I was with you I used to tell you these things? (6)And now you know what is holding him back, so that he may be revealed at the proper time. (7)For the secret power of lawlessness is already at work; but the power that now holds it back will continue to do so till it is taken out of the way. (8)And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus Christ will overthrow with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendor of his coming. (9)The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan -displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders, (10)and in every sort of evil- that deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to follow the truth and so be saved. (11)For this reason Yahweh sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie (12)and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness.*



**(2Th 2:1)** *The coming of... gathered to him.* At the end of time, at the second coming of Jesus Christ, all believers -that is, all men- will be accepted into Heaven in spiritual communion with Jesus Christ and Yahweh (Thoughts. At the end of time everybody will be with Yahweh).

**(2:2)** *Not to become... alarmed.* Jesus Christ issued a similar instruction (The Gospel of Jesus Christ. Signs of the end of the age. Mk 13:7-8; Mt 24:6-8; Lk 21:9-11). *Some prophecy, report or letter supposed to have come from us...* Whatever communication they had received, Paul was not the author; it was a forgery. *The day of the Lord... has already come.* Paul was rejecting the idea that the final days had begun and that their completion -with the descent of Jesus Christ on Earth- was imminent.

**(2:3)** *The rebellion.* At the last days, because of false prophets, there will be a falling away from faith (The Gospel of Jesus Christ. Signs of the end of the age. Mt 24:10-12) and the last, supreme battle of Satan against Yahweh's people. *The man of lawlessness.* The leader on Earth, at the last days, of the forces of evil; the Antichrist. He won't be Satan, but a powerful man totally under Satan's influence. *Revealed.* At the last days it will be clear and evident who this "man of lawlessness" is. *Doomed to destruction.* The final defeat of this Antichrist and of Satan is certain.

**(2:4)** *He will... exalt himself over...* Not merely a political or military man, but one who will claim a place above everything associated with Yahweh's worship. *He sets... in Yahweh's Temple...* He will have a prominent position inside the Church -most probably the position of head of the earthly Church. He will even claim to be the true God.

**(2:5)** *Don't you remember...?* Paul had always warned the Christians against the false teachers.

**(2:6)** *What is holding him back.* Even if Paul didn't state what was restraining this "man of lawlessness," it is clear that it is the power of Yahweh -for it wasn't and it isn't yet "the proper time" for him.

**(2:7)** *Secret power... already at work... but...* This evil power is already working in the world and on men to prepare the final rebellion. And it will continue to work in such a way until the restraining power of Yahweh is removed at the end of time -at "the proper time."

**(2:8)** *The lawless one will be revealed.* At the last days it will be clear and evident who this man is. *Overthrow with...* Paul had no doubt about Jesus Christ's final and total victory at his second coming.

**(2:9)** *The coming... in accordance with...* Satan will empower him with miracles, signs and wonders (The Gospel of Jesus Christ. Signs of the end of the age. Mk 13:22; Mt 24:24).

**(2:10)** *Every sort of evil -that deceives...* The aim of all the signs performed by the "man of lawlessness." *Perish because...* Those who will refuse Jesus Christ's affection and follow Satan will be spiritually dead.

**(2:11)** *For this reason...* Because of their deliberate rejection of Jesus Christ's offer of affection and salvation. *Yahweh sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie.* Yahweh will allow them to follow their sinful will and believe that the man of lawlessness is the true God.

**(2:12)** *So that all will be condemned...* As a consequence of their sin, Yahweh will have to punish them.

**Jesus Christ the wisdom and power of Yahweh** [1 Co 1:18-31;2:1-5]

**(1Co 1:18)**For the message of the Cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of Yahweh. **(19)**For it is written:

“I will destroy the wisdom of the wise; the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate.”

**(20)**Where is the wise man? Where is the scholar? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not Yahweh made foolish the wisdom of the world? **(21)**For since in the wisdom of Yahweh the world through its wisdom did not know Him, Yahweh was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe. **(22)**Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom, **(23)**but we preach Jesus Christ crucified: a stumbling block to the Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, **(24)**but to those whom Yahweh has called, both Jews and Greeks, Jesus Christ is the power of Yahweh and the wisdom of Yahweh. **(25)**For the foolishness of Yahweh is wiser than man's wisdom, and the weakness of Yahweh is stronger than man's strength.

**(26)**Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. **(27)**But Yahweh chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; Yahweh chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. **(28)**He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things -the things that are not- to nullify the things that are, **(29)**so that no one may boast before Him. **(30)**It is because of Him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from Yahweh -that is, our righteousness, holiness, and redemption. **(31)**Therefore, as it is written: “Let him who boasts boast in the Lord Yahweh.”

**(2:1)**When I came to you, brothers, I did not come with eloquence or superior wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about Yahweh. **(2)**For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. **(3)**I came to you in weakness and fear, and with much trembling. **(4)**My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the power of Yahweh's Spirit, **(5)**so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on Yahweh's power.

**(1Co 1:18)** *Foolishness.* The world can't accept that a crucified criminal could be the Savior. *Power of Yahweh.* The crucified Jesus Christ is the power that saves.

**(1:19)** *I will destroy...* A quotation from Isa 29:14, in which Yahweh denounced the policy of the “wise” who at the time were seeking an alliance with Egypt when Israel was threatened by the Assyrian king Sennacherib.

**(1:20)** *The wise... scholar... philosopher... Yahweh made foolish the wisdom of the world.* All humanly devised philosophical systems are meaningless because they have a wrong concept of Yahweh and of His revelation.

**(1:21)** *In the wisdom of Yahweh...* Jesus Christ has expressed a similar concept (The Gospel of Jesus Christ. Rest for the weary. Mt 11:25-26; Lk 10:21). It is Yahweh's intention that worldly wisdom should not be the means of knowing Him. *Foolishness of what was preached.* Jesus Christ's message was viewed by the world as foolish.

**(1:22)** *Miraculous signs.* It was characteristic of the Jews that they asked signs and wonders from Yahweh's messengers (The Gospel of Jesus Christ. The sign of Jonah. Mt 12:38-39; Lk 11:29). *Greeks look for wisdom.* Especially true of Greek philosophers.

**(1:23)** *Jesus Christ crucified: a stumbling block... and foolishness...* The Jews expected a triumphant, political Messiah, and they could not accept a crucified one. The Gentiles

(Greeks and Romans) could not accept that a crucified, dead man would be more than that.

**(1:24)** *Those whom Yahweh has called.* The Christian believers are “called” by Yahweh who, with His affection, is behind the whole process of salvation. *Jesus Christ is the power... and the wisdom of Yahweh.* The crucified Jesus Christ is the power that saves all men and the wisdom that transforms what seems a folly into the ultimate and highest discernment.

**(1:25)** *The foolishness of Yahweh is wiser than...* A crucified Messiah brought all men’s salvation, a result all human wisdom could not reach. *The weakness of Yahweh is stronger than...* The crucified Jesus Christ was resurrected by the power of Yahweh, something human strength could not do.

**(1:26)** *Brothers, think...* Most of the early Christians were living proof that salvation does not depend on anything in them -least of all their human wisdom, social position, rank and riches- so that, when someone is saved, he must only thank Jesus Christ and Yahweh.

**(1:27-29)** *Yahweh chose the foolish... the weak... the lowly... the despised.* Yahweh, through Jesus Christ, did not and does not look for powerful, rich, learned or particularly religious people -“the things that are.” On the contrary, those He calls to Him are quite normal and, most of the times, from the lower classes -“the things that are not.” What better indication that Yahweh’s salvation is for all men?

**(1:30)** *It is because of Him that...* It is Yahweh who calls men to salvation through Jesus Christ. *For us wisdom... righteousness, holiness and redemption.* Christianity tells men who -in the eyes of the world- are worthless, that -in the eyes of Yahweh- they are worth the death of His Son.

**(1:31)** *Let him who...* A quotation from Jer 9:24.

**(2:1-2)** *When I came to you... I did not come with...* Paul’s preaching was quite simple, based only on the fundamental facts of Christianity -Jesus Christ was the only subject of his teaching.

**(2:3)** *I came to you in...* Paul did not want to be an arrogant teacher, but a humble preacher.

**(2:4-5)** *My message and... a demonstration of the power of Yahweh’s Spirit.* Paul never used undue eloquence, leaving the merit of all conversions to Yahweh’s spiritual power.

### **Wisdom from the Spirit of Yahweh [1 Co 2:6-16]**

**(1Co 2:6)** *We do, however, speak a message of wisdom to the mature, but not of the wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. (7)No, we speak of Yahweh’s secret wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden and that Yahweh destined for our glory before time began. (8)None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory. (9)For, as it is written:*

*“No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what Yahweh has prepared for those who are fond of Him.”*

**(10)** *But Yahweh has revealed it to us by His Spirit, which knows all things, even the deep things of Yahweh. (11)For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man’s spirit within him? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of Yahweh except the Spirit of Yahweh. (12)We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit*

which is from Yahweh, that we may understand what Yahweh has freely given us. (13) This is what we speak about, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by Yahweh's Spirit, expressing spiritual truth in spiritual words. (14) The non-spiritual man does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of Yahweh, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are to be spiritually discerned. (15) The spiritual man can make judgments about all things, but he himself is not subject to any man's judgment:

(16) "For who has known the mind of the Lord Yahweh that he may instruct Him?" But we have the mind of Jesus Christ.

(1Co 2:6) *A message of wisdom to the mature.* Even if most of Paul's preaching was done in simple and fundamental terms, he used a different, more sophisticated way of preaching with those who were already strong in faith. *Not of the wisdom of this age...* Paul's preaching was always -either simple or sophisticated- about Jesus Christ. *Rulers of this age.* Here, those who did judge and condemn Jesus Christ: the High Priest, the chief priests, Herod Antipas and Pilate.

(2:7) *Yahweh's secret wisdom...* The coming of Jesus Christ as Yahweh's Messiah and the effect of his death and resurrection was previously unknown -"hidden"- to men. *Destined for our glory before time began.* Yahweh's wisdom -here, Jesus Christ's coming- had always been part of Yahweh's plan for the salvation of mankind. And that will cause all believers to share of Jesus Christ's glory.

(2:8) *Would not have crucified...* Yet it had been necessary for Jesus Christ to die because only by dying he left no possibility of doubt about having completed his mission on Earth and won his battle against Satan's temptation. (Thoughts. Who... was crucified, died...).

(2:9) *No eye has seen...* A quotation from Isa 64:4. *What Yahweh has prepared...* His Messiah Jesus Christ and the salvation of all men.

(2:10) *Revealed it to us by His Spirit, which knows... the deep things of Yahweh.* Christian believers are in spiritual communion with Jesus Christ and Yahweh. And it is through this condition of spiritual communion that Yahweh has revealed to men His plan of salvation.

(2:11) *For who... knows...? In the same way...* Man was made in the image of Yahweh. Therefore, as a man's spirit -his soul- "knows" the deepest thoughts of that man, so is for Yahweh.

(2:12) *Not... the spirit of the world but... from Yahweh.* Christian believers, who are in spiritual communion with Jesus Christ and Yahweh, are put in condition of understanding Yahweh's gift of salvation.

(2:13) *What we speak about... in words taught by Yahweh's Spirit.* The message Paul proclaimed was expressed in words given him by the Spirit of Yahweh. Thus spiritual truth was aptly expressed by appropriate words.

(2:14) *The non-spiritual man does not...* A man who follows mere natural instincts, because he is not in spiritual communion with Yahweh, is not equipped to receive and understand the truth of Yahweh.

(2:15) *The spiritual man... not subject to any man's judgment.* A mature believer, who is in spiritual communion with Yahweh, can be judged only by Yahweh because, being mature, he doesn't do anything other men can rightfully judge.

**(2:16)** *For who has known...* A quotation from Isa 40:13. No man can know Yahweh's thoughts more than Yahweh allows him. *We have the mind of Jesus Christ.* Paul's knowledge was very deep as he had been instructed directly by Jesus Christ about Yahweh's plan of salvation (Paul called by Yahweh. Gal 1:11-24).

**The supremacy of Jesus Christ [Col 1:15-23]**

**(Col 1:15)** *He, Jesus Christ, is the image of [Yahweh] the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. (16) Because for him all things were created: things in Heaven and on Earth, visible and invisible; whether thrones or powers, or rulers or authorities; all things were created because of him and for him. (17) He is above all things, and in him all things hold together. (18) And he is the head of the body, the Church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. (19) For Yahweh was pleased to have all His fullness dwell in him, (20) and through him to reconcile to Himself all things, whether things on Earth or things in Heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the Cross.*

**(21)** *Once you were alienated from Yahweh and enemies in mind as shown by your evil behavior. (22) But now He has reconciled you by the death of Jesus Christ's physical body to present you holy in His sight, without blemish and free from accusation (23)-if you continue in your faith, established and firm, not shifting from the hope offered in the Gospel. This is the Gospel that you heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature under Heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a servant.*

**(Col 1:15)** *The image.* Jesus himself has declared that "anyone who has seen me has seen the Father" (The Gospel of Jesus Christ. Jesus the way to the Father. Jn 14:9). *Invisible.* Yahweh is invisible in the sense that "no one has ever seen Yahweh" (The Gospel of Jesus Christ. The Son of Yahweh. Jn 1:18). *Firstborn of all creation.* Just as the firstborn son had certain privileges and rights in the Biblical world, so also Jesus Christ -the human Son of Yahweh- has certain rights over the world (over that part of creation where we live).

**(1:16)** *For him all things were created.* In effect, after his death and resurrection, Jesus Christ was given by Yahweh complete responsibility over the world: "seated at the right hand of the Father." *Thrones or powers, or rulers or authorities.* The first two titles refer to angels, of whom Jewish tradition had developed a hierarchy of which there is no certain mention in Scripture. The other two refer to the rulers of the Earth, the "rulers of this age" (Wisdom from the Spirit of Yahweh. 1 Co 2:6-16). *All things were created because of him and for him.* A phrase repeating and reinforcing a preceding verse, "for him all things were created."

**(1:17)** *He is above all things, and in him all things hold together.* As Son of Yahweh, after having completed his mission on Earth, all authority in Heaven and on Earth had been given to him.

**(1:18)** *Head of the body, the Church.* Jesus Christ is the head of the Christian Church, which is the united body of all believers (Unity in the body of Jesus Christ. Eph 4:1-16). *Beginning.* Of the new covenant and of the new creation. *Firstborn from among the dead.* Jesus Christ was the first to rise physically from the dead.

**(1:19)** *All His fullness dwell in him.* Jesus Christ, the human Son of Yahweh, second only to the Father, has all the powers and the attributes of Yahweh. Yet he is not God (Thoughts. I believe in Jesus Christ...).

**(1:20)** *Reconcile to Himself all things.* When Jesus Christ died on the Cross, he made possible the restoration of peace between Yahweh and man, and of harmony in the physical world, though the full realization of both will be possible only at his second coming. *Things in Heaven.* At the end of time, after the end of the human race and after the conversion to Christianity of the last man, Hell -the place where Yahweh is not and Satan reigns- will be an empty space and, for that, the reason itself of its existence will end. At that point even Lucifer, convinced of his mistake, will repent and enter for ever -accompanied by all his angels- the Kingdom of Yahweh (Thoughts. ...everybody's final access to the Reign of Yahweh).

**(1:21-22)** *Alienated from Yahweh... reconciled... by the death of Jesus Christ.* Jesus Christ died for the final reconciliation of all sinners to Yahweh. *Holy... without blemish and free from accusation.* Jesus Christ's death has made men holy (Yahweh wants to accept all men), blameless (all men will be spiritually converted) and faultless (Jesus Christ has paid the ransom necessary to free them from the bondage of sin.)

**(1:23)** *If you continue in your faith... hope... in the Gospel.* Again, an exhortation to the Jew-Christian converts not to revert to their former faith to avoid the struggle of being Christian. *The Gospel... proclaimed to every creature under Heaven.* Hyperbolic, pointing to the spread of the Gospel in every part of the Roman Empire within three decades from the Pentecost. *Paul... a servant.* As in "The introduction to the Romans" (Ro 1:1-7), the Greek for the word "servant" means both a "slave" who completely belongs to his owner, and a "servant" who willingly chooses to fully serve his master.

### **Freedom from human regulations through life with Jesus Christ [Col 2:6-23]**

**(Col 2:6)** *So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, (7)rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.*

**(8)** *See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the principles of this world rather than on Jesus Christ.*

**(9)** *For in Jesus Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, (10)and you have been given fullness in Jesus Christ, who is the head over every power and authority. (11)In him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Jesus Christ, (12)having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of Yahweh, who raised him from the dead.*

**(13)** *When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, Yahweh made you alive with Jesus Christ. He forgave us all our sins, (14)having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; He took it away, nailing it to the Cross. (15)And having disarmed the powers and authorities, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the Cross.*

**(16)** *Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. (17)These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Jesus Christ. (18)Do not let anyone who delights in false humility and the worship of angels disqualify you for the prize. Such a person goes into great detail about what he has seen, and his unspiritual mind puffs him with idle notions. (19)He has lost connection with the Head, from whom the whole body, supported and held together by its ligaments and sinews, grows as Yahweh causes it to grow.*

*(20) Since you died with Jesus Christ to the principles of this world, why, as though you still belonged to it, do you submit to its rules: (21) "Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!"? (22) These are all destined to perish with use, because they are based on human commands and teachings. (23) Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence.*

**(Col 2:6)** *Continue to live in him.* In the condition of spiritual communion with Jesus Christ and Yahweh.

**(2:7)** *Rooted... in the faith... taught.* Another exhortation to remain in the true faith -that taught by Paul and the other apostles- without believing the false teachers. *Thankfulness.* Thanking Jesus Christ for what he has done for the spiritual salvation of all men.

**(2:8)** *No one takes you captive...* Here Paul was counteracting the heretical belief that for salvation men need to combine faith in Jesus Christ with man-made regulations concerning such physical and external practices as circumcision, eating and drinking, and observance of religious festivals.

**(2:9)** *In Jesus Christ... fullness of the Deity...* Jesus Christ, the human Son of Yahweh, second only to the Father, has all the powers and attributes of Yahweh. Yet he is not God (Thoughts. I believe in Jesus...).

**(2:10)** *You have been given fullness in Jesus Christ.* True Christian faith is complete -men do not need anything else to gain spiritual salvation- and does not require the man-made regulations mentioned before. *Head over every power and...* Yahweh has given Jesus Christ full responsibility over His creation (The Gospel of Jesus Christ. The great commission, Mk 16:15; Mt 28:18-20).

**(2:11)** *In him... circumcised...* In the Israelite faith, circumcision was a sign that the individual had entered the old covenant relation with Yahweh. For the Christian, baptism is the parallel sign of the new covenant relationship.

**(2:12)** *Buried... and raised...* As Jesus Christ's resurrection followed his death, so the believers -who spiritually die to sin by believing- are raised by Yahweh to a new life of spiritual communion with Him and Jesus Christ.

**(2:13)** *Dead in your sins and... Yahweh made you alive.* As men fell into sin and became subject to death through Adam, so they have died to sin and been raised through Jesus Christ.

**(2:14)** *Written code.* In Greek, a legal term, meaning a certificate of indebtedness. Paul used it as a designation of the Mosaic law, with all its regulations, under which everyone was a debtor to Yahweh. *Nailing it to the Cross.* With his death on the Cross Jesus Christ has fully paid all men's debts.

**(2:15)** *Having disarmed.* Not only did Yahweh cancel all the accusations of the law against the Christians, but He did also disarm Satan and his emissaries (Thoughts. At the end of time, everybody will be with Yahweh). *Public spectacle.* The metaphor recalls the triumph of a Roman general.

**(2:16)** *Therefore...* Christians are not to be judged by the observance to legalistic requirements.

**(2:17)** *Shadow... reality.* The ceremonial laws of the old testament were "shadows" because they symbolically depicted the coming of Jesus Christ. Any insistence on the observance of such ceremonies is a failure to recognize that their fulfillment has already taken place.

**(2:18) False humility.** Humility in which one delights is clearly mock humility. *Worship of angels.* To the Jews the angels were exalted beings, revered because directly involved in Yahweh's activity, allowed to His presence and considered intermediaries between Yahweh and men. But Christians do not have to worship angels, their faith has to be only in Jesus Christ and Yahweh. *Disqualify you for the price.* Losing the spiritual salvation offered by Jesus Christ. *Such a person.* A person who "delights in false humility and worships the angels," clearly a false teacher, gives plenty of importance to "idle notions" which are actually damaging the true faith.

**(2:19) Lost connection with the Head.** The above mentioned errors give a defective view of Jesus Christ. *From whom the... body... grows as...* The existence and development of Christianity on Earth -the Christian Church- was and is made possible by what Jesus Christ did by following the will of Yahweh.

**(2:20) You died with Jesus Christ.** The self in its pre-Christian state, dominated by sin, "died" when Jesus Christ died, to be replaced by the Christian self who is not subject to the rules of the "principles of this world."

**(2:21-22) Do not handle... taste... touch! Human commands...** All those "Do not" rules, so much characteristic of the human laws developed by the teachers of the law, were canceled by Jesus Christ's action of salvation.

**(2:23) Appearance of wisdom, with...** All those rules appeared a wise system of commands. It was, however, a system created by the false teachers themselves ("self-imposed worship"), rather than being of divine origin. Paul's analysis is that such practices are worthless because they totally fail to control sinful desires.

### **Rules for holy living** [Col 3:1-17]

**(Col 3:1)** Since, then, you have been raised with Jesus Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Jesus Christ is seated at the right hand of Yahweh. **(2)** Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. **(3)** For you died, and your life is now hidden with Jesus Christ in Yahweh. **(4)** When Jesus Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

**(5)** Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. **(6)** Because of these, the judgment of Yahweh is coming. **(7)** You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. **(8)** But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. **(9)** Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices **(10)** and have put on the new self, which is being renewed, in knowledge, in the image of Yahweh, its Creator. **(11)** Here there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Jesus Christ is all, and is in all.

**(12)** Therefore, as Yahweh's chosen people, holy and dearly cherished, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. **(13)** Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord Jesus Christ forgave you. **(14)** And over all these virtues put on fondness, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

**(15)** Let the peace of Jesus Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. **(16)** Let the word of Jesus Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to Yahweh. **(17)** And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, giving thanks to Yahweh the Father through him.



**(Col 3:1-10)** *Since... you have been raised...* Paul describes the believer's situation and attitude. Since he "died" to sin, he has been spiritually saved ("raised with") by Jesus Christ; lives in spiritual communion ("hidden") with Jesus Christ and Yahweh; will be resurrected ("will appear") at Jesus Christ's second coming, sharing of his glory. In other words, the conversion to Christianity has changed the man who has "taken off the old self" becoming a believer ("put on the new self"). As a consequence, the believer has to set his mind on spiritual things ("things above"); to stop all sinful behaviors ("immorality... greed"); to rid himself of negative sentiments and behaviors ("anger... filthy language"), living a daily life worthy of his spiritual communion with Jesus Christ and Yahweh.

**(3:11)** *Here there is no... Jesus Christ is all, and is in all.* Christianity transcends all barriers and unifies people from all cultures, races and nations in their spiritual communion with Jesus Christ and Yahweh.

**(3:12-14)** *Yahweh's chosen people.* Earlier, Israel was called this way (Dt 4:37), and so is now the Christian community. *Clothe yourselves with compassion... Bear with each other... Forgive as... And... put on fondness...* It is because the Christians have been elected to spiritual salvation that they have to live properly.

**(3:15)** *Peace of Jesus Christ.* Peace does not mean only absence of trouble. It means everything which makes for the physical wellbeing and inner rest of spirit, in fellowship and in communion with Jesus Christ and Yahweh. And this kind of peace is a present from Yahweh.

**(3:16)** *Word of Jesus Christ.* His teaching transmitted to the believers by the apostles' preaching. *Admonish one another.* In the Christian relationship each believer must have a conciliatory attitude which will help his relationship with other believers. *Sing psalms...* Every appropriate song can be a way of praising and thanking Yahweh and Jesus Christ.

**(3:17)** *Whatever you do... do it all in the name...* Every moment and every act of a Christian's life has to be in accordance with Jesus Christ's teaching.

### ***Imitating Jesus Christ's humility [Php 2:1-11]***

**(Php 2:1)** *If you have any encouragement from being united with Jesus Christ, if any comfort from his affection, if any fellowship with Yahweh's Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, (2)then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same affection, being one in spirit and purpose. (3)Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. (4)Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.*

**(5)** *Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:*

**(6)** *Who, having the very nature of Yahweh, did not consider equality with Yahweh something to be grasped, (7)but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. (8)And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death -even death on a cross!*

**(9)** *Therefore Yahweh exalted him to the highest place and gave him the Name that is above every name, (10)that at the name of Jesus Christ every knee should bow, in Heaven and on Earth and under the Earth, (11)and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of Yahweh the Father.*

**(Php 2:1)** *United with Jesus Christ.* In Paul's teaching, this "union" -spiritual communion- is the basic fact of salvation, for to be in communion with Jesus Christ is to be sa-

ved. *Comfort from his affection.* Comforted and assured by Jesus Christ's affection for all men, demonstrated especially by his death for their salvation. *Fellowship with Yahweh's Spirit.* The spiritual communion of all believers with Yahweh, made possible by their spiritual communion with Jesus Christ. *Tenderness and compassion.* Christians have to care for and be sympathetic with each other.

**(2:2)** *Like-minded... same affection... one in spirit and purpose.* This is the unity that should exist among Christians, a unity of intents, that is, the willingness to work all together for the common good.

**(2:3)** *Selfish ambition or vain conceit.* The mortal enemies of unity and harmony in the Church. *Humility... others better than yourselves.* The mind-set of a person who sees the others as people worthy of respect and consideration.

**(2:4)** *Your own interests...* Personal interests are proper, but only if there is equal concern for the interests of the others.

**(2:5)** *Your attitude... the same as... Christ Jesus.* As Jesus Christ, the Christians must have an attitude of self-sacrificing, humility and of affection for the others.

**(2:6)** *Having the very nature of Yahweh.* Jesus Christ, the human Son of Yahweh, has fully inherited by his parents both natures, human and divine. *Not... equality with Yahweh.* Even if Jesus Christ has inherited the divine nature of Yahweh, he is not God, and he never said he was God (Thoughts. I believe in Jesus Christ...).

**(2:7)** *Made himself nothing.* Jesus Christ, putting aside the prerogatives of his divine nature -his powers- accepted the humiliation of the Cross. *Nature of a servant.* Jesus Christ himself has said, "The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve" (The Gospel of Jesus Christ. The request of James and John. Mk 10:45; Mt 20:28).

**(2:8)** *Appearance as a man.* Jesus Christ, born of a human mother, was fully a man. *Humbled himself... obedient to death... on a cross!* Jesus Christ, who always followed his Father's will, accepted to physically die on a cross, which at the time was the most degrading kind of execution that could be inflicted on a person.

**(2:9)** *Yahweh exalted him...* Jesus Christ has said, "All authority in Heaven and on Earth has been given to me" (The Gospel of Jesus Christ. The great commission. Mk 16:15; Mt 28:18-20). *The Name... above every name.* Reference to Jesus Christ's position -second only to the Father.

**(2:10-11)** *Bow... confess.* Yahweh wants that all men everywhere should worship Jesus Christ as Lord. And, ultimately, all will acknowledge him as Lord (Thoughts. At the end of time everybody will be with Yahweh).

### **Living to please Yahweh [1 Th 4:1-12]**

**(1Th 4:1)** *Finally, brothers, we instructed you how to live in order to please Yahweh, as in fact you are living. Now we ask you and urge you in the Lord Jesus Christ to do this more and more. (2) For you know what instructions we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ.*

**(3)** *It is Yahweh's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; (4) that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable, (5) not in passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know Yahweh; (6) and that in this matter no one should wrong his brother or take advantage of him. The Lord Yahweh will punish men for all such sins, as we have already told you and warned you. (7) For Yahweh did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life. (8) Therefore, he who rejects this instruction does not reject man but Yahweh, who gives you His Holy Spirit.*

(9) Now about brotherly affection we do not need to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by Yahweh to be fond of each other. (10) And in fact, you are fond of all the brothers throughout Macedonia. Yet we urge you, brothers, to do so more and more.

(11) Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business and to work with your hands, just as we told you, (12) so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody.

(1Th 4:1) Finally... we ask you and urge you... An exhortation, based on Paul's authority as an apostle of Jesus Christ, to persevere and to live a life worthy of the Christian faith.

(4:2) Instructions. Paul's preaching of Jesus Christ's Gospel.

(4:3) Sanctified. Yahweh wants all men to be justified and made right in His sight. Sexual immorality. In the first century moral standards were generally very low, and Paul had to warn the Christians, because they were not immune from temptation.

(4:4-5) Learn to control... not... like the heathen. Christians have to live and behave in a different way than Pagans, keeping under control their minds and bodies.

(4:6) No one should wrong his brother or take advantage of him. A general rule of proper social living, a must for Christian living. The Lord Yahweh will punish. All socially improper behaviors and actions are sinful in Yahweh's eyes.

(4:7) Yahweh... calls us... to live a holy life. Yahweh wants all men to be right in His sight.

(4:8) Yahweh, who gives you His Holy Spirit. Not to live in a Christian way is to refuse the possibility of being in contact -in spiritual communion- with Jesus Christ and Yahweh.

(4:9) Brotherly affection. In Greek, "philadelphia," a word used for the affection among children of the same father. In Christianity, used for the affection among fellow believers in Jesus Christ, all of whom have the same heavenly Father. Taught by Yahweh. Through Jesus Christ, who has said, "Be fond of one another. As I had been fond of you, you must be fond of one another" (The Gospel of Jesus Christ. Jesus predicts Peter's denial. Jn 13:34).

(4:10) Macedonia. One of the two Roman provinces -the other was Achaia- into which Greece was divided.

(4:11) Lead a quiet life... mind your own business. Christians are to live without creating trouble and are not to take undue interest in other people's affairs. Work with your hands. Greeks in general considered manual work degrading and fit only for slaves. Christians, on the contrary, have to work for earning their own living.

(4:12) Win the respect of outsiders. Christians' life has to set an example for all the non-Christians to follow. Not be dependent on anybody. Christians in need because of their idleness are not proper Christians.

### **Warnings from Israel's history [1 Co 10:1-13]**

(1Co 10:1) For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers, that our forefathers were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea. (2) They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. (3) They all ate the same food (4) and drank the same drink that Yahweh's Spirit gave them; for they drank from the rock that accompanied them by the action of Yahweh's Spirit, and that rock was Jesus Christ. (5) Nevertheless, Yahweh was not pleased with most of them; their bodies were scattered over the desert.

**(6)** Now these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did. **(7)** Do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written: "The people sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in pagan revelry." **(8)** We should not commit sexual immorality, as some of them did -and in one day twenty-three thousand of them died. **(9)** We should not test the Lord Yahweh, as some of them did -and were killed by snakes. **(10)** And do not grumble, as some of them did -and were killed by the destroying angel.

**(11)** These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come. **(12)** So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall! **(13)** No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And Yahweh is faithful; He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, He will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.

**(1Co 10:1)** *Under the cloud... through the sea.* Under Yahweh's protection and guidance -the "pillar of cloud" and the "pillar of fire"- all the Israelites crossed safely the Red Sea (Ex 13: 17-14:25).

**(10:2)** *All baptized into Moses...* Figurative, to depict their submission -as a people united under Yahweh's redemptive program- to Moses, Yahweh's appointed deliverer and leader.

**(10:3-4)** *Food... drink.* The manna and the water from the rock (Ex 16:2-36; 17:1-7). *The rock that accompanied them.* An image taken from the Rabbinic tradition. The legend was that the rock of the water followed the Israelites through the desert and always gave them water to drink. *That rock was Jesus Christ.* To Paul the rock of the water was the representation of the sustenance given by Jesus Christ to all believers through their spiritual communion with him and Yahweh.

**(10:5)** *Yahweh was not pleased...* The Israelites did not obey Yahweh, thus incurring His punishment -of all the adults who came out of Egypt, only Caleb and Joshua were allowed to enter Canaan (Nu 14:22-24,28-35).

**(10:6)** *Examples to keep us...* The events described in the Scripture are to be taken into due account, not to repeat the same mistakes -so incurring in Yahweh's punishment.

**(10:7)** *Idolaters... The people sat down to eat...* Referring to the incident of the golden calf (Ex 32:1-6). The Israelites ate a ritual meal of meat sacrificed to an idol.

**(10:8)** *Not commit sexual immorality...* The Israelites had sexual relations with Moabite women -actually, with the prostitutes of the temple of Baal- in this way participating in the worship of this god (Nu 25:1-9). *Twenty-three thousand.* The actual figure was 24,000 (Nu 25:9). It is clear that Paul, who was dictating his letters, was quoting from memory -writers of his time were not much concerned about precision.

**(10:9)** *Test the Lord Yahweh.* Referring to the incident of the water from the rock (Ex 17:1-7). *Killed by snakes.* Referring to the incident of the bronze snake (Nu 21:4-9).

**(10:10)** *Not grumble... destroying angel.* In Paul's opinion it was an angel who brought the plague which killed those who were complaining against Yahweh's judgment (Nu 16:41-50).

**(10:11)** *Examples... written down as warnings.* The Scripture -the Old Testament- was written for the Christians' instruction, to encourage them to hold fast to their hope in Jesus Christ's salvation. *Fulfillment of the ages.* The time of the new pact, inaugurated by Jesus Christ's death and resurrection.

**(10:12)** *If you think... be careful...* A warning against excessive confidence in themselves.

**(10:13)** *Temptation.* Temptation in itself is not sin. Jesus Christ himself was tempted (The Gospel of Jesus Christ. The temptation of Jesus. Mk 1:12-13; Mt 4:1-11; Lk 4:1-13). *Not... tempted beyond what you can bear.* The temptations Jesus Christ was subject to were of a level appropriate to his condition of Son of Yahweh in charge of a special and particular mission. The same is valid for men; the level of temptation is strictly related to their capacity to resist it. *He will also provide...* The power to resist, coming from the spiritual communion of a believer with Jesus Christ and Yahweh.

**Idol feasts and the Lord Jesus Christ's Supper** [1 Co 10:14-22]

**(1Co 10:14)** *Therefore, my dear friends, flee from idolatry. (15)I speak to sensible people; judge for yourselves what I say. (16)Is not the cup of thanksgiving, for which we give thanks, a participation in the blood of Jesus Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Jesus Christ? (17)Because there is only one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf.*

**(18)Consider the people of Israel: Do not those who eat the sacrifices participate in the altar? (19)Do I mean then that a sacrifice offered to an idol is anything, or that an idol is anything? (20)No, but the sacrifices of Pagans are offered to demons, not to Yahweh, and I don't want you to be participants with demons. (21)You cannot drink the cup of the Lord Jesus Christ and the cup of demons too; you cannot have a part in both the Lord Jesus Christ's table and the table of demons. (22)Are we trying to arouse the Lord Jesus Christ's jealousy? Are we stronger than he?**

**(1Co 10:14)** *Flee from idolatry.* Most of the Christians of Paul's time had come out of and still lived in a background of paganism. Temples for the worship of pagan deities were all around. And some cults, as the worship of Aphrodite, with its many sacred prostitutes, were particularly strong temptations.

**(10:15)** *Judge for yourselves.* Because in condition of understanding with full responsibility good and evil.

**(10:16-17)** *Cup of thanksgiving.* Originally, one of the cups drunk at the Jewish Passover, then that of the Lord's Supper (The Gospel of Jesus Christ. The Lord's Last Supper. Mk 14:12-25; Mt 26:17-29; Lk 22:7-23; Jn 13:1-30). *Participation in the blood of Jesus Christ.* A memorial, a symbol of fellowship with the crucified Jesus Christ, not a literal drinking of his blood. Jesus Christ had instituted the Lord's Supper -before to pour out his blood- to remind the Christians of him. *The bread... a participation in the body of Jesus Christ... all partake...* The act of many believers partaking of bread symbolizes the unity of the Church, the body of Jesus Christ, which is nourished by the Bread of Life (The Gospel of Jesus Christ. Jesus the Bread of Life. Jn 6:25-59).

**(10:18-20)** *Those who eat the sacrifices participate in the altar... don't... be participants with demons.* When the Jews ate the meat of animals sacrificed at the altar, they participate in the worship of Yahweh, whose altar it was. Likewise when the Pagans sacrificed, their sacrifices were "offered to demons" because, even if a sacrifice offered to an idol was nothing, as the idol was nothing, in reality, the demons (Satan's angels) behind the idols were the true recipient of idol worship.

**(10:21)** *You cannot drink the cup... and the cup...* Jesus Christ has said, "No one can serve two masters..." (The Gospel of Jesus Christ. No one can serve two masters. Mt 6:24; Lk 16:13).

**(10:22)** *Arouse the Lord Jesus Christ's jealousy.* A quotation from Psalm 78:58, originally referred to Yahweh.

***The armor of Yahweh [Eph 6:10-18]***

**(Eph 6:10)** *Finally, be strong in the Lord Yahweh and in His mighty power. (11) Put on the full armor of Yahweh so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. (12) For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. (13) Therefore put on the full armor of Yahweh, so that, after you have set everything, when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, standing. (14) Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, (15) and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the Gospel of peace. (16) In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. (17) Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of Yahweh's Spirit, which is the Word of Yahweh. (18) And pray the Spirit of Yahweh on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.*

**(Eph 6:10-11)** *Strong... power... armor of Yahweh... so that you can stand...* These phrases imply that human effort is inadequate but Yahweh's power is invincible.

**(6:12)** *Not against flesh and blood.* A caution against fighting human opponents as though they were the real enemy and against assuming that the battle can be fought using merely human resources. *Rulers... authorities... powers of this dark world... spiritual forces of evil...* The enemies of the Christians are both the rulers of the Earth, the "rulers of this age" (The supremacy of Jesus Christ. Col 1:15-23) and Satan's angels, who are the spiritual forces that are at war against Yahweh in the "heavenly realms."

**(6:13)** *Stand your ground... Stand firm...* In this contest the imagery is not that of a massive attack of evil forces, against the Church, but of attacks against individual believers.

**(6:14)** *Belt of truth.* Part of the symbolic clothing of the Messiah in Isa 11:5. *Breastplate of righteousness.* The believer's moral character is his actual defense. Yahweh Himself symbolically wears a breastplate of righteousness when He brings justice (Isa 59:17).

**(6:15)** *Feet fitted with the readiness...* A soldier ready for battle needs also to wear appropriate footwear.

**(6:16)** *Shield of faith... extinguish... flaming arrows.* A picture taken from the large Roman shield covered with leather, which could be soaked in water and which put out incoming flame-tipped arrows.

**(6:17-18)** *Helmet of salvation.* Again an image coming from Isa 59:17. The helmet is both a protection to the soldier and a military symbol. *Sword of Yahweh's Spirit... pray the Spirit of Yahweh.* Reminders that the battle is spiritual and must be fought with the help of Yahweh's strength, depending on Him through prayer. *All the saints.* All Christian believers.

***Different talents by grace [Ro 12:3-8]***

**(Ro 12:3)** *And by the grace given me I say to everyone of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith Yahweh has given you. (4) Just as each of us has one*

*body with many members, and these members do not have the same function, (5)so in Jesus Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. (6)We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. (7)If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; (8)if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully.*

**(Ro 12:3)** *The grace given me.* To be the apostle of Jesus Christ for the preaching of the Gospel to the Gentiles. *Do not think of yourself...* High self-esteem is contrary to Jesus Christ's teaching about being humble and serving the others (The Gospel of Jesus Christ. The request of James and John. Mk 10:42-45; Mt 20:25-28; Lk 22:24-27). *In accordance with the measure of faith...* The believer's capability to fulfill his ministry in the Church, is a power-gift given by Yahweh.

**(12:4-5)** *Just each of us has... so... we...* Paul likens Christians to members of a human body. There are many members, each with a different function, but all are needed for the health of the body. The emphasis is on diversity within unity. *In Jesus Christ.* The key to Paul's concept of Christian unity. It is only in Jesus Christ -in the spiritual communion of all believers with Jesus Christ and Yahweh- that the unity of the Christian Church is possible.

**(12:6)** *Gifts.* In Greek "charismata," referring here to special gifts of Yahweh's grace-gifts by Yahweh to His people to meet the needs of the Church.

**(12:7-8)** *If... prophesying... showing mercy.* A list of the most important gifts-functions in the Christian Church. *Let him use.* The existence of the gift -which comes from Yahweh- has to be acknowledged and the gift used. *In proportion to his faith.* In accordance with the "measure of faith" given by Yahweh.

### **Exhortation to affection** [Ro 12:9-21]

**(Ro 12:9)** *Affection must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. (10)Be devoted to one another in brotherly affection. Honor one another above yourselves. (11)Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord Yahweh. (12)Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. (13)Share with Yahweh's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.*

**(14)** *Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. (15)Rejoice with those who rejoice: mourn with those who mourn. (16)Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.*

**(17)** *Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. (18)If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. (19)Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for Yahweh's judgment, for it is written:*

*"It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord Yahweh.*

**(20)** *On the contrary:*

*"If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink.*

*In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head."*

**(21)** *Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.*

**(Ro 12:9)** *Affection*. Jesus Christ has said, “Be fond of one another” (The Gospel of Jesus Christ. Jesus predicts Peter’s denial. Jn 13:34). *Sincere*. True affection -not pretense, not mere emotion- active in doing good.

**(12:10)** *Brotherly affection*. All the believers are “brothers” for they are sons of Yahweh. *Honor one another above yourselves*. The mind-set of a person who has the right attitude towards the others, seeing the others worthy of preferential treatment.

**(12:11)** *Zeal... spiritual fervor*. Received by the believer through his spiritual communion with Jesus Christ and Yahweh.

**(12:12)** *Joyful in hope*. The certainty of the Christian’s “hope” -his faith in Jesus Christ’s action of salvation- is a cause of joy. *Patient*. Enduring the inevitable difficulties of Christian life without losing faith. *Faithful in prayer*. A Christian must not only pray in hard times, but also maintain spiritual contact with Yahweh through prayer at all times. Jesus Christ told his disciples that they should always pray (The Gospel of Jesus Christ. The parable of the persistent widow. Lk 18:1).

**(12:13)** *Share with... who are in need*. The Christians have social responsibilities towards all people, both believers and not.

**(12:14)** *Bless those who persecute you*. Jesus Christ has said, “Do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who mistreat and persecute you” (The Gospel of Jesus Christ. An eye for an eye. Kindness for enemies. Mt 5:44; Lk 6:27-28).

**(12:15)** *Rejoice... mourn...* Identification with others in their joys and in their sorrows is a Christian’s privilege and responsibility.

**(12:16)** *Live in harmony... Do not be conceited*. Yahweh’s decision to include all kinds of people -even slaves and Pagans- in His great plan of salvation, that is, in the Christian Church, should humble those who have received some gift, not fill them with arrogance.

**(12:17)** *Do not repay... evil for evil*. The most important moral rule of conduct after “Be fond of one another” (The Gospel of Jesus Christ. An eye for an eye. Kindness for enemies. Mt 5:39-41; Lk 6:29-31). *Do what is right in the eyes of everybody*. Christian conduct should never betray the high moral standards of the Gospel, or it will provoke the disdain of unbelievers and disrepute the Gospel.

**(12:18)** *If it is possible... live at peace*. Jesus Christ pronounced a blessing on peacemakers, and believers are to try hard to be at peace with everyone (The Gospel of Jesus Christ. The beatitudes. Blessings and woes. Mt 5:9).

**(12:19)** *Do not take revenge*. Practically, a repetition of the verse “Do not repay... evil for evil.” *Leave room for Yahweh’s judgment*. Only Yahweh can judge properly, knowing and taking into account all facts and circumstances. *It is mine to avenge...* A quotation from Dt 32:35.

**(12:20)** *If your enemy...* A quotation from Prov 25:21-22. *Heap burning coals on his head*. Horrible punishment (Psalm 140:10). Here, however, it is kindness, not burning coals, that will “hurt” the enemy. The meaning is that in re-turning good for evil, the Christian may cause his enemy to repent and change.

**(12:21)** *Do not... but overcome evil with good*. In other words, “Do not leave Satan rule in your life, but let Jesus Christ and Yahweh win over Satan.”

**You must be fond, for the day is near [Ro 13:8-14]**

**(Ro 13:8)** *Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to be fond of one another, for he who is fond of his fellow-man has fulfilled the law. (9)The command-*



ments, "Do not commit adultery, Do not murder, Do not steal, Do not covet," and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this one rule: "You'll be fond of your neighbor as of yourself." (10) Fondness does no harm to his neighbor. Therefore fondness is the fulfillment of the law.

(11) And do this, understanding the present time. The hour has come for you to wake up from your sleep, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. (12) The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. (13) Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. (14) Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature.

**(Ro 13:8)** *Continuing debt.* To be fond is the one "debt" that is never paid off. No matter how much a Christian had been fond, he is under obligation to keep on being fond. *Be fond of one another.* Not only fellow Christians but all people, all other "fellowmen." *Fulfilled the law.* The Mosaic law, which lays down both moral and social responsibilities.

**(13:9)** *The commandments... are summed up...* This statement further confirms that affection for neighbors encompasses all social responsibilities. *You'll be fond of your neighbor as of yourself.* A quotation from Lev 19:18. Jesus Christ has taught that our neighbor is anyone in need (The Gospel of Jesus Christ. The parable of the good Samaritan. Lk 10:25-37).

**(13:10)** *Fondness... is the fulfillment of the law.* Of the Mosaic law, as already seen.

**(13:11)** *Present time.* It was in Paul's time that Jesus Christ made spiritual salvation available to all men. *The hour has come... our salvation is nearer now...* After Jesus Christ's death and resurrection, the spiritual salvation of all men -at Jesus Christ's second coming- has become a certainty.

**(13:12-14)** *The night is nearly over; the day is almost here.* Paul regarded the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ as the event that began the "last days." Since the next event in Yahweh's redemptive plan is the second coming of Jesus Christ, "the night," no matter how long chronologically it may last, is "nearly over" and "the day," the appearing of Jesus Christ, is "almost here." *Put on the armor of light. Let us... clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and...* An exhortation to display outwardly what has already taken place inwardly -including practicing all Christian virtues.

### **Exhortations** [Heb 13:1-17]

**(Heb 13:1)** *Keep on being fond of each other as brothers. (2) Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it. (3) Remember those in prison as if you were their fellow prisoners, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering.*

**(4)** *Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for Yahweh will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral. (5) Keep your lives free from the greed for money and be content with what you have, because Yahweh has said,*

*"Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you."*

**(6)** *So we say with confidence,*

*"The Lord Yahweh is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?"*

**(7)** *Remember your leaders, who spoke the Word of Yahweh to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith. (8) Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.*

**(9)** *Do not be carried away by all those strange teachings. It is good for our hearts to be strengthened by grace, not by ceremonial foods, which are of no value to those who eat them. (10) We have an altar from which those who minister at the tabernacle have no right to eat.*

**(11)** *The high priest carries the blood of animals into the Most Holy Place as a sin offering, but the bodies are burned outside the camp. (12) And so Jesus Christ also suffered outside the city gate to make the people holy through his own blood. (13) Let us, then, go to him outside the camp, bearing the disgrace he bore. (14) For here we do not have an enduring city, but we are looking for the city that is to come.*

**(15)** *Through Jesus Christ, therefore, let us continually offer to Yahweh a sacrifice of praise -the fruit of lips that confess His Name. (16) And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices Yahweh is pleased.*

**(17)** *Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you.*

**(Heb 13:1)** *Being fond of each other as brothers.* The same as “Be devoted to one another in brotherly affection” (Exhortation to affection. Ro 12:9-21).

**(13:2)** *Entertain strangers.* To give hospitality to a foreign traveler meant to see him as a friend and not as a possible enemy. *Entertained angels without knowing.* As did Abraham (Ge 18) and Manoah, the father of Samson (Jdg 13).

**(13:3)** *Remember those in prison... and those... mistreated.* It often happened that the Christians were imprisoned and persecuted. Their fellow-Christians had the moral obligation to help them as much as possible.

**(13:4)** *Marriage... honored by all, and... kept... pure.* At a time when the bonds of marriage were not highly regarded -the Jews had the possibility of divorcing very easily, the Pagans had no proper concept of fidelity- the Christian couples had to be examples of fidelity and of life-lasting ties.

**(13:5)** *Greed for money... be content...* Jesus Christ has said that “a man’s life does not consist in... his possessions” and that a man has to be “rich toward Yahweh” (The Gospel of Jesus Christ. The parable of the rich fool. Lk 12:15,21). *Never will I leave you...* A quotation from Dt 31:6.

**(13:6)** *The Lord Yahweh is my helper...* A quotation from Psalm 118:6-7.

**(13:7)** *Your leaders, who spoke the Word of Yahweh... Consider... their way of life... imitate their faith.* The founders of the Christian Churches in various towns were examples for all Christians to follow.

**(13:8)** *Jesus Christ is the same...* The spiritual salvation of all men brought by Jesus Christ is an unchangeable reality, now and forever.

**(13:9)** *Those strange teachings.* The teachings of the “false teachers” so frequently mentioned. *Grace, not... ceremonial foods.* Salvation comes from Yahweh’s grace, not from ceremonial eating.

**(13:10)** *We have an altar...* Referred to the Cross, which marked the end of the Aaronic priesthood and of its repetitive sacrifices, replaced by Jesus Christ, the Great High Priest, and by his unique and final sacrifice. *No right to eat.* Only Christian believers can partake of Jesus Christ’s sacrifice through their spiritual communion with him and Yahweh. Jews -“who minister at the tabernacle”- and Jew-Christian converts reverting to their former religion cannot.

**(13:11)** *Blood... into the Most Holy Place... bodies... outside the camp.* Following the rules for sin sacrifice stated in Lev 4:3-12.

**(13:12)** *Jesus Christ also...* Jesus Christ's physical death outside Jerusalem represented the removal of sin, as had the bodies of sacrificed animals which were burned outside the camp of Israel.

**(13:13)** *Go to him outside the camp, bearing...* As Jesus Christ died willingly in disgrace outside the city, so the Jew-Christian converts should willingly "bear the same disgrace" by turning unequivocally away from Judaism.

**(13:14)** *City that is to come.* The heavenly New Jerusalem.

**(13:15)** *Sacrifice of praise.* The word "sacrifice" is used metaphorically, to represent an offering to Yahweh, that is, faith in Jesus Christ.

**(13:16)** *To do good and to share with others.* This, not animal sacrifice, is what Christians have to offer Yahweh.

**(13:17)** *Your leaders.* The leaders of the Christian Churches on Earth. *Submit to their authority.* This command does not condone dictatorial leadership, but is a request for respect, order and discipline in the Church. *They keep watch... their work... a joy...* The greatest joy of the leaders of any Christian congregation is to see those whom they lead established in the Christian way.

#### **Request for prayer** [2 Th 3:1-5]

**(2Th 3:1)** *Finally, brothers, pray for us that the message of the Lord Jesus Christ may spread rapidly and be honored, just as it was with you. (2)And pray that we may be delivered from wicked and evil men, for not everyone has faith. (3)But the Lord Yahweh is faithful, and He will strengthen and protect you from the evil one. (4)We have confidence in the Lord Jesus Christ that you are doing and will continue to do the things we command. (5)May the Lord Jesus Christ direct your hearts into Yahweh's affection and Jesus Christ's perseverance.*

**(2Th 3:1)** *Brothers, pray... the message of the Lord Jesus Christ may spread...* The target of all Christians has to be the diffusion of their faith.

**(3:2)** *Wicked and evil men.* All Christian missionaries and preachers have to face difficult times because of such people.

**(3:3)** *The Lord Yahweh is faithful...* Yahweh is always faithful to His promises and, because of the new covenant stipulated by Jesus Christ, will accept all men with Him.

**(3:4)** *Confidence... you are doing and will continue...* Paul was confident that the power coming from their spiritual communion with Jesus Christ and Yahweh would allow all Christians to endure difficulties and persecutions keeping their true faith.

**(3:5)** *Direct your hearts.* Not simply their emotions, but also their intellect and will.

#### **Forgiveness for the sinner** [2 Co 2:5-11]

**(2Co 2:5)** *If anyone has caused grief, he has not so much grieved me as he has grieved, to some extent -not to over-stress it- all of you. (6)The punishment inflicted on him by the majority is sufficient for him. (7)Now instead, you ought to forgive and comfort him, so that he will not be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. (8)I urge you, therefore, to reaffirm your affection for him. (9)The reason I wrote you was to see if you would stand the test and be obedient in everything. (10)If you forgive anyone, I also forgive him.*

*And what I have forgiven -if there was anything to forgive- I have forgiven in the sight of Jesus Christ for your sake, (11)in order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes.*

**(2Co 2:5)** *If anyone...* In this passage Paul, taking the particular case of a person who had been the cause of a serious offense in the Church of Corinth, gives a general rule of conduct for the application of discipline and Christian forgiveness in the Church. *Not so much grieved me... grieved... all of you.* The man in question had clearly insulted Paul, and the members of the Church had seen this as an injury to the good name of the Church.

**(2:6)** *The punishment... is sufficient.* Church discipline had been imposed on the man, but clearly there were some who felt that it had not been sufficiently severe and who desired to impose a greater punishment.

**(2:7-8)** *You ought to forgive.. to reaffirm your affection.* Paul admonished that, because the man had shown genuine repentance, the punishment should be discontinued and the man accepted back in the Church.

**(2:9)** *The reason I wrote you...* Paul used this occasion not only to deal with the offender, but even more as a test of the loyalty of local believers to him as their apostle.

**(2:10)** *If you forgive... forgiven in the sight of Jesus Christ.* Church discipline, important as it is, should not be allowed to develop into a form of graceless rigor in which there is no room for forgiveness. And, in effect, Jesus Christ has always forgiven all who genuinely repented of their conduct and sin.

**(2:11)** *Satan might not outwit us...* Punishment must never drive a man to despair, because over-severity may actually drive him away from the Church causing his fall into the arms of Satan -who is always there, waiting for such opportunities.

### **The weak and the strong** [Ro 14:1-23;15:1-13]

**(Ro 14:1)** *Accept him whose faith is weak, without passing judgment on disputable matters. (2)One man's faith allows him to eat everything, but another man, whose faith is weak, eats only vegetables. (3)The man who eats everything must not look down on him who does not, and the man who does not eat everything must not condemn the man who does, for Yahweh has accepted him. (4)Who are you to judge someone else's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. And he will stand, for the Lord Yahweh is able to make him stand.*

**(5)One man considers one day more sacred than another; another man considers every day alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. (6)He who regards one day as special, does so to the Lord Yahweh. He who eats meat, eats to the Lord Yahweh, for he gives thank to Yahweh; and he who abstains, does so to the Lord Yahweh and gives thanks to Yahweh. (7)For none of us lives to himself alone and none of us dies to himself alone. (8)If we live, we live to the Lord Yahweh; and if we die, we die to the Lord Yahweh. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord Yahweh.**

**(9)For this very reason, Jesus Christ died and returned to life so that he might be the Lord of both the dead and the living. (10)You, then, why do you judge your brother? Or why do you look down on your brother? For we will all stand before Yahweh's judgment seat. (11)It is written:**

*"As surely as I live, every knee will bow before Me; every tongue will confess to Yahweh," says the Lord Yahweh."*

**(12)So, then, each of us will give an account of himself to Yahweh.**

*(13)Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in your brother's way. (14)As one who is in the Lord Jesus Christ, I am fully convinced that no food is unclean in itself. But if anyone regards something as unclean, then for him it is unclean. (15)If your brother is distressed because of what you eat, you are no longer acting with affection. Do not by your eating destroy your brother for whom Jesus Christ died. (16)Do not allow what you consider good to be spoken of as evil. (17)For the Kingdom of Yahweh is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in His Holy Spirit, (18) because anyone who serves Jesus Christ in this way is pleasing to Yahweh and approved by men.*

*(19)Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification. (20)Do not destroy the work of Yahweh for the sake of food. All food is clean, but it is wrong for a man to eat anything that causes someone else to stumble. (21)It is better not to eat meat or drink wine or to do anything else that will cause your brother to fall.*

*(22)So whatever you believe about these things keep between yourself and Yahweh. Blessed is the man who does not condemn himself by what he approves. (23)But the man who has doubts is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from faith; and everything that does not come from faith is sin.*

*(15:1)We who are strong ought to bear with the failing of the weak and not to please ourselves. (2)Each of us should please his neighbor for his good, to build him up. (3) For even Jesus Christ did not please himself but, as it is written:*

*"The insults of those who insult You have fallen on me."*

*(4)For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.*

*(5)May [Yahweh] the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, (6)so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify [Yahweh] the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

*(7)Accept one another, then, just as Jesus Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to Yahweh. (8)For I tell you that Jesus Christ has become a servant of the Jews on behalf of Yahweh's truth to confirm the promises made to the patriarchs (9)so that the Gentiles may glorify Yahweh for His mercy, as it is written: "Therefore I will praise You among the Gentiles; I will sing hymns to Your Name."*

*(10)Again, it says, "Rejoice, O Gentiles, with His people."*

*(11)And again, "Praise the Lord Yahweh, all you Gentiles, and sing praises to Him, all of you peoples."*

*(12)And again, Isaiah says, "The root of Jesse will spring up, one who will arise to rule over the nations; the Gentiles will hope in him."*

*(13)May [Yahweh] the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of His Holy Spirit.*

**(Ro 14:1)** *Whose faith is weak.* Some Jew-Christian and Pagan-Christian converts did not have a clear idea about the requirements of their new faith, such as dietary restrictions or the keeping of special holy days. *Without passing judgment on disputable matters.* Fellowship among Christians is not to be based on everyone's agreement on all matters pertaining to Christian life, but only on faith in Jesus Christ.

**(14:2)** *One man's faith... but another man...* The "strong" Christian's understanding of the Gospel allows him to recognize that one's diet has no spiritual significance. The "weak" Christian understanding doesn't.

**(14:3)** *Must not look down... must not condemn... Yahweh has accepted him.* Yahweh, through Jesus Christ, has accepted all men. So they, apart from the keeping of the true Christian faith, do not have to worry about what other believers do and eat.

**(14:4)** *Someone else's servant.* A Christian must not reject a fellow Christian, who is also a servant of Yahweh. *To his own master he stands or falls.* Only Yahweh is Master and Judge, of both the "strong" and the "weak." *The Lord Yahweh... make him stand.* Yahweh has accepted all Christians, both the "strong" and the "weak."

**(14:5)** *One day more sacred... every day alike.* All days are to be dedicated to Yahweh living properly. *Fully convinced.* In such disputable matters the only essential point is full personal conviction.

**(14:6)** *He who regards... eats... abstains...* The motivation behind the actions of both the strong and the weak is to be the same: the will to serve Yahweh and give Him thanks for His provisions.

**(14:7-8)** *None of us lives... dies to himself alone... we belong to the Lord Yahweh.* Christians must live to please Yahweh, both in this life and in the next one, because they, as sons, belong to Yahweh.

**(14:9)** *Jesus Christ... Lord of both the dead and the living.* Jesus Christ, after his death and resurrection, was put by Yahweh in charge of all men, to make them suitable to enter His Kingdom.

**(14:10)** *Why do you judge... look down...?* Addressed, respectively, to the weak and the strong Christians. *All stand before Yahweh's judgment.* Yahweh is the only Judge of all men.

**(14:11)** *As surely as I live...* Quotations from Isa 49:18 and 45:23.

**(14:12)** *So, then...* Yahweh is Master, to Him alone all men will be responsible.

**(14:13)** *Stop passing judgment...* Jesus Christ has said, "Do not judge, and you will not be judged" (The Gospel of Jesus Christ. Judging others. Mk 4:24; Mt 7:1-2; Lk 6:37-38). *Instead...* Words addressed to the strong Christians, who have to accept other believers' weak points.

**(14:14)** *No food is unclean in itself.* Jesus Christ has said, "Nothing of what... goes into a man's mouth can make him unclean" (The Gospel of Jesus Christ. Clean and unclean. Mk 7:15; Mt 15:11). *If anyone... then...* Here Paul is not discussing sin in general, but only matters concerning which Christians may legitimately differ. About such matters, decisions should be guided by personal conscience.

**(14:15)** *Acting with affection.* The key to Christian life and to settlement of disputes among believers. *Your brother for whom Jesus Christ has died.* Jesus Christ so valued the weak brothers as to die for them. So, strong Christians have to make adjustments in their own behavior for the sake of such brothers.

**(14:16)** *What you consider good... spoken of as evil.* To understand more and exercise personal freedom without responsibility can lead to evil results.

**(14:17)** *Not a matter of eating and...* To be concerned with such trivial matters is to miss completely the essence of Christian living. *Joy in His Holy Spirit.* The joy of being in spiritual communion with Jesus Christ and Yahweh.

**(14:18)** *Who serves Jesus Christ... is pleasing to Yahweh.* Because he is living in the way Yahweh wants all men to live.

**(14:19)** *Mutual edification.* The spiritual building up of individual Christians and of the Church.

**(14:20-21)** *Work of Yahweh.* The weak Christian, who is a redeemed man, is anyway Yahweh's work. *It is wrong... It is better...* A strong Christian has to have regard for a weak brother's scruples.

**(14:22)** *Keep between yourself and Yahweh.* The strong Christian is not required to go against or change his convictions. Yet he does not have to show them off but to keep them a private matter.

**(14:23)** *The man who has doubts...* A Christian in doubt about the lawfulness of something, has to refrain from it.

**(15:1-2)** *We who are strong ought... to build him up.* The strong Christians have to support with affection the weak in their weaknesses, without imposing their points of view, to strengthen them.

**(15:3)** *Jesus Christ did not please himself.* He did the will of the Father, not his own, till dying on the Cross. *The insults of those...* A quotation from Psalm 69:9, where "You" refers to Yahweh and "me" to the righteous sufferer, whom Paul identifies with Jesus Christ.

**(15:4)** *Everything... written...* A great truth concerning the purpose of Scripture: It was written for the Christians' instruction, so that they may be encouraged to hold fast to their hope in Jesus Christ's salvation.

**(15:5-6)** *A spirit of unity among yourselves.* Not that believers should all come to the same conclusions on the matters of conscience discussed above, but that they might agree to disagree.

**(15:7)** *Accept one another... to bring praise to Yahweh.* By being fond of each other they do the will of Yahweh.

**(15:8)** *Jesus Christ... servant of the Jews... to confirm the promises...* Jesus Christ was sent to the Jews and largely limited his ministry to them (The Gospel of Jesus Christ. The faith of the Canaanite woman, Mt 15:24), fulfilling the promises made to Abraham (Ge 12:1-3; 17:7; 18:19; 22:18), Isaac (Ge 26:3-4) and Jacob (Ge 28:13-15; 46:2-4).

**(15:9)** *So that the Gentiles may glorify Yahweh.* Yahweh's redemptive work was and is for all men, both Jew and Gentile. *Therefore I will praise You...* A quotation from 2 Sa 22:50.

**(15:10)** *Rejoice, O Gentiles...* A quotation from Dt 32:43.

**(15:11)** *Praise the Lord Yahweh...* A quotation from Psalm 117:1.

**(15:12)** *The root of Jesse...* A quotation from Isa 11:10. Jesse was David's father.

**(15:13)** *God of hope.* Christian hope -faith in Jesus Christ's salvation- comes from Yahweh. *By the power of His Holy Spirit.* Faith cannot come from human effort, it is Yahweh's gift.

### **Food sacrificed to idols** [1 Co 8:1-13]

**(1Co 8:1)** *Now about food sacrificed to idols. We know that we all possess knowledge. Knowledge puffs up, but affection builds up. (2)And the man who thinks he knows something does not yet know as he ought to know. (3)But the man who is fond of Yahweh is known by Yahweh.*

**(4)** *So then, about eating food sacrificed to idols. We know that an idol is nothing at all in the world and there is no God but [Yahweh] the One. (5)For even if there are so-called gods, whether in Heaven or on Earth (as indeed there are many "gods" and many "lords"), (6)yet for us there is but One God, [Yahweh] the Father, from whom all*

*things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, for whom all things came and through whom we live.*

*(7)But not everyone knows this. Some people are still so accustomed to idols that when they eat such food they think of it as having been sacrificed to an idol, and since their conscience is weak, it is defiled. (8)But food does not bring us near to Yahweh; we are no worse if we do not eat, and no better if we do.*

*(9)Be careful, however, that the exercise of your freedom does not become a stumbling block to the weak. (10)For if anyone with a weak conscience sees you who have this knowledge eating in an idol's temple, won't he be emboldened to eat what has been sacrificed to idols? (11)So this weak brother, for whom Jesus Christ died, is destroyed by your knowledge. (12)When you sin against your brothers in this way and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Jesus Christ. (13)Therefore, if what I eat causes my brother to fall into sin, I will never eat meat again, so that I will not cause him to fall.*

**(1Co 8:1)** *Food sacrificed to idols.* Meat left over from pagan animal sacrifices could be eaten by the priests and by the offerer and his friends at a feast in the temple or sold in the public market. Some Christians felt that if they ate such meat (participating to the feast following the sacrifice or buying it in the market), they were participating in pagan worship, thus compromising their testimony for Jesus Christ. Other Christians did not feel this way. *We all possess knowledge. Knowledge puffs up, but affection builds up.* All Christians have a certain understanding of the Gospel and of its requests, but not all at the same level. Those who know -or suppose to- more, tend to feel superior and not to properly consider the feelings of other, less prepared Christians. And this is wrong because it contrasts with the request of brotherly affection among fellow-Christians.

**(8:2)** *The man who thinks he knows... does not yet know...* The wisest and most knowledgeable Christian realizes that his knowledge is really limited. Yahweh is the only one who knows all.

**(8:3)** *The man who is fond of Yahweh is known by Yahweh.* Yahweh knows who are the men who follow His will.

**(8:4)** *An idol is nothing.* For it represents no real god and possesses no power at all. But there are demons (Satan's angels) behind it.

**(8:5)** *So-called gods.* The pagan gods of the Greek, Roman and other mythologies. Many "gods" and many "lords." Not that they actually exist. Here Paul was simply recognizing the obvious fact that so many Pagans worshipped them.

**(8:6)** *One God... from whom... one Lord, Jesus Christ, for whom all things came.* Yahweh is the ultimate source of all creation -all things come from Him- and Jesus Christ, after his death and resurrection, has been given by Yahweh complete responsibility over the whole world (in the previous verses: "in the world" and "in heaven or on earth"). *The Father... for whom... Jesus Christ... through whom we live.* The final accomplishment of all men's lives is the possibility of going and live in the Kingdom of Yahweh; and they can obtain that through Jesus Christ's action of salvation.

**(8:7)** *Not everyone knows this.* That an idol has no personal reality. *Since their conscience is weak, it is defiled.* Christians who still conceived of an idol as being real could not rid themselves of this idea. Consequently, they thought that by eating meat sacrificed on pagan altars they were involving themselves in pagan worship, thus sinning against Jesus Christ.



**(8:8)** *But food does not...* Food has no influence at all -nor positive, nor negative- on the relationship man-Yahweh.

**(8:9)** *The exercise of your freedom... a stumbling block to the weak.* To eat meat sacrificed to idols -even knowing that an idol is nothing- could have negatively influenced the weak Christians, who thought it wrong.

**(8:10)** *You... eating in an idol's temple.* Christians, too, were invited to the feasts by their Pagan friends. *Emboldened to eat.* Pushed to follow the strong Christian's example without the proper understanding.

**(8:11)** *This weak brother... destroyed by your knowledge. You... wound... their weak conscience.* The weak Christian, influenced by the stronger Christian, could have decided to eat that meat, though he felt it to be wrong. And doing something one feels is wrong tends to blunt his conscience, so that doing it again becomes much easier.

**(8:12)** *You sin against Jesus Christ.* Because, acting that way, the strong Christian does not help his weak brother to become stronger.

**(8:13)** *Therefore... I will never eat meat again.* Paul would forever refrain from engaging in a harmless practice if it could jeopardize his weak Christian brother's faith.

***The believer's freedom [1 Co 10:23-33;11:1]***

**(1Co 10:23)** *"Everything is permissible" -but not everything is beneficial. "Everything is permissible" -but not everything is constructive. (24) Nobody should seek his own good, but the good of others.*

**(25)** *Eat anything sold in the meat market without raising questions of conscience, (26) for, "The Earth is the Lord Yahweh's, and everything in it."*

**(27)** *If some unbeliever invites you to a meal and you want to go, eat whatever is put before you without raising questions of conscience. (28) But if anyone says to you, "This has been offered in sacrifice," then do not eat it, both for the sake of the man who told you and for conscience's sake (29)-the other man's conscience, I mean, not yours. For why should my freedom be judged by another's conscience? (30) If I take part in the meal with thankfulness, why am I denounced because of something I thank Yahweh for?*

**(31)** *So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of Yahweh. (32) Do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews, Greeks or the Church of Yahweh, (33) just as I try to please everybody in every way. For I am not seeking my own good but the good of many, so that they may be saved. (11:1) Follow my example, as I follow the example of Jesus Christ.*

**(1Co 10:23-24)** *Everything is permissible... not everything is beneficial... constructive...* Personal freedom and desire for one's rights do not have to be the only considerations. One may become enslaved by those actions in which he freely indulges, and the Christian must also consider "the good of others."

**(10:25)** *Eat anything sold in the meat market.* Even if it had been sacrificed to an idol, when it was sold in the public market, the meat had lost its pagan religious significance.

**(10:26)** *The Earth is the Lord's...* A quotation from Psalm 24:1, used at Jewish mealtimes as a blessing.

**(10:27)** *Eat whatever is put before you.* Whether or not it could be meat sacrificed to idols, as long as the subject was not brought up, the Christian was free to eat the meat, without asking questions.

**(10:28)** *But if... for the sake of the man who told you.* If the meat had been identified as meat sacrificed to idols and a Christian ate it, the man who came with the information -whether a believer or an unbeliever- could think that the Christians condoned, or even were willing to participate in, the worship of the idols the meat had been offered to.

**(10:29)** *My freedom.* The exercise of one's personal freedom is to be governed by whether it will bring glory to Yahweh, whether it will build up the Church and whether it will encourage the unbelievers to receive Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.

**(10:30)** *Something I thank Yahweh for.* Paul -a strong Christian- had the capacity to thank Yahweh even for eating meat sacrificed to idols, for the idols are nothing and the meat is part of Yahweh's created world.

**(10:31)** *Do it all for the glory of Yahweh.* Yahweh has to be thanked and glorified for everything that exists and in everything that is done.

**(10:32)** *Do not cause anyone to stumble.* Living to glorify Yahweh will result in doing what is beneficial for others, whether Christians ("the Church of Yahweh") or non-Christians ("Jews, Greeks").

**(10:33)** *Please everybody in every way... that they may be saved.* Paul did not mean he would compromise the truth of the Gospel in order to please everybody, but that he would consider his fellowmen and not cause anyone's conscience to be offended by his daily life, thus keeping that person from accepting the Gospel.

**(11:1)** *Follow...* Jesus Christ is the supreme example and Paul, as all the apostles, was following it.

### ***The rights of an apostle [1 Co 9:1-27]***

**(1Co 9:1)** *Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? Are you not the result of my work in the Lord Jesus Christ? (2)Even though I may not be an apostle to others, surely I am to you! For you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord Jesus Christ.*

**(3)***This is my defense to those who sit in judgment on me. (4)Don't we have the right to food and drink? (5)Don't we have the right to take a believing wife along with us, as do the other apostles and the Lord Jesus Christ's brothers and Peter? (6)Or is it only I and Barnabas who must work for a living?*

**(7)Who serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat of its grapes? Who tends a flock and does not drink of the milk? (8)Do I say this merely from a human point of view? Doesn't the Law say the same thing? (9)For it is written in the Law of Moses: "Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain." It is about oxen that Yahweh is concerned? (10)Surely He says this for us, doesn't He? Yes, this was written for us, because when the plowman plows and the thresher threshes, they ought to do so in the hope of sharing the harvest. (11)If we have sown spiritual seed among you, is it too much if we reap a material harvest from you? (12)If others have this right of support from you, shouldn't we have it all the more?**

*But we did not use this right. On the contrary, we put up with anything rather that hinder the Gospel of Jesus Christ. (13)Don't you know that those who work in the Temple get their food from the Temple, and those who serve at the altar share in what is offered on the altar? (14)In the same way, the Lord Jesus Christ has commanded that those who preach the Gospel should receive their living from the Gospel.*

**(15)But I have not used any of these rights. And I am not writing this in the hope that you will do such things for me. I would rather die than have anyone deprive me of this boast. (16)Yet when I preach the Gospel, I cannot boast, for I am compelled to preach.**

*Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel! (17) If I preach voluntarily, I have a reward; if not voluntarily, I am simply discharging the trust committed to me. (18) What then is my reward? Just this: that in preaching the Gospel I may offer it free of charge, and so not make use of my rights in preaching it.*

*(19) Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. (20) To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. (21) To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from Yahweh's law but am under Jesus Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. (22) To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. (23) I do all this for the sake of the Gospel, that I may share in its blessings.*

*(24) Do you not know that in the race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. (25) Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. (26) Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. (27) No, I beat my body and make it my slave so after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.*

**(1Co 9:1-3)** *Am I not free?* Paul always declared to be a strong, mature and “free” Christian (The believer's freedom. 1 Co 10:23-33; 11:1). *Am I not an apostle?... This is my defense.* Some Christians questioned Paul's genuine apostleship. To certify it Paul gave this proof: He had “seen Jesus Christ our Lord,” as did the other apostles. Furthermore his ministry did produce the true spiritual fruit for “the Lord Jesus Christ,” which should confirm, at least to those who received the Gospel through him, that he was indeed an apostle.

**(9:4)** *Right to food and drink.* Paul, as any of Yahweh's workers, had a right to have his food and other physical needs supplied at the Church's expense. Jesus Christ has said, “The worker deserves his wages” (The Gospel of Jesus Christ. Jesus sends out the seventy-two. Lk 10:7).

**(9:5)** *Take a believing wife along with us.* Paul asserted his right -the right of each one of Yahweh's workers- to be married, if he wished. Anyway, Paul was not married as other apostles, including Peter, were. *The Lord Jesus Christ's brothers.* James, Joseph, Simon and Judas, quoted in the Gospels (The Gospel of Jesus Christ. Jesus' mother and brothers. Mk 3:31-35; Mt 12:46-50; Lk 8:19-21. - A prophet without honor. Mk 6:1-5; Mt 13:56-58. - Jesus goes to the Feast of Tabernacles. Jn 7:1-13).

**(9:6)** *I and Barnabas... must work...* Barnabas was a Levite from Cyprus (Ac 4:36) who became an important companion of Paul (Ac 13:1-4). Both of them refused to be supported by the Churches they were ministering to and supported themselves with their own work.

**(9:7)** *Who serves... Who plants a vineyard... Who tends a flock...?* Paul was a “soldier” of Jesus Christ, had “planted” many Churches and had “tended” the Christian flock.

**(9:8-9)** *Do I say...? Do not muzzle...* Paul quoted Dt 25:4, allegorizing that instruction and applying it to the teachers of the Gospel.

**(9:10)** *The plowman... the thresher...* Other two analogies used to demonstrate that he could have claimed the privilege of being supported by the Church.

**(9:11)** *If we have sown spiritual seed... we reap a material harvest...?* Paul here set forth the principle that Christian “workers” should receive food, lodging and pay for

their labors. *Others have this right.* The Levite priests working in the temple in Jerusalem, mentioned in the following verses.

**(9:12)** *Did not use this right.* Paul well knew the privileges and the luxury of the priests' lives, he knew how they used religion as a means to get rich and powerful and he was determined that he would go the other way and take nothing.

**(9:13)** *Those who work in the Temple... those who serve at the altar...* The "Others have this right" seen above.

**(9:14)** *The Lord Jesus Christ has commanded...* Jesus Christ has said, "The worker deserves his wages" (The Gospel of Jesus Christ. Jesus sends out the seventy-two. Lk 10:7).

**(9:15-17)** *I have not used... I would rather die than...* Paul was determined that his hands would clearly be and appear absolutely clean. *When I preach... I am compelled to preach. If... voluntarily... a reward; if not... simply discharging...* Paul had not chosen to be a preacher; it was Jesus Christ who had chosen him and who had assigned him the duty of preaching the Gospel.

**(9:18)** *My reward... in preaching the Gospel...* Paul's reward in preaching was the satisfaction of bringing the Gospel freely to all men who were willing to receive it.

**(9:19)** *I make myself a slave to everyone, to win...* To bring as many people as possible to Jesus Christ Paul not only made himself a servant of Jesus Christ (Introduction to the Romans. Ro1:1-7) but also a "servant" of all possible converts, renouncing both his material rights -refusing physical support from the Church- and his social-religious status -being in direct, personal contact with all kinds of people.

**(9:20-22)** *To the Jews... those under the law... those not having the law... the weak... all men...* Paul did accommodate himself to all kinds of people (Jews, Pharisees, Gentiles, weak Christians and any other kind of men), when it did not violate his allegiance to Jesus Christ, to bring them to spiritual salvation.

**(9:23)** *I may share in its blessings.* The blessing of hearing the Lord Jesus Christ say, "Well done" (The Gospel of Jesus Christ. The parable of the ten minas. Lk 19:17 - The parable of the talents. Mt 25:21,23).

**(9:24)** *Race... runners... prize. Run...* An exhortation to all believers to run for the ultimate prize, that is, eternal life in Heaven with Jesus Christ and Yahweh.

**(9:25)** *Strict training.* To get that prize men have to live a Christian life, following Jesus Christ's command to "be fond of one another" (The Gospel of Jesus Christ. Jesus predicts Peter's denial. Jn 13:34). *Crown that will last for ever.* The ultimate prize, eternal life in Heaven.

**(9:26)** *I do not run... aimlessly. I do not fight... beating the air.* Figurative of Paul's dedication to the preaching of the Gospel.

**(9:27)** *I beat my body and make it my slave so...* Paul severely disciplined himself (actually, his body and soul) in serving Jesus Christ. *Not be disqualified for the prize.* Paul, as any other man, had to fight against falling into sin.

### **Instructions on worship** [1 Ti 2:1-15]

**(1Ti 2:1)** *I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone (2)-for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. (3)This is good, and pleases Yahweh our Savior, (4)who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. (5)For there is one God, [Yahweh], and one mediator between Yahweh and men, the man Christ Jesus, (6)who gave himself as a ransom for all men -the testimony given in*

*its proper time. (7)And for this purpose I was appointed a herald and an apostle -I am telling the truth, I am not lying- and a teacher of the true faith to the Gentiles.*

*(8)I want men everywhere to lift up holy hands in prayer, without anger or disputing.*

*(9)I also want women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or expensive clothes, (10)but with good deeds, appropriate for women who profess to worship Yahweh.*

*(11)A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. (12)I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent. (13)For Adam was formed first, then Eve. (14)And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner. (15)But women will be saved through childbearing -if they continue in faith, affection and holiness with propriety.*

**(1Ti 2:1)** *Requests, prayers, intercessions and thanksgiving be made for everyone...* These are, in effect, all prayers. Paul, by this passage, was commanding that communal Christian prayer must be for all men, even those in authority and even if they were enemies and persecutors of Christianity (at the time, the Roman Emperor was Nero).

**(2:2)** *That we may live... in all godliness and holiness.* The Church had, and has, to pray for a world which would honor Yahweh and follow His will.

**(2:3-4)** *Yahweh our Savior... wants all men to be saved and to come to... the truth.* All men have to know the truth that, through Jesus Christ's action of salvation (he always followed his Father's will), they all will be saved (Thoughts. At the end of time everybody will be with Yahweh).

**(2:5)** *There is one God, [Yahweh], and one mediator... the man Christ Jesus.* The basic belief of Christianity. It is of fundamental importance not to confuse Yahweh -the Father, the Only Eternal God Creator Almighty- with Jesus Christ -the Son, who has both the divine nature of his Father and the human nature of his mother, and who is not God (Thoughts. Jesus Christ, the Son of Yahweh, a man).

**(2:6)** *Ransom... testimony given in its proper time.* Another fundamental belief of Christianity. Jesus Christ has said, "The Son of Man did... come... to give his life as a ransom" (The Gospel of Jesus Christ. The request of James and John. Mk 10:45; Mt 20:28). And Jesus Christ acted -giving testimony to Yahweh's plan of salvation for the whole man-kind- at the appropriate time set by Yahweh.

**(2:7)** *For this purpose.* To proclaim, testify and teach to the Gentiles -but not only to them-that, through his death, Jesus Christ had bridged the gap between Yahweh and man and had made salvation available to all.

**(2:8)** *I want men everywhere...* The early Church took over the classical Jewish attitude of prayer, standing, with hands outstretched and palms upwards.

**(2:9-12)** *I also want women to dress modestly... should learn... not... to teach or to have authority.* This part of the passage cannot be read out of its historical context and social situation. In Israel a woman was under the absolute authority of her father or of her husband, had no active part in the synagogue service and was not obliged to attend the sacred festivals. This means that what Paul wrote here and elsewhere about women is historically conditioned, not universal and timeless.

**(2:13)** *For Adam was formed...* Paul based all the preceding restrictions on Ge 2-3. Those restrictions are not universal and permanent but limited to the situation at the time.

**(2:14)** *Adam was not... deceived; it was the woman...* But we don't have to blame Eve only; for Adam was there with her in the Garden, and he was convinced too. Actually,

he did not even participate to the discussion. He did not oppose it at all; he simply accepted to eat the fruit offered him by Eve.

**(2:15)** *Women will be saved through childbearing -if they continue...* It was Paul's strictly personal opinion that, in spite of Eve's sin, all women will find salvation, not in addressing meetings, but through the most significant act of life, childbearing. Anyway (as all human beings) they will have to live properly and faithfully.

***Propriety in worship [1 Co 11:2-16]***

**(1Co 11:2)** *I praise you for remembering me in everything and for holding to the teachings, just as I passed them on to you.*

**(3)** *Now I want you to realize that the head of every man is Jesus Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Jesus Christ is Yahweh. (4) Every man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head. (5) And every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head -it is just as though her head were shaved. (6) If a woman does not cover her head, she should have her hair cut off; and if it is a disgrace for a woman to have her hair cut or shaved off, she should cover her head. (7) A man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of Yahweh; but the woman is the glory of man. (8) For man did not come from woman, but woman from man; (9) neither was man created from woman, but woman from man. (10) For this reason, and because of the angels, the woman ought to have a sign of authority on her head.*

**(11)** *In the Lord Jesus Christ, however, woman is not independent of man, nor is man independent of woman. (12) For as woman came from man, so also man is born of woman. (13) But everything comes from Yahweh. Judge for yourselves: Is it proper for a woman to pray to Yahweh with her head uncovered? (14) Does not the very nature of things teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a disgrace to him, (15) but if a woman has long hair, it is her glory? For long hair is given to her as a covering. (16) If anyone wants to be contentious about this, we have no other practice -nor do the Churches of Yahweh.*

**(1Co 11:2)** *I praise you...* A psychological prelude, to prepare his readers to the following commands, regarding propriety in public worship, not man-woman relations in general.

**(11:3)** *The head of every man is Jesus Christ... of the woman is man... of Jesus Christ is Yahweh.* As Jesus Christ has honored Yahweh during his whole life, so men have to honor Jesus Christ and women their husbands. A better and more complete expression of Paul's idea on the relation wife-husband appears in "Rules for Christian household. Wives and husbands" (Eph 5:22-33; Col 3:18-19).

**(11:4)** *Every man who prays...* In Paul's day, men uncovered their heads in worship to signify their respect and submission to Jesus Christ. A man praying with his head covered failed to show proper respect.

**(11:5-6)** *Every woman who prays...* For a woman, exposing her hair in public was a sign of loose morals, the same sign coming from cut or shaved off hair -the shaved head indicated that the woman had been publicly disgraced because of some shameful act.

**(11:7-9)** *Man... image and glory of Yahweh... woman... glory of man. Man did not come... but...* These verses are not an universal mandate, but reflect the marriage relationship at that time and therefore give a reason why women should have covered their hair.

**(11:10)** *For this reason... Because of the angels.* Referred to Ge 6:1-2, which tells how the angels fell pray to the charm of mortal women and sinned.

**(11:11-15)** *In the Lord Jesus Christ, however... For... everything comes from Yahweh.* These verses, in contrast to the previous ones, express the universal truth, emphasizing equality and mutual dependence between men and women who are “all sons of Yahweh through faith in Christ Jesus” (Sons of Yahweh. Gal 3:26-29; 4:1-7). *It is proper... the very nature of things... long hair is... a covering.* Believers must be conscious of how their actions appear in their culture, in light of what is considered to be honorable behavior.

**(11:16)** *We have no other practice.* A rebuke to those who were arguing against the accepted rules of social behavior.

### **Overseers and deacons** [1 Ti 3:1-16]

**(1Ti 3:1)** *Here is a trustworthy saying: If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task. (2)Now the overseer must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, (3)not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not greedy for money. (4)He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect. (5)(If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of Yahweh's Church?) (6)He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil. (7)He must also have a good reputation with outsiders so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap.*

**(8)Deacons, likewise, are to be men worthy of respect, sincere, not indulging in much wine, and not pursuing dishonest gain. (9)They must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience. (10)They must first be tested; and then if there is nothing against them, let them serve as deacons.**

**(12)A deacon must be the husband of but one wife and must manage his children and his household well. (13)Those who have served well gain an excellent standing and great assurance in their faith in Christ Jesus.**

**(11)In the same way, the women are to be women worthy of respect, not malicious talkers but temperate and trustworthy in everything.**

**(14)Although I hope to come to you soon, I am writing you these instructions so that, (15)if I am delayed, you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in Yahweh's household, which is the Church of [Yahweh] the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth. (16)Beyond all question, great is the mystery of godliness:**

*Jesus Christ appeared with a body, was vindicated by Yahweh, was seen by angels, was preached among the nations, was believed all over the world, was taken up in glory.*

**Note:** Verse 3:11 is moved after 3:13 for a better understanding of Paul's thought.

**(1Ti 3:1)** *Here is a trustworthy saying.* A clause used to identify a key saying. *Overseer.* Initially called “elder,” a man overseeing a local congregation, in later times called “bishop.” *A noble task.* An overseer's duties were to teach and preach, to direct the affairs of the Church, to shepherd the flock of Yahweh and to guard the Church from errors.

**(3:2-5)** *The overseer must be...* In the following verses, Paul has given a very clear list of the qualities needed to be a proper overseer. *Husband of but one wife.* A general principle that applies to any violation of Yahweh's marriage law, whether in the form of polygamy or of marital unfaithfulness.

**(3:6)** *He must not... become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil.* An overseer has to be a strong, mature Christian, not to risk to become too proud of his own importance. In effect, it was because of his pride that Lucifer rebelled against Yahweh and was expelled from Heaven.

**(3:7)** *Good reputation with outsiders...* An overseer had to be a man who had gained the respect of other men in the day-to-day matters of life, a man who respected even outside the Church the faith he professed and the precepts he taught.

**(3:8-10,12)** *Deacons.* Their service was meant to free the elders from daily practical matters, giving them more time for the ministry of the Church. *Deacons... are to be... A deacon must be...* In the following verses, Paul has given a very clear list of the qualities needed to be a proper deacon.

**(3:13)** *Those who have served well...* It is clear that the man who has performed well the office of deacon has become a strong, mature Christian and can even look to the high office of elder.

**(3:11)** *The women.* In the early Church there were deaconesses, engaged in Church service. They had the duty of instructing female converts and of presiding and attending at their baptism, which was by total immersion. *The women are to be...* Paul has given a list of the essential characteristics needed to be a good deaconess.

**(3:14-15)** *I am writing... so that...* Here, in brief, Paul has stated the purpose of his writing; to give instructions concerning Church conduct.

**(3:16)** *Mystery of godliness.* Here, in the sense of something formerly hidden or obscure but now revealed by Yahweh for all to know and understand: in this case, the coming and the action of Jesus Christ. The following words are in poetic form and probably were part of an hymn. *Appeared with a body.* Jesus Christ, the human Son of Yahweh, was a man (Thoughts. Jesus Christ, the Son of Yahweh, a man). *Vindicated by Yahweh.* Yahweh enabled Jesus Christ to perform miracles and drive out demons and, most important, raised him from the dead, showing that he was indeed the Son of Yahweh. *Seen by angels.* At his Resurrection and Ascension. *Preached among the nations.* At the time of Paul, the Gospel had already been preached to many nations. *Believed all over the world.* Men of all nations believed to the Gospel. *Taken up in glory.* Jesus Christ's Ascension to Heaven.

#### **What must be taught to various groups [Tit 2:1-15] [1Ti 6:1-2]**

**(Tit 2:1)** *You must teach what is in accord with sound doctrine. (2)Teach the older men to be temperate, worthy of respect, self-controlled, and sound in faith, in affection and in endurance.*

**(3)** *Likewise, teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good. (4)Then they can train the younger women to love their husbands and children, (5)to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the Word of Yahweh.*

**(6)** *Similarly, encourage the young men to be self-controlled. (7)In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show integrity, seriousness (8)and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned, so that those who oppose you may be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us.*

**(9)** *Teach slaves to be subject to their masters in everything, to try to please them, not to talk back to them, (10)and not to steal from them, but to show that they can be fully*



*trusted, so that in everything they will make the teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ our Savior attractive.*

**(1Ti 6:1)** *All who are under the yoke of slavery should consider their masters worthy of full respect, so that Yahweh's Name and our teaching may not be slandered. (2) Those who have believing masters are not to show less respect for them because they are brothers. Instead, they are to serve them even better, because those who benefit from their service are believers, and dear to them. These are the things you are to teach and urge on them.*

**(Tit 2:11)** *For the grace of Yahweh that brings salvation has appeared to all men. (12) It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, (13) while we wait for the blessed hope -the glorious appearing of our great Master and Savior, Jesus Christ, (14) who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.*

**(15)** *These, then are the things you should teach. Encourage and rebuke with all authority. Do not let anyone despise you.*

**(Tit 2:1)** *Sound doctrine.* Correct doctrine demands right conduct of all believers, regardless of age, sex or position.

**(2:2)** *Older men.* They, in the Church or in their families, were to be moral and spiritual examples.

**(2:3)** *Likewise... older women.* The same moral standards did apply to women as to men. *Not to be slanderers.* Slandering talk was and is very serious for its deleterious effects on the community.

**(2:4-5)** *Younger women... that no one will malign the Word of Yahweh.* Paul was always very concerned that Christian living should help the spread of the Gospel.

**(2:6)** *Young men... self-controlled.* A request full of implications as it is really difficult, when young and inexperienced, to have all things under control.

**(2:7-8)** *Set... an example. Show integrity... nothing bad to say about us.* The leaders of the Church have to live an exemplary life, most of all in the eyes of those who oppose Christianity.

**(2:9-10)** *Teach slaves to...* Slavery was a basic element of Greek and Roman society. Slavery could not be eliminated at the time, so guidance in the conduct of Christian slaves was essential. *Make the teaching... attractive.* Christian slaves could give a unique and powerful testimony to the Gospel by their willing faithfulness and obedience, attracting their masters to Christianity.

**(1Ti 6:1)** *Yoke of slavery.* Paul considered slavery a social situation which was the result of the hardness of men's hearts. The commands he gave to Christian slaves were not meant to encourage or condone such situations but practical ways of dealing with the realities of the day. *Consider their masters worthy of full respect.* A Christian slave disobedient to his master was giving to the non-Christians an easy possibility to criticize his religion.

**(6:2)** *Those who have believing masters... are to serve them even better.* In this case the slave could think to be in a special position worthy of special consideration. Paul clearly stated that it was not so. On the contrary, in this case the slave was under an even stricter obligation to submit to discipline and to work as any other man.

**(Tit 2:11)** *Grace of Yahweh... appeared to all men.* Jesus Christ's action of spiritual salvation was and is for all men.

**(2:12)** *It teaches us...* This briefly describes the effect grace should have on believers. It encourages rejection of ungodliness and leads to holier living -in keeping with Paul's insistence that profession of faith in Jesus Christ must be accompanied by godly living.

**(2:13)** *Blessed hope -the glorious appearing.* The second coming of Jesus Christ.

**(2:14)** *A people... eager to do what is good.* Salvation produces moral purity and desire to perform helpful service to others.

**(2:15)** *These, then, are...* A summary of a Church leader's responsibility and authority.

**Doing what is good [Tit 3:1-11]**

**(Tit 3:1)** *Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good, (2)to slander no one, to be peaceable and considerate, and to show true humility towards all men.*

**(3)** *At one time we too were foolish and disobedient; deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. (4)But when the kindness and affection of Yahweh, our Savior, appeared, (5)He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of His mercy. He saved us by the work of His Holy Spirit, the washing of rebirth and renewal, (6) which He poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, (7)so that, having been justified by His grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life. (8)This is a trustworthy saying. And I want you to stress these things, so that those who have trusted in Yahweh may be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good. These things are excellent and profitable for everyone.*

**(9)** *But avoid foolish controversies and genealogies and arguments and quarrels about the law, because these are unprofitable and useless. (10)Warn a divisive person once, and then warn him a second time. After that, have nothing to do with him. (11)You may be sure that such a man is warped and sinful; he is self-condemned.*

**(Tit 3:1-2)** *Rulers and authorities.* The terms refer to all forms and levels of human government. *Do whatever is good, to...* New Testament teaching is not confined to personal salvation but includes much instruction about practical living and how to improve the well-being of the community.

**(3:3)** *At one time we too...* Men's moral and spiritual condition before their conversion to Christianity.

**(3:4)** *Kindness and affection of Yahweh... appeared.* Jesus Christ's existence and his action of salvation -his sacrificial death- were the expression of Yahweh's affection for mankind.

**(3:5-7)** *He saved us... because of His mercy.* Salvation cannot be achieved by human effort, but comes from Yahweh. *Washing of rebirth.* The "new birth," the spiritual "renewal" of a convert, of which baptism is a social sign. This does not mean that baptism is necessary for "renewal," since the new birth is clearly an act of Yahweh ("poured... generously through Jesus Christ... so that we might... having... eternal life") and is not achieved by a ceremony (The Gospel of Jesus Christ. Jesus teaches Nicodemus. Jn 3:5).

**(3:8)** *This is a trustworthy saying.* Referred to the doctrinal summary of the previous verses. *I want you to stress these things... excellent and profitable for everyone.* A Christian must practice good deeds, that is, the deeds which are helpful to men.

**(3:9)** *Avoid... about the law.* Generally, discussions about not important points of Scripture. At the time, it was quite common to invent genealogies and fictitious stories for the characters of the Old Testament. We do not have to sit discussing theological que-

stions when the simple tasks of Christian life are left unattended. A discussions which does not end in Christian action is a wastage of time.

**(3:10-11)** *A divisive person... is warped and sinful.* Actually, an “heretic” who promotes dissension by propagating extreme and erroneous views of legitimate Christian truths.

**Advice about widows and elders** [1 Ti 5:1-22;24-25]

**(1Ti 5:1)** *Do not rebuke and older man harshly, but exhort him as if he were your father. Treat younger men as brothers, (2)older women as mothers, and younger women as sisters, with absolute purity.*

**(3)** *Give proper recognition to those widows who are really in need. (4)But if a widow has children or grandchildren, these should learn first of all to put their religion into practice by caring for their own family and so repaying their parents and grand-parents, for this is pleasing to Yahweh. (5)The widow who is really in need and left all alone puts her hope in Yahweh and continues night and day to pray and to ask Yahweh for help. (6)But the widow who lives for pleasure is dead even while she lives. (7)Give the people these instructions, too, so that no one may be open to blame. (8)If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.*

**(9)** *No widow may be put on the list of widows unless she is over sixty, has been faithful to her husband, (10)and is well known for her good deeds, such as bringing up children, showing hospitality, washing the feet of the saints, helping those in trouble and devoting herself to all kinds of good deeds.*

**(11)** *As for younger widows, do not put them on such a list. For when their sensual desires overcome their dedication to Jesus Christ, they want to marry. (12)Thus they bring judgment on themselves, because they have broken their first pledge. (13)Besides, they get into the habit of being idle and going about from house to house. And not only do they become idlers, but also gossips and busybodies, saying things they ought not to. (14)So I counsel younger widows to marry, to have children, to manage their homes and to give the enemy no opportunity for slander. (15)Some have in fact already turned away to follow Satan.*

**(16)** *If any woman who is a believer has widows in her family, she should help them and not let the Church be burdened with them, so that the Church can help those widows who are really in need.*

**(17)** *The elders who direct the affairs of the Church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching. (18)For the Scripture says, “Do not muzzle the ox while it is treading out the grain,” and “The worker deserves his wages.” (19)Do not entertain an accusation against an elder unless it is brought by two or three witnesses. (20)Those who sin are to be rebuked publicly, so that the others may take warning.*

**(21)** *I charge you, in the sight of Yahweh and Christ Jesus and the elect angels, to keep these instructions without partiality, and to do nothing out of favoritism.*

**(22)** *Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands, and do not share in the sins of others. Keep yourself pure.*

**(24)** *The sins of some men are obvious, reaching the place of judgment ahead of them; the sins of others trail behind them. (25)In the same way, good deeds are obvious, and even those that are not cannot be hidden.*

**(1Ti 5:1-2)** *Do not rebuke an older man harshly.* It is difficult for a young Church leader as Timothy to reprimand an older man, so Paul's advice is to do it without anger, with filial affection, showing affection and respect. *Treat...* A Church leader has to consider and treat all members of his community as part of his own family.

**(5:3)** *Give proper recognition to... widows... really in need.* In ancient societies, widows were particularly vulnerable, so the Church had to take care of them, including giving them material support.

**(5:4)** *But if a widow has...* Paul didn't want the Church to become an opportunity for children and relatives to evade their duty.

**(5:5-6)** *The widow... really in need... But the widow who lives for pleasure...* Here there are both the duty of the Church to support a person in real need and the duty of such a person to be supportable. Clearly the second widow, who is spiritually dead, doesn't make herself supportable by the Church.

**(5:7-8)** *Give the people these instructions... If anyone does not provide for...* All believers have to clearly understand that it is their duty to help and support all family members in need.

**(5:9-10)** *List of widows... devoting herself to... good deeds.* Paul did want the older widows to devote themselves to prayer and helpful activities within the Church.

**(5:11-12)** *For younger widows... they want to marry... broken their first pledge.* It is not that younger widows were condemned for marrying again, but when they were added to the list they pledged special devotion to Jesus Christ, which would be diminished by remarriage.

**(5:13)** *Besides, they get into the habit...* For a young widow supported by the Church there was always the risk, not having enough to do, to spend her time in idle gossip and to become a busybody.

**(5:14)** *So I counsel...* The best thing for these younger widows was to remarry and engage in the great task of rearing a family.

**(5:15)** *Some... follow Satan.* In the society of that time it was almost impossible for a single woman to support herself honestly; she was almost inevitably driven to prostitution.

**(5:16)** *If any woman... has widows in her family...* The duty of the Church is to help people who don't have any other help.

**(5:17)** *The elders who...* All elders who, after exercising leadership, labored at teaching and preaching, were to receive particular honor.

**(5:18)** *Do not muzzle...* A quotation from Dt 25:4. *The worker deserves...* Jesus Christ's words (The Gospel of Jesus Christ. Jesus sends out the Seventy-two. Lk 10:7).

**(5:19)** *Accusation... brought by two or three witnesses.* The Jewish law stated by Dt 19:15 was adopted by the early Church, with the only difference that the witnesses had to be Christian.

**(5:20)** *Those who sin.* The Church must never give the impression that it is condoning the sins of men in position of responsibility and authority.

**(5:21)** *Elect angels.* Those faithful to Yahweh, in contrast to Satan and his fallen angels. *Do nothing out of favoritism.* It was and it is important to direct a Church impartially, without favoritism or prejudice.

**(5:22)** *Do not be hasty in the laying of hands.* Referred to the ordination of an elder, which should not be performed until the candidate has had time to prove himself. *Do not share in the sins of others.* Refusing to ordain or to become involved in the ordination of a man unworthy of the office of elder.

**(5:24-25)** *Sins of some men... obvious. Good deeds... obvious... cannot be hidden.* An advise to being alert to the hidden sins as well as to the hidden good deeds of candidates for ordination.

### **Rules for Christian households**

#### **Wives and husbands** [Eph 5:21-33] [Col 3:18-19]

**(Eph 5:21)** *Submit to one another out of reverence for Jesus Christ.*

**(Eph 5:22, Col 3:18)** *Wives, submit to your husbands as is fitting in the Lord Jesus Christ. (Eph 5:23) For the husband is the head of the wife as Jesus Christ is the head of the Church, which is his body, of which he is the Savior. (5:24) Now, as the Church submits to Jesus Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.*

**(Eph 5:25, Col 3:19)** *Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them, just as Jesus Christ had been fond of the Church and gave himself up for her (Eph 5:26) to make her holy; cleansing her by the washing with water, through the Word, (5:27) to present her to himself as a radiant Church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. (5:28) In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife is fond of himself. (5:29) After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Jesus Christ does for the Church (5:30) -for we are members of his body. (5:31) "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." (5:32) This is a profound mystery -but I am talking about Jesus Christ and the Church. (5:33) However, each one of you also must love his wife as he is fond of himself, and the wife must respect her husband.*

**(Eph 5:21)** *Submit to one another.* The Christian ethic is an ethic of reciprocal obligation, never an ethic in which all duties are on one side. In the Christian marriage (and in any other relationship), each partner must have a conciliatory attitude that will help that relationship.

**(Eph 5:22; Col 3:18)** *Wives, submit to your husbands.* An aspect of the mutual submission taught in the previous verse. *As is fitting in the Lord Jesus Christ.* It was not Paul's opinion that a woman has to put her husband in the place of the Lord, but that she ought to submit to him as an act to submission to Jesus Christ.

**(Eph 5:23-24)** *Husband... head of the wife... Jesus Christ... head of the Church.* The analogy between the relationship of Jesus Christ to the Church and that of the husband to the wife is basic to the entire passage.

**(Eph 5:25; Col 3:19)** *Husbands, love your wives...* The relationship husband-wife is not one-sided, but a reciprocal one. As Jesus Christ had been fond of all men (who compose the Church), sacrificing himself for them, so husbands have to love their wives devoting themselves to their wives' good.

**(Eph 5:26-27)** *Washing with water, through the Word.* A reference to the Greek custom of the bride bathing in the water of a sacred stream before to be taken to her marriage. In a similar way the washing of Christian baptism by water and the acceptance of the Gospel made each new convert, and so the whole Church, "holy and blameless."

**(5:28)** *Love their wives as their own bodies... He who loves his wife is fond of himself.* The basic for such expressions and for the teaching of these verses can be found in Ge 2:24. If the husband and the wife become "one flesh," then for the man to love his wife is to love one who has become part of himself.

**(5:29-30)** *After all... we are members of his body.* All believers, each one of them, are part of the Christian Church.

**(5:31)** *For this reason...* A quotation from Ge 2:24.

**(5:32)** *Mystery.* Here, in the sense of something formerly hidden or obscure but now revealed by Yahweh for all to know and understand: the truth of the union -the spiritual communion- of Jesus Christ and his "bride," the Church. Human marriage is a similar relationship.

**(5:33)** *Each one... must love... must respect...* A rephrasing and summary of the whole passage.

### **Rules for Christian households**

#### **Children and parents** [Eph 6:1-4] [Col 3:20-21]

**(Eph 6:1; Col 3:20)** *Children, obey your parents in everything, for this is right and pleases the Lord Jesus Christ. (Eph 6:2) "Honor your father and mother" -which is the first commandment with a promise- (Eph 6:3) "that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the Earth."*

**(Eph 6:4; Col 3:21)** *Fathers, do not exasperate and do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord Jesus Christ.*

**(Eph 6:1; Col 3:20)** *Children, obey...* It is clear that, in any family and in any society, children have to respect and obey their parents.

**(Eph 6:2-3)** *Honor your father...* The first on the list of the Ten Commandments to carry a promise, "that it may go well..." (Ex 20:12 and Dt 5:16).

**(Eph 6:4; Col 3:21)** *Fathers, do not exasperate and do not embitter...* Fathers, from their position of authority, must avoid to act unreasonably toward their children, who can be discouraged by continuous criticism and rebuke or by too strict discipline. *Bring them up... in... the Lord Jesus Christ.* With the affection Jesus Christ had for all men and, especially, for children.

### **Rules for Christian households**

#### **Slaves and masters** [Eph 6:5-9] [Col 3:22-25;4:1]

**(Eph 6:5-6; Col 3:22)** *Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Jesus Christ. Obey them, and do it not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but like slaves of Jesus Christ, with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord Jesus Christ, doing the will of Yahweh from your heart. (Eph 6:7-8; Col 3:23-24) Whatever you do, serve and work at it with all your heart, as if you were serving and working for the Lord Jesus Christ, not for men, because you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord Yahweh and that the Lord Jesus Christ will reward everyone for whatever good he does, whether he is slave or free. It is the Lord Jesus Christ you are serving. (Col 3:25) Anyone who does wrong will be repaid for his wrong, and there is no favoritism.*

**(Eph 6:9; Col 4:1)** *And masters, treat your slaves in the same way. Provide your slaves with what is right and fair, and do not threaten them, because you know that you also have a Master in Heaven, who is both their Master and yours, and there is no favoritism with him.*

**(Eph 6:8; Col 3:22-25)** *Slaves, obey... It is the Lord Jesus Christ you are serving.* Both the Old and the New Testament included regulations for slavery, a social situation they did not encourage or condone. Such regulations were only divinely-given practical ways of dealing with the realities of the time.

**(Eph 6:9; Col 4:1)** *Masters... you also have a Master in Heaven...* Masters had to treat their slaves not like things, but like persons, with justice and equity. Paul neither condoned slavery nor sanctioned revolt against masters. As slavery could not be eliminated at the time, Paul called on both slaves and masters to show Christian principles in their relationship, thus attempting to change the institution from within.

### **Rules for Christian households**

#### **Submission to the authorities** [Ro 13:1-7]

**(Ro 13:1)** *Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which Yahweh has established. The authorities that exist have been established by Yahweh. (2)Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what Yahweh has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. (3)For the rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and he will commend you. (4)For he is Yahweh's servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is Yahweh's servant, an agent of justice to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. (5)Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also because of conscience.*

**(6)** *This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are Yahweh's servants, who give their full time to governing. (7)Give everyone what you owe him: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor.*

**(Ro 13:1)** *Governing authorities.* The civil rulers, all of whom were pagans at the time Paul was writing. Christians may have been tempted not to submit to them and claim allegiance only to Jesus Christ. *Established by Yahweh.* Even the possibility of a persecuting state did not shake Paul's conviction that civil government was ordained by Yahweh.

**(13:2)** *Judgment.* Punishment by the governing authorities, as it appears from the following verses.

**(13:3)** *Do what is right and....* Paul was not stating that this will always be true, for when civil rulers are badly unjust, the Christians must obey Yahweh rather than men (Ac 4:19; 5:29).

**(13:4)** *He is Yahweh's servant.* In the order of divine providence the (proper) ruler is Yahweh's servant (Isa 45:1). *To do you good.* Rules exist for the good of society -to protect the general public by maintaining good order. *Bear the sword.* The symbol of Roman authority at the national and international level. The rulers can use police force and courts of justice to maintain good order.

**(13:5)** *Because of conscience.* Civil authorities are ordained by Yahweh, and the Christians have to honor them.

**(13:6-7)** *Why you pay taxes. Give everyone what you owe...* Because rulers are Yahweh's agents, whose function is for the good of society in general. It was, in fact, the Pax Romana which gave the Christian missionaries the practical possibility of doing their work, freely traveling from country to country.

**Marriage** [1 Co 7:1-40]

**(1Co 7:1)** Now for the matters you wrote about: It is good for a man not to marry. **(2)** But since there is so much immorality, each man should have his own wife, and each woman her own husband. **(3)** The husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband. **(4)** The wife's body does not belong to her alone but also to her husband. In the same way, the husband's body does not belong to him alone but also to his wife. **(5)** Do not deprive each other except by mutual consent and for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer. Then come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control. **(6)** I say this as a concession, not as a command. **(7)** I wish that all men were as I am. But each man has his own gift from Yahweh; one has this gift, another has that.

**(8)** Now to the unmarried and the widows I say: It is good for them to stay unmarried, as I am. **(9)** But if they cannot control themselves, they should marry, for it is better to marry than to burn with passion.

**(10)** To the married I give this command (not I, but the Lord Yahweh): A wife must not separate from her husband. **(11)** But if she does, she must remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband. And a husband must not divorce his wife.

**(12)** To the rest I say this (I, not the Lord Yahweh): If any brother has a wife who is not a believer and she is willing to live with him, he must not divorce her. **(13)** And if a woman has a husband who is not a believer and he is willing to live with her, she must not divorce him. **(14)** For the unbelieving husband has been sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife has been sanctified through her believing husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy.

**(15)** But if the unbeliever leaves, let him do so. A believing man or woman is not bound in such circumstances; Yahweh has called us to live in peace. **(16)** How do you know, wife, whether you will save your husband? Or, how do you know, husband, whether you will save your wife?

**(17)** Nevertheless, each one should retain the place in life that the Lord Yahweh assigned to him and to which Yahweh has called him. This is the rule I lay down in all the Churches. Was a man already circumcised when he was called? He should not become uncircumcised. **(18)** Was man uncircumcised when he was called? He should not be circumcised. **(19)** Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing. Keeping Yahweh's command is what counts. **(20)** Each one should remain in the situation which he was in when Yahweh called him. **(21)** Where you a slave when you were called? Don't let it trouble you -although if you can gain your freedom, do so. **(22)** For he who was a slave when he was called by the Lord Jesus Christ is the Lord Jesus Christ's freedman; similarly, he who was a free man when he was called is Jesus Christ's slave. **(23)** You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of men. **(24)** Brothers, each man, as responsible to Yahweh, should remain in the situation Yahweh called him to.

**(25)** Now about virgins: I have no command from the Lord Yahweh, but I give a judgment as one who by the Lord Yahweh's mercy is trustworthy. **(26)** If anyone thinks he is acting improperly toward the virgin he is engaged to, and if she is getting along in years and he feels he ought to marry, he should do as he wants. He is not sinning. They should get married. **(27)** But the man who has settled the matter in his own mind, who is under no compulsion but has control over his own will, and who has made up his mind not to marry the virgin -this man also does the right thing. **(28)** So then, he who marries the virgin does right, but he who does not marry her does even better.



*(26) Because of the present crisis, I think that it is good for you to remain as you are. (27) Are you married? Do not seek a divorce. Are you unmarried? Do not look for a wife. (28) But if you do marry, you have not sinned; and if a virgin marries, she has not sinned. But those who marry will face many troubles in this life, and I want to spare you this.*

*(29) What I mean, brothers, is that the time is short. From now on those who have wives should live as if they had none; (30) those who mourn, as if they did not; those who are happy, as if they were not; those who buy something, as if it were not theirs to keep; (31) those who use the things of the world, as if not engrossed in them. For the world in this present form is passing away.*

*(32) I would like you to be free from concern. An unmarried man is concerned about the Lord Yahweh's affairs -how he can please the Lord Yahweh. (33) But a married man is concerned about the affairs of this world -how he can please his wife- (34) and his interests are divided. An unmarried woman or virgin is concerned about the Lord Yahweh's affairs: Her aim is to be devoted to the Lord Yahweh in both body and spirit. But a married woman is concerned about the affairs of this world -how she can please her husband. (35) I am saying this for your own good, not to restrict you, but that you may live in a right way in undivided devotion to the Lord Yahweh.*

*(39) A woman is bound to her husband as long as he lives. But if her husband dies, she is free to marry anyone she wishes, but he must belong to the Lord Jesus Christ. (40) In my judgment, she is happier if she stays as she is -and I think that I too have the Spirit of Yahweh.*

**Note:** Verses 7:36-38 were moved in between verses 7:25 and 7:26 for a better understanding of Paul's thought.

**(1Co 7:1)** *Matters you wrote about.* Believers from all the Churches were writing to Paul, asking various questions. *Good for a man not to marry.* Paul's answer to the first of the questions asked by the believers.

**(7:2)** *Each man... his... wife... each woman her... husband.* Paul always spoke in favor of the married state.

**(7:3)** *Fulfill... marital duty.* Married couples should have normal sexual relations.

**(7:4)** *The wife's body... the husband's body does not...* Both husband and wife have conjugal rights and exclusive possession of the other in this area.

**(7:5)** *Do not deprive each other... that Satan will not tempt you.* Permanent abstention would deprive the other partner of his or her natural right making him or her prone to temptation.

**(7:6)** *A concession... not... a command.* Although marriage is in accord to Yahweh's plan, it is not mandatory.

**(7:7)** *As I am... Gift from Yahweh.* Paul's gift was the freedom to dedicate himself entirely to the preaching of the Gospel.

**(7:8-9)** *It is good to stay unmarried... but... it is better to marry than...* Most people could not abstain from normal sexual activity, so they have to marry not to fall prey of Satan's temptation.

**(7:10)** *I give this command.* Jesus Christ has said that married couples must live together (The Gospel of Jesus Christ. Divorce. Mk 10:11-12; Mt 5:31-32,19:9; Lk 16:18).

**(7:11)** *Must remain unmarried or else...* In light of Jesus Christ's command, divorced people should not marry again. Clearly the ideal is that marriage should not be permanently disrupted.

**(7:12-13)** *If... a wife... a husband... not a believer.* Paul had to solve the case of already married couples, when only one of them had become a Christian. If possible, they should remain together.

**(7:14)** *The unbelieving... sanctified.* The non-Christian partner and the family are influenced by the godly life of the Christian one and in that sense they are sanctified. *Your children... are holy.* Because they could be introduced to Christianity by the Christian parent.

**(7:15)** *If the unbeliever leaves... a believing man or woman is not bound.* In this case -not a case of divorce- the believing partner was not under the obligation to continue living with the unbeliever. *Live in peace.* If the unbeliever were forced to live with the believer, there would be no peace in the home.

**(7:16)** *How do you know...?* The believer should not try to force the unbeliever to become a Christian.

**(7:17-19)** *Retain the place in life that...* Each Christian is to live willingly in the actual reality of his life. *Circumcised... uncircumcised... is nothing.* Jews-Christians should not try to cancel the fact that they were Jews; and Gentiles-Christians did not have to submit to old Jewish rules.

**(7:20)** *Each one should remain...* Conversion to Christianity should involve moral, not social, change.

**(7:21)** *Were you a slave...? If you can gain your freedom, do so.* There was nothing wrong with a slave seeking to improve his condition, but he should accept willingly his present condition.

**(7:22)** *A slave... is the Lord Jesus Christ's freedman. A free man... is Jesus Christ's slave.* A Christian slave was spiritually free in Jesus Christ. A free Christian spiritually belongs to Jesus Christ.

**(7:23-24)** *Bought at a price... not... slaves of men.* Christians' ultimate allegiance is to Jesus Christ (who bought their salvation with his own life), not to men.

**(7:25)** *About virgins... I give a judgment.* Paul's answer to another of the questions asked by the believers.

**(7:36)** *Improperly toward the virgin he is engaged to... They should get married.* In the light of the hostility toward believers, a man might refrain from marrying the girl he was engaged to. But if he realized that by so doing he was unfair to her, it was better for him to marry her.

**(7:37)** *But... under no compulsion... not to marry the virgin...* If the man came to realize that he was not acting unfairly, he was free to decide not to marry her.

**(7:38)** *So then... does right... even better.* Both solutions were fully acceptable, even if Paul, personally, preferred the second.

**(7:26-28)** *Present crisis.* A reference to the pressures of Christian life in a particularly hostile situation. It is clear that Paul's recommendation does not apply to all times and all situations. *Good... to remain as you are. Married? Unmarried? But if... not sinned.* It was not a matter of right or wrong. Paul was, actually, recommending the believers to be deeply convinced and to act accordingly. *Many troubles.* Those were times of suffering and persecution, and being married would mean even greater hardship in taking care of one's mate.

**(7:29-31)** *Time is short.* Paul meant that the time for doing the Lord Jesus Christ's work is limited; people don't have to be unduly concerned with the affairs of the world ("those who have... mourn... are happy...") and with material things ("those who buy...

use...”), be-cause the second coming of Jesus Christ is on the way (“the world in this present form is passing away”).

**(7:32-35)** *Free from concern. An unmarried... A married... his interests are divided... please her husband. Not to restrict you, but...* A clear explanation of why Paul preferred to stay unmarried, and why he considered the unmarried condition to be better for all Church leaders.

**(7:39)** *Bound to her husband as long as he lives.* Marriage is a life-long union. *If her husband dies.* Death breaks the marriage bond, and a Christian is then free to marry another Christian (“he must belong to the Lord Jesus Christ”).

**(7:40)** *She stays as she is.* As a widow, without remarrying. *I think that I too have the Spirit of Yahweh.* Paul was always sure to be spiritually guided by Yahweh.

### **Expel the immoral brother** [1 Co 5:1-13]

**(1Co 5:1)** *It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that does not occur even among Pagans: A man has his father’s wife!* **(2)** *And you are proud! Shouldn’t you rather have been filled with grief and have put out of your fellowship the man who did this?* **(3)** *Even though I am not physically present, I am spiritually with you. And I have already passed judgment on the one who did this, just as if I were present.* **(4)** *When you will be assembled in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and I will be spiritually with you and the power of our Lord Jesus Christ will be present,* **(5)** *hand this man over to Satan, so that the sinful nature may be destroyed and his soul saved on the day of the Lord Jesus Christ.*

**(6)** *Your boasting is not good. Don’t you know that a little yeast works through the whole batch of dough?* **(7)** *Get rid of the old yeast that you may be a new batch without yeast -as you really are. For Jesus Christ, our Passover Lamb, has been sacrificed.* **(8)** *Therefore let us keep the Festival, not with the old yeast, the yeast of malice and wickedness, but with bread without yeast, the bread of sincerity and truth.*

**(9)** *I have written you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people* **(10)** *-not at all meaning the people of this world who are immoral-, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters. In that case you would have to leave this world.* **(11)** *But now I am writing you that you must not associate with anyone who call himself a brother but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or a slanderer, a drunkard or a swindler. With such a man do not even eat.*

**(12)** *What business it is of mine to judge those outside the Church? Are you not to judge those inside?* **(13)** *Yahweh will judge those outside. “Expel the wicked man from among you.”*

**(1Co 5:1)** *Not... even among Pagans.* Not even the Pagans were allowing something so immoral. In effect, incest was practically unheard of in Roman society. *His father’s wife.* The expression suggests that the woman was his stepmother. This kind of relation was prohibited by the Old Testament (Le 18:8; Dt 22:30; 27:20).

**(5:2)** *Proud.* A distorted application of their “freedom from human regulations...” (Col 2:6-23). *Put out of your fellowship.* Excommunicated from the Church.

**(5:3)** *Spiritually with you.* As their spiritual guide in fighting errors.

**(5:4)** *Assembled in the name of... the power of our Lord Jesus Christ will be present.* The members of the Church had to pass judgment on the man in the name (that is, taking into account the teaching) of Jesus Christ.

**(5:5)** *Hand this man over to Satan.* The expulsion of the man from the Church was leaving him fully under Satan's influence. *So that the sinful nature may be destroyed.* Paul's expectation was that the fact of being officially ostracized from the Church would cause the man such anguish that he would repent and, then, be spiritually saved for ever, after a period of expiatory and corrective punishment in Hell.

**(5:6)** *A little yeast... the whole batch.* Even a little evil influence can have serious effects on the Church.

**(5:7)** *A new batch without yeast -as you really are.* The Christians were a new batch, already sanctified in Yahweh's sight by the death of Jesus Christ.

**(5:8)** *Let us keep the Festival.* Symbolic of living a sincere and true Christian life, free of such sins as malice, wickedness and sexual immorality.

**(5:9-11)** *Written you in my letter.* One of the many we know nothing about. *Not to associate with... not... the people of this world... but... a brother... immoral or...* Christians did not have to dissociate (socially speaking) from non-Christian people but from immoral members of the Church. *With such a man do not even eat.* Not to give the non-Christians the impression that the Church approved immoral living.

**(5:12)** *Judge those inside. Yahweh will judge those outside.* The Church has to exercise spiritual discipline within its members, leaving the others to the judgment of civil authorities and to the ultimate judgment of Yahweh.

**(5:13)** *Expel the wicked man...* A quotation from Dt 17:7; 19:19; 21:21; 22:21,24; 24:7.

### **Sexual immorality** [1 Co 6:12-20]

**(1Co 6:12)** *"Everything is permissible for me" -but not everything is beneficial. "Everything is permissible for me" -but I will not be mastered by anything. (13) "Food for the stomach and the stomach for the food" -but Yahweh will destroy them both. The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord Yahweh, and the Lord Yahweh for the body. (14) By His power Yahweh raised the Lord Jesus Christ from the dead, and He will raise us also. (15) Do you know that your bodies are members of Jesus Christ himself? Shall I then take the members of Jesus Christ and unite them with a prostitute? Never! (16) Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, "The two will become one flesh." (17) But he who unites himself with the Lord Jesus Christ is spiritually one with him.*

**(18)** *Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body. (19) Do you not know that your body is a temple of Yahweh's Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from Yahweh? You are not your own; (20) you were bought at a price. Therefore honor Yahweh with your body.*

**(1Co 6:12)** *Everything is permissible... not everything is beneficial... I will not be mastered...* Personal freedom and desire for one's rights did not have to be the only considerations. A believer could become enslaved by those actions in which he freely indulges.

**(6:13)** *Food for the stomach and... The body... for the Lord and...* Some Christians were claiming that as the physical acts of eating and digesting had no influence on their spiritual life, so was with their physical acts of promiscuous sexual activity. But man is made to be in spiritual communion with Jesus Christ in this life and, even more, in the next life.

**(6:14)** *Yahweh raised... Jesus Christ... us also.* A body destined for resurrection should not be used immorally.

**(6:15)** *Bodies... are members of Jesus Christ.* That is, members of the Christian Church.

**(6:16)** *One with her in body.* In a sexual relation the two bodies become one ("The two will become one flesh" Ge 2:24).

**(6:17)** *Spiritually one with him.* The believer's spiritual communion with Jesus Christ and Yahweh.

**(6:18)** *Sexual immorality. Other sins... are outside his body... sins... against his own body.* Paul was fighting against a specific problem: The thought that Christians could do what they want with their bodies without affecting their souls.

**(6:19-20)** *Your body is a temple of Yahweh's Spirit...* Because the body is the host of the soul, and the soul can be in spiritual communion with Yahweh. *Not your own... bought at a price.* At the price of Jesus Christ's death. *Honor Yahweh with your body.* A man is both body and spirit. Both are important as both, after resurrection, will live for ever in Yahweh's Kingdom. So, during earthly life, the body has to be treated as the soul.

### **Lawsuits among believers** [1 Co 6:1-11]

**(1Co 6:1)** *If any of you has a dispute with another, dare he take it before the ungodly for judgment instead of before the saints? (2) Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if you are to judge the world, are you not competent to judge trivial cases? (3) Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more the things of this life! (4) Therefore, if you have disputes about such matters, you can appoint as judges even men of little account in the Church! (5) I say this to shame you. Is it possible that there is nobody among you wise enough to judge a dispute between believers? (6) But instead, one brother goes to law against another -and this in front of unbelievers!*

**(7)** *The very fact that you have lawsuits among you means that you have been completely defeated already. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be cheated? (8) Instead, you yourselves cheat and do wrong, and you do this to your brothers.*

**(9)** *Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the Kingdom of Yahweh? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders (10) nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the Kingdom of Yahweh. (11) And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, by the Spirit of [Yahweh] our God.*

**(1Co 6:1)** *A dispute.* Mostly property cases, not criminal cases that should have been handled by the state (Submission to authorities. Ro 13:1-7). *Before the ungodly... before the saints.* The Christians should have taken their problems before the elders or the deacons, without recurring to Pagan courts.

**(6:2)** *The saints will judge the world.* Jesus Christ has said, "At the renewal of all things... you who have followed me will also sit... judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (The Gospel of Jesus Christ. The rich young man. Mk 10:29-30; Mt 19:28-29; Lk 18:29-30). *Competent to judge trivial cases.* Christians are the best judges of cases involving other Christians because they see matters from a godly point of view.

**(6:3)** *We will judge angels.* In Paul's opinion, the universal judgment, with Jesus Christ as judge and his followers as co-judges, will involve not only men but also fallen angels (2 Pe 2:4).

**(6:4)** *Men of little account...* Even the least in the Church are surely capable of judging such minor matters.

**(6:5-6)** *Is it possible... in front of unbelievers!* Paul was really shocked by the fact that believers could give such a poor demonstration of themselves and of their faith to unbelievers.

**(6:7-8)** *The very fact... completely defeated. Why not rather be...? Instead, you....* Spiritually defeated by their greed, instead of practicing Christian forgiveness and affection -even willingness to suffer loss.

**(6:9-10)** *The wicked will not inherit the Kingdom of Yahweh. Neither the sexually immoral nor...* They will not enter the Kingdom of Yahweh immediately after their physical death, but will be subjected to the formative and corrective punishment of Hell (Thoughts. Expiatory and corrective punishment of sins...).

**(6:11)** *What some of you were. But you were...* Yahweh however, through Jesus Christ's sacrificial action, will save all men, even the wicked (Thoughts. At the end of time everybody will be with Yahweh).

**Particular addresses****To the Thessalonians****Paul's ministry in Thessalonica** [1 Th 2:1-16]

*(1Th 2:1) You know, brothers, that our visit to you was not a failure. (2) We had previously suffered and been insulted in Philippi, as you know, but with the help of [Yahweh] our God we dared to tell you His Gospel in spite of strong opposition. (3) For the appeal we made does not spring from error or impure motives, nor are we trying to trick you. (4) On the contrary, we speak as men approved by Yahweh to be entrusted with the Gospel. We are not trying to please men but Yahweh, who tests our hearts. (5) You know we never used flattery nor did we put on a mask to cover up greed - Yahweh is our witness. (6a) We were not looking for praise from men, not from you or anyone else.*

*(6b) As apostles of Jesus Christ we could have been a burden to you, (7) but we were gentle among you, like a mother caring for her little children. (8) We were so fond of you that we were delighted to share with you not only the Gospel of Yahweh but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us. (9) Surely you remember, brothers, our toil and hardship; we worked night and day in order not to be a burden to anyone while we preached the Gospel of Yahweh to you.*

*(10) You are witnesses, and so is Yahweh, of how holy, righteous and blameless we were among you who believed. (11) For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, (12) encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of Yahweh, who calls you into His Kingdom and Glory.*

*(13) And we also thank Yahweh continually because, when you received the Word of Yahweh, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the Word of Yahweh, which is at work in you who believe. (14) For you, brothers, became imitators of Yahweh's Churches in Israel, which are in Christ Jesus: You suffered from your own countrymen the same things those Churches suffered from the Jews, (15) who killed the Lord Jesus Christ and the prophets and also drove us out. They displease Yahweh and are hostile to all men (16) in their effort to keep us from speaking to the Gentiles so that they may be saved. In this way they always heap up their sins to the limit. The punishment of Yahweh has come upon them fully.*

**(1Th 2:1)** *Not a failure.* Not as the visit to Philippi, where Paul and Silas were attacked by the crowd, flogged and put in prison (Ac 16:12-24).

**(2:2)** *Suffered... insulted in Philippi.* Paul was deeply hurt by the way he and Silas had been treated in Philippi (Ac 16:19-40). *Dared to tell you His Gospel in spite of strong opposition.* The situation in Thessalonica was not so bad as in Philippi. Yet Paul had to leave Thessalonica abruptly after a rather brief stay (Ac 16:1-15).

**(2:3)** *The appeal we make... not... error... or impure motives.* Paul was preaching the true Gospel (Paul accepted by the apostles. Gal 2:1-10). *Nor... trick you.* Paul was not preaching to get prestige or a profit from it.

**(2:4)** *Approved by Yahweh... with the Gospel.* Paul's preaching was based on what Jesus Christ himself had revealed him (Paul called by Yahweh. Gal 1:11-24). *Not trying to please men but Yahweh.* Paul was preaching following Yahweh's will, for men's spiritual good, not to get their approval.

**(2:5)** *You know...* Personal profit was never Paul's aim.

**(2:6a)** *Not looking for...* Practically, a repetition of a previous verse.

**(2:6b-9)** *Burden.* The apostles were entitled to be supported by the Church (The rights of an apostle. 1 Co 9:1-27). *But we were... we worked... not to be a burden...* Paul did not take advantage of his rights as an Apostle. On the contrary, he supported himself working with his own hands (The rights of an apostle. 1 Co 9:1-27).

**(2:10-12)** *You are witnesses... For you know... urging you...* They didn't need Paul's explanations or justifications, as they had enough time and opportunity for personally experiencing Paul's behavior and motives.

**(2:13)** *Not as the word of men, but as... the Word of Yahweh.* Paul's preaching was not tailored to satisfy human expectations, but was what Yahweh, through Jesus Christ's revelation, told him to say.

**(2:14-16)** *Imitators of Yahweh's Churches in Israel.* The first Christian Churches were established in Israel by the apostles and their followers, before Paul's conversion. *You suffered from your own countrymen.* At the time of Paul's initial visit to Thessalonica, persecution instigated by the Jews was carried out by the Gentiles (Ac 17:5-9). *The Jews who killed the Lord Jesus Christ and the prophets.* Although Paul had deep concern for the salvation of those of his own race (Yahweh's sovereign choice. Ro 9:1-3; Israel's unbelief. Ro 10:1), he always rebuked harshly the Jews who persecuted the Church. Furthermore, the Israelites had always persecuted the Old Testament prophets. *They displease Yahweh... in their effort to keep us from... so that...* Yahweh's will was and is that all men be saved, and for that He has sacrificed His own Son (Thoughts. Who was crucified, died, and... to pay the price of everybody's ransom). *Heap up their sins to the limit.* By killing the prophets, Jesus Christ and the Christians. *The punishment of Yahweh has come.* Yahweh's judgment and punishment were so sure to Paul that he described them as already present.

**Paul's longing to see the Thessalonians** [1 Th 2:17-20;3:1-5]

**(1Th 2:17)** *But, brothers, when we were torn away from you for a short time (in person, not in thought), out of our intense longing we made every effort to see you. (18) For we wanted to come to you -certainly I, Paul, did, again and again- but Satan stopped us. (19) For what is our hope, our joy, or the crown in which we will glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ when he comes? It is not you? (20) Indeed, you are our glory and joy.*

**(3:1)** *So when we could stand it no longer, we thought it best to be left by ourselves in Athens. (2) We sent Timothy, who is our brother and Yahweh's fellow-worker in spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ, to strengthen and encourage you in your faith, (3) so that no one would be unsettled by these trials. You know quite well that we were destined for them. (4) In fact, when we were with you, we kept telling you that we would be persecuted. And it turned out that way, as you well know. (5) For this reason, when I could stand it no longer, I sent [Timothy] to find out about your faith. I was afraid that in some way the tempter might have tempted you and our efforts might have been useless.*

**(1Th 2:17)** *Torn away from you... every effort to see you.* Paul had to leave Thessalonica abruptly after a rather brief stay (Ac 17:1-15). Recent converts from paganism were thus left with insufficient preparation and little support. But it was Paul's intense desire to go back there and complete his work.

**(2:18)** *Satan stopped us.* It was and it is part of Satan's work to throw obstacles into the way of Christianity.



**(2:19) Crown.** Not a royal crown, but the laurel given as first prize in the Greek games. Here, the admission to the Kingdom of Yahweh. *Lord Jesus Christ when he comes.* At the universal judgment following his second coming.

**(2:20) You are our glory and joy.** Their conversion to Christianity was to be Paul's prize, a prize giving him great glory and filling him with spiritual joy.

**(3:1-3) When we could stand it no longer... we sent Timothy.** Paul was clearly quite worried for all the recent converts he had left at Thessalonica. And so, when Timothy joined him in Athens, he decided to send him there, remaining alone in Athens. *Yahweh's fellow worker.* Paul's view of Christian service. *To strengthen and encourage... so that no one would be...* The Thessalonian converts were suffering strong opposition and persecution, and Timothy had to help them in those difficult times. *We were destined for them.* All Christians must expect trouble, all men working for Yahweh are subject to and have to stand Satan's opposition.

**(3:4) In fact... we would be persecuted.** Jesus Christ told his followers that "they persecuted me, they will persecute you also" (The Gospel of Jesus Christ. The world hates the disciples. Jn 15:20).

**(3:5) I sent [Timothy] to find out...** As already seen, Paul sent Timothy to the Church in Thessalonica. *The tempter.* Satan, who has tempted Jesus Christ and continues to tempt his followers.

#### **Timothy's encouraging report [1 Th 3:6-13]**

**(1Th 3:6)** *But Timothy has just now come to us from you and has brought good news about your faith and affection. He has told us that you always have pleasant memories of us and that you long to see us, just as we also long to see you. (7) Therefore, brothers, in all our distress and persecution we were encouraged about you because of your faith. (8) For now we really live, since you are standing firm in the Lord Yahweh. (9) How can we thank Yahweh enough for you in return for all the joy we have in the presence of [Yahweh] our God because of you? (10) Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you again and supply what is lacking in your faith.*

**(11)** *Now may [Yahweh] our God and Father Himself and our Lord Jesus Christ clear the way for us to come to you. (12) May the Lord Jesus Christ make your affection increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you. (13) May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of [Yahweh] our God and Father when our Lord Jesus Christ comes with all his holy ones.*

**(1Th 3:6-8) Timothy... has brought good news... we were encouraged... now we really live.** Paul had been very anxious to know about the converts in Thessalonica. And so, when Timothy came back from there with good news, he felt full of joy, a joy that helped him overcome his own problems.

**(3:9-10) We thank Yahweh.** For the effectiveness of his work of evangelism and for the joy he felt. *What is lacking in your faith.* All the instructions (doctrinal, moral and disciplinary) Paul had no time to give them during his stay.

**(3:11-13) Now may [Yahweh] our God... May the Lord Jesus Christ... May he strengthen...** A prayer, to Yahweh and His Son, for allowing Paul to guide again the Thessalonians and for them to live fulfilling the law of affection. *When... Jesus Christ comes with all his holy ones.* When, after the Universal Resurrection, all men will enter the Kingdom of Yahweh (Thoughts. At the end of time everybody will be with Yahweh).

**Stand firm** [2 Th 2:13-17]

**(2Th 2:13)** But we ought always to thank Yahweh for you, brothers cherished by the Lord Jesus Christ, because from the beginning Yahweh chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of His Spirit and through belief in the truth. **(14)** He called you to this through our Gospel, that you might share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. **(15)** So then, brothers, stand firm and hold to the teachings we passed on to you, whether by word of mouth or by letter.

**(16)** May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and Yahweh our Father, who had been fond of us and by His grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope, **(17)** encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word.

**(2Th 2:13-15)** Thank Yahweh for you... The first part of this passage is a kind of summary of the Christian doctrine. It begins with Yahweh calling to salvation all men ("Yahweh chose you to be saved") through the preaching of the Gospel and ends with the request that believers "stand firm" in the faith taught them by Paul.

**(2:16-17)** May our Lord Jesus Christ... and Yahweh our Father... A prayer, to Yahweh and His Son, for giving them the inner strength necessary to produce good results in their lives ("every good deed and word").

**Final instructions** [1 Th 5:12-22]

**(1Th 5:12)** Now we ask you, brothers, to respect those who work hard among you, who are over you in the Lord Jesus Christ and who admonish you. **(13)** Hold them in the highest regard in affection because of their work. Live in peace with each other. **(14)** And we urge you, brothers, warn those who are idle, encourage the timid, help the weak, be patient with everyone. **(15)** Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always try to be kind to each other and to everyone else.

**(16)** Be joyful always; **(17)** pray continually; **(18)** give thanks in all circumstances, for this is Yahweh's will for you in Christ Jesus.

**(19)** Do not put out your spiritual fire; **(20)** do not treat prophecies with contempt. **(21)** Test everything. **(22)** Hold on to the good. Avoid every kind of evil.

**(1Th 5:12-13)** Those who work hard among you... because of their work. The elders, the deacons and all those who were involved in the development of the Church were to be not only respected but also cherished for their work. *Live in peace with each other.* Respecting Jesus Christ's command to "be fond of one another" (The Gospel of Jesus Christ. Jesus Predicts Peter's denial. Jn 13:34).

**(5:14)** Those who are idle. Some Thessalonians were so sure that the second coming was imminent that they had given up their jobs. *The timid... the weak... be patient...* Those "weak Christians" were to be helped, not rejected, by the "strong ones."

**(5:15)** Nobody pays back... Retaliation is never a Christian option. Christians are called to forgive.

**(5:16-18)** Be joyful... pray... give thanks... The proper attitude of Christians with regard to life.

**(5:19)** Do not put out your spiritual fire. A warning against a passive worship that would have discouraged the expression of their spiritual gifts.

**(5:20-22)** Do not treat prophecies with contempt. Test everything... Avoid... evil. The approval of prophecy did not mean that anyone who claimed to speak in the name of the

Lord Yahweh or of Jesus Christ was to be accepted without question. Every teaching had to be tested and, to be accepted, had to be found in agreement with Paul's preaching.

***Warning against idleness [2 Th 3:6-15]***

**(2Th 3:6)** *In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we command you, brothers, to keep away from every brother who is idle and does not live according to the teaching you received from us. (7) For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example. We were not idle when we were with you, (8) nor did we eat anyone's food without paying for it. On the contrary, we worked night and day, laboring and toiling so that we would not be a burden to any of you. (9) We did this, not because we do not have the right to such help, but in order to make ourselves a model for you to follow. (10) For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: "If a man will not work, he shall not eat."*

**(11)** *We hear that some among you are idle. They are not busy; they are busy-bodies. (12) Such people we command and urge in the Lord Jesus Christ to settle down and earn the bread they eat. (13) And as for you, brothers, never tire of doing what is right.*

**(14)** *If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of him. Do not associate with him, in order that he may feel ashamed. (15) Yet do not regard him as enemy, but warn him as a brother.*

**(2Th 3:6)** *We command you... to keep away from... idle and does not live according to... An authoritative, yet necessary command, not to follow those who had given up their jobs and were waiting for an imminent second coming of Jesus Christ (going, in this way, against Paul's teaching).*

**(3:7-8)** *Follow our example.* Paul, too, thought that Jesus Christ's second coming was imminent. But, in spite of this, he was very active both preaching to get more converts and working with his hands to support himself. *We were not idle... nor did we eat... we worked... laboring and toiling...* Paul did not say that he never accepted hospitality but that he had not been dependent on other people for his living.

**(3:9)** *We did this... to make ourselves a model for you to follow.* The best teaching comes from the teacher's example.

**(3:10)** *If a man will not work...* An important point, as the Greeks in general were considering manual work degrading and fit only for slaves. Christians, on the contrary, had to take seriously the need of working for earning their living.

**(3:11)** *Idle... busy-bodies.* Because of their idleness, they were interfering with other people's work and life, a problem to which idleness often leads.

**(3:12)** *We command and urge...* Again an authoritative command, given "in the Lord Jesus Christ" name for their good.

**(3:13)** *Never tire...* To live a proper, Christian, life was and is a continuous battle.

**(3:14-15)** *If anyone... do not associate with him... Yet... regard him... as a brother.* Paul commanded that those who were disregarding his instructions must be dealt with by the community. Yet not as enemies but as brothers. Church discipline is necessary, but it has to be given by a brother to a brother, not in anger but in affection, to bring him back to a right attitude.

**To the Galatians****No other Gospel [Gal 1:6-10]**

**(Gal 1:6)** *I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Jesus Christ and are turning to a different gospel (7)-which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the Gospel of Jesus Christ. (8)But even if one of us or an angel from Heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned! (9)As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned!*

**(10)** *Am I now trying to win the approval of men, or of Yahweh? Or am I trying to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Jesus Christ.*

**(Gal 1:6-7)** *So quickly deserting... and turning to... no gospel at all.* Shortly after accepting the Gospel preached to them by Paul, the Galatians were led astray by the Judaizers, who believed that to be saved the Christians had to follow a number of ceremonial Old Testament practices. *Some people.* The Judaizers. *Pervert the Gospel of Jesus Christ.* By introducing additional requirements for salvation, the Judaizers had perverted the Gospel of grace, making people fall in the bondage of legalism.

**(1:8)** *Even if... be eternally condemned!* The Gospel Paul had taught them was what he had received as a revelation from Jesus Christ himself (Paul called by Yahweh. Gal 1: 11-24). So, those who were preaching something different were actually going against Jesus Christ and Yahweh.

**(1:9)** *As... already said...* A repetition, a reinforcement, of the previous verse.

**(1:10)** *Am I now trying...?* Paul was preaching following Yahweh's will, for men's spiritual good, not to get their approval. *Servant of Jesus Christ.* A definition of himself Paul often used. (Introduction. Ro 1:1-7).

**Faith or observance of the law [Gal 3:1-14]**

**(Gal 3:1)** *You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? Jesus Christ crucified was clearly portrayed before your very eyes. (2)I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you receive Yahweh's Spirit by observing the law, or by believing what you heard? (3)Are you so foolish? After beginning with Yahweh's Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort? (4)Have you suffered so much for nothing -if it really was for nothing? (5)Does Yahweh give you His Spirit and work miracles among you because you observe the law, or because you believe what you heard?*

**(6)** *Consider Abraham: "He believed in Yahweh, and it was credited to him as righteousness." (7)Understand, then, that those who believe are children of Abraham. (8)The Scripture foresaw that Yahweh would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the Gospel in advance to Abraham: "All nations will be blessed through you." (9)So those who have faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.*

**(10)** *All who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law." (11)Clearly no one is justified before Yahweh by the law, because, "The righteous will live by faith." (12)The law is not based on faith; on the contrary, "The man who does these things will live by them." (13)Jesus Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree."*

*(14) He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of Yahweh's Spirit.*

**(Gal 3:1)** *Foolish.* For failing to understand the truth. The same word ("foolish") was used by Jesus Christ (The Gospel of Jesus Christ. On the road to Emmaus. Lk 24:25). *Who has...* Obviously, the legalistic Judaizers. *Clearly portrayed.* In Thessalonica, as in Corinth, Paul's preaching had been quite simple, based only on the fundamental facts of Christianity - Jesus Christ had been the only subject of his teaching and preaching (Jesus Christ, the wisdom and the power of Yahweh. 1 Co 2:1-5).

**(3:2)** *Did you receive Yahweh's Spirit by observing the law, or by believing...?* They were given the spiritual salvation brought by Jesus Christ and allowed to be in spiritual communion with him and the Father by having faith in Paul's preaching.

**(3:3)** *Beginning with Yahweh's Spirit... trying... human effort?* Salvation is a gift of Yahweh. No man can reach it by observing any kind of ceremonial law.

**(3:4-5)** *Have you suffered... Does Yahweh give you... because you believe...?* A repetition of previous concepts, in the hope that those who had been misled would return to the true Gospel.

**(3:6)** *Consider Abraham.* Abraham, the man who embodied faith in Yahweh, was chosen by Yahweh and pleased Him not by observing the law (which, anyway, at the time did not exist) but by having total faith in Yahweh and obeying to His orders. *He believed in Yahweh...* A quotation from Ge 15:6.

**(3:7-9)** *Children of Abraham. The Scripture foresaw... Those who have faith are blessed along with Abraham.* Abraham, the physical and spiritual father of the Jewish race, is also the spiritual father of all Christians because "All nations will be blessed through you" (The call of Abraham. Ge 12:3).

**(3:10)** *All who rely on observing the law.* The legalists - those who did refuse Yahweh's offer of grace insisting on pursuing righteousness through works. *Cursed is everyone...* A quotation from Dt 27:26. No one can keep perfectly all the rules of the law.

**(3:11)** *The righteous will live by faith.* A quotation from Hab 2:4.

**(3:12)** *The man who does these things...* A quotation from Lev 18:5.

**(3:13)** *Jesus Christ redeemed us... by becoming a curse.* Jesus Christ became "a curse" by accepting to die on a cross, which at the time was the most degrading kind of execution that could be inflicted on a person. *Cursed is everyone who...* A quotation from Dt 21:23.

**(3:14)** *He redeemed us in order... that by faith...* Practically, a summary of this passage.

### **The law and the promise** [Gal 3:15-25]

**(Gal 3:15)** *Brothers, let me take an example from everyday life. Just as no one can set aside or add to a human covenant that has been duly established, so it is in this case.*

**(16)** *The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. The Scripture does not say "and to seeds," meaning many people, but "and to your seed," meaning one person, who is Jesus Christ. (17) What I mean is this: The law, introduced 430 years later, does not set aside the covenant previously established by Yahweh and thus do away with the promise. (18) For if the inheritance depends on the law, then it no longer depends on a promise; but Yahweh in His grace gave it to Abraham through a promise.*

**(19)** *What, then, was the purpose of the law? It was added because of transgressions until the "Seed" to whom the promise referred had come. The law was put into effect*

through angels by a mediator. **(20)** *A mediator, however, does not represent just one party... But Yahweh is one.*

**(21)** *Is the law, therefore, opposed to the promises of Yahweh? Absolutely not! For if a law had been given that could impart life, then righteousness would certainly have come by the law. (22) But the Scripture declares that the whole world is a prisoner of sin, so that what was promised, being given through faith in Jesus Christ, might be given to those who believe.*

**(23)** *Before this faith came, we were held prisoners by the law, locked up until faith should be revealed. (24) So the law was put in charge to lead us to Jesus Christ that we might be justified by faith. (25) Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law.*

**(Gal 3:15)** *A human covenant... duly established, so it is in this case. As a properly written official document has legal validity and has to be fully respected, so it is with Yahweh's covenant with Abraham.*

**(3:16)** *The promises.* Numerous offspring (Ge 13:16), possession of the Land of Canaan (Ge 12:7; 13:14-15; 15:7,18-21; 17:8) and blessing of all the peoples on Earth through him (Ge 12:3; 18:18) or his offspring (Ge 22:18). *And to your seed.* A quotation from Ge 24:7.

**(3:16)** *The law.* The laws given to Moses on Mount Sinai (Ex 19-24). *430 years.* The length of time the Israelites lived in Egypt (Ex 12:40-41) designated in round number as "400 years" in Ge 15:13 and Ac 7:6.

**(3:18)** *For if the inheritance...* No law can supersede Yahweh's promise.

**(3:19)** *Was added.* From the time of Abraham, Yahweh's covenant had stood at the center of the relationship Yahweh-Israelites. After the exodus from Egypt the laws given to Moses became additional elements in that relationship, without replacing the original promise of "the Seed." *Through angels.* A reference to Dt 33:2, "The Lord Yahweh came from Sinai... with myriads of holy ones." *A mediator.* Moses.

**(3:20)** *A mediator, however...* A clearly incomplete sentence, meaning that, being Yahweh's promise unilateral (the commitment was only from Yahweh's side), no mediator was necessary -as it would have been in case of a mutual arrangement.

**(3:21-22)** *Is the law... opposed...? Absolutely not! The Scripture declares...* The reason why the law was not opposed to the promise was that, although the law in itself could not save, it served to reveal sin, which alienated Yahweh from man, and showed the need for the salvation that the promise offered.

**(3:23)** *This faith.* Faith in Jesus Christ and in his work of salvation. *Held prisoners by the law.* That is, prisoners of sin, because the law revealed and stimulated sin.

**(3:24-25)** *So... justified by faith... we are no longer under... the law.* When a man has put his faith in Jesus Christ, for him the purpose of the law is attained, and the man is spiritually free from the law's requirements.

### **Sons of Yahweh** [Gal 3:26-29;4:1-7]

**(Gal 3:26)** *You are all sons of Yahweh through faith in Christ Jesus, (27) for all of you who were baptized into Jesus Christ have clothed yourselves with Jesus Christ. (28) There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Jesus Christ. (29) If you belong to Jesus Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.*

*(4:1) What I am saying is that as long as the heir is a child, he is no different from a slave, although he owns the whole estate. (2) He is subject to guardians and trustees until the time set by his father. (3) So also, when we were children, we were in slavery under the basic principles of the world. (4) But when the time had fully come, Yahweh sent His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, (5) to redeem those under the law, that we might receive the full rights of sons. (6) Because you are sons, Yahweh sent the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father." (7) So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, Yahweh has made you also an heir.*

**(Gal 3:26) Sons of Yahweh.** By a process of adoption, believers are "co-heirs with Jesus Christ" (Life by means of Yahweh's Spirit. Ro 8:1-17), that is, full members of Yahweh's family, with all the relevant rights and privileges.

**(3:27) Baptized into Jesus Christ.** Baptism is closely associated with faith and represents the result of the Christians' spiritual communion with Jesus Christ, which comes with faith.

**(3:28) There is neither... you are all one.** Unity in Jesus Christ transcends ethnic, social and sexual distinctions. Spiritual salvation is open to all men.

**(3:29) You are Abraham's seed.** Christians are Abraham's true, spiritual descendants (Abraham justified by faith. Ro 4:1-25).

**(4:1-2) A child... subject to guardians and... until the time set by his father.** A minor, in the eyes of the Roman law, could have been the owner of a vast property but could have taken no legal decision. He was legally not responsible and, therefore, for all legal purposes he had no more freedom than if he were a slave. But when he became a man -at an age set by his father- he entered into his full inheritance.

**(4:3-5) When we were children... when the time had fully come... the full rights of sons.** When the Galatians -and indeed all men- were, religiously speaking, mere children, they were under the tyranny of the law; then, when everything was ready, Jesus Christ came and released all men from the slavery of the law making them adult sons in Yahweh's family.

**(4:6) The Spirit of His Son into your hearts.** Representative of the spiritual communion between all believers and Jesus Christ and the Father. *Abba, Father.* The double term expresses an especially close relationship to Yahweh.

**(4:7) No longer a slave, but a son... an heir.** For Paul, he who governed his life by slavery to the law was still a child; he who learned the way of grace had become a mature man in the Christian faith.

### **Paul's concern for the Galatians** [Gal 4:8-20]

**(Gal 4:8) Formerly, when you did not know Yahweh, you were slaves to those who by nature are not gods. (9) But now that you know Yahweh -or rather are known by Yahweh- how is it that you are turning back to those weak and miserable principles? Do you wish to be enslaved by them all over again? (10) You are observing special days and months and seasons and years! (11) I fear for you, that somehow I have wasted my efforts on you.**

**(12) I plead with you, brothers, become like me, for I became like you. (13) You have done me no wrong. As you know, it was because of an illness that I first preached the Gospel to you. (14) Even though my illness was a trial to you, you did not treat me with contempt or scorn. Instead, you welcomed me as if I were an angel of Yahweh, as if I were Christ Jesus himself. (15) What has happened to all your joy? I can testify that, if**

*you could have done so, you would have torn your eyes and given them to me. (16) Have I now become your enemy by telling you the truth?*

*(17) Those people are zealous to win you over, but for no good. What they want is to alienate you from us, so that you may be zealous for them. (18) It is fine to be zealous, provided the purpose is good, and to be so always and not just when I am with you. (19) My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Jesus Christ is formed in you, (20) how I wish I could be with you now and change my tone, because I am perplexed about you!*

**(Gal 4:8-9)** *When you did not know Yahweh... slaves to... not gods. But now...* When the Galatians were Pagans, they thought that the idols they worshiped were gods. But when they became Christians, they knew [Yahweh] the true God. *Turning back.* Shortly after accepting the Gospel preached to them by Paul, the Galatians were led astray by the Judaizers, who believed that to be saved the Christians had to follow a number of ceremonial Jewish practices. *Miserable principles.* The Greek term used here refers to the already existing religions, that of the Jews (“under the law”) and that of the Gentiles (“slaves to... not gods”). *Enslaved... again.* Trust in rituals and in the law, or even in cold, dead orthodoxy was indicative of a relapse into religious “childhood”, after knowing and enjoying the freedom of mature sons.

**(4:10)** *Special days... months... seasons... years.* Such as the Sabbath and the Day of Atonement (Lev 16:29-34); the New Moons (Nu 28:11-15; Isa 1:13-14); the Passover (Ex 12: 18) and the Firstfruit (Lev 23:10); the Sabbath Year (Lev 25:4). All those had never been, and can never be, in themselves means of salvation or sanctification.

**(4:11)** *Wasted my efforts.* Due to their following the influence of the Judaizers.

**(4:12)** *Become like me... I became like you.* A personal, not a theological appeal. Paul reminded the Galatians that for their sake he had abandoned all his traditions and was living as a Gentile. They should not seek to become Jews but mature Christians like himself.

**(4:13-14)** *You have done me no wrong. Because of an illness... You did not treat me with con-tempt or...* Paul, Barnabas and Mark had come to Cyprus from the mainland (Ac 13:13-14), then they went to Perga in Pamphylia where Mark left them; and then to Antioch in Pisidia, in the province of Galatia. Probably in Pamphylia Paul contracted malaria (which was accompanied by prostrating headaches -Paul’s traditional “thorn in the flesh”) and had to rush to the highlands of Galatia, without preaching in the coastal area. Paul arrived among the Galatians as a sick man. Yet, in spite of his debilitating illness, he and his preaching were well accepted by the Galatians.

**(4:15)** *What has happened...?* Because of the restraints of legalistic Judaism they had lost their blessing and joy. *Torn out your eyes.* An hyperbole indicating their willingness to do whatever they could for him.

**(4:16)** *Your enemy.* Telling the truth sometimes results in loss of friends.

**(4:17)** *Those people are zealous... you may be zealous...* The Judaizers were active trying to persuade them to adopt Jewish ways. If they were successful, the Galatians would in turn have been subject to them and to their rules (“zealous for them”).

**(4:18)** *Be zealous... always... not just as I am with you.* In this case, clearly, “zealous” for the true Gospel preached by Paul.

**(4:19)** *Again in the pains of childbirth until...* A vivid metaphor. His bringing the Galatians to Jesus Christ did cost Paul pain like a mother’s travail; and now he had to go through it all again.



**(4:20)** *How I wish...* Clearly, knowing of their situation and being far from them made Paul wish to be there with them.

***Hagar and Sarah*** [Gal 4:21-31]

**(Gal 4:21)** *Tell me, you who want to be under the law, are you not aware of what the law says? (22)For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the slave woman and the other by the free woman. (23)His son by the slave woman was born in the ordinary way; but his son by the free woman was born as the result of a promise.*

**(24)***These things may be taken figuratively, for the women represent two covenants. One covenant is from Mount Sinai and bears children who are to be slaves: This is Hagar. (25)Now Hagar stands for Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present city of Jerusalem, because she is in slavery with her children. (26)But the Jerusalem that is above is free, and she is our mother. (27)For it is written:*

*“Be glad, O barren woman, who bears no children; break forth and cry aloud, you who have no labor pains; because more are the children of the desolate woman than of her who has a husband.”*

**(28)***Now you, brothers, like Isaac, are children of promise. (29)At that time the son born in the ordinary way persecuted the son born by the power of Yahweh’s Spirit. It is the same now. (30)But what does the Scripture say? “Get rid of the slave woman and her son, for the slave woman’s son will never share in the inheritance with the free woman’s son.” (31)Therefore, brothers, we are not children of the slave woman, but of the free woman.*

**(Gal 4:21-23)** *Tell me... It is written that Abraham had two sons... one... the other... ordinary way... a promise.* The Rabbis assigned to Scripture more than the direct, literal meaning. And Paul, who was a Rabbi, took the story involving Abraham, Sarah, Hagar, Ishmael and Isaac (Ge 16,17,21) -which in the Old Testament is a straightforward narrative- and allegorized it to illustrate his point.

**(4:24-25)** *These things can be taken figuratively... Hagar... present city of Jerusalem.* Hagar was a slave -and a slave’s children are born into slavery- and the Old Testament basis was the law which turned men into slaves. Paul did equate Jerusalem with Mount Sinai because it represented the center of Judaism, which was still under bondage to the law issued at Mount Sinai.

**(4:26)** *The Jerusalem... above is free... she is our mother.* Sarah was representative of the New Covenant in Jesus Christ. Her child was born free -and according to Yahweh’s promise- and all his descendants had to be free. The “Jerusalem above” is the heavenly city of Yahweh, the Kingdom of Yahweh, in which Jesus Christ reigns and of which the Christians are citizens, that is, children.

**(4:27)** *Be glad...* A quotation from Isa 54:1. Paul applied the joyful promise made to the exiled Jerusalem (in her exile “barren” of children) to the ingathering of the believers, by which “Jerusalem’s” children had become many.

**(4:28)** *Children of the promise.* Children by virtue of Yahweh’s promise to Abraham (Sons of Yahweh. Gal 3:26-29; 4:1-7. - Abraham justified by faith. Ro 4:1-25).

**(4:29)** *At that time... It is the same now.* As the child of the slave Hagar vexed the child of the free Sarah, the children of the law persecuted the children “born” by virtue of Yahweh’s grace and promise.

**(4:30)** *Get rid of the slave woman...* A quotation of Sarah’s words (Ge 21:10), used by

Paul as the Scriptural basis for teaching the Galatians to put the Judaizers out of the Church.

**(4:31)** *We are not children of the slave woman, but...* The believers are not enslaved by the law but children of Yahweh's promise and are spiritually alive by faith.

**Freedom in Jesus Christ** [Gal 5:1-15]

**(Gal 5:1)** *It is for freedom that Jesus Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.*

**(2)** *Mark my words! I, Paul, tell you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Jesus Christ will be of no value to you at all. (3) Again I declare to every man who lets himself be circumcised that he is obligated to obey the whole law. (4) You who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Jesus Christ; you have fallen away from grace. (5) But by faith we eagerly await through Yahweh's Spirit the righteousness for which we hope. (6) For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through affection.*

**(7)** *You were running a good race. Who cut in on you and kept you from obeying the truth? (8) That kind of persuasion does not come from the One who calls you. (9) "A little yeast works through the whole batch of dough." (10) I am confident in the Lord Yahweh that you will take no other view. The one who is throwing you into confusion will pay the penalty, whoever he may be. (11) Brothers, if I am still preaching circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? In that case the offense of the Cross has been abolished. (12) As for those agitators, I wish they would go the whole way and emasculate themselves!*

**(13)** *You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in affection. (14) The entire law is summed up in a single command: "You'll be fond of your neighbor as of yourself." (15) If you keep on biting and devouring each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.*

**(Gal 5:1)** *Freedom.* Here, freedom from the yoke of the law. *Yoke of slavery.* The burden of the rigorous demands of the law as the means to gain Yahweh's favor -an intolerable burden for men (Peter's speech at Jerusalem council. Ac 15:10-11).

**(5:2)** *Circumcised.* Considering circumcision a condition for Yahweh's acceptance.

**(5:3)** *Obligated to obey the whole law.* The Old Testament law was a unit; submission to it could not be selective.

**(5:4)** *Fallen away from grace.* Those who were following the Judaizers were placing themselves outside the divine favor, because gaining Yahweh's favor by observing the law and receiving it by grace are mutually exclusive.

**(5:5)** *The righteousness for which we hope.* A reference of Yahweh's final verdict of "not guilty," assured to the believers by their faith and by the sanctifying action of Yahweh's Spirit (that is, by the believers' spiritual communion with Jesus Christ and Yahweh).

**(5:6)** *Neither circumcision nor... faith expressing itself through affection.* Only faith counts; a faith which doesn't have to be a mere intellectual attitude but a practical matter expressed by acts of affection toward other people.

**(5:7)** *Running a good race.* Before the Judaizers led them astray. Paul liked to depict the Christian life as a race.

**(5:8)** *That kind of persuasion.* By the Judaizers. *The One who calls you.* Yahweh (More than winners. Ro 8:28-39).

**(5:9)** *A little yeast works...* A proverb used here to stress the pervasive effect of the Judaizers' false teaching.

**(5:10)** *I am confident...* That Yahweh would not allow the Galatians to go astray. *The one who... will pay the penalty.* By being expelled from the Church and cut off from Yahweh's grace.

**(5:11)** *If I am still preaching... the offense... has been abolished.* If Paul had preached the need for circumcision, there would not have been any reason to persecute him, because the preaching of circumcision was in itself a total denial of Christianity -of the effect of Jesus Christ's sacrifice on the Cross.

**(5:12)** *I wish they would... emasculate themselves.* A sarcastic remark, linked to the worship of Cybele in nearby Phrygia. Priest and really devout worshipers of Cybele used to mutilate themselves by castration. In Paul's opinion those who came out with circumcision were set to come to a bad end, incurring divine punishment.

**(5:13)** *Do not use your freedom to indulge...* Freedom is not license but willingness to serve Yahweh and be fond of all men (Dead to sin, alive in Jesus Christ. Ro 6:1-14).

**(5:14)** *The entire law is...* "You'll be fond of your neighbor..." A quotation from Lev 19:18. Doing to others what you would have them do to you expresses the spirit and the intention of "the Law and the Prophets" (The Gospel of Jesus Christ. An eye for an eye. Kindness for enemies. Mt 5:38-48; 7:12; Lk 6:27-36).

**(5:15)** *Biting and devouring each other.* In opposition to the command of the previous verse. Seeking to attain status with Yahweh and man by mere observance of the law breeds a self-righteous, critical spirit.

### ***Life by the Spirit of Yahweh*** [Gal 5:16-26]

**(Gal 5:16)** *So I say, live by the Spirit of Yahweh, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. (17)For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to Yahweh's Spirit, and Yahweh's Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want. (18)But if you are led by Yahweh's Spirit, you are not under law.*

**(19)***The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; (20)idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions (21)and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the Kingdom of Yahweh.*

**(22)***But the fruit of Yahweh's Spirit is affection, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, (23)gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.*

**(24)** *Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. (25)Since we live by Yahweh's Spirit, let us keep in step with His Spirit.*

**(26)***Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.*

**(Gal 5:16-17)** *Live by the Spirit of Yahweh, and...* Living in spiritual communion with Jesus Christ and Yahweh is the key to fight temptation. *The sinful nature... Yahweh's Spirit... in conflict with each other.* Two kinds of life are described here: that of the sinful human nature -which leads to spiritual death- and that of Yahweh -which leads to spiritual life and peace (Life by means of Yahweh's Spirit. Ro 8:1-17).

**(5:18)** *Not under the law.* Not under the bondage of trying to please Yahweh by minute observation of the rules of the law.

**(5:19-21)** *Acts of the sinful nature are... I warn you, as I did before...* Paul had given a similar warning in "Lawsuit among believers" (1 Co 6:1-11). Those who were commit-

ting those acts would not have entered the Kingdom of Yahweh immediately after their physical death, but would have been subjected to the formative and corrective punishment of Hell (Thoughts. Expiatory and corrective punishment of sins for everybody final access to the Reign of Yahweh).

**(5:22-23)** *The fruit of Yahweh's Spirit is...* Christian character is produced by a man's spiritual communion with Jesus Christ and Yahweh, not by the mere moral discipline of trying to live by the law.

**(5:24)** *Crucified the sinful nature.* Synonym of "crucified with Jesus Christ," that is, "dead to sin" (Dead to sin, alive in Jesus Christ. Ro 6:1-14).

**(5:25)** *Keep in step with His Spirit.* Following what the spiritual communion with Jesus Christ and Yahweh suggests.

**(5:26)** *Let us not become...* Justification by faith does not have to result in libertinism.

**Doing good to all** [Gal 6:1-10]

**(Gal 6:1)** *Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. (2) Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Jesus Christ. (3) If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. (4) Each one should test his own actions. Then he can take pride in himself, without comparing himself to somebody else, (5) for each one should carry his own load.*

**(6)** *Anyone who receives instructions in the Word must share all good things with his instructor.*

**(7)** *Do not be deceived: Yahweh cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. (8) The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please Yahweh's Spirit, from Yahweh's Spirit will reap eternal life. (9) Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. (10) Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of the believers.*

**(Gal 6:1)** *You who are spiritual.* Those who live following the indication of Yahweh's Spirit. *Restore him gently.* The occasional sinner has not to be corrected harshly. *Watch yourself, or...* Do not judge the sins of others hardly, as only Yahweh and Jesus Christ can judge.

**(6:2)** *Carry each other's burdens...* Mutual help was and is fundamental to the Christians.

**(6:3)** *If anyone...* As no man is sin-free, nobody has to express his judgment on a fellow-man.

**(6:4-5)** *Each one should test his own actions... carry his own load.* The emphasis here is on personal responsibility. Each man is responsible before Yahweh of his actions and of the execution of his duty.

**(6:6)** *Anyone who receives instruction... must share...* In those days the Church was really a sharing institution. No Christian should bear to have too much while others have too little.

**(6:7)** *A man reaps what he sows.* This principle applies not only negatively but also positively.

**(6:8)** *Reap destruction... eternal life.* Practically, a repetition of Paul's thought about "those who live by the sinful nature" and "those who live by the Spirit of Yahweh."

**(6:9-10)** *Not become weary... do good to all people.* Paul finished by remarking his friends that even if sometimes the duty of generosity may be annoying, at the due time they “will reap a harvest” from it. *Especially to those who belong to the family of the believers.* Christians have to provide for their relatives in need, especially for those of their immediate family (Advice about widows and elders. 1 Ti 5:1-22; 24-25).

**Not circumcision but a new creation** [Gal 6:11-17]

**(Gal 6:11)** *See what large letters I use as I write to you with my own hand!*

**(12)** *Those who want to make a good impression outwardly are trying to compel you to be circumcised. The only reason they do this is to avoid being persecuted for the Cross of Jesus Christ. (13) Not even those who are circumcised obey the law, yet they want you to be circumcised that they may boast about your flesh. (14) May I never boast except in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. (15) Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is a new creation. (16) Peace and mercy to all who follow this rule, who are the Israel of Yahweh.*

**(17)** *Finally, let no one cause me trouble, for I bear on my own body the marks of Jesus Christ.*

**(Gal 6:11)** *I write... with my own hand.* The letter up to this point had been dictated to a scribe, after which Paul personally finished it.

**(6:12)** *Compel you to be circumcised. The only reason... is to avoid being persecuted.* By advocating circumcision, which was the mark of the Jews, the Judaizers were trying to avoid Roman persecution. In effect, the Romans recognized the Jewish religion and officially allowed the Jews to practice it.

**(6:13)** *Not even those who are circumcised obey the law.* By advocating circumcision and the keeping of the law, the Judaizers -who were, as any other man, unable to keep all the rules of the law- were only trying to win the approval of men (“may boast about your flesh”).

**(6:14)** *May I never boast...* Paul was certain that nothing that man could do can win salvation, which comes from Jesus Christ’s voluntary sacrifice. *The world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.* Not the created world of people, but the realm of sin, which is controlled by Satan and organized against Yahweh and righteousness. By his conversion Paul had renounced to that world, making himself not available to it.

**(6:15)** *Neither circumcision nor... what counts is...* Physical marks count for nothing. The only important point is the act of faith in Jesus Christ, which opens a new life.

**(6:16)** *Peace and mercy...* Paul’s benediction to all believers, who are “the seed of Abraham and heirs according to the promise” (Sons of Yahweh. Gal 3:26-29; 4:1-7) that is, “the Israel of Yahweh.”

**(6:17)** *Marks of Jesus Christ.* The Greek word used here for “marks” identified the mark of slaves and animals. Paul was marked as a “servant of Jesus Christ” by suffering stoning (Ac 14:19), beating and flogging (Paul boasts about his sufferings. Ac 16:22-23; 2Co 11:25) and illness (Paul’s vision and his thorn. 2Co 12:7; Paul’s concern for the Galatians. Gal 4:13-14).

**To the Corinthians****Divisions in the Church** [1 Co 1:10-17]

**(1Co 1:10)** *I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought. (11) My brothers, some from Chloe's household have informed me that there are quarrels among you. (12) What I mean is this: One of you says, "I follow Paul"; another, "I follow Apollos"; another, "I follow Peter"; still another, "I follow Jesus Christ."*

**(13)** *Is Jesus Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Were you baptized in the name of Paul? (14) I am thankful that I did not baptize any of you except Crispus and Gaius, (15) so no one can say that you were baptized in my name. (16) (Yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I don't remember if I baptized anyone else.) (17) For Jesus Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the Gospel -not with words of human wisdom, lest the Cross of Jesus Christ be emptied of its power.*

**(1Co 1:10)** *No division among you... be perfectly united.* Believers in Jesus Christ were and are united by their spiritual communion with him and Yahweh.

**(1:11)** *Some from Chloe's household... quarrels among you.* Paul was writing from Ephesus. From there, some Christian slaves who belonged to a lady called Chloe had visited Corinth and had come back with a sorry tale of dissension and disunity.

**(1:12)** *I follow Paul... Apollos... Peter... Jesus Christ.* Paul identified four parties in the Church at Corinth. The party called after Paul was composed by Gentile converts who were turning their "Christian freedom" in license, doing as they liked. The party called after Apollos (Ac 18:24) was composed by Greek converts who were intellectualizing Christianity, turning it into a philosophy rather than a religion. The party called after Peter was composed by Jews converts who were still observing the Jewish law, in such a way making appear insignificant Yahweh's grace. The party called after Jesus Christ was composed by rigid and intolerant people who claimed to be the only true Christians at Corinth.

**(1:13)** *Is Jesus Christ divided?* All Christians are spiritually united in Jesus Christ as parts of his Christian Church (One body, many parts. 1 Co 12:12-31). *Was Paul crucified?* Only Jesus Christ's sacrifice on the Cross brought spiritual salvation to all men. *Baptized in the name of Paul?* All converts were always baptized only in Jesus Christ's name.

**(1:14-6)** *Thankful... I did not baptize...* Because it would have given some of them the excuse to say that they were Paul instead of Jesus Christ's followers.

**(1:17)** *Jesus Christ did not send me to baptize.* Paul was not minimizing baptism; he was simply glad that no act of his could be misconstrued. *To preach the Gospel -not with words of human wisdom, lest...* Paul's Yahweh-given task was to preach in simple and direct terms, not in the language of a trained orator, one who had studied the techniques of influencing people.

**On divisions in the Church** [1 Co 3:1-23]

**(1Co 3:1)** *Brothers, I could not address you as spiritual but as worldly -mere infants in Jesus Christ. (2) I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready. (3) You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere men? (4) For*

when one says, "I follow Paul," and another, "I follow Apollos," are you not mere men?

(5)What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe -as the Lord Yahweh has assigned to each his task. (6)I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but Yahweh made it grow. (7)So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only Yahweh, who makes things grow. (8)The man who plants and the man who waters have one purpose, and each will be rewarded according to his own labor. (9)For we are Yahweh's fellow workers; you are Yahweh's field, Yahweh's building.

(10)By the grace Yahweh has given me, I laid a foundation as an expert builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should be careful how he builds. (11)For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. (12)If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, (13)his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. (14)It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work. If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. (15)If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames.

(16)Don't you know that you yourselves are Yahweh's temple and that Yahweh's Spirit lives in you? (17)If anyone destroys Yahweh's temple, Yahweh will destroy him; for Yahweh's temple is sacred, and you are that temple.

(18)Do not deceive yourselves. If any one of you thinks he is wise by the standards of this age, he should become a "fool" so that he can become wise. (19)For the wisdom of this world is foolishness in Yahweh's sight. As it is written: "He catches the wise in their craftiness;" (20)and again, "The Lord Yahweh knows that the thoughts of the wise are futile." (21)So then, no more boasting about men! All things are yours, (22)whether Paul or Apollos or Peter or the world of life or death or the present or the future -all are yours, (23)and you are of Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ is of Yahweh.

**(1Co 3:1)** Not... as spiritual but as worldly -mere infants. Paul could not consider the Corinthians as mature Christian. They were immature, and the proof of their immaturity was their divisions.

**(3:2)** Milk, not solid food. Religious instruction, referred to their spiritual immaturity (infants take milk) against the maturity they should have reached (adults take solid food).

**(3:3)** Still worldly... acting like mere men. Still immature Christians, following merely human standards as men of the world instead of men of Yahweh.

**(3:4)** For when one says... Again, their division was the proof of their immaturity.

**(3:5)** What is... Apollos... Paul? Church leaders were and are only men whose assigned task is to preach the Gospel and take care of their local Church.

**(3:6)** I planted... Apollos watered... Yahweh made it grow. Paul's work was of a pioneer nature, bringing the Gospel to unbelievers, whereas Apollos worked in the established Church. And they were both working following Yahweh's plans.

**(3:7-9)** Neither he who plants... is anything. The man who plants... one purpose. We are Yahweh's fellow workers. In a field one man may plant a seed and another water it; but neither can claim to have made the seed grow. They are only servants working together for one Master -Yahweh. Yahweh's field. Yahweh's building. Yahweh owns the farm and the building, that is, the Christian Church as a community of believers, were both Paul and Apollos were working.

**(3:10)** *I laid a foundation.* By preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ. *Someone else is building on it.* Apollos.

**(3:11)** *No... foundation other than... Jesus Christ.* Christian faith is founded only on Jesus Christ, on his sacrifice for the spiritual salvation of all men.

**(3:12)** *Gold, silver, costly stones.* Symbolic of precious, durable work that builds the true Christian doctrine and living, standing the test of divine judgment. *Wood, hay or straw.* Symbolic of weak and worthless work that will not stand the test.

**(3:13)** *The Day.* The day of Universal Judgment, at the second coming of Jesus Christ.

**(3:14-15)** *Fire.* Symbolic of Yahweh's judgment. *If... survives... reward. If... burned up... loss.* The work of some believers will stand the test while that of others will disappear. *He... will be saved... as one...* The believer whose work will not stand the test will anyway gain salvation, but only by a narrow escape ("escaping through the flames").

**(3:16)** *Yahweh's temple.* The community of all Christians constitute the Temple of Yahweh, the Christian Church, because all of them are in spiritual communion with Jesus Christ and Yahweh.

**(3:17)** *If... Yahweh will destroy him.* Strong, but necessary language, indicating that an unfaithful Christian is not one of Yahweh's true servants. The reference here is to the people who were tearing the local Church apart by factions and quarrels.

**(3:18)** *If anyone... is wise... become a "fool."* A vivid way of urging those who think highly of themselves to be humble enough to understand that human wisdom, that is, wisdom "by the standards of this age" counts for nothing in the sight of Yahweh.

**(3:19)** *He catches the wise...* A quotation from Job 5:13.

**(3:20)** *The Lord Yahweh knows...* A quotation from Psalm 94:11.

**(3:21-22)** *Boasting about men.* About being some man's disciples. *All things are yours.* In point of fact, nothing belongs to any man but, as members of the Christian Church, everything (in the present life on Earth and in the future one in Heaven) belongs to every man through Jesus Christ and Yahweh.

**(3:23)** *You are of Jesus Christ and...* Through their spiritual communion with him and the Father.

### **Apostles of Jesus Christ** [1 Co 4:1-21]

**(1Co 4:1)** *So then, men ought to regard us as servants of Jesus Christ and as those entrusted with the secret things of Yahweh. (2)Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful. (3)I care very little if I am judged by you or by any human court; indeed, I do not even judge myself. (4)My conscience is clear, but that does not make me innocent. It is the Lord Yahweh who judges me. (5)Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait till the Lord Jesus Christ comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of men's hearts. At that time each will receive his praise from Yahweh.*

**(6)** *Now, brothers, I have applied these things to myself and Apollos for your benefit, so that you may learn from us the meaning of the saying, "Do not go beyond what is written." Then you will not take pride in one man over against another.*

**(7)** *For who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not?*

**(8)** *Already you have all you want! Already you have become rich! You have become kings -and that without us! How I wish that you really had become kings so that we might be kings with you! (9)For it seems to me that Yahweh has put us apostles on display at the end of the procession, like men condemned to die in the arena. We have*



been made a spectacle to the whole universe, to angels as well as to men. (10) We are fools for Jesus Christ, but you are so wise in Jesus Christ! We are weak, but you are strong! You are honored, we are dishonored! (11) To this very hour we go hungry and thirsty, we are in rags, we are brutally treated, we are homeless. (12) We work hard with our own hands. When we are cursed, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure it; (13) when we are slandered, we answer kindly. Up to this moment we have become the scum of the Earth, the refuse of the world.

(14) I am not writing this to shame you, but to warn you, as my dear children. (15) You may have thousands of tutors in Jesus Christ, but you do not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the Gospel. (16) Therefore I urge you to imitate me. (17) For this reason I am sending to you Timothy, my son of whom I am fond, who is faithful in the Lord Jesus Christ. He will remind you of my way of life in Christ Jesus, which agrees with what I teach everywhere in every Church.

(18) Some of you have become arrogant, as if I were not coming to you. (19) But I will come to you very soon, if the Lord Yahweh is willing, and then I will find out not only how these arrogant people are talking, but what power they have. (20) For the Kingdom of Yahweh is not a matter of talk but of power. (21) What do you prefer? Shall I come to you with a whip, or in affection and with a gentle spirit?

**(1Co 4:1)** *Regard us as servants of Jesus Christ.* The Corinthians had to understand that men as Paul, Apollos and Peter were not leaders of different parties, but laborers of the Lord Jesus Christ. *Secret things of Yahweh.* Facts men could not discover by themselves, now revealed by Yahweh to His people (All Israel will be saved. Ro 11:25-32; 12:1-2).

**(4:2)** *Those... given a trust must prove faithful.* The more responsibility a man is given by Yahweh, the more faithful he must demonstrate to be.

**(4:3-4)** *Judged by you or... not even judge myself... Yahweh... judges me.* The Corinthians' judgment -and Paul's own as well- was merely human, and their -as well as his- conscience could be mistaken. Only Yahweh -and His Son Jesus Christ- is fully qualified to judge.

**(4:5)** *Appointed time.* The Universal Judgment at Jesus Christ's second coming. *Bring to light... expose... men's hearts. At that time...* Yahweh "judges the thoughts and the attitudes of the heart. Nothing in all creation is hidden from Yahweh's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of Him to whom we must give account" (A Sabbath-rest for the people of Yahweh. Heb 4:1-13).

**(4:6)** *Do not go beyond what is written.* A proverb common among the Rabbis. *You will not take pride...* What Paul had said above about himself and Apollos (that at the end they will have to face not the judgment of men, but of Yahweh), was true also for the Corinthians who had to understand that their pride (which is a kind of judgment) was one of the main causes of their divisions.

**(4:7)** *Who makes you different...? What... you have... you did receive...* Since all they have -all their characteristics and gifts- came from Yahweh, there can be no basis for an attitude of superiority.

**(4:8)** *Already you have...* Paul used irony and sarcasm to get the Corinthians see how poor they really were, because of their arrogance and spiritual immaturity, in comparison with the apostles.

**(4:9)** *Yahweh has put us apostles... a spectacle...* An image taken from the triumphal procession of a victorious Roman general and from the gladiatorial contests in the are-

na, with the whole creation -men and angels- looking on while the apostles are compelled to fight very hard.

**(4:10)** *We are fool... you are so wise...* Another ironic phrase, pointing to the Corinthians self-pride.

**(4:11-13)** *To this very hour... We work... we are slandered... the refuse of the world.* A pictorial description of Paul's condition in Ephesus right up to the writing of this letter. Paul was tentmaker by trade (Ac 18:3).

**(4:14)** *Writing... to warn you.* It was as a father that Paul wrote to the Corinthians, with that severity which seeks to recover a son gone astray.

**(4:15)** *Thousands of tutors... I became your father through the Gospel.* As a child could have many tutors but had only one father, so in the days to come the Corinthians (who were, religiously speaking, mere children) could have many religious tutors but none of them could do what Paul had done; he was their spiritual father, the one who brought them to spiritual life in Jesus Christ.

**(4:16)** *Therefore... imitate me.* Following the true Gospel and abandoning their divisions.

**(4:17)** *I am sending... Timothy. He will remind you...* Actually, Paul said that all their errors and mistakes were due, not to deliberate rebellion, but to the fact that they had forgotten his true teaching.

**(4:18)** *Arrogant.* Proud of their mistakes (Expel the immoral brother. 1 Co 5:1-13).

**(4:19-20)** *I will come to you very soon...* In effect, Paul visited again Corinth at the end of his third missionary journey (Ac 20:2-3). *What power they have. The Kingdom of Yahweh is not... talk but of power.* The power of Christianity resides not in the words used to describe it but in the power given to all believers by their spiritual communion with Jesus Christ and Yahweh.

**(4:21)** *What do you prefer? A whip... affection...?* Paul's affection for the Corinthians was as the paternal love of a father who knew that sometimes he had to correct and to hurt for the good of his children.

### **The Lord Jesus Christ's Supper** [1 Co 11:17-34]

**(1Co 11:17)** *In the following directives I have no praise for you, for your meetings do more harm than good. (18)In the first place, I hear that when you come together as a Church, there are divisions among you, and to some extent I believe it. (19)No doubt there have to be differences among you to show which of you have Yahweh's approval. (20)When you come together, it is not the Lord Jesus Christ's Supper you eat, (21)for as you eat, each of you goes ahead without waiting for anybody else. One remains hungry, another gets drunk. (22)Don't you have homes to drink and eat in? Or do you despise the Church of Yahweh and humiliate those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you for this? Certainly not!*

**(23)** *For I received from the Lord Jesus Christ what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus Christ, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, (24)and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me." (25)In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me." (26)For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord Jesus Christ's death until he comes.*

**(27)** *Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord Jesus Christ in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord*

*Jesus Christ. (28) A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. (29) For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord Jesus Christ eats and drinks judgment on himself. (30) That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep. (31) But if we judged ourselves, we would not come under judgment. (32) When we are judged by the Lord Jesus Christ, we are being disciplined so that we will not be condemned with the world.*

*(33) So then, my brothers, when you come together to eat, wait for each other. (34) If anyone is hungry, he should eat at home, so that when you meet together it may not result in judgment.*

*And when I come, I will give further directions.*

**(1Co 11:7)** *Your meetings.* The communal commemorations of the Lord Jesus Christ's Supper.

**(11:18)** *Divisions.* Paul had already dealt with one aspect of these divisions (Divisions in the Church. 1 Co 1:10-17 - On divisions in the Church. 1 Co 3:1-23).

**(11:19)** *Differences... to show which... have Yahweh' approval.* As deplorable as factions could be, they served one good purpose: To distinguish those who were faithful and followed the Gospel preached by Paul.

**(11:20)** *Not the Lord Jesus Christ's Supper you eat.* The spiritual meaning of their communal meal was profaned by their gluttony and discrimination.

**(11:21)** *Remains hungry... gets drunk.* In the early Church the participants brought food for all to share, the rich bringing more and the poor less, but because of their discriminations the rich ate among themselves, eating more, and the poor among themselves, being left hungry.

**(11:22)** *Don't you have homes... Do you despise the Church of Yahweh?* Addressed to the rich who did not share with the poor. The Christian meal ought to be a meal where people linger long in mutual company, not keeping food for themselves and their own circle.

**(11:23)** *I received from the Lord Jesus Christ.* Paul always affirmed that the Gospel he was preaching came to him directly from Jesus Christ (Paul called by Yahweh. Gal 1:11-24).

**(11:24)** *My body.* The broken bread was and is a symbol of Jesus Christ's body "broken" for the spiritual salvation of all men. *In remembrance of me.* The Lord Jesus Christ's Supper was and is a commemorative meal, recalling Jesus Christ's death for the spiritual salvation of all sinners.

**(11:25)** *My blood... in remembrance of me.* A symbol of the new covenant signed in Jesus Christ's blood; the spiritual salvation of all men, sealed by the shedding of his blood.

**(11:26)** *Whenever you eat... and drink.* The commemorative Supper should be held periodically, but Jesus Christ did not leave any explicit instruction as to how often. *Until he comes.* Till the moment of Jesus Christ's second coming.

**(11:27)** *In an unworthy manner.* In the irreverent and self-centered manner of some of the Corinthians.

**(11:28)** *Examine himself.* A person should test the attitude of his own heart, his actions and his awareness of the significance of the Supper, thus making it a means of spiritual grace.

**(11:29)** *Without recognizing the body of the Lord Jesus Christ.* This is the case of the person taking part to the commemorative Supper without recognizing that it symbolizes Jesus Christ's crucified body.

**(11:30)** *Why many... are weak and sick, and... fallen asleep.* The idea of Yahweh's immediate disciplinary punishment -by physical illnesses, even by death- for sin was quite strong in the early Church.

**(11:31-32)** *But... we are... disciplined... not to be condemned.* As Yahweh's redeemed children, the Christians are disciplined -just as a human father disciplines his children to bring them back to the right way.

**(11:33)** *When you come together... wait for each other.* Each person was to exercise restraint and wait to eat with the others.

**(11:34)** *If anyone is hungry...* If a person was too hungry, he should have satisfied his hunger at home without bringing selfish and discriminatory practices into the Church. *When I come... further directions.* This phrase suggests that the Corinthians had other problems -not dealt with in this letter- requiring Paul's presence.

### **The collection for Yahweh's people [1 Co 16:1-4]**

**(1Co 16:1)** *Now about the collection for Yahweh's people: Do what I told the Galatian Churches to do. (2)On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, saving it up, so that when I come no collection will have to be made. (3)Then, when I arrive, I will give letters of introduction to the men you approve and send them with your gift to Jerusalem. (4)If it seems advisable for me to go also, they will accompany me.*

**(1Co 16:1)** *Now about the collection.* The answer to another of the questions posed by the Corinthians. *Yahweh's people.* The Church at Jerusalem was poverty-stricken because of famine (Ac 11:28) and persecution (Ac 8:1). *Galatian Churches.* The collection of this offering was quite widespread, involving the Galatian and the Macedonian Churches (Generosity encouraged. 2 Co 8:1-15. - Titus sent to Corinth. 2 Co 8:16-24; 9:1-15) along with the Corinthian.

**(16:2)** *On the first day of every week... set aside a sum of money...* Every Sunday, the Christian day for worship, each head of family had to bring to the Church -where it was kept and administered- what he had set aside for the communal necessities. *When I come no collections... to be made.* Clearly Paul wished to be sure that, at his next visit at Corinth, he would have had the possibility of dedicating all his time and energy to the solution of that Church's problems, without having to worry also about the collection.

**(16:3)** *The men you approve.* To ensure a proper financial control, these approved men acted as auditors and guardians of the funds the Corinthians gave.

**(16:4)** *If it seems advisable for me to go also.* To be there in Jerusalem to explain about the gift and its donors.

### **Personal requests [1 Co 16:5-18]**

**(1Co 16:5)** *After I go through Macedonia, I will come to you -for I will be going through Macedonia. (6)Perhaps I will stay with you a while, or even spend the winter, so that you can help me on my journey, wherever I go. (7)I do not want to see you now and make only a passing visit; I hope to spend some time with you, if the Lord Yahweh permits. (8)But I will stay on at Ephesus until Pentecost, (9)because a great door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many who oppose me.*

*(10) If Timothy comes, see to it that he has nothing to fear while he is with you, for he is carrying on the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, just as I am. (11) No one, then, should refuse to accept him. Send him on his way in peace so that he may return to me. I am expecting him along with the brothers.*

*(12) Now about our brother Apollos: I strongly urged him to go to you with the brothers. He was quite unwilling to go now, but he will go when he has the opportunity.*

*(13) Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be men of courage; be strong. (14) Do everything with affection.*

*(15) You know that the household of Stephanas were the first converts in Achaia, and they have devoted themselves to the service of the saints. I urge you, brothers, (16) to submit to such as these and to everyone who joins in the work, and labors at it. (17) I was glad when Stephanas, Fortunatus and Achaïus arrived, because they have supplied what was lacking from you. (18) For they refreshed my spirit and you also. Such men deserve recognition.*

**(1Co 16:5)** *After I go through Macedonia.* Paul planned to go up to Macedonia after leaving Ephesus, where he was when he wrote 1 Corinthians, to visit the Philippians and others in northern Greece, and then to Corinth. He had originally planned to go to Corinth first and then to Macedonia but thought it best to change his plans (Paul's change of plans. 2 Co 1:12-2:4).

**(16:6)** *Even spend the winter.* The three-month stay in Greece mentioned in Ac 20:3. *Help me on my journey.* With supplies and equipment. However, Paul did not want to be a financial burden to them (The rights of an apostle. 1 Co 9:1-27).

**(16:7)** *I do not want... to make a passing visit.* The seriousness of the Corinthians' problems required a long stay.

**(16:8-9)** *At Ephesus... there are many who oppose me.* A reference to the pagan craftsmen who made the silver shrines of Artemis and the populace they had stirred (Ac 19:23-34).

**(16:10-11)** *If Timothy comes.* Paul had sent Timothy and Erastus to Macedonia (Ac 19:22), after which Timothy was to go to Corinth (Apostles of Jesus Christ. 1 Co 4:1-21). *See to it that he has nothing to fear. No one... should refuse... him.* As full representative of Paul and of his teaching, he could have been opposed by Paul's enemies. *Expecting him along with the brothers.* Clearly, Timothy was not traveling alone.

**(16:12)** *Now about... Apollos.* The answer to another of the questions posed by the Corinthians. They had asked Paul about Apollos and his coming to see them. *He was quite unwilling to go.* Apollos knew of the party who, without his approval, had formed in Corinth under his name and, clearly, wished to stay away from that kind of problem.

**(16:13-14)** *Be on your guard... Do everything with affection.* A series of imperative orders followed by the superseding instruction to execute them by applying to everything and everybody the fundamental rule of Christian affection.

**(16:15-16)** *Household of Stephanas... devoted themselves to the service... submit to such as these.* Evidently the Corinthians had little respect for this household that Paul had personally baptized (Divisions in the Church. 1 Co 1:10-17). They were among the first converts in Achaia (Greece), along with the few people in Athens who had believed a short time earlier (Ac 17:34).

**(16:17)** *Stephanas, Fortunatus and Achaïus.* They had brought to Paul, in Ephesus, the letter from the Corinthians with all their questions. *Supplied what was lacking from you.* That is, the affection Paul desired from the whole Church at Corinth.

**(16:18)** *Refreshed my spirit and you also.* Because they had come to get Paul's advice, to bring it back to the Corinthians.

**Paul's change of plans** [2 Co 1:12-24;2:1-4]

**(2Co 1:12)** *Now, this is our boast: Our conscience testifies that we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially in our relations with you, in the holiness and sincerity that are from Yahweh. We have done so not according to worldly wisdom, but according to Yahweh's grace. (13)For we do not write you anything you cannot read or understand. And I hope that, (14)as you have understood us in part, you will come to understand fully that you can boast of us just as we will boast of you in the day of the Lord Jesus Christ.*

**(15)** *Because I was confident of this, I planned to visit you first so that you might benefit twice. (16)I planned to visit you on my way to Macedonia and to come back to you from Macedonia, and then to have you send me on my way to Judea. (17)When I planned this, did I do it lightly? Or do I make my plans in a worldly manner so that in the same breath I say, "Yes, yes" and "No, no"?*

**(18)** *But as surely as Yahweh is faithful, our message to you is not "Yes" and "No." (19)For the Son of Yahweh, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by me and Silas and Timothy, was not "Yes" and "No," but in him it has always been "Yes." (20)For no matter how many promises Yahweh has made, they are "Yes" in Jesus Christ. That is why through him the "Amen" is spoken by us to the glory of Yahweh. (21)Now it is Yahweh who makes both us and you stand firm in Jesus Christ. He anointed us, (22) set His seal of ownership on us, and put His Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.*

**(23)** *I call Yahweh as my witness that it was in order to spare you that I did not return to Corinth. (24)Not that we lord it over your faith, but we work with you for your joy, because it is by faith you stand firm. (2:1)So I made up my mind that I would not make another painful visit to you. (2)For if I grieve you, who is left to make me glad but you whom I have grieved? (3)I wrote as I did so that when I came I should not be distressed by those who ought to make me rejoice. I had confidence in all of you, that you would all share my joy. (4)For I wrote you out of great distress and anguish of heart and with many tears, not to grieve you but to let you know the depth of my affection for you.*

**(2Co 1:12)** *We have conducted ourselves... in... holiness and sincerity.* In defending his trustworthiness, Paul appealed to the witnesses of his conduct and of his character, which he had shown during the eighteen months he had spent with them the first time he was in Corinth (Ac 18:11).

**(1:13)** *We do not write you anything you cannot read or understand.* Because of the knowledge they had of Paul, they could trust what he wrote in his letters; he meant what he was writing.

**(1:14)** *Understood us in part.* The confidence the Corinthians had had in Paul and in his apostolic authority had been shaken by the false teachers who had penetrated in their ranks. *Will come to understand fully.* Paul hoped that, with one more visit to them, it could be possible to bring them back to the truth of the Gospel. *Day of the Lord Jesus Christ.* His second coming at the end of time.

**(1:15-16)** *I planned... that you might benefit twice... on my way to... and... from Macedonia.* Here Paul referred to his change of itinerary. Originally he had planned to cross over by sea from Ephesus to Corinth, visiting the Corinthians before traveling north to

Macedonia, and then, returning from there, to visit them a second time, thus giving them two short visits. This was before he knew of their problems.

**(1:17)** *Did I do it lightly? Do I make my plans...?* Paul's opponents in Corinth were saying that his change of plan was evidence that his word was not to be trusted. With the two rhetorical questions Paul was in effect denying that he was acting in a lightly and unreliable manner. His plan to visit the Corinthians had been modified as a consequence of and to better suit the situation at Corinth.

**(1:18-20)** *"Yes" and "No." The Son of Yahweh... has always been "Yes." Promises are... "Yes" in Jesus Christ.* Here Paul appealed to the message of the Gospel he had preached to the Corinthians: By accepting and believing it, they had found it to be absolutely true and entirely free from ambiguity. Furthermore, it was the realization of all of Yahweh's promises -bringing the spiritual salvation of all men through the action of His Messiah. *That is why... "Amen" is spoken... "Amen,"* the Hebrew for "shall it be," was pronounced by the congregation at the end of the hymn of praise, marking everybody's agreement to the true Gospel.

**(1:21-22)** *It is Yahweh who makes... us... firm in Jesus Christ. He anointed... set His seal... put His Spirit...* Faith in Jesus Christ and in the spiritual salvation of all men was and is a gift from Yahweh. The believers' spiritual communion with Jesus Christ and Yahweh was and is the guarantee of their future life in Heaven.

**(1:23)** *To spare you.* Paul's change of plans for visiting the Corinthian Church had been motivated, not by an insensitive attitude, but by affection and concern for them.

**(1:24)** *Not that we lord it over...* Paul did not desire to dominate over their faith, but to bring them back to the true faith, giving them the joy of being again all united in Jesus Christ's name.

**(2:1)** *Another painful visit.* Paul had already made one painful visit to Corinth, and he wanted to avoid another such visit, though he was ready to exert his authority should it prove necessary. The occasion of the painful visit here mentioned is not known. It could not have been his original stay when the local Church was founded. Therefore Paul must have paid a second visit which most probably took place between the writing of 1 and 2 Corinthians, as stated elsewhere in this letter (Paul's concern for the Corinthians. 2 Co 12:11-21. - Final warnings. 2 Co 13:1-10).

**(2:2)** *For, if I grieve you...* Paul did not wish to have to rebuke the Corinthians -making them unhappy- but he had to, in order to have the possibility to correct their mistakes -making him happy.

**(2:3-4)** *I wrote as I did... out of great distress and anguish... my affection for you.* Clearly Paul, for all his reluctance to rebuke, for all his desire to see the best in others, nonetheless did rebuke when it was necessary. Yet his rebuke was based not on criticism but on the Christian affection he felt for the Corinthians.

### **Ministers of the new covenant** [2 Co 2:12-17;3:1-6]

**(2Co 2:12)** *Now when I went to Troas to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ and found that the Lord Yahweh had opened a door for me, (13)I still had no peace of mind, because I did not find my brother Titus there. So I said goodbye to them and went on to Macedonia.*

**(14)** *But thanks to Yahweh, who always leads us in triumphal procession in Jesus Christ and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of him. (15) For we are to Yahweh the aroma of Jesus Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. (16)To the one we are the fragrance of life, to the other, the*

*smell of death. And who is equal to such a task? (17) Unlike so many, we do not go around selling the Word of Yahweh for profit. On the contrary, in Jesus Christ we speak before Yahweh with sincerity, like men sent from Yahweh. (3:1) Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Or do we need, like some people, letters of recommendation to you or from you? (2) You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, known and read by everybody. (3) You show that you are a letter from Jesus Christ, the result of our ministry, written not with ink but with the Spirit of [Yahweh] the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.*

*(4) Such confidence as this is ours through Jesus Christ before Yahweh. (5) Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from Yahweh. (6) He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant -not written but spiritual; for the letter kills, but the Spirit of Yahweh gives life.*

**(2Co 2:12-13)** *When I went to Troas... did not find... Titus... went on to Macedonia.* Paul had traveled up from Ephesus to Troas, on the Aegean coast, hoping to find Titus there and to receive news from him about the Corinthian Church. But Titus had not yet arrived; so Paul, anxious for news from Corinth, set off, going to Philippi, where he met Titus (Paul's joy. 2 Co 7:2-16). *Yahweh had opened a door.* By bringing the Pagans to faith through Paul, Yahweh had opened the door of His Kingdom to them.

**(2:14)** *Yahweh... leads us in triumphal procession... spreads... the fragrance...* The imagery is that of a Roman triumph in which the victorious general led his soldiers and the captives they had taken in festive procession, while the people watched and applauded and the air was filled with the sweet smell released by the burning of spices in the streets. So the Christians, called to spiritual warfare, are triumphantly led by Yahweh. And it is through them that Yahweh spreads everywhere the "fragrance" of their knowledge and of their spiritual communion with Jesus Christ.

**(2:15-16)** *We are... the aroma... the fragrance of life... the smell of death.* The "aroma" of the Gospel released in the world through the testimony of Paul and of the other workers of the Gospel was always a "fragrance," even if it was received by some and rejected by others. To the believers, "those who are being saved," it meant being in spiritual communion with Jesus Christ and Yahweh. To the non-believers, "those who are perishing," it meant being spiritually dead, that is, being separated from Yahweh. *Who is equal to such a task?* Of being "aroma" to Yahweh.

**(2:17)** *Unlike so many... On the contrary...* Referred to the false teachers who had infiltrated the Corinthian Church. Their main interest was to make a profit from their teaching. Paul, by contrast, had preached the Gospel sincerely and free of charge, providing for his own sustenance.

**(3:1)** *Are we beginning to commend ourselves again?* Paul was aware that virtually everything he wrote or said was twisted and used in an hostile manner by the false teachers in Corinth. *Do we need... letters of recommendation?* The appearance of vagrant impostors, who claimed to be teachers of the apostolic truth, led to the need of letters of recommendation for all preachers, with the exception of few people, like Paul and the other apostles.

**(3:2)** *You... are our letter...* The Corinthians themselves were Paul's testimonial. Their change of life after his first visit to them was the only commendation he needed.

**(3:3)** *You are a letter from Jesus Christ... written...* Jesus Christ had written Yahweh's spiritual message on the Corinthians' souls through the work of his servant, Paul.



**(3:4-5)** *Such confidence... our competence comes from Yahweh.* Paul clearly felt that his claim that the Corinthians were a living epistle of Jesus Christ, produced under his ministry, could sound like self-praise. So he strongly insisted that whatever he had done was actually Yahweh's work because it was Yahweh who had made him adequate for the task He had assigned him.

**(3:6)** *A new covenant -not written but spiritual... the letter kills, but the Spirit of Yahweh gives life.* Here, the "letter" is synonymous with the "written law of external behavior," before which all men, because they are unable of keeping all the rules of the law, stand guilty and condemned. On the other hand, the Spirit of Yahweh gives spiritual life in fulfillment of the promise of the new, spiritual covenant, based on the spiritual influence of Yahweh's grace and affection; an influence characteristic of the relationship between a father and his sons.

### ***Paul's hardship [2 Co 6:3-13]***

**(2Co 6:3)** *We put no stumbling block in anyone's path, so that our ministry will not be discredited. (4)Rather, as servants of Yahweh we commend ourselves in every way: in great endurance; in troubles, hardship and distress; (5)in beatings, imprisonments and riots; in hard work, sleepless nights and hunger; (6)in purity, understanding, patience and kindness; in Yahweh's spiritual holiness and in sincere affection; (7)in truthful speech and in the power of Yahweh; with weapons of righteousness in the right hand and in the left; (8)through glory and dishonor, bad report and good report; genuine, yet regarded as impostors; (9)known, yet regarded as unknown; dying, and yet we live on; beaten, and yet not killed; (10)sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; poor, yet making many rich; having nothing, and yet possessing everything.*

**(11)** *We have spoken freely to you, Corinthians, and opened wide our hearts to you. (12)We are not withholding our affection from you, but you are withholding yours from us. (13)As a fair exchange, -I speak as to my children- open wide your hearts also.*

**(2Co 6:3)** *We put no stumbling block...* Paul was always concerned to live an exemplary life because he didn't want his ministry to be discredited.

**(6:4-9)** *As servants of Yahweh we commend ourselves in every way...* Paul commended himself again only because the Gospel he had preached in Corinth was at great risk. But, in contrast to the false teachers, he did so as a servant of Yahweh. His life, with all his trials and afflictions (of which he gives a detailed list) and with the spiritual power coming from Yahweh, could not have been more evidently different from that of the false teachers whose concern was for their own comfort and prestige.

**(6:10)** *Making many rich; having nothing... possessing everything.* True wealth does not consist in worldly possessions but in being "rich toward Yahweh" (The Gospel of Jesus Christ. The parable of the rich fool. Lk 12:21).

**(6:11)** *Spoken freely...* Paul had always been completely open and sincere in his relations with the Christians in Corinth.

**(6:12-13)** *Not withholding our affection... I speak as to my children.* Even if the false teachers were turning the Corinthians against him, he was still fond of them as a father.

### ***Paul's joy [2 Co 7:2-16]***

**(2Co 7:2)** *Make room for us in your hearts. We have wronged no one, we have corrupted no one, we have exploited no one. (3)I do not say this to condemn you; I have said before that you have such a place in our hearts that we would live or die with you. (4)I*

*have great confidence in you; I take great pride in you. I am greatly encouraged; in all our troubles my joy knows no bounds.*

*(5)For when we came into Macedonia, this body of ours had no rest, but we were harassed at every turn -conflicts on the outside, fears within. (6)But Yahweh, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus, (7)and not only by his coming but also by the comfort you had given him. He told us about your longing for me, your deep sorrow, your ardent concern for me, so that my joy was greater than ever.*

*(8)Even if I caused you sorrow by my letter, I do not regret it. Though I did regret it -I see that my letter hurt you, but only for a little while- (9)yet now I am happy, not because you were made sorry, but because your sorrow led you to repentance. For you became sorrowful as Yahweh intended and so were not harmed in any way by us. (10) Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death. (11)See what this godly sorrow has produced in you: what earnestness, what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what alarm, what longing, what concern, what readiness to see justice done. At every point you have proved yourselves to be innocent in this matter. (12)So even though I wrote to you, it was not on account of the one who did the wrong or of the injured party, but rather that before Yahweh you could see for yourselves how devoted to us you are. (13)By all this we are encouraged.*

*In addition to our own encouragement, we were especially delighted to see how happy Titus was, because his spirit has been refreshed by all of you. (14)I had boasted to him about you, and you have not embarrassed me. But just as everything we said to you was true, so our boasting about you to Titus has proved to be true as well. (15)And his affection for you is all the greater when he remembers that you were all obedient, receiving him with fear and trembling. (16)I am glad I can have complete confidence in you.*

**(2Co 7:2)** *We have... exploited no one.* Paul had been accused by the false teachers of being unjust and fraudulent, the very things they were guilty of.

**(7:3)** *I do not... condemn you...* Another declaration of Paul's affection for the Corinthians believers.

**(7:4)** *Great confidence... my joy knows no bounds.* In spite of the troublesome situation, Paul was very confident in the possibility of bringing all the Corinthians back to the true Gospel, and his sureness was already filling him with joy.

**(7:5-7)** *When we came into Macedonia... Yahweh... comforted us by the coming of Titus...* On reaching Macedonia Paul was joined by Titus, who brought good news from Corinth (Ministers of the new covenant. 2 Co 2:12-17; 3:1-6). Titus had been well received and the Corinthians had expressed "deep sorrow" for the grief they had caused to Paul. Consequently, his "joy was greater than ever."

**(7:8-9)** *I do not regret it... I did regret it... now I am happy...* Paul did not regret writing a letter that had caused sorrow to the Corinthians, because it was necessary. In effect, he did regret not the letter but the situation that required it. And the fact that his letter had the desired effect made him happy, for their sorrow did not leave them embittered and hostile but led them to repentance.

**(7:10)** *Godly sorrow... worldly sorrow.* Godly sorrow -manifested by repentance and by the desire of not sinning again- leads to spiritual salvation because it opens the way to divine grace. Worldly sorrow can't, because it is focused only on the painful consequen-

ces of a discovered sin -it is only resentment that the sin has been found out. Given the chance to do the same thing escaping the consequences, it would be done again.

**(7:11)** *See what... godly sorrow has produced in you...* An emphatic -and optimistic-expression of the results of their “deep sorrow.”

**(7:12)** *I wrote... not on account of... who did the wrong, but...* As already declared, Paul assured again the Corinthians that he wrote them only to bring them back to the true Gospel.

**(7:13)** *How happy Titus was.* To have found, in the Corinthian Church, a situation much better than expected; so much better that they had “not embarrassed” Paul.

**(7:14-16)** *I had boasted... you were all obedient... I can have... confidence in you.* At that point the trouble at Corinth was over and, after so much sorrow, Paul could look with confidence at the future of that Church.

### ***Paul's defense of his ministry [2 Co 10:1-18]***

**(2Co 10:1)** *By the meekness and the gentleness of Jesus Christ, I appeal to you -I, Paul, who am “timid” when face to face with you, but “bold” when away! (2)I beg you that when I come I may not have to be as bold as I expect to be toward some people who think that we live by the standards of this world. (3)For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. (4)The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. (5)We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of Yahweh, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Jesus Christ. (6)And we will be ready to punish every act of disobedience, once your obedience is complete.*

**(7)You are looking only on the surface of things. If anyone is confident that he belongs to Jesus Christ, he should also consider that we belong to Jesus Christ just as much as he. (8)For even if I boast somewhat freely about the authority the Lord Yahweh gave us for building you up rather than pulling you down, I will not be ashamed of it. (9)I do not want to seem to be trying to frighten you with my letters. (10)For some say, “His letters are weighty and forceful, but in person he is unimpressive and his speaking amounts to nothing.” (11)Such people should realize that what we are in our letters when we are absent, we will be in our actions when we are present.**

**(12)We do not dare to classify or compare ourselves with some who commend themselves. When they measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves, they are not wise. (13)We, however, will not boast beyond proper limits, but will confine our boasting to the field Yahweh has assigned to us, a field that reaches even to you. (14)We are not going too far in our boasting, as would be the case if we had not come to you, for we did get as far as you with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. (15)Neither do we go beyond our limits by boasting of work done by others. Our hope is that, as your faith continues to grow, our area of activity among you will greatly expand, (16)so that we can preach the Gospel in the regions beyond you. For we do not want to boast about work already done in another man's territory. (17)But, “Let him who boasts boast in the Lord Yahweh.” (18)For it is not the one who commends himself who is approved, but the one whom the Lord Yahweh commends.**

**(2Co 10:1)** *“Timid” when face to face... “bold” when away.* From the previous passage (Paul's joy. 2 Co 7:2-16) it appears that the majority of the Corinthians believers had been won over to Paul, after having been alienated by his opponents.

**(10:2)** *I beg you that...* Paul dealt firmly with the false accusations spread by the remaining opponents. Those who wished to discredit him were saying that he was bold at a distance -threatening, especially in his letters, to take severe disciplinary actions- but that he would be weak and indecisive when present in person. In short, that he did not have the apostolic authority he claimed to have.

**(10:3-5)** *We live in the world... do not wage war as the world. The weapons we fight with are...* Paul was clearly prepared for the battle against his opponents, and his weapon was the power of his divinely given authority (Paul called by Yahweh. Gal 1:11-24) by which he would “demolish... every pretensions... against... Yahweh.”

**(10:6)** *Ready to punish...* First, Paul wanted to bring back all the Corinthians to the true Gospel and, then, he was prepared to firmly defend the reconstituted Church.

**(10:7)** *If anyone is confident that he belongs to Jesus Christ...* A reference to the claim of superior spirituality by the party of Jesus Christ (Divisions in the Church. 1 Co 1:10-17). Paul, who had received the Gospel by Jesus Christ (Paul called by Yahweh. Gal 1:11-24), belonged to Jesus Christ “just as much” as them.

**(10:8)** *Even if I boast...* The primary purpose of Paul’s authority was constructive -building up spiritually the Corinthians and bringing them to Yahweh- not destructive -pulling them down with severe punishment.

**(10:9-11)** *I do not want to seem... his letters are... forceful... his speaking... nothing. When... absent... present.* Paul’s adversaries used professional oratory, designed to extract money from gullible audiences. On the contrary, in coming to Corinth Paul had purposely avoided academic eloquence and had proclaimed in the simplest way the message of Jesus Christ crucified for the spiritual salvation of all men.

**(10:12)** *They measure themselves by themselves.* The false teachers in Corinth behaved as though there was no standard of comparison higher than themselves.

**(10:13)** *We... confine... to the field Yahweh has assigned to us... that reaches even to you.* Paul worked as a servant of Yahweh, doing only His will by bringing the Gospel to all men, inclusive of the Corinthians.

**(10:14-15)** *Not going too far... Neither... work done by others.* In rebuking the Corinthians, Paul was not exceeding his authority, because it had been him, not other preachers, who brought them Jesus Christ’s Gospel.

**(10:16)** *Preach the Gospel in the regions beyond you.* Paul was dreaming of spreading the Gospel all around the Roman Empire, till Spain (Paul’s plan to visit Rome. Ro 15:23-33). *Work... done in another man’s territory.* Paul’s work was of a pioneering nature, bringing the Gospel to unbelievers, not going where others had already preached.

**(10:17)** *Let him who boast...* A quotation from Jer. 9:24.

**(10:18)** *Not... who commends himself... the one whom the Lord Yahweh commends.* The true servant of Yahweh is “commended” by his way of preaching and by his kind of life, not by what he is declaring about himself.

### **Paul and the false apostles** [2 Co 11:1-15]

**(2Co 11:1)** *I hope you will put up with a little of my foolishness; but you are already doing that. (2)* *I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy. I promised you to one husband, to Jesus Christ, so that I might present you as a pure virgin to him. (3)* *But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent’s cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Jesus Christ. (4)* *For if someone comes to you and preaches a Jesus Christ other than the Jesus Christ we preached, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or a different gospel from*

*the one you accepted, you put up with it easily enough. (5)But I do not think I am in the least inferior to those "super-apostles." (6)I may not be a trained speaker, but I do have knowledge. We have made this perfectly clear to you in every way.*

*(7)Was it a sin for me to lower myself in order to elevate you by preaching the Gospel of Yahweh to you free of charge? (8)I robbed other Churches by receiving support from them so as to serve you. (9)And when I was with you and needed something, I was not a burden to anyone, for the brothers who came from Macedonia supplied what I needed. I have kept myself from being a burden to you in any way, and will continue to do so. (10)As surely as the truth of Jesus Christ is in me, nobody in the regions of Achaia will stop this boasting of mine. (11)Why? Because I am not fond of you? Yahweh knows I do! (12)And I will keep on doing what I am doing in order to cut the ground from under those who want an opportunity to be considered equal with us in the things they boast about.*

*(13)For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, masquerading as apostles of Jesus Christ. (14)And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. (15)It is not surprising, then, if his servants masquerade as servants of righteousness. Their end will be what their actions deserve.*

**(2Co 11:1)** *My foolishness.* In order to compare his own ministry with that of the false apostles who had invaded the Corinthian Church, Paul had to speak about himself, which inevitably seemed foolish boasting.

**(11:2)** *Godly jealousy.* Paul could not bear the thought that there could be any rival to the true Gospel. *I promised you to one husband.* As their spiritual father, Paul had promised the Corinthian believers to Jesus Christ -frequently depicted as the bridegroom, with the Church portrayed as his bride. *Pure virgin.* Undeclared by the doctrines of the false teachers.

**(11:3)** *I am afraid that...* In other terms, Paul clearly considered the false teachers as Satan's emissaries.

**(11:4)** *A Jesus Christ other than the Jesus Christ we preached.* The false teachers, who were Judaizers, wished to impose Jewish practices and observances to the Gentile converts. *A different spirit... a different gospel.* Not the "Spirit of sonship" (Life by means of Yahweh's Spirit. Ro 8:1-17) which they had received by believing to the true Gospel, but a teaching leading to spiritual bondage, fear and worldliness. *You put up with it easily enough.* A bitter comment on their poor discernment.

**(11:5)** *Those "super-apostles."* In reality they were not apostles at all, except in their own arrogantly inflated opinion of themselves.

**(11:6)** *I may not be a trained speaker.* One using the skills, references and flourishes of professional rhetoric. *I do have knowledge... made... clear to you.* As the Corinthian believers well knew, Paul had a Yahweh-given knowledge of Jesus Christ (Paul called by Yahweh. Gal 1:11-24).

**(11:7)** *Was it a sin... preaching... free of charge?* The false teachers' method of operation -the first century traveling philosophers and religious teachers- was to demand payment for their "professional" services. Paul, his enemies said, was lowering himself and committing a sin by breaking the rule that a teacher should receive payment in proportion to the worth of his skill.

**(11:8)** *I robbed other Churches.* By accepting freely given support from established congregations.

**(11:9)** *Not a burden... for the brothers... from Macedonia supplied...* Paul was never a financial burden to the Corinthian believers. Furthermore, during his stay in Corinth, he received financial gifts from the Churches in Macedonia (Ac 18:5), particularly from the Church at Philippi (Thanks for their gifts. Php 4:15). To note that Paul never accepted to be financially supported by the Church of the place where he was staying and preaching, but accepted gifts only after he had moved on.

**(11:10-12)** *Nobody... will stop... Because... I will keep on doing...* Paul would never be deterred from presenting the Gospel free of charge. To him his financial independence was always a way to demonstrate that his moral standard was higher, not “equal” to that of his adversaries.

**(11:13)** *False apostles... masquerading as apostles of Jesus Christ.* Because, even if asserting the contrary, they were not preaching the true Gospel of Jesus Christ.

**(11:14)** *Satan... masquerades as an angel of light.* As when he convinced Eve to eat from the forbidden tree (Thoughts. Creation of man).

**(11:15)** *His servants... as servants of righteousness.* Their supposed Christianity was only covering their true identity.

**Paul boasts about his sufferings** [2 Co 11:16-33]

**(2Co 11:16)** *I repeat: Let no one take me for a fool. But if you do, then receive me just as you would a fool, so that I may do a little boasting. (17) In this self-confident boasting I am not talking as the Lord Jesus Christ would, but as a fool. (18) Since many are boasting in the way the world does, I too will boast. (19) You gladly put up with fools since you are so wise! (20) In fact, you even put up with anyone who enslaves you or exploits you or takes advantage of you or pushes himself forward or slaps you in the face. (21) To my shame I admit that we were too weak for that!*

*What anyone else dares to boast about -I am speaking as a fool- I also dare to boast about. (22) Are they Hebrew? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. (23) Are they Abraham's descendants? So am I. Are they servants of Jesus Christ? (I am out of 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. (24) Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. (25) 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. (26) 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. (27) 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. (28) Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the Churches. Who is weak, and I do not feel weak? (29) Who is led to sin, and I do not inwardly burn?*

**(30)** *If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness. (31) [Yahweh] the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is to be praised forever, knows that I am not lying. (32) In Damascus the governor under King Aretas had the city of the Damascenes guarded in order to arrest me. But I was lowered in a basket from a window in the wall and slipped through his hands.*

**(2Co 11:16-17)** *Let no one take me for a fool. But... receive me... as... a fool.* As already seen at the beginning of “Paul and the false apostles” (2 Co 11:1-15), Paul wanted to

make clear that it was only in order to compare his own ministry with that of the false apostles that he had to speak about himself, which inevitably seemed foolish boasting -that is, speaking "as a fool."

**(11:18)** *I too will boast.* By speaking of the nature of his apostolic ministry.

**(11:19)** *You gladly put up with fools.* An ironic rebuke. The Corinthians were ready to accept the graceless teaching of the false apostles, described as fools because of their self-centered boasting.

**(11:20)** *Enslaves you.* By the imposition of Jewish rules and prohibitions. *Exploits... takes advantage of you.* Financially, thanks to the Corinthians' lack of discernment and readiness to be impressed by outward shows and clever talks. *Pushes himself forward or slaps you in the face.* Physically, using violent methods to obtain their submission and control over the Church.

**(11:21)** *We were too weak for that!* Ironically, compared with the self-seeking roughness of the impostors, Paul's conduct had to be considered weak. *What anyone... I also dare to...* All against his will Paul was forced to produce his credentials as an apostle -not for his own sake, but for the sake of the Gospel he was preaching.

**(11:22-27)** *Hebrews... Israelites... Abraham's descendants.* The false apostles were Jew Christians who felt superior to Gentile Christians and wished to impose Jewish practices and observances to Gentile converts. That, of course, was not Paul's opinion. *Servants of Jesus Christ. I am more. I have worked...* The consideration of the nature of Paul's ministry and of its cost to him in suffering (of which Paul made a detailed catalog in the following verses) was showing that he was a greater servant of Jesus Christ than all of the false teachers.

**(11:28-29)** *I face daily... my concern for all the Churches. Weak... inwardly burn.* So close was Paul to all the Churches that he felt on himself the weakness of any member who was weak and the shame of any believer who was sinning.

**(11:30-31)** *I will boast of the things that show my weakness.* His "weakness" opened the way for him to experience the power of Yahweh's grace. Therefore his boasting, unlike that of the false apostles, was not in what he had done but in what Yahweh had done.

**(11:32)** *King Aretas.* Aretas IV, father-in-law of Herod Antipas, ruled there from 9 BC to AD 40. *Guarded in order to arrest me. I was lowered in a basket...* As reported in Ac 9:24-25.

### **Paul's vision and his thorn** [2 Co 12:1-10]

**(2Co 12:1)** *I must go on boasting. Although there is nothing to be gained, I will go on to visions and revelations from the Lord Yahweh. (2)I know a man in Jesus Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven. Whether it was in the body or out of the body I do not know -Yahweh knows. (3)And I know that this man -whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, but Yahweh knows- (4)was caught up to Paradise. He heard inexpressible things, things that man is not permitted to tell. (5)I will boast about a man like that, but I will not boast about myself, except about my weaknesses. (6)Even if I should choose to boast, I would not be a fool, because I would be speaking the truth. But I refrain, so no one will think more of me than is warranted by what I do or say.*

**(7)** *To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. (8) Three times I pleaded with the Lord Jesus Christ to take it away from me. (9)But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."*

*Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Jesus Christ's power may rest on me. (10) That is why, for Jesus Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.*

**(2Co 12:1)** *I must go on boasting. Although... I will go on to visions...* All against his will Paul had to set out his credentials knowing that he was telling of an experience -a rapture to Heaven- which was too easy to refute and consider a foolishness.

**(12:2-4)** *I know a man in Jesus Christ who...* Paul was that man and he described his experience, with a kind of detachment, from the point of view of an external observer. *Third heaven... Paradise.* Paul was sure of his remarkable experience, but he did not know whether it included even the body or only the spirit. To the Jews, the "third heaven" designated the place -beyond the Earth's atmosphere (first heaven) and outer space with its constellations (second heaven)- where Yahweh was present. Third heaven and Paradise were synonymous. *Inexpressible things... not permitted to tell.* Clearly, there was and there is no way to express by human words such a kind of ecstatic experience.

**(12:5-6)** *I will boast about... my weaknesses. If I... boast, I would... be speaking the truth.* It was because some of Paul's adversaries claimed they had visions and revelations that he decided to tell about his high ecstatic experience which -differently than in their case- was counterbalanced by a particular affliction, which was given to him so that he should glory not himself but Yahweh.

**(12:7)** *Thorn in my flesh.* In Pamphilia Paul had contracted malaria, which was accompanied by prostrating headaches (Paul's concern for the Galatians. Gal 4:8-20). *Messenger from Satan.* At that time, all illnesses were considered the consequence of sins, that is, of Satan's temptations.

**(12:8-10)** *I pleaded with the Lord... "My grace is sufficient for you..."* The answer to Paul's prayer was the same given to so many prayers: he was not freed from that illness but given the strength to bear it. This is how Yahweh, and Jesus Christ, works. He does not spare troubles, but makes men able to withstand them. *I will boast... gladly... When I am weak, then I am strong.* Human weakness provides the ideal opportunity for the display of divine power.

### **Paul's concern for the Corinthians [2 Co 12:11-21]**

**(2Co 12:11)** *I have made a fool of myself, but you drove me to it. I ought to have been commended by you, for I am not in the least inferior to the "super-apostles," even though I am nothing. (12) The things that mark an apostle -signs, wonders and miracles- were done among you with great perseverance. (13) In what were you inferior to the other Churches, except that I was never a burden to you? Forgive me this offense!*

**(14)** *Now I am ready to visit you for the third time, and I will not be a burden to you, because what I want is not your possessions but you. After all, children should not have to save up for their parents, but parents for their children. (15) So I will very gladly spend for you everything I have and expend myself as well. If I am fond of you more, will you be fond of me less? (16) Be that as it may, I have not been a burden to you. Yet, crafty fellow that I am, I caught you by trickery! (17) Did I exploit you through any of the men I sent you? (18) I urged Titus to go to you and I sent our brother with him. Titus did not exploit you, did he? Did we not act in the same spirit and follow the same course?*

**(19)** *Have you been thinking all along that we have been defending ourselves to you?*



*We have been speaking in the sight of Yahweh as those in Jesus Christ; and everything we do, dear friends, is for your strengthening. (20) For I am afraid that when I come I may not find you as I want you to be, and you may not find me as you want me to be. I fear that there may be quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, factions, slander, gossip, arrogance and disorder. (21) I am afraid that when I come again [Yahweh] my God will humble me before you, and I will be grieved over many who have sinned earlier and have not repented of the impurity, sexual sin and debauchery in which they have indulged.*

**(2Co 12:11)** *Made a fool of myself.* In order to compare his own ministry with that of the false apostles, Paul had to speak about himself, which inevitably seemed foolish boasting. *You drove me to it.* The Corinthian Christians had obliged Paul to write about himself because they had accepted the claims of the “super-apostles,” who were challenging Paul’s apostolic authority.

**(12:12)** *Things that mark an apostle.* Paul’s claim of apostleship was based on one thing: the effectiveness of his ministry. When Paul wished to guarantee the reality of the Gospel that he preached in Corinth, he made a list of sins and sinners and then added the sentence, “And that is what some of you were” (Lawsuits among believers. 1 Co 6: 1-11). Paul wished to have his apostleship judged only by his ability to bring the life-changing grace of Jesus Christ to men.

**(12:13)** *I was never a burden to you. Forgive me this offense!* Paul’s refusal to accept any payment when preaching the Gospel to the Corinthians had been twisted by his adversaries. They, who had grasped at all they could get, were saying that it was he who had offended the Corinthians.

**(12:14)** *Visit you for the third time.* Paul’s first visit had been his stay when the local Church was founded. The occasion of the second visit is not known, but it is clear that it took place between the writing of 1 and 2 Corinthians. *Will not be a burden.* Chiefly now, so that the falsity and greed of the “super-apostles” could be clearly exposed. *Children.* Paul was the spiritual father of all Corinthian believers.

**(12:15)** *I will very gladly... expend myself.* Paul was showing his paternal devotion not merely in his readiness to spend whatever money he had but, much more deeply, in his joyful willingness to give all of himself for their sake.

**(12:16)** *I caught you by trickery!* Sarcastically, refuting another of the accusations made against him by the false apostles: that he was exploiting the Corinthians by the trick of organizing a collection for the poverty-stricken Christians in Jerusalem -contributions that would never reach them because they were going into Paul’s pockets.

**(12:17)** *Did I exploit you through...? I urged Titus... and I sent our brother.* The collection had been started in Corinth under the direction of Titus but, due to the troubles in the Corinthian Church, had come to a stand-still. Paul was sending Titus back to them, taking with him this letter, to complete that good work. The “brother” accompanying Titus was probably Luke, but possibly Barnabas. *Titus did not exploit you... we... act in the same spirit.* The integrity of Paul’s representatives reflected well his own integrity.

**(12:18-21)** *Have you been thinking...? We have been speaking in the sight of Yahweh.* Paul’s concern in speaking of himself was not for his own prestige and reputation before the Corinthians. It was before Yahweh that he stood. *Everything... is for your strengthening. I am afraid... fear that... I will be grieved over many who...* Far from being self-centered, Paul’s concern was for the spiritual situation of the Corinthians, his “dear friends,” for they too had to stand before Yahweh’s judgment.

**Generosity encouraged** [2 Co 8:1-15]

**(2Co 8:1)** *And now, brothers, we want you to know about the grace that Yahweh has given the Macedonian Churches. (2) Out of the most severe trial and their extreme poverty, their overflowing joy welled up in rich generosity. (3) For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, (4) they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints. (5) And they did not do as we expected, by they gave themselves first to the Lord Jesus Christ and then to us in keeping with Yahweh's will. (6) So we urged Titus, since he had earlier made a beginning, to bring also to completion this act of grace on your part. (7) But just as you excel in everything -in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in your affection for us- see that you also excel in the grace of this giving.*

**(8)** *I am not commanding you, but I want to test the sincerity of your affection by comparing it with the earnestness of others. (9) For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.*

**(10)** *And here is my advice about what is best for you in this matter: Last year you were the first not only to give but also to have the desire to do so. (11) Now finish the work, so that your eager willingness to do it may be matched by your completion of it, according to your means. (12) For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what he does not have.*

**(13)** *Our desire is not that others might be relieved while you are hard pressed, but that there might be equality. (14) At the present time your plenty will supply what they need, so that in turn their plenty will supply what you need. Then there will be equality, (15) as it is written: "He who gathered much did not have too much, and he who gathered little did not have too little."*

**(2Co 8:1)** *The grace... Yahweh has given.* To be in condition -spiritually and materially- of helping other men was and is a privilege given by Yahweh.

**(8:2)** *Most severe trial... rich generosity.* The Macedonian Churches, in spite of their own poverty and problems, were an example of Christian generosity, as demonstrated by their contributions for the poverty-stricken Christians of Jerusalem.

**(8:3)** *I testify that...* Paul, who knew the situation of all the Asian Churches, was the witness of the generosity of the Macedonian believers.

**(8:4)** *The saints.* Another term for Yahweh's people. At that time, the Church at Jerusalem was the "Mother Church" -mother in the faith- because it had been the first Christian Church.

**(8:5)** *They gave themselves...* The Macedonian Christians were to be an example to the Corinthian believers.

**(8:6)** *We urged Titus...* The collection had been started in Corinth one year earlier under the direction of Titus but, due the troubles in the Corinthian Church, had come to a standstill. Now Paul was sending Titus back to them, taking with him this letter, to complete that "act of grace."

**(8:7)** *Just as you excel... see that...* A request of not forgetting how they were -full of faith and zeal- when their Church had been founded.

**(8:8)** *I am not commanding you.* True charity and generosity cannot be commanded. *Sincerity of your affection.* They could prove this by giving selflessly and spontaneously. *Earnestness of others.* The remarkable example of the Macedonian Churches.

**(8:9)** *Though he was rich... he became poor, so that you... might become rich.* Jesus Christ, the human Son of Yahweh, had renounced everything, even his own life, for the spiritual salvation of all men.

**(8:10-11)** *My advice... finish the work... according to your means.* The collection they had started and then abandoned needed to be completed in accordance to their financial capability.

**(8:12)** *If the willingness is there... according to what one has.* What matters is the willingness, which is the motive of true generosity, no matter the amount that can be afforded.

**(8:13)** *Our desire is...* Clearly, the Church at Corinth was much better off than that at Jerusalem.

**(8:14)** *Your plenty... what they need... their plenty... what you need.* The Corinthians were in condition of giving a substantial financial help, which would have been compensated by the prayers of the faithful -and poor- believers of Jerusalem.

**(8:15)** *He who gathered much...* A quotation from Ex 16:18, originally referred to the gathering by the Israelites of the manna in the desert. Though the aged and the weak could collect less than the young and the strong, at the end of the day there was an equal distribution. Similarly, the distribution of the essential things -both material and spiritual- has to be equal among fellow-believers.

**Titus sent to Corinth** [2 Co 8:16-24;9:1-5]

**(2Co 8:16)** *I thank Yahweh, who put into the heart of Titus the same concern I have for you. (17)For Titus not only welcomed our appeal, but he is coming to you with much enthusiasm and on his own initiative. (18)And we are sending along with him the brother who is praised by all the Churches for his service to the Gospel. (19)What is more, he was chosen by the Churches to accompany us as we carry the offering, which we administer in order to honor the Lord Jesus Christ himself and to show our eagerness to help. (20)We want to avoid any criticism on the way we administer this liberal gift. (21)For we are taking pains to do what is right, not only in the eyes of the Lord Yahweh, but also in the eyes of men.*

**(22)** *In addition, we are sending with them our brother who has often proved to us in many ways that he is zealous, and now even more so because of his great confidence in you. (23)As for Titus, he is my partner and fellow worker among you; as for our brothers, they are representatives of the Churches and an honor to Jesus Christ. (24)Therefore show these men the proof of your affection and the reason for our pride in you, so that the Churches can see it.*

**(9:1)** *There is no need for me to write to you about this service to the saints. (2)For I know your eagerness to help, and I have been boasting about it to the Macedonians, telling them that since last year you in Achaia were ready to give; and your enthusiasm has stirred most of them to action. (3)But I am sending the brothers in order that our boasting about you in this matter should not prove hollow, but that you may be ready, as I said you would be. (4)For if any Macedonians come with me and find you unprepared, we -not to say anything about you- would be ashamed of having been so confident. (5)So I thought it necessary to urge the brothers to visit you in advance and finish the arrangements for the generous gift you have promised. Then it will be ready as a generous gift, not as one grudgingly given.*

**(2Co 8:16-17)** *Titus... welcomed our appeal... To go to Corinth and complete the collection.*

**(8:18-19)** *The brother... praised... chosen by the Churches.* The “brother” accompanying Titus was probably Luke, but possibly Barnabas. Anyway, it is clear that he was widely known for the faithfulness of his ministry and fully trusted in the delicate matter of handling money.

**(8:20-21)** *We want to avoid any criticism... we are taking pains for...* It is important not only what Yahweh sees, but also that people could see that one is carrying on the Lord’s work in a proper, ethical and honest way.

**(8:22)** *In addition... sending with them our brother...* This second man sent by Paul is totally unknown.

**(8:23)** *Partner and fellow worker.* Paul held Titus in high esteem. *Representatives of the Churches.* Duly elected delegates of the oldest Churches, so that they could not be dismissed as cronies chosen by Paul alone. They were Christians of well-known and outstanding faithfulness.

**(8:24)** *Proof of your affection... reason for our pride in you.* In spite of the troublesome situation, Paul had already declared to “have great confidence” and “great pride” in the Corinthians (Paul’s joy. 2 Co 7:2-16).

**(9:1-2)** *No need... your eagerness... you... were ready to give...* The initial -good- results of the collection started in Corinth under the direction of Titus during the previous year had been used by Paul to convince the Macedonian believers to participate to it with substantial contributions.

**(9:3-5)** *I am sending the brothers... not to... be ashamed... and finish the arrangements.* All those details and considerations show that Paul was still worried by the influence the false teachers could still have on the Corinthian believers.

### **Sowing generously** [2 Co 9:6-15]

**(2Co 9:6)** *Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. (7)Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for Yahweh likes a cheerful giver. (8)And Yahweh is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. (9)As it is written:*

*“He has scattered abroad His gifts to the poor; His righteousness endures forever.”*

**(10)** *Now He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. (11)You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to Yahweh.*

**(12)** *This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of Yahweh’s people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to Yahweh. (13)Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, men will praise Yahweh for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else. (14)And in their prayers for you their hearts will go out to you, because of the surpassing grace Yahweh has given you. (15)Thanks be to Yahweh for His indescribable gift!*

**(2Co 9:6)** *Whoever sows...* A well known proverb -but not one from the Old Testament book of Proverbs.

**(9:7)** *Each... should give...* There are many ways in which a man can give a gift. As a social duty, or for self-satisfaction, or for personal prestige, or for the desire to help those in need. Clearly, the first three ways are not totally bad, for at least the gift is made. But the proper way to give is the fourth one.

**(9:8-9)** *All things... all times... all that you need.* Yahweh, through His grace, gives each “cheerful giver” both the gift to give and the spirit in which to give it. *He has scattered...* A quotation from Psalm 112:9, a praise to the man who follows the will of Yahweh with generosity, justice and righteousness.

**(9:10-13)** *He who supplies... will enlarge... You will be made rich... so... be generous...* Paul insisted that no man was ever a loser because he was generous. On the contrary, the man who sows with a generous hand will in due time reap a generous, spiritual, return. *Your generosity... not only supplying... men will praise Yahweh...* The effect of generous giving on the part of the Corinthians would extend beyond Jerusalem, the destination of their gift, to the Church as a whole, causing widespread prayer and praise to Yahweh for their generosity.

**(9:14)** *The surpassing grace Yahweh has given you.* Displayed by their demonstration of concern for fellow believers who were in desperate need.

**(9:15)** *His indescribable gift.* The gift of His Son, for the spiritual salvation of all men.

#### ***Final warnings [2 Co 13:1-10]***

**(2Co 13:1)** *This will be my third visit to you. “Every matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.” (2) I already gave you a warning when I was with you the second time. I now repeat it while absent: On my return I will not spare those who sinned earlier or any of the others, (3) since you are demanding proof that Jesus Christ is speaking through me. He is not weak in dealing with you, but is powerful among you. (4) For to be sure, he was crucified in weakness, yet he lives by Yahweh’s power. Likewise, we are weak in him, yet by Yahweh’s power we will live with him to serve you.*

**(5)** *Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Jesus Christ is in you -unless, of course, you fail the test? (6) And I trust that you will discover that we have not failed the test. (7) Now we pray to Yahweh that you will not do anything wrong. Not that people will see that we have stood the test but that you will do what is right even though we may seem to have failed. (8) For we cannot do anything against the truth, but only for the truth. (9) We are glad whenever we are weak but you are strong; and our prayer is for your perfection. (10) This is why I write these things when I am absent, that when I come I may not have to be harsh in my use of authority -the authority the Lord Yahweh gave me for building you up, not for tearing you down.*

**(2Co 13:1)** *Third visit.* Paul’s first visit had been his stay when the local Church was founded. The occasion of the second visit is not known, but most probably took place between the writing of 1 and 2 Corinthians. *Every matter...* A quotation from Dt 19:15.

**(13:2)** *I will not spare... any.* Paul would not hesitate to take stern disciplinary action against the offenders when coming to Corinth for the third time, as he was about to do.

**(13:3)** *Demanding proof that Jesus Christ is speaking through me.* Paul’s opponents were affirming that what he said was worthless because Paul had purposely disdained academic eloquence when proclaiming in very simple terms the message of Jesus Christ

crucified for the spiritual salvation of all men. *He is not weak.* Paul was appointed apostle by Jesus Christ who conferred him the power of his authority.

**(13:4)** *Likewise... we will live... to serve you.* Here, Paul confirms his apostolic authority which, through Jesus Christ, he had received from Yahweh Himself, to bring the Gentiles to Christianity.

**(13:5-6)** *Examine... test yourselves... discover that we have not failed the test.* If, instead of demanding proof that Jesus Christ was speaking through him -as the false apostles were inciting them to do- the Corinthians had looked into their own hearts, they would have recognized Paul's faithfulness.

**(13:7)** *We pray... that you will do what is right.* Then there would be no need for Paul to give evidence of his authority by taking disciplinary action.

**(13:8)** *We cannot do anything against the truth.* Paul was exercising his apostolic authority only in a way supporting the truth. Consequently, if they had recognized the truth at his arrival in Corinth, there would have been no need for him to take disciplinary action.

**(13:9-10)** *We are weak... you are strong.* Paul considered himself "weak," that is, a simple preacher, not an arrogant teacher. And he considered the Corinthians "strong" because he was convinced that through his suffering and trials they were brought to the strength and life of the Christian faith. *Our prayer is for your perfection. I write... I may not... to be harsh...* Paul never wanted to show his authority for the sake of showing it. Everything he did was for the spiritual improvement of the believers.

### To the Romans

#### Paul's longing to visit Rome [Ro 1:11-17]

**(Ro 1:11)** *I long to see you so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to make you strong (12)-that is, that you and I may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith.*

**(13)** *I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that I planned many times to come to you (but have been prevented from doing so until now) in order that I might have a harvest among you, just as I have had among the other Gentiles.*

**(14)** *I am obligated both to Greeks and non-Greeks, both to the wise and the foolish.*

**(15)** *That is why I am so eager to preach the Gospel also to you who are at Rome.*

**(16)** *I am not ashamed of the Gospel, because it is the power of Yahweh for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. (17) For in the Gospel a righteousness from Yahweh is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith."*

**(Ro 1:11-12)** *I long to see you.* When he wrote this letter, Paul had never been in Rome and, then, had not participated to the founding of the Roman Church. *I may impart you... that is, that you and I may be...* When dictating this phrase, Paul realized that it sounded unproper ("that I may impart you"), so he quickly changed it ("that is, that you and I may be..."). *Mutually encouraged by...* So that he and the Roman believers could spiritually comfort and strengthen each other.

**(1:13)** *I planned many times...* Paul had always dreamed to go and preach there, in the capital of the Roman Empire (Ac 19:21; 23:11), but his missionary activity in the eastern Mediterranean had absorbed him completely. *Harvest among you... Gentiles.* Most probably, initially the Church at Rome was composed mainly by Jew-converts (in Rome there was a substantial Jewish community). And Paul, the "apostle to the Gentiles"

(Paul accepted by the apostles. Gal 2:1-10), was dreaming of spreading the Gospel among the so many Gentiles living in Rome.

**(1:14-15)** *Obligated... to Greeks and non-Greeks... to the wise and the foolish. That is why...* Paul always felt that he “was compelled to preach” the Gospel to all men (The rights of an apostle. 1 Co 9:1-27), in this case to the Gentiles living in Rome, both the Roman citizens (Greeks, wise) and the non-Roman (non-Greeks, foolish).

**(1:16)** *Not ashamed.* Actually, Paul was proud that he had the privilege to preach the Gospel with its message of spiritual salvation. *First for the Jew, then for the Gentile.* It was necessary that the diffusion of the Gospel began at a particular point with a particular people, from where it could spread all around the world.

**(1:17)** *Righteousness... by faith.* All men need to be righteous, that is, to be “in the right” in relation to Yahweh. This state cannot come from the observance of the law (nobody can do it) but only from having faith in Yahweh’s grace (Righteousness through faith. Ro 3:21-31). *The righteous will live by faith.* A quotation from Hab 2:4.

**Paul the minister to the Gentiles [Ro 15:14-22]**

**(Ro 15:14)** *I myself am convinced, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, complete in knowledge and competent to instruct one another. (15) I have written you quite boldly on some points, as if to remind you of them again, because of the grace Yahweh gave me (16) to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles with the priestly duty of proclaiming the Gospel of Yahweh, so that the Gentiles might become an offering acceptable to Yahweh, sanctified by His Holy Spirit.*

**(17)** *Therefore I glory in Jesus Christ in my service to Yahweh. (18) I will not venture to speak of anything except what Jesus Christ has accomplished through me in leading the Gentiles to obey Yahweh by what I have said and done (19)-by the power of signs and miracles, through the power of His Spirit. So from Jerusalem all the way around Illyricum, I have fully proclaimed the Gospel of Jesus Christ. (20) It has always been my ambition to preach the Gospel where Jesus Christ was not known, so that I would not be building on someone else’s foundation. (21) Rather, as it is written:*

*“Those who were not told about him will see, and those who have not heard will understand.”*

**(22)** *This is why I have often been hindered from coming to you.*

**(Ro 15:14)** *I... am convinced... that you are...* Paul did want to make clear that he had no doubt about the correctness of the Gospel taught by the founders of the Church at Rome.

**(15:15)** *Written... on some points, as if to remind you...* Since Paul had never preached or taught in Rome, he wrote this letter to prepare the way for his future visit and to present the basic system of salvation to a Church that had not received the teaching of an apostle before.

**(15:16)** *Priestly duty of proclaiming the Gospel.* Paul’s priestly function did not consist of performing some rituals in a temple, but of preaching the Gospel. *An offering acceptable to Yahweh, sanctified by His Holy Spirit.* The purpose of his missionary activity was to bring people to Yahweh, that is, in spiritual communion with Jesus Christ and Yahweh.

**(15:17-18)** *I glory... I will not... speak...* Paul was not boasting of his own achievements but of what Jesus Christ had accomplished through his preaching.

**(15:19)** *By the power... of His Spirit.* In the early Church Yahweh added His confirmation to the Gospel through supernatural acts such as the healing of the sick (Warning to pay attention. Heb 2:1-4). *I have fully proclaimed the Gospel.* Actually, not everyone had heard the Gospel in the eastern Mediterranean (from Jerusalem, where the Gospel had originated, to the border of Illyricum, a Roman province north of Macedonia -presently Albania and Yugoslavia), but Paul considered his own work completed there and was willing to move to other places.

**(15:20)** *My ambition to preach... where...* Paul's work was of a pioneering nature, bringing the Gospel to unbelievers, not going where others had already preached.

**(15:21)** *Those who were not told...* A quotation from Isa 52:15.

**(15:22)** *Hindered from coming to you.* Paul had decided to complete his missionary task in the eastern Mediterranean before to make a trip to Rome.

**Paul's plan to visit Rome** [Ro 15:23-33;16:1-2,17-20]

**(Ro 15:23)** *But now that there is no more place for me to work in these regions, and since I have been longing for many years to see you, (24)I plan to do so when I go to Spain. I hope to visit you while passing through and to have you assist me on my journey there, after I have enjoyed your company for a while. (25)Now, however, I am on my way to Jerusalem in the service of the saints there. (26)For Macedonia and Achaia were pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saint in Jerusalem. (27) They were pleased to do it, and indeed they owe it to them. For if the Gentiles have shared in the Jews' spiritual blessing, they owe it to the Jews to share with them the material blessings. (28)So after I have completed this task and have made sure that they have received this fruit, I will go to Spain and visit you on the way. (29)I know that when I come to you, I will come in the full measure of the blessing of Jesus Christ.*

**(30)** *I urge you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the benevolence of Yahweh's Spirit, to join me in the struggle by praying to Yahweh for me. (31)Pray that I may be rescued from the unbelievers in Judea and that my service in Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints there, (32)so that by Yahweh's will I may come to you with joy and together with you be refreshed. (33)Yahweh, the God of peace, be with you all. Amen.*

**(16:1)** *I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant of the Church in Cenchrea. (2)I ask you to receive her in the Lord Yahweh in a way worthy of the saints and to give her any help she may need from you, for she has been a great help to many people, including me.*

**(17)** *I urge you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them.*

**(18)** *For such people are not serving our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own appetites. By smooth talk and flattery they deceive the minds of naive people. (19)Everyone has heard about your obedience, so I am full of joy over you; but I want you to be wise about what is good, and innocent about what is evil.*

**(20)** *Yahweh, the God of peace, will soon crush Satan under your feet.*

*The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.*

**(Ro 15:23)** *No more... work in these regions.* As seen in the previous section, Paul had already preached the Gospel in the eastern Mediterranean ("From Jerusalem... Illyricum, I have fully proclaimed the Gospel"). *Longing... to see you.* As already declared at the beginning of this letter (Paul longing to visit Rome. Ro 1:11-17).



**(15:24)** *When I go to Spain... to have you assist me on my journey there.* Paul wished to use the Roman Church as a base of operations for a mission to Spain. Anyway, he was planning to stop at Rome “for a while.”

**(15:25-26)** *On my way to Jerusalem in the service of the saints there.* Paul wanted to present the gift of the collection personally to the Church at Jerusalem. In effect, the gift was not merely a matter of money; it represented the affection and concern of the Gentile Christians of “Macedonia and Achaia... for the poor... in Jerusalem.”

**(15:27)** *The Jews’ spiritual blessing.* That is, Jesus Christ and the spiritual salvation of all men he had purchased with his death on the cross.

**(15:28)** *Received this fruit.* The collection from the Gentile Churches. *I will go to Spain.* The Book of Acts stops without even saying if Paul was released or condemned. But there are a number of indications that he was released [Paul wrote to some Churches expecting to visit them soon; so he must have anticipated his release (Php 2:24; Phm 1:22). A number of details in Paul’s Pastoral Letters indicate a further return to Asia Minor, Crete and Greece. Eusebius says that Paul was released following his first Roman imprisonment (Ecclesiastical History. 2.22.2-3). Tradition and early Christian literature indicate that Paul went to Spain (Clement of Rome, Epistle to the Corinthians, ch. 5; Actus Petri Vercellenses, chapters 1-3; Muratorian Canon, lines 34-39)]. At the end, Paul traveled again to Rome, where he was imprisoned for the second time and where he wrote 2 Timothy from the Mamertime dungeon shortly before being executed.

**(15:29)** *In the full measure of the blessing of...* That is, bringing a full blessing from Jesus Christ.

**(15:30-31)** *I urge you... join me... praying... I may be rescued from the unbelievers in Judea.* Paul wanted to go to Jerusalem -the delivery of the collection was important for him- and was well aware of the dangers that lay ahead -he had received warnings about what may happen to him there (Ac 20:22-23). *My service... may be acceptable...* Most probably a reference to the way in which the money was to be distributed -a delicate and difficult task.

**(15:32)** *I may... together with you be refreshed.* So that he and the Roman believers could spiritually comfort and strengthen each other.

**(15:33)** *Yahweh, the God of peace.* The believers, once Yahweh’s enemies, now were His friends; a new status, a new relationship with Yahweh.

**(16:1)** *Sister Phoebe, a servant.* That is, a deaconess, probably the carrier of the letter to the Romans. *Cenchrea.* A port located about six miles east of Corinth.

**(16:2)** *I ask you...* Paul asked the people at Rome to welcome Phoebe as Yahweh’s dedicated people ought to welcome each other.

**(16:17-18)** *Those who cause divisions and put obstacles... Such people are not serving....* We don’t know who those people were, as Paul only mentioned some of their characteristics (“serving... their own appetites... deceive the minds”).

**(16:19)** *Wise... innocent...* Christians are to be experts in doing good and in avoiding evil.

**(16:20)** *Yahweh... will crush Satan under your feet.* By having faith in Jesus Christ and living properly, the believers actually defeat Satan.

### **To the Ephesians**

#### **Final instructions [Eph 6:19-22]**

**(Eph 6:19)** *Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me*

so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the Gospel, (20)for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.

(21)Tychicus, the dear brother and faithful servant in the Lord Jesus Christ, will tell you everything, so that you also may know how I am and what I am doing. (22)I am sending him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are, and that he may encourage you.

**(Eph 6:19-20)** Pray... that I... make known... the Gospel... declare it fearlessly. To note that, when Paul asked his friends to pray for him, he did not ask for personal comfort or peace, but to be yet allowed to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ. *Ambassador in chains*. Paul was writing this letter from Rome, during his first Roman imprisonment.

**(6:21)** Tychicus. An associate of Paul who traveled as his representative.

**(6:22)** *That you may know how we are*. As he went from Church to Church, Tychicus would tell how Paul was getting on and would convey his message of encouragement.

### To the Colossians

#### Paul's labor for the Church [Col 1:24-29;2:1-5]

**(Col 1:24)** Now I rejoice in what was suffered for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Jesus Christ's afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the Church. (25)I have become his servant by the commission Yahweh gave me to present to you the Word of Yahweh in its fullness (26)-the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the saints. (27)To them Yahweh has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Jesus Christ in you, the hope of glory.

(28)We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Jesus Christ. (29)To this end I labor, struggling with all his energy, which so powerfully works in me.

(2:1)I want you to know how much I am struggling for you and for those at Laodicea, and for all who have not met me personally. (2)My purpose is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in affection, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of Yahweh, namely, Jesus Christ, (3)in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. (4)I tell you this so that no one may deceive you by fine-sounding arguments. (5)For though I am absent from you in body, I am present with you in spirit and delight to see how orderly you are and how firm your faith in Jesus Christ is.

**(Col 1:24)** *What was suffered*. Paul, when preaching the Gospel, had experienced all kinds of afflictions (Paul's hardship. 2 Co 6:3-13). *Fill up... what is still lacking...* That is, after Jesus Christ had to suffer on the cross to bring spiritual salvation to all men, Paul had to add up his own sufferings to carry the Gospel of salvation to the Gentiles.

**(1:25)** *To present... the Word of Yahweh in its fullness*. The Word of Yahweh is brought to completion, that is, to its intended scope, only when it is proclaimed.

**(1:26)** *Mystery*. The purpose of Yahweh, unknown to men except by revelation. *Now disclosed*. The spiritual salvation brought by Jesus Christ to all men is not a mysterious and secret knowledge reserved to a few; on the contrary, it is open to all men of all races and ages.

**(1:27)** *Gentiles... Jesus Christ in you*. Jesus Christ's preaching was limited, in space and

time, to the Jews only. But Yahweh wants that all men, Jew and Gentile alike, be admitted to the Christian Church.

**(1:28)** *We... may present everyone perfect in Jesus Christ.* The purpose of Paul's preaching was to make all people believe in Jesus Christ, so to present them "perfect" to Yahweh.

**(1:29)** *To this end I labor... struggling...* Another declaration of Paul's mission in the name and with the power of Jesus Christ.

**(2:1)** *You and... those at Laodicea.* This letter, addressed to the Church at Colosse, was to be read also in the Church at Laodicea. Laodicea (modern Pamukkale) was about 11 miles (17.5 km) from Colosse.

**(2:2)** *They... may have... complete understanding.* Of the meaning and result of Jesus Christ's sacrifice on the cross.

**(2:3)** *All the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.* Paul stressed knowledge in this letter because he was refuting a heresy (Gnosticism) that emphasized knowledge as the means of salvation.

**(2:4)** *I tell you this...* Paul insisted that the Christian, not the Gnostic, possessed the true knowledge.

**(2:5)** *Present with you in spirit.* As their spiritual guide in fighting errors.

***Further instructions [Col 4:2-9,16]***

**(Col 4:2)** *Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. (3) And pray for us, too, that Yahweh may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Jesus Christ, for which I am in chains. (4) Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should. (5) Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. (6) Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.*

**(7)** *Tychicus will tell you all the news about me. He is a dear brother, a faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord Jesus Christ. (8) I am sending him to you for the express purpose that you may know about our circumstances and that he may encourage your hearts. (9) He is coming with Onesimus, our faithful and dear brother, who is one of you. They will tell you everything that is happening here.*

**(16)** *After this letter has been read to you, see that it is also read in the Church of the Laodiceans and that you in turn read the letter from Laodicea.*

**(Col 4:2-4)** *Devote yourself to prayer... pray for us... Pray that I may proclaim...* To note that Paul asked their prayers not so much for himself as for his work.

**(4:5)** *Be wise... make the most...* To convince the unbelievers and attract them to Christianity.

**(4:6)** *Conversation... seasoned with salt.* As salt has the double function of preserving and of giving taste, so every Christian conversation has to "preserve" the truth of the Gospel and make it "tasteful" to the unbelievers.

**(4:7)** *Tychicus.* An associate of Paul who traveled as his representative.

**(4:8)** *That you may know...* As he went from Church to Church, Tychicus would tell how Paul was getting on and would convey his message of encouragement.

**(4:9)** *Onesimus.* The runaway slave of Philemon (Paul's plea for Onesimus. Phm 1:8-22). After his conversion to Christianity, he had become one of Paul's associated.

**(4:16)** *After this letter has been read to you...* The practice was to read Paul's letters aloud to the congregation. *Letter from Laodicea.* Most probably it was the circular letter known as "Ephesians."

**To Philemon****Paul's plea for Onesimus [Phm 1:8-22]**

**(Phm 1:8)** *Therefore, although in Jesus Christ I could be bold and order you to do what you ought to do, (9) yet I appeal to you on the basis of affection. I then, as Paul -an old man and now also a prisoner of Christ Jesus- (10) I appeal to you for my son Onesimus, who became my son when I was in chains. (11) Formerly he was useless to you, but now he has become useful both to you and to me.*

*(12) I am sending him -who is my very heart- back to you. (13) I would have liked to keep him with me so that he could take your place in helping me while I am in chains for the Gospel. (14) But I did not want to do anything without your consent, so that any favor you do will be spontaneous and not forced. (15) Perhaps the reason he was separated from you for a little while was that you might have him back for good (16) -no longer as a slave, but better than a slave, as a dear brother. He is very dear to me but even dearer to you, both as a man and as a brother in the Lord Jesus Christ.*

*(17) So if you consider me a partner, welcome him as you would welcome me. (18) If he has done you any wrong or owes you anything, charge it to me. (19) I, Paul, am writing this with my own hand. I will pay it back -not to mention that you owe me your very self. (20) I do wish, brother, that I may have some benefit from you in the Lord Jesus Christ; refresh my heart in Jesus Christ. (21) Confident of your willingness, I write to you, knowing that you will do even more than I ask.*

*(22) And one thing more: Prepare a guest room for me, because I hope to be restored to you in answer to your prayers.*

**(Phm 1:8)** *Also... I could be bold...* Even if Paul could have used his apostolic authority, he only requested what he wished from Philemon, a Christian living in Colosse.

**(1:9)** *Prisoner of Christ Jesus.* Paul wrote this letter from Rome, during his first imprisonment there.

**(1:10)** *Onesimus.* Onesimus, a runaway slave, had contacted Paul in prison, through him had become a Christian, and was now willing to return to his master.

**(1:11)** *Formerly... useless... now useful.* A play on the meaning of Onesimus' name (Onesimus = Useful). He went away as a pagan slave, and was coming back as a brother in Jesus Christ.

**(1:12-14)** *I am sending him... I would have liked... but... not... without your consent... not forced.* Onesimus had run away, then he had to go back and face the consequences of what he had done, without hiding behind Christianity. If he was to be pardoned, it had to be for a matter of Christian affection, not for pleasing Paul.

**(1:15-16)** *You might have him back... as a dear brother. Dear to me... to you... a brother in the Lord...* During the months in prison Onesimus had clearly become very close to Paul (he "is my very heart").

**(1:17)** *So... welcome him as... me.* The Christians should always welcome back the man who has made a mistake, receiving him as a brother.

**(1:18)** *If he has done... or owes you... charge it to me.* Onesimus, a slave, must have stolen from Philemon, before he run away from him. And both facts, under the Roman law, were punishable by death.

**(1:19-20)** *Writing... with my own hand.* To make more personal his request. *You owe me your very self. I do wish... I may have... some benefit...* After reminding Philemon that he owed something to him (the salvation of his soul), Paul asked to receive something good (in terms of Christian affection) in return of that.

**(1:21)** *Confident... that you will do even more.* Typical of Paul. He never doubted that Philemon would grant his request.

**(1:22)** *Prepare a guest room for me...* Even when in prison Paul believed it possible that through the prayer of his friends he could get back his freedom.

### **To the Philippians**

#### **Paul's chains advance the Gospel** [Php 1:12-30]

**(Php 1:12)** *Now I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the Gospel. (13)As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Jesus Christ. (14)Because of my chains, most of the brothers in the Lord Jesus Christ have been encouraged to speak the Word of Yahweh more courageously and fearlessly.*

**(15)***It is true that some preach Jesus Christ out of envy and rivalry, but others out of good-will. (16)The latter do so in affection, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the Gospel. (17)The former preach Jesus Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing that they can stir up trouble for me while I am in chains. (18)But what does it matter? The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Jesus Christ is preached. And because of this I rejoice.*

*Yes, and I will continue to rejoice, (19)for I know that through your prayers and the spiritual help given by Jesus Christ, what has happened to me will turn out for my salvation. (20)I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Jesus Christ will be glorified in my body, whether by life or by death. (21)For to me, to live is Jesus Christ and to die is gain. (22)If I have to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet what shall I choose? (23)I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Jesus Christ, which is better by far; (24)but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body. (25)Convinced of this, I know that I will remain, and I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith, (26)so that through my being with you again your joy in Christ Jesus will overflow on account of me.*

**(27)***Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the Gospel (28)without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you. This is a sign to them that they will be destroyed, but that you will be saved -and that by Yahweh. (29)For it has been granted to you on behalf of Jesus Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him, (30)since you are going through the same struggle you saw I had, and now hear that I still have.*

**(Php 1:12)** *What has happened to me.* Paul's detainment in prison. *Advance the Gospel.* Instead of hindering the Gospel, Paul's imprisonment had served to make it known.

**(1:13)** *Clear... I am in chains for Jesus Christ.* All who knew of Paul's situation had clear that he had been imprisoned not because guilty of some crime, but because of his preaching of the Gospel. *Palace guard... everyone else.* Many of the soldiers assigned to guard Paul and many other people heard him preach the Gospel during the course of his imprisonment; from his arrest in Jerusalem (Ac 21:27) to the end of his house arrest in Rome (Ac 28:16).

**(1:14)** *Encouraged to speak.* The unexpected result of Paul's imprisonment was that

others, encouraged by his example, were “courageously and fearlessly” preaching the Gospel.

**(1:15)** *Out of envy and rivalry... out of good-will.* Both these sharply opposed motives for preaching the Gospel were stimulated by Paul’s imprisonment.

**(1:16)** *The latter do so in affection.* Those who preached with a right motive recognized the true reason for Paul’s imprisonment and were encouraged to take the same bold stand he had taken.

**(1:17)** *The former preach... out of selfish ambition.* Those who preached with wrong, insincere motives did so out of a sense of competition with Paul, thinking they were making his imprisonment more difficult to bear.

**(1:18)** *The important thing is that... Jesus Christ is preached.* The ambitious preachers were not heretical. Their message was true, even though their motives were not pure. The Gospel had and has its own validity, apart from those who preach it.

**(1:19)** *What has happened... will... my salvation.* In that situation Paul knew that he had two great supports, the prayers of his friends and the spiritual power of Jesus Christ. Paul was sure that all was happening to him in that very difficult situation was the best thing for him and for his spiritual salvation.

**(1:20)** *Ashamed... sufficient courage.* The imprisonment with all its suffering and oppression could have constituted a real temptation for Paul to abandon the Gospel and his service for Jesus Christ. *Glorified... whether by life or death.* Whether he would continue to serve Jesus Christ or would die.

**(1:21)** *To live in Jesus Christ and to die is gain.* The gain brought by physical death is the life in Heaven -in spiritual communion with Jesus Christ and Yahweh.

**(1:22-24)** *If... living in the body... fruitful labor.* Continuing with his mission of spreading the Gospel and building up the Christian Church. *What shall I chose?... to depart... remain...* Either alternative was a good one, but the second was also altruistic, that is, more “Christian.”

**(1:25)** *Convinced of this, I know that I will remain... for your... faith.* And, in effect, Paul was released from his first Roman imprisonment and then, for the fourth time, went on a missionary journey (Titus’ task on Crete. Tit 1:5).

**(1:26)** *Your joy in Christ Jesus... on account of me.* In other words, they would be able to look at Paul and see in him a shining example of how, through Jesus Christ, a man can face the worst remaining unafraid and strong in faith.

**(1:27)** *Worthy of the Gospel.* Appropriate to the standards and goals set by the Gospel. *Firm in one spirit... for the faith of the Gospel.* Having a common disposition and purpose, that is, to defend the true Gospel.

**(1:28)** *A sign... destroyed... saved.* Persistent opposition to the Church and the Gospel was a sure sign that the opposers were heading toward Yahweh’s punishment in hell. Similarly, when the Christians were persecuted for their faith, that was a sure sign that they were heading toward spiritual salvation.

**(1:29)** *Granted... to suffer for him.* Christian suffering was and is, as faith, a gift and a privilege, because it opens the way to a life of spiritual communion with Jesus Christ and Yahweh.

**(1:30)** *Same struggle.* Their involvement with Paul, in conflict with those who opposed the Gospel. *You saw.* When Paul and Silas first visited Philippi and were imprisoned (Ac 16:19-40).

**Shining as stars** [Php 2:12-18]

**(Php 2:12)** *Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed -not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence- continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, (13)for it is Yahweh who works in you to will and to act according to His good purpose.*

**(14)** *Do everything without complaining or arguing, (15)so that you can become blameless and pure, children of Yahweh without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe (16)as you hold on to the Word of life -in order that I may boast on the day of Jesus Christ that I did not run or labor for nothing. (17)But even if I am being poured out like a drink offering on the sacrificial offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you. (18)So you too should be glad and rejoice with me.*

**(Php 2:12)** *Obeyed.* To the commands of Yahweh as passed on to the Philippians by Paul. *My presence.* During Paul's second (Ac 16:12-40) and third (Ac 20:1-3,6) missionary journeys. *Work out your salvation.* Spiritual salvation is not merely a gift received once for all; admission to Heaven immediately after physical death requires an ongoing process of perseverance, spiritual grow and maturation in which the believer is strenuously involved. *Fear and trembling.* Not for the prospect of punishment, but for the anxiety of reaching salvation.

**(2:13)** *To will and to act.* Both intention (or faith) and obedience are necessary to reach immediate salvation.

**(2:14)** *Without complaining.* Being discontented with Yahweh's will is an expression of unbelief that prevents a man from doing what pleases to Yahweh. *Arguing.* Arguing produces useless quarrels and painful divisions among believers.

**(2:15)** *Blameless and pure... without fault.* Not absolute, sinless perfection, but whole-hearted, unmixed devotion to doing Yahweh's will. *Shine like stars.* The contrast, like light in darkness, that Christians are to be to the world around them.

**(2:16)** *Word of life.* The message of the Gospel. *I may boast.* Not out of pride or a sense of self-accomplishment, but because of what Yahweh had done through him (Paul longing to see the Thessalonians. 1 Th 2:19). *On the day of Jesus Christ.* The day of his second coming, when his work of salvation will be brought to completion. *I did not run or labor for nothing.* Paul had completely dedicated his life to the preaching of the Gospel for the spiritual salvation of all men.

**(2:17-18)** *I am being poured out like a drink offering.* A picture taken from the daily sacrifices to Yahweh (Ex 29:38-41). Here Paul was speaking both of his entire ministry as one large thanksgiving sacrifice and of his imprisonment -which could have ended in a martyr's death. *I am glad and rejoice... you too should...* The joy felt by one believer for doing Yahweh's work has to be shared by all Christians.

**Timothy and Epaphroditus** [Php 2:19-30]

**(Php 2:19)** *I hope in the Lord Jesus Christ to send Timothy to you soon, that I also may be cheered when I receive news about you. (20)I have no one else like him, who takes a genuine interest in your welfare. (21)For everyone looks out for his own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. (22)But you know that Timothy has proved himself, because as a son with his father he has served with me in the work of the Gospel. (23)I hope, therefore, to send him as soon as I see how things go with me. (24)And I am confident in the Lord Jesus Christ that I myself will come soon.*

*(25)But I think it is necessary to send back to you Epaphroditus, my brother, fellow worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger, whom you sent to take care of my needs. (26)For he longs for all of you and is distressed because you heard he was ill. (27)Indeed he was ill, and almost died. But Yahweh had mercy on him, and not on him only but also on me, to spare me sorrow upon sorrow. (28)Therefore I am all the more eager to send him, so that when you see him again you may be glad and I may have less anxiety. (29)Welcome him in the Lord Jesus Christ with great joy, and honor men like him, (30)because he almost died for the work of Jesus Christ, risking his life to make up for the help you could not give me.*

**(Php 2:19)** *I hope... to send Timothy... news about you.* Timothy was with Paul in Rome and Paul was planning to send him to Philippi to see the situation of the Philippian Church.

**(2:20-22)** *I have no else like him... For everyone looks out...* Timothy was a good example of a person “looking more to the interests of others than to his own”, as recommended in “Imitating Jesus Christ’s humility.” (Php 2:1-11). *As a son with his father...* The relationship between Paul and Timothy is developed at length in 1 and 2 Ti).

**(2:23-24)** *I hope... to send him... I myself will come soon.* Clearly, even if Paul was confident of his release from house arrest in the near future, his intention was to send Timothy quite soon.

**(2:25)** *Epaphroditus... you sent to take care of my needs.* When the Philippians heard that Paul was in prison, they sent gifts to him by means of Epaphroditus who, then, intended to stay in Rome as Paul’s servant.

**(2:26-27)** *He was ill... almost died...* Most probably of the notorious “Roman fever,” that is, malaria.

**(2:28-30)** *When you see him again... be glad... welcome him... he almost died for...* Epaphroditus was sent to stay with Paul and, if he came back home, some would say that he had abandoned Paul. So Paul, to silence any possible criticism about his return, gave him this testimonial.

### **No confidence in the flesh** [Php 3:1-11]

**(Php 3:1)** *Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord Jesus Christ! It is no trouble for me to write the same things to you again, and it is a safeguard for you.*

**(2)** *Watch out for those dogs, those men who do evil, those mutilators of the flesh. (3) For it is we who are the circumcision, we who worship by the Spirit of Yahweh, who glory in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh (4a)-though I myself have reasons for such confidence.*

**(4b)** *If anyone else thinks he has reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: (5)circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; (6)as for zeal, persecuting the Church; as for legalistic righteousness, faultless.*

**(7)** *But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Jesus Christ. (8) What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all these things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Jesus Christ (9)and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Jesus Christ -the righteousness that comes from Yahweh and is by faith. (10)I want to know*



*Jesus Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, (11) and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead.*

**(Php 3:1)** *Same things... again.* Matters taken up in the following verses, which Paul had previously dealt with either personally when he was in Philippi or perhaps in an earlier (unknown) letter. *Safeguard.* When there is the risk of some serious error, repetition can help.

**(3:2)** *Dogs.* A harsh word for Paul's opponents -the Judaizers- indicative of the seriousness of their errors. *Mutilators.* The false teachers were advocating the necessity of circumcision, which for the Christians was only a useless cutting of the body.

**(3:3)** *We... are the circumcision, we... put no confidence in the flesh.* The true sign of belonging to Yahweh is not given by an external mark on the physical body, but by the man's spiritual attitude -what Paul called "circumcision of the heart" (The Jews and the Law. Ro 2:17-29).

**(3:4a)** *I... have reasons for such confidence.* Paul's pre-Christian confidence in the law.

**(3:4b-5)** *If anyone... I have more: circumcised... Pharisee.* Paul was born a Jew and his Jewish roots were deep and unambiguous.

**(3:6)** *As for legalistic righteousness, faultless.* Following scrupulously all the requests of the law.

**(3:7)** *Whatever... profit... loss.* All the points listed above, of absolute importance -"profit"- to a Jew, were totally useless -"loss"- to a Christian.

**(3:8)** *Everything a loss compared... knowing Jesus Christ.* What Paul had as a Christian was not merely preferable or a better alternative to his former way of life, a life he had refuted -"lost all these things"- and abandoned as worthless and despicable -"rubbish."

**(3:9)** *Righteousness that comes from Yahweh and is by faith.* The law is useless to reach a condition of right relationship with Yahweh, while it is sufficient to know Jesus Christ and to accept the offer of Yahweh's grace.

**(3:10-11)** *I want to know Jesus Christ... to attain to the resurrection from the dead.* These verses show how much Paul was focused on obtaining eternal life in Heaven, in spiritual communion with Jesus Christ and Yahweh.

### **Pressing on toward the goal** [Php 3:12-21;4:1]

**(Php 3:12)** *Not that I have already obtained all this, or I have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. (13) Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have obtained it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, (14) I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which Yahweh has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.*

**(15)** *All of us who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too Yahweh will make clear to you. (16) Only let us live up to what we have already attained.*

**(17)** *Join with others in following my example, brothers, and take note of those who live according to the pattern we gave you. (18) For, as I have often told you before and now say again even with tears, many live as enemies of the Cross of Jesus Christ. (19) Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is on earthly things. (20) But our citizenship is in Heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, (21) who, by the power that ena-*

bles him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.

**(4:1)** *Therefore, my brothers, you whom I am fond of and long for, my joy and crown, that is how you should stand firm in the Lord Jesus Christ, dear friends!*

**(Php 3:12)** *Not... already obtained all this.* Paul declared that he was not by any means a complete Christian, but that he did “press on” to be. *I press on to take hold... took hold of me.* To Paul, his Christian life was like a race, and his goal was the same Jesus Christ had for him, eternal life in Heaven.

**(3:13)** *Forgetting... behind... straining... ahead.* Considering his past as a close chapter, and looking only at what he still had to do.

**(3:14)** *To win the prize...* Again, Paul’s image of Christian life as a race to win the ultimate prize, that is, eternal life in Heaven, in spiritual communion with Jesus Christ and Yahweh.

**(3:15)** *Mature.* The Christians who had made reasonable progress in spiritual growth and stability. *Take such a view.* The points of view expressed in the previous verses. *If... you think differently...* If the Philippians had accepted those points of view and yet failed to agree on some lesser point, Yahweh would clarify the matter to them.

**(3:16)** *Live up to what... already attained.* They had to put into practice the truth they had already understood.

**(3:17)** *Following my example... take note of those who live...* Following the example of Paul, as he followed that of Jesus Christ. The life-style of the Christians must be a model worth following.

**(3:18)** *Often told you before.* Matters which Paul had previously dealt with either personally when he was in Philippi or perhaps in an earlier (unknown) letter. *With tears.* This gives an idea of how Paul’s ministry was conducted with emotional fervency. *Live as enemies of the Cross.* In evident contrast to Paul’s conduct and to the truth of the Gospel.

**(3:19)** *Their destiny is destruction.* At the end of their terrestrial lives, they would be judged and sent to hell for the necessary period of formative punishment (Thoughts. Expiatory and corrective punishment...). *Their god... stomach... glory... shame. Their mind... earthly things.* They were deeply self-centered; their appetites and desires came first; they were only interested in the things of this life. Those were the Antinomians, who asserted that a man could not be called complete until he had experienced everything that life had to offer, both good and bad.

**(3:20)** *Citizenship... in Heaven.* In this world Christians are aliens, involved in it, yet not of it. They belong to Heaven, where they will be in spiritual communion with Jesus Christ and Yahweh.

**(3:21)** *By the power... will transform... like his glorious body.* The power given to Jesus Christ by Yahweh, earned by his obedience and testified by his Resurrection and Ascension, will resurrect and admit all men to Yahweh’s Kingdom (Thoughts. At the end of time, everybody will be with Yahweh...).

**(4:1)** *Therefore... that is why you should...* In the face of the libertine practices of the Antinomians, the Philippians should follow Paul’s example, setting firmly on heavenly things.

**Exhortations** [Php 4:2-9]

**(Php 4:2)** *I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to agree with each other in the Lord Jesus Christ. (3) Yes, and I ask you, loyal yokefellow, help these women who have contended at my side in the cause of the Gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the Book of Life.*

**(4)** *Rejoice in the Lord Jesus Christ always. I will say it again: Rejoice! (5) Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord Jesus Christ is near. (6) Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to Yahweh. (7) And the peace of Yahweh, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

**(8)** *Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is beautiful, whatever is admirable -if anything is excellent or praiseworthy- think about such things. (9) Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen me -put it into practice. And [Yahweh] the God of peace will be with you.*

**(Php 4:2)** *I plead... Euodia and... Syntyche to agree with each other.* Clearly, two women of importance in the Philippian Church who had quarreled, generating a serious problem. Paul did not take sides but asked an unknown member of the Philippian Church -a “loyal yoke-fellow”- to promote reconciliation.

**(4:3)** *These women... at my side... Clement... the rest of my fellow workers.* Paul considered his equals, not subordinates, all who were associated with him in the cause of the Gospel (women as well as men). *Names... in the Book of Life.* The names of all the workers of the Gospel were known to Yahweh and written in the heavenly register of the saved (The Book of Life. Rev 3:5).

**(4:4)** *Rejoice...* A joyful attitude -for having Jesus Christ at his side- has to be a characteristic of the Christian.

**(4:5)** *Gentleness.* Proper consideration for others is especially necessary in Church leaders. *The Lord Jesus Christ is near.* At the time, Jesus Christ’s second coming was supposed to be imminent.

**(4:6)** *Do not be anxious.* Jesus Christ has said, “Do not worry about your life... about tomorrow” (The Gospel of Jesus Christ. Do not worry. Mt 6:25-34; Lk 12:22-31). *In everything, by prayer... present your requests to Yahweh.* Jesus Christ has said, “Ask and it will be given to you” (The Gospel of Jesus Christ. Ask, seek, knock. Mt 7:7-8; Lk 11:9-10).

**(4:7)** *Peace of Yahweh... transcends all understanding...* Not mere absence of trouble, but inner tranquility coming from being in the proper relation with Yahweh -something men, on their own, can never achieve. *Guard... hearts... minds.* The peace of Yahweh is like a sentry whose “protective custody” extends to the innermost spiritual part of believers.

**(4:8)** *True... praiseworthy... think about such things.* An exhortation showing that Paul clearly understood the influence of one’s thoughts on one’s life.

**(4:9)** *Learned... seen in me -put it into practice.* The Philippians had to follow Paul’s example, as he followed that of Jesus Christ. *And... Yahweh... will be with you.* A life of moral and spiritual excellence would surely allow a deep spiritual communion with Jesus Christ and Yahweh.

**Thanks for their gifts** [Php 4:10-20]

**(Php 4:10)** *I rejoice greatly in the Lord Jesus Christ that at last you have renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you have been concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it. (11) I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. (12) I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. (13) I can do with everything through him who gives me strength.*

**(14)** *Yet it was good of you to share in my troubles. (15) Moreover, as you Philippians know, in the early days of your acquaintance with the Gospel, when I set out from Macedonia, not one Church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving, except you only; (16) for even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me aid again and again when I was in need. (17) Not that I am looking for a gift, but I am looking for what may be credited to your account. (18) I have received full payment and even more; I am amply supplied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent. They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to Yahweh. (19) And [Yahweh] my God will meet all your needs according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus.*

**(20)** *To [Yahweh] our God and Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen.*

**(Php 4:10)** *At last... no opportunity.* The Philippians had been very concerned for Paul. The delay in sending gifts to him was due both to Paul's uncertain itinerary prior to his arrival at Rome and -probably- to the lack of an appropriate messenger.

**(4:11-12)** *Content whatever the circumstances... whether living in plenty or in want.* Paul appreciated the gifts from Philippi but was not dependent on them, because he had always worked to be financially self-sufficient. Anyway, prosperity, too, can be a source of discontent.

**(4:13)** *Through him who gives me strength.* Jesus Christ. Spiritual communion -even when living on Earth- with Jesus Christ is the "secret of being content" and of moral and physical "strength."

**(4:14)** *Yet it was good...* Obviously, Paul was glad both of their gifts and of their interest.

**(4:15)** *Early days.* During Paul's second missionary journey, when he first preached in Philippi (Ac 16:12-40). *Set out from Macedonia.* From the northern part of modern-day Greece -where Berea, Thessalonica and Philippi were located- Paul traveled to the south, to Achaia -where Athens and Corinth were located (Ac 17:14-16; 18:1-4). *Not one Church... except you.* The generosity of the Philippian Church was unique and unmatched.

**(4:16)** *Aid again... when I was in need.* The gifts sent to Rome through Epaphroditus were the latest in a long and consistent pattern of generosity.

**(4:17)** *Credited to your account.* Paul liked to use commercial language. The "investment value" of their gifts was not due to their monetary value, but to the "spiritual dividend" the Philippians were "credited."

**(4:18)** *A fragrant offering.* In Old Testament terms, a thanksgiving sacrifice, "acceptable... pleasing to Yahweh" for the affection they were expressing by collecting and sending those gifts.

**(4:19)** *Yahweh will meet all your needs...* By giving they had made themselves richer, for they had opened the way to the affection of Yahweh, expressed by Jesus Christ's action for the salvation of all men.

**(4:20)** *To... [Yahweh]... be glory...* The ultimate purpose of all created beings is to glorify their Creator, their “Father.”

### **To Timothy**

#### **Warning against false teachers of the law** [1 Ti 1:3-11,18-20]

**(1Ti 1:3)** *As I urged you when I went into Macedonia, stay there in Ephesus so that you may command certain men not to teach false doctrines any longer (4)nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies. These promote controversies rather than Yahweh’s work -which is by faith. (5)The goal of this command is affection, which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. (6)Some have wandered away from these and turned to meaningless talk. (7)They want to be teachers of the law, but they do not know what they are talking about or what they so confidently affirm.*

**(8)** *We know that the law is good if one uses it properly. (9)We also know that law is made not for the righteous but for law-breakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers, (10)for adulterers and perverts, for slave traders and liars and perjurers -and for whatever else is contrary to the sound doctrine (11)that conforms to the glorious Gospel of the blessed Yahweh, which He entrusted to me.*

**(18)** *Timothy, my son, I give you this instruction in keeping with the prophecies once made about you, so that by following them you may fight the good fight, (19)holding on to faith and a good conscience. Some have rejected these and so have shipwrecked their faith. (20)Among them are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan to be taught not to blaspheme.*

**(1Ti 1:3-4)** *When I went into Macedonia.* Following Paul’s release from his first Roman imprisonment (after Ac 28), Timothy -who was traveling with him- stopped at Ephesus -an already well established Church- to deal with the problems there, while Paul went on to Macedonia. *False doctrines... myths and endless genealogies.* The doctrines of the false teachers -the Judaizers- and their mythical, intricate stories built on Old Testament narrative (“genealogies”). *Controversies rather than... faith.* The final result of the false teachers’ preaching was to bring division into the Church, forgetting the only important point: faith in Jesus Christ and in his saving action.

**(1:5)** *The goal... is affection.* Jesus Christ has said, “Be fond of one another” (The Gospel of Jesus Christ. Jesus predicts Peter’s denial. Jn 13:34).

**(1:6-7)** *Some... turned to meaningless talk... they do not know...* The false teachers’ preaching was not only wrong, but also useless, as they were not teaching the true Gospel of salvation by faith in Jesus Christ.

**(1:8)** *The law is good if...* The law, in itself, was a fine thing, meant to make a man good. Yet the fact remained that the same law was the very thing through which sin -Satan- could gain entry into a man.

**(1:9-11)** *The law is made not for the righteous but for... whatever... contrary to the... Gospel.* The purpose of the law was to deal with evil-doers. The good men did not need any law to control their actions or threaten them with punishment. *He entrusted to me.* Paul received the true Gospel by Yahweh, through Jesus Christ. (Paul called by Yahweh. Gal 1:11-24).

**(1:18)** *Prophecies once made about you.* As in Old Testament times, so at the beginning of the Christian era Yahweh revealed His will through prophets. Prophecies (unknown) about Timothy seem to have pointed to the role he was to have in the Church “holding on to faith and a good conscience.”

**(1:19)** *Some have... shipwrecked their faith.* Hymenaeus (cited also in “A workman approved by Yahweh.” 2 Ti 2:17-18) and Alexander (cited also in “Personal remarks.” 2 Ti 4:14) had become “false teachers.”

**(1:20)** *Handed over to Satan.* Paul had applied Church discipline by excluding (excommunicating) these two men from the Church, that is, leaving them into Satan’s power. The purpose of such a drastic action was more remedial than punitive, similar to the temporary and formative punishment in hell after physical death (Thoughts. expiatory and corrective punishment...).

### ***Instructions to Timothy [1 Ti 4:1-16]***

**(1Ti 4:1)** *The Spirit of Yahweh clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons. (2) Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron. (3) They forbid people to marry and order them to abstain from certain foods, which Yahweh created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and who know the truth. (4) For everything Yahweh created is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, (5) because it is consecrated by the Word of Yahweh and prayer.*

**(6)** *If you point these things out to the brothers, you will be a good minister of Christ Jesus, brought up in the truths of the faith and of the good teaching that you have followed. (7) Have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives’ tales; rather, train yourself to be godly. (8) For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come.*

**(9)** *This is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance (10) (and for this we labor and strive), that we have put our hope in [Yahweh] the living God, who is the Savior of all men, and especially of those who believe.*

**(11)** *Command and teach these things. (12) Don’t let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in affection, in faith and in purity. (13) Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching. (14) Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through a prophetic message when the body of elders laid their hands on you.*

**(15)** *Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress. (16) Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers.*

**(1Ti 4:1)** *The Spirit of Yahweh clearly says... in later times some will... follow...* Jesus Christ has announced the coming of false Christs and false prophets. (The Gospel of Jesus Christ. Signs of the end of the age. Threats to the faith. Mk 13:5-6,21-26; Mt 24:4-5,11-13,23-26; Lk 21:8). Anyway, Paul was referring to the false teachers of his time, not of the time immediately prior to Jesus Christ’s second coming.

**(4:2)** *Hypocritical liars...* The false teachers, the Judaizers. *Seared as with a hot iron.* Branded with a mark identifying them as property of Satan.

**(4:3)** *Forbid... to marry and order... those who believe and...* This un-Christian asceticism arose out of the mistaken belief that the material world was absolutely evil -a central belief of the Gnostic heresy.

**(4:4-5)** *Everything... received with thanksgiving, because... consecrated by the Word of Yahweh.* All things were created by Yahweh, and His creation is declared to be good (Ge 1:27-28,31; 9:3).

**(4:6)** *If you point these things... you will be a good minister...* A Church leader has to guide in gentleness, without teaching dogmatically, sure that in this way his action will be much more effective.

**(4:7-8)** *Have nothing to do with... A very clear advice, not only for Timothy, but for any teacher of the Gospel. Train... to be godly. Physical training is of some value... godliness... for all things...* Physical training produces good results which last for some time only. On the contrary, training in godliness produces good results which last for eternity.

**(4:9)** *This is a trustworthy saying...* A clause used to identify a key saying.

**(4:10)** *For this we labor... we have put our hope... For the results produced by godliness. Yahweh... the Savior of all men... especially of those who believe.* Yahweh, through Jesus Christ, at the end of time will have all men saved. Clearly, those who had believed during their physical life will be saved earlier -at the moment of their death (Thoughts. At the end of time, everybody will be with Yahweh).

**(4:11-12)** *Command and teach... you are young... set an example...* Timothy was much younger than Paul and there would be many who would not consider him mature enough to be a Church leader. So, Paul gave him the only possible advice: to live in such a way to silence any criticism by conduct.

**(4:13)** *Until I come.* Paul's journey (his fourth) had taken him from Ephesus to Macedonia, but he hoped to rejoin Timothy soon at Ephesus (Overseers and deacons. 1 Ti 3:1-13).

**(4:14)** *Devote yourself to...* Actually, here Paul laid down the pattern of the Christian Church service. *A prophetic message.* At the beginning of the Christian era Yahweh revealed His will through prophets. This unknown prophetic message pointed to the role Timothy was to have in the Church -"your gift." *The body of elders laid their hands on you.* Hands laying on was a common Old Testament practice. In New Testament time it is used for ordaining and commissioning, as in this case.

**(4:15-16)** *Be diligent... everyone may see your progress. Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere...* Practically, a repetition of the advice already given few verses earlier, that is, to live in such a way to silence any criticism by proper conduct. *You will save... yourself... your hearers.* Yahweh alone saves, but Christians can bring Yahweh's salvation to others.

### **Grrred for money [1 Ti 6:3-10]**

**(1Ti 6:3)** *If anyone teaches false doctrines and does not agree to the sound instruction of our Lord Jesus Christ and to godly teaching, (4)he is conceited and understands nothing. He has an unhealthy interest in controversies and quarrels about words that result in envy, strife, malicious talk, evil suspicion (5)and constant friction between men of corrupt mind, who have been robbed of the truth and who think that godliness is a means to financial gain.*

**(6)** *But godliness with contentment is great gain. (7)For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. (8)But if we have food and clothing, we will*

be content with that. **(9)** People who want to get rich fall into the temptation and the trap of many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. **(10)** For the greed for money is the root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.

**(1Ti 6:3-5)** If anyone teaches... and does not agree... he is conceited and understands nothing. The fact that the false teachers were full of pride and preached for money was the demonstration that their preaching was not following -because they were unable to understand it- the true Gospel of Jesus Christ. *Controversies and quarrels about words.* The false teachers preached in a beautiful and professional way -giving much more importance to the form than to the message- and often quarreled against each other for the interest -and the money- of the audience. *Result in envy... constant friction...* Not only they quarreled against each other but, to get the command of the audience, accused each other of false teaching. *Think that godliness is a means to financial gain.* Their method of operation -like that of the first century traveling philosophers- was to demand payment for their services.

**(6:6)** *Godliness with contentment is great gain.* True godliness is not “a means to financial gain” and, together with true “contentment” -the mental attitude of Paul, who had “learned to be content whatever the circumstances” (Thanks for their gifts. Php 4:10-20)- carries in itself the secret of spiritual happiness.

**(6:7)** *For we brought...* A loose quotation from Job 1:21; Psalm 49:17; Ecc 5:15.

**(6:8)** *If we have... be content.* By these words, Paul set a limit to the physical necessities of a Church leader.

**(6:9)** *People who want... fall... into... destruction.* The desire for riches makes men fall into Satan's temptations.

**(6:10)** *Greed for money is...* To note that it is not money in itself but the greed for money that leads to evil. *Some... have wandered from the faith.* Some of the false teachers had once known true faith but had been led astray by their greed for money. *Pierced themselves with...* The desire for wealth, which is based on the desire for security, may easily lead a man into wrong ways of acquiring it and, in the end, into pain and remorse.

### **Paul's charge to Timothy** [1 Ti 6:11-21; 5:23]

**(1Ti 6:11)** *But you, man of Yahweh, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, affection, endurance and gentleness. (12) Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses. (13) In the sight of Yahweh, who gives life to every-thing, and of Christ Jesus, who while testifying before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, I charge you (14) to keep this command without spot or blame until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, (15) which Yahweh will bring about in His own time -Yahweh, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords, (16) who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see. To Him be honor and might forever. Amen.*

**(17)** *Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in Yahweh, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. (18) Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. (19) In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.*



*(20) Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to your care. Turn away from godless chatter and the opposing ideas of what is falsely called knowledge, (21) which some have professed and in so doing have wandered from the faith.*

*(5:23) Stop drinking only water, and use a little wine because of your stomach and your frequent illnesses.*

*Grace be to you.*

**(1Ti 6:11)** *Flee from all this.* From “greed for money.” Pursue righteousness... A list of virtues and noble qualities of a “man of Yahweh.”

**(6:12)** *Fight... Take hold of the eternal life...* Timothy (as all Christians) was saved at the time of his conversion and baptism during Paul’s first missionary journey, but Paul urged him to grow in faith during his life.

**(6:13)** *Christ Jesus... made the good confession.* When Jesus Christ stood before Pilate, Pilate asked, “Are you the King of the Jews?” And Jesus Christ answered, “Yes, it is as you say” (The Gospel of Jesus Christ. Jesus before Pilate and Herod. Mk 15:2; Mt 27:11; Lk 23:3; Jn 18:33-37).

**(6:14)** *Keep this command.* To preach the Gospel and care for the Church. *Appearing of... Jesus Christ... in His own time.* Just as Jesus Christ’s first coming occurred at the precise time Yahweh wanted, so will be with his second coming.

**(6:15-16)** *Yahweh, the... Ruler... King... Lord... immortal and...* Traditional titles and characteristics of Yahweh.

**(6:17-18)** *Command those... rich...* From the beginning of the Church, some of its members were rich. They were not condemned for that, nor told to give all their wealth away, but they were told what not to do -“not to be arrogant”- and what to do -“to be rich in good deeds”- with it.

**(6:19)** *Lay up treasure...* As Jesus Christ has said in “Treasures in Heaven” (The Gospel of Jesus Christ. Mt 6:19-21; Lk 12:32-34). *Take hold of the life...* As the advice to grow in faith and to take hold of the eternal life given to Timothy few verses earlier.

**(6:20-21)** *What has been entrusted to your care.* The Gospel and the local Church. *Turn away from... some have... wandered from the faith.* Actually, Paul told Timothy not to waste his time in subtle arguments with those -heretical- intellectuals who were teaching that one may be saved by knowledge and not by faith.

**(5:23)** *Stop drinking only water...* Here, in the suggestion of moderate use of wine for medicinal reasons, we have a great truth: the Christians don’t have to neglect their body. Nobody can properly do Jesus Christ’s work if he is physically unfit to do it. Generally speaking, total abstinence is never to be enforced as a religious obligation. There is no virtue in an asceticism which does the body more harm than good.**(6:12)**

### **Further instructions to Timothy** [2 Ti 1:4-18; 2:1-13]

**(2Ti 1:4)** *Recalling your tears, I long to see you, so that I may be filled with joy. (5) I have been reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also. (6) For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of Yahweh, which is in you through the laying of my hands. (7) For Yahweh did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of affection and of self-discipline.*

**(8)** *So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord Jesus Christ, or ashamed of me his prisoner. But join with me in suffering for the Gospel, by the power of Yahweh, (9) who has saved us and called us to a holy life -not because of anything we have done but be-*

cause of His own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, **(10)**but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel. **(11)**And of this Gospel I was appointed a herald and an apostle and a teacher. **(12)**That is why I am suffering as I am. Yet I am not ashamed, because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day.

**(13)**What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith in and devotion for Christ Jesus. **(14)**Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you -guard it with the help of Yahweh's Holy Spirit who lives in us.

**(15)**You know that everyone in the province of Asia has deserted me, including Phygelus and Hermogenes.

**(16)**May the Lord Yahweh show mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, because he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains. **(17)**On the contrary, when he was in Rome, he searched hard for me until he found me. **(18)**May the Lord Jesus Christ grant that he will find mercy from the Lord Yahweh on the last day! You know very well in how many ways he helped me in Ephesus.

**(2:1)**You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. **(2)**And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others. **(3)**Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. **(4)**No one serving as a soldier gets involved in civilian affairs -he wants to please his commanding officer. **(5)**Similarly, if anyone competes as an athlete, he does not receive the victor's crown unless he competes according to the rules. **(6)**The hardworking farmer should be the first to receive a share of the crops. **(7)**Reflect on what I am saying, for the Lord Yahweh will give you insight into all this.

**(8)**Remember that Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David. This is my Gospel, **(9)**for which I am suffering even to the point of being chained like a criminal. But Yahweh's Word is not chained. **(10)**Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory.

**(11)**Here is a trustworthy saying:

If we died with him, we will also live with him; **(12)**if we endure, we will also reign with him. If we disown him, he will also disown us; **(13)**if we are faithless, he will remain faithful, for he cannot disown himself.

**(2Ti 1:4)** *Recalling your tears.* Timothy's tears when Paul left for Macedonia (Warning against false teachers of the law. 1 Ti 1:3-11,18-20).

**(1:5)** *Your grandmother Lois.* Nothing more is known about Timothy's grandmother. *Your mother Eunice.* Timothy's mother was a Jew-Christian and his father a Greek, an unbeliever (Ac 16:1). It was probably because of him that Timothy had not been circumcised as a child.

**(1:6)** *Fan into flame the gift of Yahweh.* Yahweh's gifts need to be developed through use. *Through the laying of my hands.* Paul was Yahweh's instrument through whom the gift came to Timothy.

**(1:7)** *Yahweh did not give us a spirit of timidity, but...* It seems that lack of confidence was a serious problem for Timothy, at least when he was young.

**(1:8)** *Do not be ashamed... about our Lord Jesus Christ... of me his prisoner.* It is a fact that loyalty to the Gospel brings trouble. And, for Timothy, it meant loyalty to a man who was regarded as a criminal, because when Paul wrote this letter he was in prison at Rome.

**(1:9)** *Not because of anything we have done but... of His own purpose and grace.* Salvation is by grace alone and is not based on human effort but on Yahweh's saving plan and the gift of His Son Jesus Christ. *Before the beginning of time.* It was Paul's opinion that, even before the creation of time and of the world, the work of Jesus Christ was part of Yahweh's salvation plan.

**(1:10)** *It has now been revealed... through the Gospel.* Jesus' Christ life, death and resurrection have revealed the existence of Yahweh's salvation plan, that is, of His grace.

**(1:11)** *I was appointed...* Paul received the true Gospel by Yahweh, through Jesus Christ (Paul called by Yahweh. Gal 1:11-24).

**(1:12)** *That is why... I have believed.* Paul had become a believer because of Yahweh's direct (through Jesus Christ) intervention. *He is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day.* Paul had entrusted his life to Jesus Christ and dedicated himself completely to Yahweh's work, sure that, on the day of judgment, he would be safe and accepted for ever in Yahweh's Kingdom.

**(1:13)** *Sound teaching.* Correct teaching, in keeping with that of the other apostles.

**(1:14)** *Guard the good deposit... entrusted to you...* The Gospel and the local Church.

**(1:15)** *Everyone... has deserted me.* An hyperbole, to express the widespread desertion of his friends when he had been imprisoned. *Phygelus and Hermogenes.* Nothing is known about these two people.

**(1:16-17)** *Onesiphorus... in Rome... searched hard for me...* Nothing is known of him except that in his loyalty to Paul he risked his life.

**(1:18)** *Find mercy... on the last day.* Paul's prayer was that Jesus Christ would grant Onesiphorus admission to Yahweh's Kingdom on the day of judgment. *He helped me in Ephesus.* Either on Paul's third missionary journey (Ac 19), or on his fourth, or on both.

**(2:1)** *My son.* A spiritual son, having been converted by Paul.

**(2:2)** *In the presence of many witnesses... to reliable men... qualified to teach others.* Timothy had been present to Paul's preaching and teaching -on all three missionary journeys- for the formation of Church pastors.

**(2:3-6)** *Endure hardship... like a good soldier... an athlete... farmer... to receive a share of the crops.* In these three illustrations, the main lesson is that dedicated effort will be rewarded, in this case by seeing the Gospel produce changed lives.

**(2:7)** *Reflect...* Paul had no doubt that Yahweh would help Timothy understand his teaching and his advices.

**(2:8)** *Raised from the dead.* Jesus Christ's Resurrection is at the center of the Christian beliefs. There never would have been a Christian Church had there never been the Resurrection. *Descended from David.* Jesus Christ was the announced Messiah of Yahweh, a man of Davidic lineage.

**(2:9)** *Chained as a criminal.* Paul was writing from the Mamertime dungeon in Rome.

**(2:10)** *I endure everything for the... salvation... eternal glory.* No suffering is too great if it brings about the conversion and the salvation of men.

**(2:11)** *Here is a trustworthy saying.* A clause used to identify a key saying. Here, probably, an early Christian hymn. *If we died with him...* The Greek construction here assumes that we "died" with Jesus Christ in the past, when he died for us on the cross. We

are therefore assured that we will live with him eternally (Dead to sin, alive in Jesus Christ. Ro 6:1-14).

**(2:12)** *If we endure...* Faithfully bearing up under suffering and trial will result in eternal reward. *If we disown him...* Who rejects Jesus Christ in his earthly life, will be rejected by him -and sent to hell for the necessary formative and punitive period (Thoughts. Expiatory and corrective punishment...).

**(2:13)** *If we are faithless... he cannot disown himself.* Jesus Christ sacrificed himself to bring spiritual salvation to all men without any exception (Thoughts. At the end of time, everybody will be with Yahweh).

**A workman approved by Yahweh** [2 Ti 2:14-26]

**(2Ti 2:14)** *Keep reminding them of these things. Warn them before Yahweh against quarreling about words; it is of no value, and only ruins those who listen. (15)Do your best to present yourself to Yahweh as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the Word of truth. (16)Avoid godless chatter, because those who indulge in it will become more and more ungodly. (17)Their teaching will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, (18)who have wandered away from the truth. They say that the resurrection has already taken place, and they destroy the faith of some. (19)Nevertheless, Yahweh's solid foundation stands firm, sealed with this inscription: "The Lord Yahweh knows those who are His," and, "Everyone who confesses the name of the Lord Yahweh must turn away from wickedness."*

**(20)** *In a large house there are articles not only of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay; some are for noble purposes and some for ignoble. (21)If a man cleanses himself from the latter, he will be an instrument for noble purposes, made holy, useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work.*

**(22)** *Flee the evil desires of youth, and pursue righteousness, faith, affection and peace, along with those who call on the Lord Yahweh out of a pure heart. (23)Don't have anything to do with foolish and stupid arguments, because you know they produce quarrels. (24)And the Lord Yahweh's servant must not quarrel; instead he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. (25)Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that Yahweh will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, (26)and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will.*

**(2Ti 2:14)** *Keep reminding them...* Of what written in the previous verses. *Warn them... ruins those who listen.* Paul had already warned Timothy against those "who teach false doctrines" and "devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies" (Warning against false teachers of the law. 1 Ti 1:3-11,18-20).

**(2:15)** *Do your best...* To keep faithfully the true Gospel of Jesus Christ, the "Word of truth."

**(2:16)** *Avoid godless chatter...* The more those senseless talkers talked, the farther they went from Yahweh and His truth.

**(2:17-18)** *Hymenaeus and Philetus... say...* Two leaders of the Gnostic heresy, who denied the bodily resurrection of the dead, asserting that the resurrection of the Christians takes place at baptism.

**(2:19)** *Yahweh's solid foundation.* The true Church of Yahweh, which keeps His truth. *The Lord Yahweh knows...* A loose quotation from a saying of Moses to the rebellious

Korah and his friends (Nu 16:5). *Everyone who confesses...* Another reminiscence of the Korah story, to emphasize hu-man responsibility (Nu 16:26). In other terms, the Church consists of those who belong to Yahweh and are on the way to righteousness.

**(2:20)** *Articles not only of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay...* In the earthly Church there are all kinds of people, as explained by Jesus Christ in “The Parable of the weeds” (The Gospel of Jesus Christ. Mt 13:24-30,36-43).

**(2:21)** *If a man cleanses himself from...* It is a duty of a Christian to keep himself free from polluting influences. And if he does so, his reward is not special honor and privilege, but special service (The Gospel of Jesus Christ. The parable of the talents. Mt 25:14-30).

**(2:22)** *Flee the evil desires of youth, and pursue...* Paul had already given Timothy a similar advice in his first letter (Instructions to Timothy. 1 Ti 4:1-16).

**(2:23)** *Don't have... foolish and stupid arguments... they produce quarrels.* Similar instructions appear in “Warning against false teachers of the law” (1 Ti 1:3-11,18-20).

**(2:24-25)** *The Lord Yahweh's servant must... He must... instruct, in the hope...* Similar instructions in “Overseers and deacons” (1 Ti 3:1-16). *He must... instruct, in the hope...* Similar instructions in “Instructions on worship” (1 Ti 2:1-15).

**(2:26)** *They will... escape from... the devil...* Similar instructions in “Overseers and deacons” (1 Ti 3:1-16).

### **Godlessness in the last days** [2 Ti 3:1-9]

**(2Ti 3:1)** *But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. (2)People will be egoist, greedy for money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, (3)without affection, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, with no regard for the good, (4)treacherous, rash, conceited, greedy for pleasure rather than fond of Yahweh (5)-maintaining the outform of religion but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them.*

**(6)** *They are the kind who worm their way into homes and gain control over weak-willed women, who are loaded down with sins and are swayed by all kinds of evil desires, (7)always learning but never able to acknowledge the truth. (8)Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so also these men oppose the truth -men of depraved minds, who, as far as the faith is concerned, are rejected. (9)But they will not get very far because, as in the case of those men, their folly will be clear to everyone.*

**(2Ti 3:1-5)** *In the last days. People will be... Have nothing to do with them.* Generally speaking, the “last days” are the Messianic era, the time beginning with Jesus Christ's first coming. But it is clear that in this passage Paul gave to Timothy the command to have nothing to do with the unbelieving and unfaithful people who characterized his time.

**(3:6-7)** *They... worm their way into homes and gain control over weak-willed women, who... False teachers were -and are- fascinating and victimizing unstable women who, guilt-ridden because of their sins and torn by their lust, were never coming (“always learning”) to the knowledge of Jesus Christ's salvation.*

**(3:8)** *Jannes and Jambres.* They are not mentioned in the Old Testament, but according to Jewish tradition they were the Egyptian court magicians who opposed Moses (Ex 7:11).

**(3:9)** *They will not get very far... their folly will be clear to everyone.* There will always be those who have wrong ideas about the Christian faith, but Paul was sure that their falsity would always be demonstrated “by their fruit” (The Gospel of Jesus Christ. A tree and its fruit. Mt 17:15).

**Paul's charge to Timothy** [2 Ti 3:10-17; 4:1-8]

**(2Ti 3:10)** *You, however, know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, affection, endurance, (11)persecutions, sufferings -what kinds of things happened to me in Antioch, Iconium and Lystra, the persecutions I endured. Yet the Lord Yahweh rescued me from all of them. (12)In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, (13)while evil men and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. (14)But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, (15)and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. (16)All Scripture is Yahweh-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, (17)so that the man of Yahweh may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

**(4:1)** *In the presence of Yahweh and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his Kingdom, I give you this charge: (2)Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season to correct, rebuke and encourage -with great patience and careful instruction. (3)For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. (4)They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. (5)But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.*

**(6)** *For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time has come for my departure. (7)I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. (8)Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord Jesus Christ, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day -and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.*

**(2Ti 3:10)** *You... know all about my teaching...* In opposition to the false teachers of the previous section.

**(3:11)** *Antioch, Iconium and Lystra.* Three cities in the Roman province of Galatia, which Paul visited on his first and second missionary journey (Ac 13:14; 14:1-23; 16:1-6). Since Timothy was from Lystra, he would have known first-hand of Paul's sufferings in that region. *The Lord Yahweh rescued me from all of them.* Even from execution by stoning (Ac 14: 19-20).

**(3:12)** *Everyone... persecuted.* Jesus Christ has said, “All men will hate you because of me” (The Gospel of Jesus Christ. Jesus sends out the Twelve. Warnings and encouragements. Mt 10:22).

**(3:13)** *While... deceiving and...* Jesus Christ has said, “Many will come in my name... and will deceive many” (The Gospel of Jesus Christ. Signs of the end of the age. Threats to the faith. Mk 13:5-6; Mt 24:4-5; Lk 21:8).

**(3:14)** *Those from whom you learned it.* A reference to Paul and to Timothy's mother and grandmother.

**(3:15)** *From infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures.* Timothy, whose mother was a Jew-Christian, had studied the Old Testament when he was a boy (study of the Scripture began at five years of age).

**(3:16)** *All Scripture.* The Old Testament and the New Testament books already written at that time.

**(3:17)** *So that the man of Yahweh may be... equipped...* A believer must study the Scripture not only for himself, but much more to make himself useful to Yahweh and to his fellow-men.

**(4:1)** *I give you this charge.* Paul's charge to Timothy was of the outmost importance; that is why Paul cited Yahweh and Jesus Christ.

**(4:2)** *In season and out of season.* In every occasion, favorable and unfavorable. *Preach the Word; be prepared... with... careful instruction.* The duties of a Christian teacher only begin with the preaching of the Gospel; he has to be always ready to instruct properly his fellow-believers who need it.

**(4:3-4)** *The time will come when men will... turn aside to myths.* Knowing human nature, Paul was sure that soon or later, the Ephesians would fall prey to the false teachers and their teaching.

**(4:5)** *Keep your head...* Paul urged Timothy to fulfill dutifully his ministry, in spite of all possible problems.

**(4:6)** *Drink offering... my departure.* Wine was offered by pouring it around the base of the altar (Nu 15:1-12; 28:7-24). Paul viewed his approaching death as the outpouring of his life as an offering to Yahweh.

**(4:7)** *I have fought... finished...* In this verse Paul looked back to over thirty years of labor as an apostle. Like an athlete who had engaged successfully in a contest, he had "finished the race" and "kept the faith," that is, had carefully observed the teaching of the Gospel.

**(4:8)** *Crown of righteousness.* The ultimate prize, eternal life in Heaven. *That day.* The day of Jesus Christ's second coming. *Not only to me, but... to all who...* Eternal life in Heaven, in spiritual communion with Jesus Christ and Yahweh, will be the reward of all believers.

#### **Personal remarks** [2 Ti 4:9-18]

**(2Ti 4:9)** *Do your best to come to me quickly, (10)for Demas, because he liked this world, has deserted me and has gone to Thessalonica. Crescens has gone to Galatia, and Titus to Dalmatia. (11)Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, because he is helpful to me in my ministry. (12)I sent Tychicus to Ephesus. (13)When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas, and my scrolls, especially the parchments.*

**(14)** *Alexander the metalworker did me a great deal of harm. The Lord Yahweh will repay him for what he has done. (15)You too should be on your guard against him, because he strongly opposed our message.*

**(16)** *At my first defense, no one came to my support, but everyone deserted me. May it not be held against them. (17)But the Lord Jesus Christ stood at my side and gave me strength, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. And I was delivered from the lion's mouth. (18)The Lord Jesus Christ will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly Kingdom. To him be the glory for ever and ever. Amen.*

**(2Ti 4:9)** *Come... quickly.* Paul, detained in Rome, wished to speak personally with Timothy, “before winter” (Benediction and final greetings. 2 Ti 4:19-22).

**(4:10)** *Demas.* A man mentioned three times in Paul’s letters. In “Benediction and final greetings” to the Colossians (Col 4:10-15; 17-18) and to Philemon (“fellow worker.” Phm 1: 23-25) and here (one who had “deserted” Paul). *Crescens.* Nothing is known of this man who is mentioned only here. *Titus.* One of Paul’s converts, a considerable help in his ministry, and the recipient of one of his letters.

**(4:11)** *Luke.* The author of the Gospel and of the Acts of the Apostles, the most dedicated of Paul’s companions. *Mark.* The author of the Gospel, initially a close associate to Peter and, then, to Paul during his first Roman imprisonment (Benediction and final greetings to the Colossians. Col 4:10-15; 17-18; and to Philemon. Phm 1:23-25).

**(4:12)** *Tychicus.* An associate of Paul who traveled as his representative (Final instructions. Eph 6:21-22; Further instructions. Col 4:7-9,16, Final remarks. Tit 3:12-14).

**(4:13)** *Cloak.* A heavy, sleeveless, outer garment, circular in shape and with a hole in the middle for the head. *Carpus.* Not mentioned elsewhere. *Scrolls... parchments.* The scrolls were made of papyrus, the parchments of the skin of animals.

**(4:14-15)** *Alexander the metalworker... be on your guard against him...* One of the men Paul excluded from the Ephesian Church, mentioned in “Warning against false teachers of the law.” (1 Ti 1:3-11,18-20).

**(4:16)** *My first defense.* The first court hearing of Paul’s case at Rome.

**(4:17-18)** *The Lord Jesus Christ stood at my side.* In times of crisis and need for strength, Paul was always given help (Ac 18:9; 22:18; 23:11; 27:23). *So that through me the message... all the Gentiles might hear it.* As Jesus Christ had said to Ananias after Paul’s conversion (Ac 9:15). Even in this circumstance Paul used the occasion to testify about Jesus Christ in the imperial court. *I was delivered from the lion’s mouth.* A figurative way of saying that his first hearing did not result in an immediate guilty verdict.

### **To Titus**

#### **Titus’ task on Crete [Tit 1:5-16]**

**(Tit 1:5)** *The reason I left you in Crete was that you might straighten out what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I directed you. (6)An elder must be blameless, the husband of but one wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient. (7)Since an overseer is entrusted with Yahweh’s work, he must be blameless -not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain. (8)Rather he must be hospitable, one who likes what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined. (9)He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.*

**(10)** *For there are many rebellious people, mere talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision group. (11)They must be silenced, because they are ruining whole households by teaching things they ought not to teach -and that for the sake of dishonest gain. (12)Even one of their own poets has said, “Cretans are always liars, evil brutes, lazy gluttons.” (13)This testimony is true. Therefore, rebuke them sharply, so that they will be sound in the faith (14)and will pay no attention to Jewish myths or to the commands of those who reject the truth. (15)To the pure, all the things are pure, but to those who are corrupted and do not believe, nothing is pure. In fact, both their minds and consciences are corrupted. (16)They claim to know Yahweh, but by their actions they deny Him. They are detestable, disobedient and unfit for doing anything good.*



**(Tit 1:5)** *Left you in Crete.* This means that Paul and Titus had been together in Crete, a ministry not mentioned in Acts. Anyway, on his voyage to Rome, Paul visited Crete briefly as a prisoner (Ac 27:7-8). *Appoint elders.* The ordination of elders is consistent with Paul's usual practice (Ac 14: 23). Though Paul and Titus had already preached together in Crete, they had not had time to organize local Churches and appoint their pastors.

**(1:6-8)** *An elder must be... an overseer... must be...* Practically, a repetition of the necessary qualifications already seen in "Overseers and deacons" (1 Ti 3:1-16). To note that, in Paul's letters, the terms "Elder" and "Overseer" (or "Bishop") are used interchangeably. Generally speaking, "Elder" indicates qualification (maturity and experience), while "overseer" indicates responsibility (watching over Yahweh's people).

**(1:9)** *The... message as it has been taught... sound doctrine.* The teaching of the elders must be correct, in keeping with that of the apostles.

**(1:10)** *Rebellious people... of the circumcision group.* The Judaizers, who opposed Paul's teaching.

**(1:11)** *Teaching things they ought not.* That, to attain salvation, it was necessary to be circumcised and keep all Jewish ceremonial laws. *Dishonest gain.* Asking to be paid for their preaching.

**(1:12)** *Cretans are...* A quotation from the poet Epimenides (a sixth-century BC native of Knossos, Crete), who was held in high esteem by the Cretans.

**(1:13-14)** *This testimony is true.* In the ancient world the Cretans had a really bad reputation, confirmed by the facts. *Therefore, rebuke... so that they... will pay no attention to...* In spite of all the defects of the Cretans, Paul encouraged Titus to go and convert them, in this way showing the divinely inspired optimism of a Christian Evangelist; that is, refusing to regard any man as hopeless.

**(1:15)** *To the pure...* To the Christians, who have been purified by Jesus Christ's death, "everything Yahweh created is good" (Instructions to Timothy. 1 Ti 4:1-16). *To those who... do not believe...* Unbelievers, especially ascetics with scruples against certain food, marriage and the like, do not receive all Yahweh's creation with thanks-giving. Instead, they set up arbitrary, man-made prohibitions against what they consider impure.

**(1:16)** *By their actions they deny Him.* The false teachers stood condemned by the test of personal conduct.

### **Final remarks** [Tit 3:12-14]

**(Tit 3:12)** *As soon as I send Artemas or Tychicus to you, do your best to come to me at Nicopolis, because I have decided to winter there. (13) Do everything you can to help Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their way and see that they have everything they need. (14) Our people must learn to devote themselves to doing what is good, in order that they may provide for daily necessities and not live unproductive lives.*

**(Tit 3:12)** *Artemas.* Nothing is known of this man who is mentioned only here. *Tychicus.* An associate of Paul who traveled as his representative (Final greetings. Eph 6:21-22; Further instructions. Col 4:7-9,16; Personal Remarks. 2 Ti 4:9-18). *Nicopolis.* It means "City of victory." Several cities had this name, but the reference here is to the one in Epirus, on the western shore of Greece. *Decided to winter there.* Indicates that Paul had not arrived in Nicopolis when he wrote this letter.

**(3:13)** *Zenas the lawyer.* Unknown and mentioned only here. If he was a Jewish convert, “lawyer” means that he was an expert in the Mosaic law; if he was a Gentile convert, that he was a jurist. *Apollos.* A native of Alexandria and one of Paul’s well-known co-workers (Ac 18:24-28; 19:1). *On their way.* Most probably, the two travelers brought the letter from Paul.

**(3:14)** *Our people must... provide for daily necessities and...* The “workers” of the Gospel should be financially independent, as Paul was.

### To the Hebrews

#### Warning against falling away [Heb 5:11-14;6:1-12]

**(Heb 5:11)** *We have much to say about this, but it is hard to explain because you are slow to learn. (12)In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of Yahweh’s Word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! (13)Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. (14)But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.*

**(6:1)** *Therefore let us leave the elementary teachings about Jesus Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in Yahweh, (2)instruction about baptism, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. (3)And Yahweh permitting, we will do so.*

**(4)** *For it is not possible to bring back to repentance those who have once been enlightened, (5)who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in Yahweh’s Holy Spirit, who have tasted the goodness of the Word of Yahweh and the powers of the coming age, (6)and who then fall away, because to their loss they are crucifying the Son of Yahweh all over again and subjecting him to public disgrace.*

**(7)** *Land that drinks the rain often falling on it and that produces a crop useful to those for whom it is farmed receives the blessing of Yahweh. (8)But land that produces thorns and thistles is worthless and is in danger of being cursed. In the end it will be burned.*

**(9)** *Even though we speak like this, dear friends, we are confident of better things in your case -things that accompany salvation. (10)Yahweh is not unjust; He will not forget your work and the affection you have shown Him as you have helped His people and continue to help them. (11)We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, in order to make your hope sure. (12)We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised.*

**(Heb 5:11)** *Much to say about this.* About Jesus Christ’s eternal priesthood “in the order of Melchizedek” (Jesus Christ the great High Priest. Heb 4:14-16; 5:1-10). *Slow to learn.* Instead of progressing in the Christian life, the readers had become spiritually inert and mentally lazy.

**(5:12)** *By this time.* They were not recent converts. *Elementary truths of Yahweh’s Word.* Which are listed few verses later (repentance, faith in Yahweh, baptism, laying on of hands, resurrection, eternal judgment). *Milk... solid food.* Respectively, elementary and advanced teaching about Yahweh’s truths.

**(5:13)** *Who lives on milk... is not acquainted...* The comprehension of the teaching about righteousness by faith and not by deeds requires Christian maturity.

**(5:14)** *Solid food is for the mature.* Advanced teaching can only be given to and understood by those who have progressed in spiritual life and have developed sound judgment and discernment. *Distinguish good from evil.* Something neither physical nor spiritual infants can do.

**(6:1-2)** *The foundation of...* Six fundamental “truths of Yahweh’s Word” are mentioned:  
1. *Repentance.* The change of mind that causes a man to turn away from sin and useless rituals.

2. *Faith in Yahweh.* The belief that spiritual salvation comes from the grace of Yahweh, not from the legalistic respect of a religious law.

3. *Instruction about baptism.* The baptism commanded by Jesus Christ, the sign that -after repenting of all the past sins and having accepted Jesus Christ as his Lord- officially marks a man as a Christian (The Gospel of Jesus Christ. The great commission. Mk 16:15; Mt 28:18-20).

4. *Laying on of hands.* The ceremonial act practiced in connection with ordaining or commissioning, healing the sick and conferring of blessing.

5. *Resurrection of the dead.* The physical resurrection of all men at the end of time (Thoughts. Physical resurrection at the end of time).

6. *Eternal judgment.* The punishment of those who have refused to repent during their terrestrial life and repeatedly refuse Jesus Christ’s offer of Yahweh’s grace during their punishment in hell. Their punishment can last till the time will last -being, in this sense, “eternal”(see note). But time is part of the created universe and, as such, will end at the end of it -when, after the conversion of the last man, there will be the Universal Resurrection with the Universal Judgment (Thoughts. Physical resurrection at the end of time).

**Note:** The word “*eternal*” has two “temporal” meanings:

1. When referred to the physical, created universe where we live. In this case, it means “for the duration of the universe,” because time -as we know it- is part of the universe and will end with it. This means that, taking into account that at the end of time all men will have accepted Jesus Christ’s offer of Yahweh’s grace, even hell will end at that moment (Thoughts. At the end of time, everybody will be with Yahweh).

2. When referred to Yahweh and to our future life with Him in Heaven. In this case it is, clearly, a word inadequate -but we do not have any other- to describe, after the end of time, a life “without end.”

**(6:3)** *Yahweh permitting...* A common expression of dependence on the will of Yahweh. Only Yahweh can open minds and hearts and bring spiritual maturity.

**(6:4)** *It is not possible to bring back to repentance...* Here, it is essential to remember that this passage was written in an age of persecution and that in such an age apostasy is the supreme sin. The drastic statement of the letter refers to Jew-Christians whose apostasy proved that their faith was not genuine. So, it would not be possible to convince them to repent after they turned against “the light” they had previously received. And the expressions “enlightened,” “tasted the heavenly gift” and “shared in Yahweh’s Holy Spirit” prove that such persons -who had come under the influence of Yahweh’s blessing and had professed to have turned from darkness to light- had never actually been regenerated.

**(6:5)** *Coming age.* The age which will begin with Jesus Christ’s second coming, when all men will live in Heaven, in spiritual communion with Jesus Christ and Yahweh.

**(6:6)** *They are crucifying the Son of Yahweh all over again.* In the sense that, as Jesus Christ died on the cross to pay for all sins of all men of all times, those who commit the biggest sins -here, apostasy is the supreme sin- make the biggest contributions to Jesus Christ's suffering. *Subjecting him to public disgrace.* With their act, the apostates bring discredit on Jesus Christ and his Church.

**(6:7-8)** *Land that drinks... that produces thorns... will be burned.* A short parable graphically illustrating the warning just given.

**(6:9)** *Even though... we are confident...* Although the author of this letter thinks that some of its readers may still be unsaved, he is confident that Yahweh is always at work among them.

**(6:10)** *Yahweh... will not forget...* Their changed lives and their works of Christian affection suggest that many of those persons were indeed regenerated.

**(6:11)** *Diligence to the very end.* A call to perseverance in faith as an evidence of salvation. *Make your hope sure.* Their faith in the spiritual salvation brought by Jesus Christ.

**(6:12)** *Imitate those who... inherit what... promised.* Another call to perseverance in following the example of those who are already mature Christians.

### ***Final exhortations*** [Heb 13:18-23]

**(Heb 13:18)** *Pray for us. We are sure that we have a clear conscience and desire to live honorably in every way. (19)I particularly urge you to pray so that I may be restored to you soon.*

**(20)** *May [Yahweh] the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, (21)equip you with everything good for doing His will, and may He work in us what is pleasing to Him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.*

**(22)** *Brothers, I urge you to bear with my word of exhortation, for I have written you only a short letter.*

**(23)** *I want you to know that our brother Timothy has been released. If he arrives soon, I will come with him to see you.*

**(Heb 13:18)** *Clear conscience.* Because of following and teaching the true Gospel of Jesus Christ.

**(13:19)** *I may be restored to you soon.* We do not know the reason why the author of the letter to the Hebrews had been delayed in visiting those to whom he was writing. Anyway, the last verse of this section makes it clear that he was not under arrest, but free to travel ("If he [Timothy] arrives soon, I will come with him").

**(13:20)** *[Yahweh] the God of peace.* A title for Yahweh used frequently in benedictions. *Eternal covenant.* The new covenant mediated by Jesus Christ (The High Priest of a new covenant. Heb 8:1-13).

**(13:21)** *May He work in us...* Everything is due to Yahweh's initiative, to His grace.

**(13:22)** *Word of exhortation.* To go on in Christian maturity and not to fall away from Jesus Christ. *Short letter.* Compared with the lengthy treatise that would be necessary to explain adequately the superiority of Jesus Christ and of his new covenant.

**(13:23)** *Timothy has been released.* From this letter we learn that Timothy had been in prison for the sake of Jesus Christ, but not where and when.

**Benediction and final greetings****To the Thessalonians** [1 Th 5:23-28] [2 Th 3:16-18]

**(1Th 5:23)(2Th 3:16)**Now may Yahweh Himself, the Lord God of peace, sanctify you through and through and give you peace all times and in every way. May your whole spirit, mind and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord Yahweh will be with all of you. **(1Th 5:24)**The One who calls you is faithful and He will do it.

**(2Th 3:17)**I, Paul, write these greetings in my own hand, which is the distinguishing mark in all my letters. This is how I write.

**(1Th 5:25)**Brothers, pray for us. **(26)**Greet all the brothers with a holy kiss. **(27)**I charge you before the Lord Jesus Christ to have this letter read to all the brothers.

**(1Th 5:28)(2Th 3:18)**The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

**To the Galatians** [Gal 6:18]

**(Gal 6:18)**The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers. Amen.

**To the Corinthians** [1 Co 16:19-24] [2 Co 13:11-14]

**(1Co 16:19)**The Churches in the province of Asia send you greetings. Aquila and Priscilla greet you warmly in the Lord Yahweh, and so does the Church that meets at their house. **(1Co 16:20)(2Co 13:12-13)**All the brothers here, the saints, send you their greetings. Greet one another with a holy kiss.

**(1Co 16:21)**I, Paul, write this greeting in my own hand.

**(22)**If anyone is not fond of the Lord Jesus Christ, a curse is on him. Come, O Lord Jesus Christ!

**(1Co 16:23)(2Co 13:14)**May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the affection of Yahweh, and the fellowship of Yahweh's Holy Spirit be with you all.

**(2Co 13:11)**Finally, brothers, goodbye. Aim for perfection, listen to my appeal, be of one mind, live in peace. And [Yahweh] the God of affection and peace will be with you.

**(1Co 16:24)**My affection to all of you in Christ Jesus. Amen.

**To the Romans** [Ro 16:3-16,21-24]

**(Ro 16:3)**Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus. **(4)**They risked their lives for me. Not only I but all the Churches of the Gentiles are grateful to them. **(5)**Greet also the Church that meets at their house. Greet my dear friend Epene-tus, who was the first convert to Jesus Christ in the province of Asia. **(6)**Greet Mary, who worked very hard for you. **(7)**Greet Adronicus and Junias, my relatives who have been in prison with me. They are outstanding among the apostles, and they were in Jesus Christ before I was. **(8)**Greet Ampliatus, whom I cherish in the Lord Jesus Christ. **(9)**Greet Urbanus, our fellow worker in Jesus Christ, and my dear friend Stachys. **(10)**Greet Apelles, tested and approved in Jesus Christ. Greet those who belong to the household of Aristobulos. **(11)**Greet Herodion, my relative. Greet those in the household of Narcissus who are in the Lord Jesus Christ. **(12)**Greet Tryphena and Tryphosa, those women who work hard in the Lord Jesus Christ. Greet my dear friend Persis, another woman who has worked very hard in the Lord Jesus Christ. **(13)**Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord Jesus Christ, and his mother, who has been a mother to me, too. **(14)**Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas and the brothers with them. **(15)**Greet Philologus, Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas and all the saints with them. **(16)**Greet one another with a holy kiss.

All the Churches of Jesus Christ send greetings. **(21)**Timothy, my fellow worker, sends his greeting to you, as do Lucius, Jason and Sosipater, my relatives.

*(22)I, Terzius, who wrote down this letter, greet you in the Lord.*

*(23)Gaius, whose hospitality I and the whole Church enjoy, sends you his greetings. Erastus, who is the city's director of public works, and our brother Quartus send you their greetings.*

*(24)May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with all of you. Amen.*

**To the Ephesians** [Eph 6:23-24]

*(Eph 6:23)Peace to the brothers, and affection with faith from Yahweh the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. (24)Grace to all who are fond of our Lord Jesus Christ with an undying affection.*

**To the Colossians** [Col 4:10-15;17-18]

*(Col 4:10)My fellow prisoner Aristarchus sends you his greetings, as does Mark, the cousin of Barnabas. (You have received instructions about him; if he comes to you, welcome him.) (11)Jesus, who is called Justus, also sends greetings. These are the only Jews among my fellow workers for the Kingdom of Yahweh, and they have proved a comfort to me. (12)Epaphras, who is one of you and a servant of Christ Jesus, sends greetings. He is always wrestling in prayer for you, that you may stand firm in all the will of Yahweh, mature and fully assured. (13)I testify that he is working hard for you and for those at Laodicea and Hierapolis. (14)Our dear friend Luke, the doctor, and Demas send greetings. (15)Give my greetings to the brothers at Laodicea, and to Nympha and the Church in her house.*

*(17)Tell Archippus: "See to it that you complete the work you have received in the Lord."*

*(18)I, Paul, write this greeting in my own hand. Remember my chains. Grace be with you.*

**To Philemon** [Phm 1:23-25]

*(Phm 1:23)Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, sends you greetings. (24)And so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas and Luke, my fellow workers.*

*(25)The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.*

**To the Philippians** [Php 4:21-23]

*(Php 4:21)Greet all the saints in Christ Jesus. The brothers who are with me send greetings. (22)All the saints send you greetings, especially those who belong to Caesar's household.*

*(23)The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.*

**To Timothy** [2 Ti 4:19-22]

*(2Ti 4:19)Greet Priscilla and Aquila and the household of Onesiphorus. (20)Erastus stayed in Corinth, and I left Trophimus sick in Miletus. (21)Do your best to get here before winter. Eubulus greets you, and so do Pudens, Linus, Claudia and all the brothers.*

*(22)The Lord Yahweh be with your spirit. Grace be with you.*

**To Titus** [Tit 3:15]

*(Tit 3:15)Everyone with me sends you greetings. Greet those who are fond of us in the faith.*

*Grace be with you all.*

**To the Hebrews** [Heb 13:24-25]

*(Heb 13:24)Greet all your leaders and all Yahweh's people. Those from Italy send you their greetings.*

*(25)Grace be with you all.*

**1 & 2 Thessalonians**

**(1Th 5:23)(2Th 3:16)** *May Yahweh... God of peace...* A typical prayer, fit to end a letter. *Your whole spirit, mind and body.* All the parts of a human being are equally important as all will reach salvation. *The Lord Yahweh... will be with all of you.* Addressed to everybody, even the disobedient.

**(1Th 5:24)** *One who calls you.* Yahweh, who calls all men to salvation.

**(2Th 3:17)** *I, Paul, write... in my own hand.* Paul normally dictated his letters, but toward the end he used to add something personally, as his distinguishing mark.

**(1Th 5:25-26)** *Brothers, pray... Greet all...* Paul's greeting was for everyone, even for those he had corrected.

**(27)** *I charge you...* A strong command. Clearly, Paul wanted every member of the Church to read or hear his letter and to know of his concern and advice for them.

**(1Th 5:28)(2Th 3:18)** *The grace... be with you.* Paul always ended his letters with a benediction or a blessing.

**Galatians**

**(Gal 6:18)** *The grace... be with your spirit.* Paul always ended his letters with a benediction or a blessing.

**1 & 2 Corinthians**

**(1Co 16:19)** *Aquila and Priscilla.* Husband and wife, they had helped Paul found the Church at Corinth (Ac 18:1-4). *The Church that meets at their house.* Aquila and Priscilla had left Corinth with Paul and gone to Ephesus (Ac 18:18-19). Evidently they were still there, and the believers were meeting at their house, as it was common in that early period.

**(1Co 16:20; 2Co 13:12-13)** *All the saints.* All the believers. *Holy kiss.* The kiss of mutual respect and affection in Jesus Christ was the usual practice of the early Christians (from a practice that was customary in the ancient East).

**(1Co 16:21)** *I, Paul, write... in my own hand.* Paul normally dictated his letters, but toward the end he used to add something personally, as his distinguishing mark.

**(16:22)** *If anyone... a curse is on him.* Because this person has to experience Yahweh's displeasure and punishment. *Come, O Lord Jesus Christ!* An expression used by the early Church, asking for Jesus Christ's second coming.

**(1Co 16:23; 2Co 13:14)** *May... the fellowship of Yahweh's Holy Spirit...* A wish that all would be in spiritual communion with Jesus Christ and Yahweh.

**(2Co 13:11)** *Aim... listen... be... live...* These concluding exhortations exhibit a note of confident affection.

**(1Co 16:24)** *My affection to all of you.* Although he had been severe with the Corinthians, Paul wanted them to know that he was fond of all of them as believers in Jesus Christ.

**Romans**

**(Ro 16:3-4)** *Priscilla and Aquila.* Close friends of Paul who worked in the same trade of tentmaking (Ac 18:2-3).

**(16:5-16)** *Epenetus, Mary, Adronicus and Junias, Ampliatus, Urbanus, Stachys, Appelles, Aristobulos, Herodion, Narcissus, Tryphena and Tryphosa, Persis, Rufus and his mother, Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas, Philologus, Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas.* None of these persons can be further identified, except that they were slaves or freedmen in the Roman Church -all were slave names commonly found in Roman households.

**(16:21)** *Timothy... Lucius, Jason and Sosipater.* A group of Paul's close friends. Timothy is well known. Lucius probably was Lucius of Cyrene, a prophet of the Church at Antioch (Ac 13:1). Jason probably was the Jason who gave Paul hospitality at Thessalonica and suffered for it at the hands of the mob (Ac 17:5-9). Sosipater probably was the Sosipater of Berea who took the collection of his Church to Jerusalem with Paul (Ac 20:4).

**(16:22)** *I Terzius...* The only time we are given to know the name of one of the amanuensis who wrote Paul's letters under dictation.

**(16:23)** *Gaius.* His full name was Gaius Titus Justus, in whose house Paul stayed while at Corinth (Ac 18:7; Divisions in the Church. 1 Co 1:14). *Erastus.* At one time an important man at Corinth (Ac 19:22; Final greetings. 2 Ti 4:20). *Quartus.* Unknown, but clearly very close to Paul.

### **Ephesians**

**(Eph 6:23-24)** *Peace to the brothers... Grace to all...* Paul concluded this letter with greetings lacking the personal references usually found in his letters. This is understandable because Ephesian was intended as a circular letter to several Churches, including the one at Ephesus.

### **Colossians**

**(Col 4:10)** *Aristarcus.* A Macedonian who was with Paul during the Ephesian riot (Ac 19:29) and therefore was known in Colosse. Then he and Tychicus were with Paul in Greece (Ac 20:4). And he accompanied Paul on his trip to Rome (Ac 27:2) after he had appealed to Caesar. *Mark.* The author of the Gospel, initially a close associate to Peter and, then, to Paul during his first Roman imprisonment. *Barnabas.* A Levite from Cyprus (Ac 4:36) who became an important companion of Paul (Ac 13:1-4).

**(Col 4:11)** *Jesus... called Justus.* Nothing is known about this man. *The only Jews.* Jew-converts who became close associates and companions of Paul.

**(Col 4:12)** *Epaphras.* A native of Colosse, probably the founder of the local Church (Thanksgiving and prayer to the Colossians. Col 1:3-14).

**(Col 4:13)** *Working... for you and for those at Laodicea and Hierapolis.* This most probably means that Epaphras was the Overseer of the Churches at Colosse, Laodicea and Hierapolis.

**(Col 4:14)** *Luke, the doctor.* The author of the Gospel and of the Acts of the Apostles, the most dedicated of Paul's companions. *Demas.* A Christian worker who would later desert Paul (Personal remarks. 2 Ti 4:10).

**(Col 4:15)** *Nympha.* A Laodicean lady. *Church in her house.* The early Churches had no dedicated buildings, so the Christians usually met for worship and instruction in some of their homes.

**(Col 4:17)** *Archippus.* Probably the son of Philemon (Introduction to Philemon. Phm 1:1-3). *Complete the work...* We do not know which was the task assigned to Archippus.

**(Col 4:18)** *I, Paul, write... in my own hand.* Paul normally dictated his letters, but toward the end he used to add something personally, as his distinguishing mark.

### **Philemon**

**(Phm 1:23-24)** *Epaphras, Mark, Aristarcus, Demas and Luke.* Already seen in: "Final Greetings" (Col 4:10-15; 17-18).

**(1:25)** *The grace... be with your spirit.* Paul always ended his letters with a benediction or a blessing.



**Philippians**

**(Php 4:21)** *All the saints.* All the believers.

**(4:22)** *Those who belong to Caesar's household.* A regular phrase for those employed in the civil administration of the Roman Empire. Paul wrote this letter when he was under house arrest in Rome (Ac 28:14-31), where for two years he was free to teach the Gospel to all who came to him.

**(4:23)** *The grace... be with your spirit.* Paul always ended his letters with a benediction or a blessing.

**Timothy**

**(2Ti 4:19)** *Priscilla and Aquila.* Wife and husband, Jew-converts, who met Paul at Corinth (Ac 18:2) and then left with him for Syria, stopping at Ephesus (Ac 18:18-19). *Onesiphorus.* Nothing is known of him except that in his loyalty to Paul he risked his life (Further instructions to Timothy. 2Ti 1:4-18. Benediction and final greetings to Timothy. 2Ti 4:19-22).

**(4:20)** *Erastus.* Already seen in: Ac 19:22 and "Final greetings" (Ro 16:21-24). *Trophimus.* An Ephesian, one of the delegates appointed to accompany Paul and the money collected for the poor of Jerusalem (Ac 20:4; 21:29). *Miletus.* A seaport on the coast of Asia Minor about 50 miles (80 km) south of Ephesus.

**(4:21)** *Eubulus... Pudens... Claudia.* Nothing is known about these friends of Paul. *Linus.* Early tradition affirms that he was the first bishop of Rome after the death of Peter and Paul.

**(4:22)** *The grace... be with your spirit.* Paul always ended his letters with a benediction or a blessing.

**Titus**

**(Tit 3:15)** *Everyone... sends... Greet those... Grace be with you all.* At the end, as in any letter, come the final greetings and Paul's blessing.

**Hebrews**

**(Heb 13:24)** *Leaders.* The leaders of the Christian Church on Earth (Exhortations. Heb 13:1-17). *Those from Italy.* Jew-Christians who, as Aquila and Priscilla, had left Italy when the Emperor Claudius had ordered all the Jews to leave Rome (Ac 18:2).

**(13:25)** *Grace be with you all.* Paul always ended his letters with a benediction or a blessing.

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**Alpha-numerical index**

<b>Colossians</b>	<b>Page</b>	<b>2 Corinth.</b>	<b>Page</b>	<b>Galatians</b>	<b>Page</b>	<b>Philippians</b>	<b>Page</b>
1:1-2	22	1:1-2	22	1:1-5	22	1:1-2	23
1:3-14	34	1:3-11	37	1:6-10	168	1:3-11	35
1:15-23	121	1:12-24	186	1:11-24	26	1:12-30	209
1:24-29	206	2:1-4	186	2:1-10	27	2:1-11	125
2:1-5	206	2:5-11	135	2:11-21	28	2:12-18	211
2:6-23	122	2:12-17	187	3:1-14	168	2:19-30	211
3:1-17	124	3:1-6	187	3:15-25	169	3:1-11	212
3:18-19	153	3:7-18	92	3:26-29	170	3:12-21	213
3:20-21	154	4:1-18	93	4:1-7	170	4:1	213
3:22-25	154	5:1-10	95	4:8-20	171	4:2-9	215
4:1	154	5:11-21	96	4:21-31	173	4:10-20	216
4:2-9	207	6:1-2	96	5:1-15	174	4:21-23	234
4:10-15	234	6:3-13	189	5:16-26	175	<b>Romans</b>	<b>Page</b>
4:16	207	6:14-18	97	6:1-10	176	1:1-7	22
4:17-18	234	7:1	97	6:11-17	177	1:8-10	33
<b>1 Corinth.</b>	<b>Page</b>	7:2-16	189	6:18	233	1:11-17	202
1:1-3	22	8:1-15	198	<b>Hebrews</b>	<b>Page</b>	1:18-32	40
1:4-9	32	8:16-24	199	1:1-14	65	2:1-16	41
1:10-17	178	9:1-5	199	2:1-4	67	2:17-29	42
1:18-31	118	9:6-15	200	2:5-18	67	3:1-8	43
2:1-5	118	10:1-18	191	3:1-6	69	3:9-20	44
2:6-16	119	11:1-15	192	3:7-19	70	3:21-31	44
3:1-23	178	11:16-33	194	4:1-13	70	4:1-25	45
4:1-21	180	12:1-10	195	4:14-16	72	5:1-11	47
5:1-13	159	12:11-21	196	5:1-10	72	5:12-21	48
6:1-11	161	13:1-10	201	5:11-14	230	6:1-14	49
6:12-20	160	13:11-14	233	6:1-12	230	6:15-23	50
7:1-40	156	<b>Ephesians</b>	<b>Page</b>	6:13-20	73	7:1-6	51
8:1-13	139	1:1-2	22	7:1-10	74	7:7-25	52
9:1-27	142	1:3-14	38	7:11-28	74	8:1-17	54
10:1-13	127	1:15-23	33	8:1-13	76	8:18-27	55
10:14-22	129	2:1-10	98	9:1-10	77	8:28-39	56
10:23-33	141	2:11-22	99	9:11-28	78	9:1-29	57
11:1	141	3:1-13	100	10:1-18	80	9:30-33	60
11:2-16	146	3:14-19	101	10:19-39	81	10:1-21	60
11:17-34	182	3:20-21	38	11:1-40	83	11:1-10	62
12:1-11	103	4:1-16	102	12:1-13	86	11:11-24	63
12:12-31	104	4:17-32	110	12:14-29	113	11:25-32	64
13:1-13	106	5:1-20	110	13:1-17	133	11:33-36	37
14:1-25	107	5:21-33	153	13:18-23	232	12:1-2	64
14:26-40	109	6:1-4	154	13:24-25	234	12:3-8	130
15:1-11	87	6:5-9	154	<b>Philemon</b>	<b>Page</b>	12:9-21	131
15:12-34	88	6:10-18	130	1:1-3	23	13:1-7	155
15:35-58	90	6:19-22	205	1:4-7	35	13:8-14	133
16:1-4	184	6:23-24	234	1:8-22	208	14:1-23	136
16:5-18	184			1:23-25	234	15:1-13	136
16:19-24	233					15:14-22	203

<b>Romans</b>	<b>Page</b>	<b>2 Thessalon.</b>	<b>Page</b>	<b>1 Timothy</b>	<b>Page</b>	<b>Titus</b>	<b>Page</b>
15:23-33	204	1:1-2	22	6:1-2	148	1:1-4	23
16:1-2	204	1:3-12	31	6:3-10	219	1:5-16	228
16:3-16	233	2:1-12	116	6:11-21	220	2:1-15	148
16:17-20	204	2:13-17	166	<b>2 Timothy</b>	<b>Page</b>	3:1-11	150
16:21-24	233	3:1-5	135	1:1-2	23	3:12-14	229
16:25-27	37	3:6-15	167	1:3	36	3:15	234
<b>1 Thessalon.</b>	<b>Page</b>	3:16-18	233	1:4-18	221		
1:1	22	<b>1 Timothy</b>	<b>Page</b>	2:1-13	221		
1:2-10	31	1:1-2	23	2:14-26	224		
2:1-16	163	1:3-11	217	3:1-9	225		
2:17-20	164	1:12-17	29	3:10-17	226		
3:1-5	164	1:18-20	217	4:1-8	226		
3:6-13	165	2:1-15	144	4:9-18	227		
4:1-12	126	3:1-16	147	4:19-22	234		
4:13-18	115	4:1-16	218				
5:1-11	115	5:1-22	151				
5:12-22	166	5:23	220				
5:23-28	233	5:24-25	151				

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