LESSON #5- OVERVIEW OF THE PAULINE EPISTLES

Review

Review the last lesson, go over the 7 epistles, name, place of writing, date of writing. to, main theme/s

Objective:

To be familiar with the fourteen epistles attributed to St. Paul in the New Testament.
To understand the themes and the reasons for writing the different epistles.

Memory Verse:

"Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season" (2 Timothy 4:2).

Classification according to the content

A. Eschatological Epistles
B. Stereological (chief) Epistles
C. Prison Letters
E. Pastoral Epistles

Classification according to the receiver:

8 to Churches/congregation
4 to individuals

4. Galatians

Epistle Name	Place of writing	Time of writing	Main theme
Galatians	Ephesus	49-50 [1st trip]	Justification is by faith [heresy]

St. Paul criticizes the Judaizers for using the Old Testament as a sort of ritual prescription so that by keeping the ritual prescription they can come closer to God. Their good news was conditional. They considered themselves to be the gatekeepers to the gate of righteousness, and the key to the gate was the observances of the law including circumcision. St. Paul talks about justification by faith. The keynote in Galatians is 5:1, freedom in Christ. Through Christ, we have been freed from the tyranny of the law. Galatians 3:28 talks about the unity in Christ: freedom from any social or racial barriers. St. Paul also talks about the flesh that sets itself against God, and the Spirit that frees us through Jesus Christ.

5. Ephesians

Epistle Name	Place of writing	Time of writing	Main theme
Ephesians	Prison in Rome	61 AD	Church is the body of Christ

Ephesians is referred to by many theologians as a —theological tract, "wisdom discourse", and "liturgical homily". Ephesians was a circular letter. St. Paul wrote this epistle to refute the dualistic and Gnostic types of thinking that the Church was suffering from at that time. For that reason, St. Paul emphasized certain theologies in Ephesians such as:

1. Christ is the One in whom God unites all things in heaven and on earth. He is the head of all
2. things (1:22). His Body (Church) is cosmic in scale, composed of Jews and Gentiles, heavenly and earthly.
3. Christ is the head of all things for His Church.
4. Cosmic Christ is working a cosmic reconciliation. (Cosmic means universal and inclusive)
5. St. Paul also discussed many themes including the unity of Jews and Gentiles, the exalted Christ, the greatness of God, the apostle to the Gentiles, the status of the believers, and salvation in the present dimension.

One theologian suggested that the Epistle to the Ephesians was a cover letter to all the epistles that St. Paul had written.

6. Philippians

Epistle Name	Place of writing	Time of writing	Main theme
Philippians	Prison in Rome	61 AD	Rejoice in the Lord and thanking them

Lydia is the first convert in Philippi. The Church of Philippi is the first Church formed in Europe. Lydia and her family provided a place for the converts to meet.

A. The two major difficulties that brought about the writing of this epistle

1- Oppositions coming from non-Jewish communities.
2- Conflict between Euodoia and Syntyche. The conflict could be something about leadership in the Church of Philippi (Philippians 4:2).
The keynote of Philippians is Joy. While in prison, the Philippians decided to bring a love offering to St. Paul by Epaphroditus, but Epaphroditus got sick, and St. Paul had to take care of him instead. St. Paul praised Epaphroditus in his epistle just to show the Philippians that Epaphroditus did not fail in his mission to help him.

B. The reasons for writing this epistle

1. To thank the Philippians for their love gift.
2. To discuss Epaphroditus' situation with them.

3. To address some potential problems primarily related to Euodia and Syntyche.
4. The Christ hymn in Chapter 2 has ample parallelism with John 13:3-17 (the washing of the feet

Activities:
Print each epistle in a flash cared and distribute them among the students, so they may can read or quiz each other hiding the name of the epistle and other may guess which one is that

7. Colossians

Epistle Name	Place of writing	Time of writing	Main theme
Colossians	Prison in Rome	61 AD	Christ is the head of the church

Epapharus started the Church in Colossi. The believers at Colossi were suffering from a heresy that was going around at the time. The heresy had three aspects:

a) Jewish services (2:16),
b) Pagan mythology and philosophy (2:8, 18), and
c) Angelic worship (angels having power over people).

St. Paul wrote this epistle for two reasons: to deal with this heresy and to give insight about the Christian life. The general theme of the epistle is the sufficiency of Christ; "But Christ is all and in All" (3:11). This epistle was sent to the Colossians with Tychicus.

8. First and
9. Second Thessalonians

Epistle Name	Place of writing	Time of writing	Main theme
1st Thessalonian	Corinth	51 AD [2nd trip]	Encouraging the persecuted church
2nd Thessalonian	Corinth	52-53 AD [2nd trip]	Second coming

St. Paul wrote these two epistles around AD 50 from Corinth. They were delivered to the Thessalonians by Silas and Timothy. St. Paul went to Macedonia and preached in Thessalonica, which was the capital. Many God fearers were saved, while the converts were mad. St. Paul, Timothy, and Silas had to flee to Athens. From Athens, St. Paul sent Timothy to the Church of Thessalonica with the epistles.

The problems that led to the writing of First Thessalonians

Accusations against St. Paul.

Conflicts concerning the Parousia (means being near or being by, and the word refers to the second coming of Christ).

a) What will happen to those who already died?
b) When will Christ return?

Second Thessalonians is not as elaborate and detailed as Thessalonians 1. St. Paul realized that some of the Thessalonians became idlers waiting for the second coming (2 Thessalonians 3:11) so he had to tell them in the Second Thessalonians that certain signs had to be revealed first before the coming of Christ.

1st Thessalonian was one of the first books in the NT or may be the first as it was written around 51 AD. It seemed that after he wrote the first letter telling them about the second coming of Jesus to give them hope, some people stopped working assuming the end of the world is almost here. That was the reason for writing the 2nd letter of Thessalonians to address this wrong thought and to mention the signs of the end of the world.

Both epistles were around 51-53 AD

Both were during the 2nd missionary trip and their main theme is the 2nd coming

10. First Timothy

Epistle Name	Place of writing	Time of writing	Main theme
1st Timothy	Macedonia	64-65 AD	Pastoral duties

St. Paul wrote this epistle from Macedonia to Timothy in Ephesus. Timothy was facing several difficulties because of a false doctrine that was turning people away from Church.

Characteristics of this false doctrine

a) It involved myths and genealogies (1:4 and 4:7).
b) It taught the law without understanding (1:7).
c) They advocated asceticism in the form of marriage and the taking of certain food.
d) They emphasized their own brand of knowledge (6:20).
e) It had elements of Judaism and Gnosticism.

St. Paul wrote to Timothy encouraging him to be faithful in his ministry, to stay away from false doctrine, and to give instructions concerning Church organization and practice.

11. Second Timothy

Epistle Name	Place of writing	Time of writing	Main theme
2nd Timothy	Rome [2nd prison]	67 AD	Farewell discourse

St. Paul wrote it while he was in prison in Rome to Timothy in Ephesus. St. Paul was about to meet his death (4:6). For that reason, he wrote this letter to give final instructions to Timothy:

a) To endure the difficulties.

b) To be faithful.
c) To fulfill his duties in enduring with the Gospel.
d) To remind him that God gives us a Spirit of power and not of fear.
e) To admonish him and give him a charge to teach and practice correctly.
f) To encourage him to —exhort, convince, rebuke‖(4:2).

The four things that St. Paul asked of Timothy as St. Paul approached death were:
1) Friends, 2) Cloak, 3) Books, 4) Parchments (4:2)
In this epistle, St. Paul mentioned so many people whom we have never met anywhere else in the Bible.

12. Titus

Epistle Name	Place of writing	Time of writing	Main theme
Titus	Ephesus	63-64 AD	Church order

St. Paul wrote this epistle from Macedonia to Titus in Crete. Titus was also facing several difficulties just like Timothy. The heresy that was attacking the Church in Crete dealt with circumcision, Jewish myth, and the observances of the law. Verse 12 in Chapter 3 talks about a meeting that St. Paul had planned with Titus. No one knows if this meeting ever took place. Some theologians believe that St. Paul wrote the Epistle to Titus before he wrote Second Timothy. It is said that Titus became a Christian because of St. Paul's testimony.

13. Philemon

Epistle Name	Place of writing	Time of writing	Main theme
Philemon	Prison in Rome	61 AD	Appeal for Onesimus - REDEMPTION

This letter is addressed to Philemon, Apphia, and Archippus. Colossians and Philemon are said to have been written around the same time and delivered by the same people. The letter to Philemon is also referred to as the Letter to Laodicea. In verse 1:8, St. Paul states the reason and purpose of the letter "Therefore, though I might be very bold in Christ to command you what is fitting". Some think that Archippus is the slave owner, and that Philemon is the pastor of the Church. Later in AD 110, it is recorded that there was a bishop named Onesimus. Some think that this is the same Onesimus, the runaway slave.

14. Hebrews

Epistle Name	Place of writing	Time of writing	Main theme
Hebrews	**After release from Prison in Rome**	**63-64 AD**	**To all Jews telling them about Christ's heavenly priesthood**

Many Jewish believers, having stepped out of Judaism into Christianity, want to reverse their course in order to escape persecution by their countrymen. St. Paul exhorts the Hebrews to "go to perfection" (6:1). His appeal is based on the superiority of Christ over the Judaic system. Christ is better than the angels, for they worship Him. He is better than Moses, for He created him. He is better than the Aaronic priesthood, for His sacrifice was once for all time. He is better than the law, for He mediates a better covenant. In short, there is more to be gained in Christ than to be lost in Judaism.
Pressing on in Christ produces tested faith, self-discipline, and a visible love seen in good works. The Epistle to the Hebrews seems to be written before 70 AD.

Conclusion:

It is of more benefit to learn about each epistle before studying the epistle. Learning about the time, the occasion, the purpose, the difficulties that the Churches were facing, will help us to have a better understanding of what St. Paul said and why.

Applications:

It might be more efficient if everyone in the Sunday school class gets a copy of the lesson so that they may use it as they study the different epistles of St. Paul later on.