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An Introduction to the Epistles of St. Paul

AIM:

- At the end of the lesson the students should all know the Epistles of St. Paul, understand that they are more than 50% of the New Testament. They should understand how rich they are, have a good idea of St. Paul and his life as an example for us. It will be a bit hard for them to memorize all the epistles but if we manage to get them to remember the major ones and their broad themes it would be great Example, Romans, Corinthians, Hebrews, Thessalonians, Galatians and Colossians

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION FOR SERVANTS:

- Each servant should be reading the Epistles regularly so they can pass the message onto the class.

There is more details in the lesson so please tailor it based on the class's needs.

RESOURCES:

Handouts from Uncle Magdy in the servants meetings

ACTIVITY:

- Display the map of the region and ask them match the epistles to their locations

Rome

Corinthians (1st and 2nd)

Galatians

Ephesians

Philippians

Colossians

Thessalonians (1st and 2nd)

LESSON:

The life of St. Paul

- ❖ Saint Paul represents a unique personality among the apostles . His conversion , the depth of his knowledge and understanding of the O.T , his zeal to spread the Good News to everyone Jews and Gentiles , his continuous battle with the false teachers and hard converted Jews who insisted on Judaism (circumcision and other ritual Jewish traditions) as a gate to Christianity , his teaching about Christ and his fourteen epistles which he wrote , his long sufferings for Christ and His Church , and his fervent life which was empowered and inflamed by the Holy Spirit give him a special place in the Church.
- ❖ He was born to a Jewish family in Tarsus of Cilicia (Acts 22:3) . He received the Roman citizenship (Acts 22:38) as a citizen of Tarsus. (Tarsus is a city in Asia Minor).
- ❖ He was given the name of Saul (Hebrew) and Paul (Roman) [as suggested by Origin]
- ❖ He was from the tribe of Benjamin , circumcised on the 8th. day according to the Law of Moses , a Hebrew , and Pharisee (Phil. 3:5) .
- ❖ He started to read the books of the O.T in Tarsus . At the age of 15 , his father sent him to Jerusalem to be educated at the feet of Gamaliel the teacher of the Law (Acts 22:3).
- ❖ According to the Jewish traditions , each one have to have a trade . The trade of Saul was tent making (Acts 18:3)
- ❖ He was very zealous to the religion of his fathers and the traditions of his nation (Gal. 1:13-14) , so he proudly guarded the clothes of the fanatics who stoned St. Stephen.(Acts 7:58) . But beyond any doubt the last words of St. Stephen touched deeply in his heart and prepared him to accept the message of Jesus when he appeared to him.
- ❖ He seek orders from the High Priest to kill and torture the believers in Damascus . In his way the Lord of glory appeared to him and touched his heart . He was converted and received his sight when St. Ananias put his hand on him . He was baptized and filled with the Holy Spirit.(Acts 9: 1-22) [Saul was ~ 22 years old , the date was ~35 AD] { the events of his conversion was mentioned also in Acts 22:1-16 , 26:12:18 }
- ❖ He stayed ~ 3 years in Arabia (Gal. 1:17-18)

The LIFE OF SAINT PAUL

Yr. AD	Age	Activities	Reference	Notes
35	~20-22	Conversion	Acts 9:1-18	
36		3 years in the Solitude in Arabia then returned to Damascus, and then the 1st. visit to Jerusalem	Acts 9 :19-29	(2 wks in Jerusalem)
37			Gal 1: 17-20	
38				
39		In Tarsus	Acts 9:30	
40				
41				
42				
43	~28-30	Barnabas & Saul in Antioch (Head quarter of the mission for the Gentiles)	Acts 11:26	(1 year - Disciples called Christians)
44		2nd . visit to Jerusalem Barnabas & Saul. St. Mark returned with Them	Acts 11:27-30 Acts 12:25	To carry relief for the brethren
45	~30-32	First Mission (Barnabas, Saul, Mark) Antioch- Cyprus-Salamis- Paphos- Perga- Antioch Pisidia- Iconium- Lystra- Derba- (Then reverse the way back to Antioch)	Acts 13-14:26	
46				
47				
48				
49		Antioch	Acts 14:26-28	Reporting Back
50	-35-37	Third Visit to Jerusalem (The Council of Jerusalem)	Acts 15 , Gal.2	Acceptance of Gentiles without circumcision
51		Antioch	Acts 15:30-35	
52	-37-39	Second Mission (Paul& Silas) Derbe- Lystra(Timothy joined them)- Troas(Luke joined them)- Philippi(first city in Europe)- Thessalonica- Berea- Athens- Corinth(for 18 months)- Ephesus- Jerusalem -Antioch	Acts 15:40-18:21	St. Paul wrote 1't. 2 nd . Thessalonians from Corinth - 53 AD
53				
54				
55		Antioch	Acts 18:22	

Yr. AD	Age	Activities	Reference	Notes
56	~41-43	Third Mission (Paul and partially Timothy) Galatia - Ephesus- Macedonia- Corinth (3 months)- Troas- Miletus- Tyre (7 days)- Caesarea Jerusalem (Paul's arrest) (last visit to Jerusalem)	Acts 18:33-21:17	St Paul wrote: I't Corinthians from Ephesus 2 nd Corinthians from Macedonia Romans from Corinth Galatians from Corinth
57			Acts 21:18-3:3 5	
58				
59	~44-46	Caesarea (2 years waiting for trial)-	Acts 24: 1 - 26:32	Witnessing before the governor Felix ,and King Agrippa
60				
61		The Journey to Rome and waiting to the court of Caesar	Acts 27: 1 - 28:16	
62	~49-51	In Rome as a prisoner under house arrest	Acts 28:17-31	St Paul wrote the four letters of imprisonment 1. Ephesians, 2.Philippians 3. Colossians 4. Philemon
63				
64	~51-53	Freed from the prison, May be he went to Spain to Preach		St. Paul wrote the three Pastoral epistles 1. 1". Timothy 2. Titus 3.2 nd . Timothy
65				
66				
67	~54-56	Rearrested , trailed , and beheaded at the time of Emperor Nero		In Rome

The Epistles of St. Paul

- ❖ The epistles of Saint Paul represents a treasure in the N.T and ~ 50% of all the books of the NT. (14 epistles)
- ❖ We read a part from his Epistles in every mass: The Pauline
- ❖ 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 .
- ❖ It is important to highlight to the class that St. Paul was a sinner who persecuted Christians but from the moment he changed he never hesitated to proclaim Jesus Christ as the risen and living Son of God.

+ The epistles may be divided into groups according to

A) Either the time of that they were written.

Group 1 : written about 52-53 AD

1. 1 Thessalonians
2. 2 Thessalonians

Group 2 : written about 57-58 AD

1. Galatians
2. 1 Corinthians
3. 2 Corinthians
4. Romans

Group 3 : written about 61-63 AD (the prison epistles)

1. Ephesians
2. Philippians
3. Colossians
4. Philemon

Group 4 : written about 64-67AD

1. 1 Timothy

2. 2 Timothy
3. Titus

Group 5 : not definite but before the martyrdom written about 64-67AD

1. Hebrew

B) Or The type of the epistle

Group 1 : To a Church or group of Churches

1. 1 Thessalonians
2. 2 Thessalonians
3. Galatians
4. 1 Corinthians
5. 2 Corinthians
6. Romans
7. Ephesians
8. Philippians
9. Colossians
10. Hebrews

Group 2: Pastoral Epistles

1. 1 Timothy
2. 2 Timothy
3. Titus

Group 3 : Personal

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 2 nd . mission(Acts 18:1-11)	~55 from Ephesus during St. Paul 3 rd . mission	Church disunity Moral failure Dealing with Pagan religion 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 1 st . epistle on the church at Corinth	1. Some attacked the Apostleship of St. Paul , and his equality to the other Apostles.	Reconciliation to the Corinthian church . 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 2 nd . mission (Acts 16:6) and also on the 3 rd . mission (Acts 18:23)	~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 2 nd and 3 rd . 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 Philipe which is the 1 st . city St. Paul preached in Europe in his 2 nd . mission (Acts 16:11-40) . He visited again in his 3 rd . 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. Christ is not unique. Angels was super than Christ Sin resulted from lack of knowledge 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 2 nd . 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 1 st . 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 , 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

Examples of his main writings

(Have just picked a few verses, please feel free to add) – To give the class an idea of how St. Paul was a bold preacher and brilliant writer, whose example we can all learn from. He shows us that through God, any life and any heart can be changed.

I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. (Gal 2:20)

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control (Gal 5:22-23)

But God forbid that I should glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world (Gal 6:14)

23 For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 6:23)

And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. (Romans 8:28)

Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? 20 For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body^[c] and in your spirit, which are God's. (1 Corinthians 6:19,20)

I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, 2 with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, 3 endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. 4 There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism; 6 one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. (Ephesians 4:1-6)

21 For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. (Philippians 1:21)

And just to give an idea of what he went through

22 Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? So am I. 23 Are they ministers of Christ?—I speak as a fool—I am more: in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. 24 From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. 25 Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; 26 in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; 27 in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness— 28 besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches. 29 Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is

made to stumble, and I do not burn with indignation?

30 If I must boast, I will boast in the things which concern my infirmity. 31 The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is blessed forever, knows that I am not lying. 32 In Damascus the governor, under Aretas the king, was guarding the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desiring to arrest me; 33 but I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall, and escaped from his hands. (2 Corinthians 11:22-30)