**+ *Saint Mark’s Church***

***Sunday School***

**An Introduction to the Epistles of Saint Paul**

+ The epistles of Saint Paul represents a treasure in the N.T and ~ 50% of all the books of the NT. (14 epistles)

+ The epistles were written to defend the true faith against some heresies in the Church , or to solve some problems there , or to instruct the co-servants of Saint Paul ( the Bishops ) how to oversee the church .

+ The normal feature of the epistles : The epistle is divided into two major parts . The first part is doctrinal which deals with Faith or Dogma , and the second part is practical which reflect the outcomes of the first part on the life of the believers .

+ The epistles may be divided into groups according to :

1. **A) the time of writing.**

# Group 1 : written about 52-53 AD

1. 1 Thessalonins

2. 2 Thessalonins

# Group 2 : written about 57-58 AD

1. Galatians

2. 1 Corinthians

1. 2 Corinthians
2. Romans

## Group 3 : written about 61-63 AD ( The epistles of the prison-wrote while he was prisoner)

1. Ephesians

2. Philippians

3. Colossians

1. Philemon

## Group 4 : written about 64-67AD

1. 1Timothy

1. 2 Timothy
2. Titus

### Group 5 : not definite , but before the martyrdom of Saint Paul 67AD

1. Hebrews

#### the type of the epistle

# Group 1 : To a Church or group of Churches

1. 1 Thessalonins

2. 2 Thessalonins

3. Galatians

4. 1 Corinthians

1. 5. 2 Corinthians
2. 6. Romans

7. Ephesians

8. Philippians

1. 9. Colossians
2. 10. Hebrews

##### Group 2: Pastoral Epistles

1. 1 Timothy
2. 2 Timothy
3. Titus

### Group 3 : Personal

1. Philemon

|  | **The Epistle** | **To whom it was sent** | **Date & place of writing the epistle** | **Problems need to be solved** | **The theme of the epistle** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1 | Romans | Paul did not visit the Church in Rome yet. But he sent this epistle to the Christian there either from Jewish origin or Gentile origin to prepare them to the faith he preach. | ~57 AD from Corinth in the third mission. | Christian from Jewish origin felt that they are better than the others from Gentile origin and vice versa | God’s RIGHEOUSNESS revealed in CHRIST for our SALVATION |
| 2 | **1st. Corinthians** | To the Church in Corinth which St. Paul established in the 2nd. mission(Acts 18:1-11) | ~55 from Ephesus during St. Paul 3rd. mission | 1. Church disunity 2. Moral failure 3. Dealing with Pagan religion 4. Wrong teaching about Spiritual gifts , Eucharist and resurrection of the bodies | 1.Application of Christian principles to the problems occurring in Corinth .  2. Establish the theology of :  + Spiritual gifts  + Eucharist  + Resurrection of the bodies |
| 3 | **2nd. Corinthians** | ,, ,, ,, | ~56 AD from Macedonia after St. Paul received a report from Titus about the effect of the 1st. epistle on the church at Corinth | 1. Some attacked the Apostleship of St. Paul , and his equality to the other Apostles. | 1. Reconciliation to the Corinthian church . 2. St. Paul defense of his apostolic credentials and authority. |
| 4 | **Galatians** | To the Churches in the province of Galatia in Asia Minor. He visited these Churches in the 2nd. mission (Acts 16:6 ) and also on the 3rd. mission (Acts18:23) | ~56 AD from Ephesus or Macedonia | The Galatians churches were taken over by Jewish teaching of returning back to the law of Moses for salvation. | The true gospel vs. the false gospel .  [Sufficiency of the true faith in Christ for salvation.] |
| 5 | **Ephesians** | To the Church of Ephesus in Asia Minor ,where he spent about 3 years (Acts 18:19-20 ; 19:8,10 ; 20:17,31) in his 2nd and 3rd. missions. | ~61-63 AD from his first imprisonment in Rome |  | .The riches of Christ in the Church.  [The Church is the Body of Christ. This Body is the center and life of all.] |
| 6 | **Philippians** | To the Church of Philippe which is the 1st. city St. Paul preached in Europe in his 2nd. mission (Acts 16:11-40) . He visited again in his 3rd. mission ( Acts 20:1-6) | ~61-63 AD from his first imprisonment in Rome |  | The dynamic of our life in Christ  [JOY ] |
| 7 | **Colossians** | To the Church of Colossi. Colossi was a minor city near Ephesus. The Church- most probably- was found by Epaphras , a native of Colossi, Philemon was its largest financial supporter and the church was in his home. | ~61-63 AD from his first imprisonment in Rome | Heresy which was a blend of Jewish and Oriental ideas.   1. Christ is not unique. 2. Angels was super than Christ 3. Sin resulted from lack of knowledge 4. Salvation can be gained through ritual and ascetic practices. | Living by the will of God vs. dying by false human schemes.  [Preeminence of Christ in all things.] |
| 8 | **1st Thessalonians** | To the Church in Thessalonica .  Thessalonica was the most prominent city of the province of Macedonia. St. Paul established the Church in his 2nd. mission (Acts17: 1-8) | ~50-51AD from Corinth as a response to St. Timothy’s report. |  | A holy life leads to eternal life.  [Jesus next coming] |
| 9 | **2nd. Thessalonians** | ,, ,, ,, ,, | ~ 51AD from Corinth ,few months after the 1st. epistle. | False speculations about the next coming of the Lord. | Stand fast through Apostolic teaching  [Understand the day of the Lord] |
| 10 | **1st. Timothy** | St. Timothy ,the beloved son of St. Paul and the Bishop of Ephesus | ~64-65 from Macedonia |  | Pastoral care of the faithful |
| 11 | **2nd. Timothy** | ,, ,, ,, ,, | ~65-67 from Roman prison near his execution |  | Overcoming hardship in the ministry |
| 12 | **Titus** | Titus was a gentile converted by St. Paul , received an approval of the Apostles in Jerusalem to remain uncircumcised ( Gal. 2:1-5). Appointed by St. Paul to be the Bishop of Crete. | ~63-65 from Corinth |  | Overseeing the Church according to the true faith. |
| 13 | **Philemon** | Philemon had been converted by St. Paul, and was a member of the Church in Colossi | ~61-63 AD from his first imprisonment in Rome | Onesimus was a slave of Philemon , who stole from his master and run away. He was then captured . Somehow, reached St. Paul and was converted to Christ. St. Paul returned him back to his master with this letter. | Our brotherhood in Christ |
| 14 | **Hebrews** | The Greek speaking Jewish Christian mainly in Palestine . | ~ 64-68 AD | As Jewish Christians were dismissed from the Temple , they started to feel the sense of loss of the Jewish customs and traditions. They started to have a low view of Christ and Christianity | The superiority of Christ |