

# start strong

A 2020 NEW YEAR DEVOTIONAL

# Merry Christmas!

Thanks, so much for deciding to jump in as we begin our study of Paul, arguably one of the most incredible writers and followers of Christ.

We will spend 2020 studying and learning from his early life, his transformation, his mission work, and his love for people. This is the beginning of a year-long journey focused on Paul.

I have included a reading plan for you to follow for the next twelve days. I am hoping you become a little more aware of his early life, his trials, his victories, his love for Christ, and how he took the next right step time after time.

To finish like Paul, we will want to start strong. Commit to the reading plan and do what you can to stick to it. If you get off track, that's ok-just jump right back to it!

Let's Get Started,

Toby

*"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith."*

*-2 Timothy 4:7*

# Reading Plan

DECEMBER 24 <sup>TH</sup>	COLOSSIANS 1
DECEMBER 25 <sup>TH</sup>	1 CORINTHIANS 15
DECEMBER 26 <sup>TH</sup>	EPHESIANS 2
DECEMBER 27 <sup>TH</sup>	ROMANS 12
DECEMBER 28 <sup>TH</sup>	PHILIPPIANS 3
DECEMBER 29 <sup>TH</sup>	GALATIANS 5
DECEMBER 30 <sup>TH</sup>	1 CORINTHIANS 11
DECEMBER 31 <sup>ST</sup>	PHILIPPIANS 4
JANUARY 1 <sup>ST</sup>	2 CORINTHIANS 11
JANUARY 2 <sup>ND</sup>	1 CORINTHIANS 4
JANUARY 3 <sup>RD</sup>	2 CORINTHIANS 12
JANUARY 4 <sup>TH</sup>	2 TIMOTHY 4

*New International Version (NIV)*

*Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV® Copyright ©1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.*

# December 24<sup>th</sup>

## COLOSSIANS 1 - WHAT GOD HAS DONE THROUGH CHRIST

1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother,

<sup>2</sup>To God's holy people in Colossae, the faithful brothers and sisters<sup>[a]</sup> in Christ:

Grace and peace to you from God our Father.<sup>[b]</sup>

### Thanksgiving and Prayer

<sup>3</sup>We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you,<sup>4</sup> because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all God's people—<sup>5</sup> the faith and love that spring from the hope stored up for you in heaven and about which you have already heard in the true message of the gospel<sup>6</sup> that has come to you. In the same way, the gospel is bearing fruit and growing throughout the whole world—just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and truly understood God's grace. <sup>7</sup>You learned it from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant,<sup>[c]</sup> who is a faithful minister of Christ on our<sup>[d]</sup> behalf, <sup>8</sup> and who also told us of your love in the Spirit.

<sup>9</sup>For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you. We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives,<sup>[e]</sup> <sup>10</sup> so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, <sup>11</sup> being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, <sup>12</sup> and giving joyful thanks to the Father, who has qualified you<sup>[f]</sup> to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light. <sup>13</sup>For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, <sup>14</sup> in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

### The Supremacy of the Son of God

<sup>15</sup>The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. <sup>16</sup>For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. <sup>17</sup>He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. <sup>18</sup>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.<sup>19</sup> For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, <sup>20</sup> 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.

<sup>21</sup> Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of<sup>[g]</sup> your evil behavior. <sup>22</sup> But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation— <sup>23</sup> if you continue in your faith, established and firm, and do not move from the hope held out 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.

#### Paul's Labor for the Church

<sup>24</sup> Now I rejoice in what I am suffering for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church. <sup>25</sup> I have become its servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness— <sup>26</sup> the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the Lord's people. <sup>27</sup> To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

<sup>28</sup> He is the one we proclaim, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ. <sup>29</sup> To this end I strenuously contend with all the energy Christ so powerfully works in me.

#### Footnotes:

- a. Colossians 1:2 The Greek word for brothers and sisters (adelphoi) refers here to believers, both men and women, as part of God's family; also in 4:15.
- b. Colossians 1:2 Some manuscripts Father and the Lord Jesus Christ
- c. Colossians 1:7 Or slave
- d. Colossians 1:7 Some manuscripts your
- e. Colossians 1:9 Or all spiritual wisdom and understanding
- f. Colossians 1:12 Some manuscripts us
- g. Colossians 1:21 Or minds, as shown by

# December 25<sup>th</sup>

## I CORINTHIANS 15 – THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS

15 Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. <sup>2</sup>By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain.

<sup>3</sup>For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance<sup>[a]</sup>: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, <sup>4</sup>that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, <sup>5</sup>and that he appeared to Cephas,<sup>[b]</sup>and then to the Twelve. <sup>6</sup>After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. <sup>7</sup>Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, <sup>8</sup>and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.

<sup>9</sup>For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. <sup>10</sup>But by the grace of God 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 God that was with me. <sup>11</sup>Whether, then, it is I or they, this is what we preach, and this is what you believed.

### The Resurrection of the Dead

<sup>12</sup>But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? <sup>13</sup>If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. <sup>14</sup>And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. <sup>15</sup>More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead. But he did not raise him if in fact the dead are not raised. <sup>16</sup>For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either. <sup>17</sup>And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. <sup>18</sup>Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. <sup>19</sup>If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.

<sup>20</sup>But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. <sup>21</sup>For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. <sup>22</sup>For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. <sup>23</sup>But each in turn: Christ, the first fruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him. <sup>24</sup>Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. <sup>25</sup>For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. <sup>26</sup>The last enemy to be destroyed is death. <sup>27</sup>For he “has put everything under his

feet.”<sup>[c]</sup> Now when it says that “everything” has been put under him, it is clear that this does not include God himself, who put everything under Christ. <sup>28</sup> When he has done this, then the Son himself will be made subject to him who put everything under him, so that God may be all in all.

<sup>29</sup> 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? <sup>30</sup> And as for us, why do we endanger ourselves every hour? <sup>31</sup> I face death every day—yes, just as surely as I boast about you in Christ Jesus our Lord. <sup>32</sup> If I fought wild beasts in Ephesus with no more than human hopes, what have I gained? If the dead are not raised,

“Let us eat and drink,  
for tomorrow we die.”<sup>[d]</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Do not be misled: “Bad company corrupts good character.”<sup>[e]</sup> <sup>34</sup> Come back to your senses as you ought, and stop sinning; for there are some who are ignorant of God—I say this to your shame.

### The Resurrection Body

<sup>35</sup> But someone will ask, “How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come?” <sup>36</sup> How foolish! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies.<sup>37</sup> When you sow, you do not plant the body that will be, but just a seed, perhaps of wheat or of something else. <sup>38</sup> But God gives it a body as he has determined, and to each kind of seed he gives its own body. <sup>39</sup> Not all flesh is the same: People have one kind of flesh, animals have another, birds another and fish another.<sup>40</sup> 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.<sup>41</sup> The sun has one kind of splendor, the moon another and the stars another; and star differs from star in splendor.

<sup>42</sup> So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; <sup>43</sup> it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; <sup>44</sup> it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.

If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. <sup>45</sup> So it is written: “The first man Adam became a living being”<sup>[f]</sup>; the last Adam, a life-giving spirit. <sup>46</sup> The spiritual did not come first, but the natural, and after that the spiritual. <sup>47</sup> The first man was of the dust of the earth; the second man is of heaven. <sup>48</sup> As was the earthly man, so are those who are of the earth; and as is the heavenly man, so also are those who are of heaven. <sup>49</sup> And just as we have borne the image of the earthly man, so shall we<sup>[g]</sup> bear the image of the heavenly man.

<sup>50</sup> I declare to you, brothers and sisters, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. <sup>51</sup> Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed—<sup>52</sup> 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. <sup>53</sup> For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. <sup>54</sup> 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.”<sup>[h]</sup>

<sup>55</sup> “Where, O death, is your victory?

Where, O death, is your sting?”<sup>[i]</sup>

<sup>56</sup> The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. <sup>57</sup> But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

<sup>58</sup> Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.

#### Footnotes:

- a. 1 Corinthians 15:3 Or you at the first
- b. 1 Corinthians 15:5 That is, Peter
- c. 1 Corinthians 15:27 Psalm 8:6
- d. 1 Corinthians 15:32 Isaiah 22:13
- e. 1 Corinthians 15:33 From the Greek poet Menander
- f. 1 Corinthians 15:45 Gen. 2:7
- g. 1 Corinthians 15:49 Some early manuscripts so let us
- h. 1 Corinthians 15:54 Isaiah 25:8
- i. 1 Corinthians 15:55 Hosea 13:14

# December 26<sup>th</sup>

## EPHESIANS 2 – WE ARE MADE ALIVE IN CHRIST

2 As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, <sup>2</sup> 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. <sup>3</sup> All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh<sup>[a]</sup> and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath. <sup>4</sup> But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, <sup>5</sup> made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. <sup>6</sup> And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, <sup>7</sup> 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. <sup>8</sup> For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— <sup>9</sup> not by works, so that no one can boast. <sup>10</sup> For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

### Jew and Gentile Reconciled Through Christ

<sup>11</sup> Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called “uncircumcised” by those who call themselves “the circumcision” (which is done in the body by human hands)— <sup>12</sup> remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. <sup>13</sup> But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

<sup>14</sup> For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, <sup>15</sup> by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, <sup>16</sup> and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. <sup>17</sup> He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. <sup>18</sup> For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.

<sup>19</sup> Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God’s people and also members of his household, <sup>20</sup> built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. <sup>21</sup> In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. <sup>22</sup> And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

Footnotes:

- a. Ephesians 2:3 In contexts like this, the Greek word for flesh (sarx) refers to the sinful state of human beings, often presented as a power in opposition to the Spirit.

# December 27<sup>th</sup>

## ROMANS 12 – LIVING FOR OTHERS

12 Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. <sup>2</sup> Do not conform 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 God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

### Humble Service in the Body of Christ

<sup>3</sup> For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you. <sup>4</sup> For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, <sup>5</sup> so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. <sup>6</sup> We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your<sup>[a]</sup> faith; <sup>7</sup> if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; <sup>8</sup> if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead,<sup>[b]</sup> do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.

### Love in Action

<sup>9</sup> Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. <sup>10</sup> Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves. <sup>11</sup> Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. <sup>12</sup> Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. <sup>13</sup> Share with the Lord’s people who are in need. Practice hospitality.

<sup>14</sup> Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. <sup>15</sup> Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. <sup>16</sup> Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position.<sup>[c]</sup> Do not be conceited.

<sup>17</sup> Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. <sup>18</sup> If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. <sup>19</sup> Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: “It is mine to avenge; I will repay,”<sup>[d]</sup> says the Lord. <sup>20</sup> 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.”<sup>[e]</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Do not be overcome by evil but overcome evil with good.

Footnotes:

- a. Romans 12:6 Or the
- b. Romans 12:8 Or to provide for others
- c. Romans 12:16 Or willing to do menial work
- d. Romans 12:19 Deut. 32:35
- e. Romans 12:20 Prov. 25:21,22

# December 28<sup>th</sup>

## PHILIPPIANS 3 – REJOICE IN THE LORD

### No Confidence in the Flesh

3 Further, my brothers and sisters, rejoice in the Lord! It is no trouble for me to write the same things to you again, and it is a safeguard for you. <sup>2</sup> Watch out for those dogs, those evildoers, those mutilators of the flesh. <sup>3</sup> For it is we who are the circumcision, we who serve God by his Spirit, who boast in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh— <sup>4</sup> though I myself have reasons for such confidence.

If someone else thinks they have reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: <sup>5</sup> 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; <sup>6</sup> as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for righteousness based on the law, faultless.

<sup>7</sup> But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. <sup>8</sup> What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ <sup>9</sup> and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in<sup>[a]</sup> Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith. <sup>10</sup> I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, <sup>11</sup> and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead.

<sup>12</sup> Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. <sup>13</sup> Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, <sup>14</sup> I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

### Following Paul's Example

<sup>15</sup> All of us, then, who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you. <sup>16</sup> Only let us live up to what we have already attained.

<sup>17</sup> Join together in following my example, brothers and sisters, and just as you have us as a model, keep your eyes on those who live as we do. <sup>18</sup> For, as I have often told you before and now tell you again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. <sup>19</sup> Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is set on earthly things. <sup>20</sup> But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>21</sup> who, by the power that enables

him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.

Footnotes:

- a. Philippians 3:9 Or through the faithfulness of

# December 29<sup>th</sup>

## GALATIANS 5 – FREEDOM IN CHRIST

<sup>5</sup> It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.

<sup>2</sup> Mark my words! I, Paul, tell you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no value to you at all. <sup>3</sup> Again I declare to every man who lets himself be circumcised that he is obligated to obey the whole law. <sup>4</sup> You who are trying to be justified by the law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace. <sup>5</sup> For through the Spirit we eagerly await by faith the righteousness for which we hope. <sup>6</sup> For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.

<sup>7</sup> You were running a good race. Who cut in on you to keep you from obeying the truth? <sup>8</sup> That kind of persuasion does not come from the one who calls you. <sup>9</sup> “A little yeast works through the whole batch of dough.” <sup>10</sup> I am confident in the Lord that you will take no other view. The one who is throwing you into confusion, whoever that may be, will have to pay the penalty. <sup>11</sup> Brothers and sisters, if I am still preaching circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? In that case the offense of the cross has been abolished. <sup>12</sup> As for those agitators, I wish they would go the whole way and emasculate themselves!

### Life by the Spirit

<sup>13</sup> You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh<sup>[a]</sup>; rather, serve one another humbly in love. <sup>14</sup> For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.”<sup>[b]</sup> <sup>15</sup> If you bite and devour each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.

<sup>16</sup> So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. <sup>17</sup> For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever<sup>[c]</sup> you want. <sup>18</sup> But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

<sup>19</sup> The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery;<sup>20</sup> idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions <sup>21</sup> 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 God.

<sup>22</sup> But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, <sup>23</sup> gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.<sup>24</sup> Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the

flesh with its passions and desires.<sup>25</sup> Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.<sup>26</sup> Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.

Footnotes:

- a. Galatians 5:13 In contexts like this, the Greek word for flesh (*sarx*) refers to the sinful state of human beings, often presented as a power in opposition to the Spirit; also, in verses 16, 17, 19 and 24; and in 6:8.
- b. Galatians 5:14 Lev. 19:18
- c. Galatians 5:17 Or you do not do what

# December 30<sup>th</sup>

## I CORINTHIANS 11 – FOLLOW THE EXAMPLE OF CHRIST

11 <sup>1</sup> Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.

### On Covering the Head in Worship

<sup>2</sup> I praise you for remembering me in everything and for holding to the traditions just as I passed them on to you. <sup>3</sup> But I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man,<sup>[a]</sup> and the head of Christ is God.<sup>4</sup> Every man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head.<sup>5</sup> But every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head—it is the same as having her head shaved. <sup>6</sup> For if a woman does not cover her head, she might as well have her hair cut off; but if it is a disgrace for a woman to have her hair cut off or her head shaved, then she should cover her head.

<sup>7</sup> A man ought not to cover his head,<sup>[b]</sup> since he is the image and glory of God; but woman is the glory of man. <sup>8</sup> For man did not come from woman, but woman from man; <sup>9</sup> neither was man created for woman, but woman for man. <sup>10</sup> It is for this reason that a woman ought to have authority over her own<sup>[c]</sup> head, because of the angels. <sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man, nor is man independent of woman. <sup>12</sup> For as woman came from man, so also man is born of woman. But everything comes from God.

<sup>13</sup> Judge for yourselves: Is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered? <sup>14</sup> Does not the very nature of things teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a disgrace to him, <sup>15</sup> but that if a woman has long hair, it is her glory? For long hair is given to her as a covering. <sup>16</sup> If anyone wants to be contentious about this, we have no other practice—nor do the churches of God.

### Correcting an Abuse of the Lord's Supper

<sup>17</sup> In the following directives I have no praise for you, for your meetings do more harm than good. <sup>18</sup> 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. <sup>19</sup> No doubt there have to be differences among you to show which of you have God's approval. <sup>20</sup> So then, when you come together, it is not the Lord's Supper you eat,<sup>21</sup> for when you are eating, some of you go ahead with your own private suppers. As a result, one person remains hungry and another gets drunk. <sup>22</sup> Don't you have homes to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God by humiliating those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you? Certainly not in this matter!

<sup>23</sup> For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, <sup>24</sup> 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.” <sup>25</sup> 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.” <sup>26</sup> For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.

<sup>27</sup> So then, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord.<sup>28</sup> Everyone ought to examine themselves before they eat of the bread and drink from the cup. <sup>29</sup> For those who eat and drink without discerning the body of Christ eat and drink judgment on themselves. <sup>30</sup> That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep. <sup>31</sup> But if we were more discerning with regard to ourselves, we would not come under such judgment. <sup>32</sup> Nevertheless, when we are judged in this way by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be finally condemned with the world.

<sup>33</sup> So then, my brothers and sisters, when you gather to eat, you should all eat together. <sup>34</sup> Anyone who is hungry should eat something at home, so that when you meet together it may not result in judgment.

And when I come I will give further directions.

#### Footnotes:

- a. 1 Corinthians 11:3 Or of the wife is her husband
- b. 1 Corinthians 11:7 Or <sup>4</sup>Every man who prays or prophesies with long hair dishonors his head. <sup>5</sup> But every woman who prays or prophesies with no covering of hair dishonors her head—she is just like one of the “shorn women.” <sup>6</sup> If a woman has no covering, let her be for now with short hair; but since it is a disgrace for a woman to have her hair shorn or shaved, she should grow it again. <sup>7</sup> A man ought not to have long hair
- c. 1 Corinthians 11:10 Or have a sign of authority on her

# December 31st

## PHILIPPIANS 4 – BE UNITED IN CHRIST

### Closing Appeal for Steadfastness and Unity

<sup>4</sup> Therefore, my brothers and sisters, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, dear friends!

<sup>2</sup> I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord.<sup>3</sup> Yes, and I ask you, my true companion, help these women since they have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are in the book of life.

### Final Exhortations

<sup>4</sup> Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!<sup>5</sup> Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near.<sup>6</sup> Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.<sup>7</sup> And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

<sup>8</sup> Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.<sup>9</sup> Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

### Thanks for Their Gifts

<sup>10</sup> I rejoiced greatly in the Lord that at last you renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you were concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it.<sup>11</sup> I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances.<sup>12</sup> 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.<sup>13</sup> I can do all this through him who gives me strength.

<sup>14</sup> Yet it was good of you to share in my troubles.<sup>15</sup> 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;<sup>16</sup> for even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me aid more than once when I was in need.<sup>17</sup> Not that I desire your gifts; what I desire is that more be credited to your account.<sup>18</sup> I have received full payment and have more than enough. 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 God.<sup>19</sup> And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus.

<sup>20</sup>To our God and Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

### Final Greetings

<sup>21</sup>Greet all God's people in Christ Jesus. The brothers and sisters who are with me send greetings. <sup>22</sup>All God's people here send you greetings, especially those who belong to Caesar's household.

<sup>23</sup>The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.<sup>[a]</sup>

### Footnotes:

- a. Philippians 4:23 Some manuscripts do not have Amen.

# January 1st

## 2 CORINTHIANS II – BE AWARE

### Paul and the False Apostles

<sup>11</sup> I hope you will put up with me in a little foolishness. Yes, please put up with me! <sup>2</sup> I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy. I promised you to one husband, to Christ, so that I might present you as a pure virgin to him. <sup>3</sup> 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 Christ. <sup>4</sup> For if someone comes to you and preaches a Jesus other than the Jesus we preached, or if you receive a different spirit from the Spirit you received, or a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it easily enough.

<sup>5</sup> I do not think I am in the least inferior to those "super-apostles."<sup>[a]</sup> <sup>6</sup> I may indeed be untrained as a speaker, but I do have knowledge. We have made this perfectly clear to you in every way. <sup>7</sup> Was it a sin for me to lower myself in order to elevate you by preaching the gospel of God to you free of charge? <sup>8</sup> I robbed other churches by receiving support from them so as to serve you. <sup>9</sup> 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. <sup>10</sup> As surely as the truth of Christ is in me, nobody in the regions of Achaia will stop this boasting of mine. <sup>11</sup> Why? Because I do not love you? God knows I do!

<sup>12</sup> 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. <sup>13</sup> For such people are false apostles, deceitful workers, masquerading as apostles of Christ. <sup>14</sup> And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. <sup>15</sup> It is not surprising, then, if his servants also masquerade as servants of righteousness. Their end will be what their actions deserve.

### Paul Boasts About His Sufferings

<sup>16</sup> I repeat: Let no one take me for a fool. But if you do, then tolerate me just as you would a fool, so that I may do a little boasting. <sup>17</sup> In this self-confident boasting I am not talking as the Lord would, but as a fool. <sup>18</sup> Since many are boasting in the way the world does, I too will boast. <sup>19</sup> You gladly put up with fools since you are so wise! <sup>20</sup> In fact, you even put up with anyone who enslaves you or exploits you or takes advantage of you or puts on airs or slaps you in the face. <sup>21</sup> To my shame I admit that we were too weak for that!

Whatever anyone else dares to boast about—I am speaking as a fool—I also dare to boast about. <sup>22</sup> Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they Abraham's descendants? So am I. <sup>23</sup> Are they

servants of Christ? (I am out of my 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.<sup>24</sup> Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one.<sup>25</sup> Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was pelted with stones, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea,<sup>26</sup> I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my fellow Jews, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false believers.<sup>27</sup> 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.<sup>28</sup> Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches.<sup>29</sup> Who is weak, and I do not feel weak? Who is led into sin, and I do not inwardly burn?

<sup>30</sup>If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness. <sup>31</sup>The God and Father of the Lord Jesus, who is to be praised forever, knows that I am not lying. <sup>32</sup>In Damascus the governor under King Aretas had the city of the Damascenes guarded in order to arrest me. <sup>33</sup>But I was lowered in a basket from a window in the wall and slipped through his hands.

Footnotes:

- a. 2 Corinthians 11:5 Or to the most eminent apostles

# January 2nd

## I CORINTHIANS 4 – TO LIVE WITH HUMILITY

### The Nature of True Apostleship

<sup>4</sup> This, then, is how you ought to regard us: as servants of Christ and as those entrusted with the mysteries God has revealed. <sup>2</sup> Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful. <sup>3</sup> I care very little if I am judged by you or by any human court; indeed, I do not even judge myself. <sup>4</sup> My conscience is clear, but that does not make me innocent. It is the Lord who judges me. <sup>5</sup> Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait until the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of the heart. At that time each will receive their praise from God.

<sup>6</sup> Now, brothers and sisters, 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 be puffed up in being a follower of one of us over against the other. <sup>7</sup> 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?

<sup>8</sup> Already you have all you want! Already you have become rich! You have begun to reign—and that without us! How I wish that you really had begun to reign so that we also might reign with you! <sup>9</sup> For it seems to me that God has put us apostles on display at the end of the procession, like those condemned to die in the arena. We have been made a spectacle to the whole universe, to angels as well as to human beings. <sup>10</sup> We are fools for Christ, but you are so wise in Christ! We are weak, but you are strong! You are honored, we are dishonored! <sup>11</sup> To this very hour we go hungry and thirsty, we are in rags, we are brutally treated, we are homeless. <sup>12</sup> We work hard with our own hands. When we are cursed, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure it; <sup>13</sup> when we are slandered, we answer kindly. We have become the scum of the earth, the garbage of the world—right up to this moment.

### Paul’s Appeal and Warning

<sup>14</sup> I am writing this not to shame you but to warn you as my dear children. <sup>15</sup> Even if you had ten thousand guardians in Christ, you do not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel. <sup>16</sup> Therefore I urge you to imitate me. <sup>17</sup> For this reason I have sent to you Timothy, my son whom I love, who is faithful in the Lord. He will remind you of my way of life in Christ Jesus, which agrees with what I teach everywhere in every church.

<sup>18</sup> Some of you have become arrogant, as if I were not coming to you. <sup>19</sup> But I will come to you very soon, if the Lord is willing, and then I will find out not only how these arrogant people are talking, but what power they have. <sup>20</sup> For the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power. <sup>21</sup> What do you prefer? Shall I come to you with a rod of discipline, or shall I come in love and with a gentle spirit?

# January 3rd

## 2 CORINTHIANS 12 – LIVING WITH A THORN

### Paul's Vision and His Thorn

12 I must go on boasting. Although there is nothing to be gained, I will go on to visions and revelations from the Lord. <sup>2</sup> I know a man in 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—God knows. <sup>3</sup> And I know that this man—whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, but God knows—<sup>4</sup> was caught up to paradise and heard inexpressible things, things that no one is permitted to tell. <sup>5</sup> I will boast about a man like that, but I will not boast about myself, except about my weaknesses. <sup>6</sup> 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, <sup>7</sup> or because of these surpassingly great revelations. Therefore, in order to keep me from becoming conceited, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. <sup>8</sup> Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. <sup>9</sup> 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 Christ’s power may rest on me. <sup>10</sup> That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

### Paul's Concern for the Corinthians

<sup>11</sup> 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,”<sup>[a]</sup> even though I am nothing. <sup>12</sup> I persevered in demonstrating among you the marks of a true apostle, including signs, wonders and miracles. <sup>13</sup> How were you inferior to the other churches, except that I was never a burden to you? Forgive me this wrong!

<sup>14</sup> 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. <sup>15</sup> So I will very gladly spend for you everything I have and expend myself as well. If I love you more, will you love me less? <sup>16</sup> Be that as it may, I have not been a burden to you. Yet, crafty fellow that I am, I caught you by trickery! <sup>17</sup> Did I exploit you through any of the men I sent to you? <sup>18</sup> I urged Titus to go to you and I sent our brother with him. Titus did not exploit you, did he? Did we not walk in the same footsteps by the same Spirit?

<sup>19</sup> Have you been thinking all along that we have been defending ourselves to you? We have been speaking in the sight of God as those in Christ; and everything we do, dear friends, is for your strengthening. <sup>20</sup> 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 discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, slander, gossip, arrogance and disorder. <sup>21</sup>I am afraid that when I come again 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.

Footnotes:

- a. 2 Corinthians 12:11 Or the most eminent apostles

# January 4th

## 2 TIMOTHY 4 – FINISHING STRONG

<sup>4</sup> In the presence of God 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:<sup>2</sup> Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction. <sup>3</sup> For the time will come when people 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. <sup>4</sup> They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. <sup>5</sup> But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.

<sup>6</sup> For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time for my departure is near. <sup>7</sup> I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. <sup>8</sup> Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, 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.

### Personal Remarks

<sup>9</sup> Do your best to come to me quickly, <sup>10</sup> for Demas, because he loved this world, has deserted me and has gone to Thessalonica. Crescens has gone to Galatia, and Titus to Dalmatia. <sup>11</sup> Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, because he is helpful to me in my ministry. <sup>12</sup> I sent Tychicus to Ephesus. <sup>13</sup> When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas, and my scrolls, especially the parchments.

<sup>14</sup> Alexander the metalworker did me a great deal of harm. The Lord will repay him for what he has done. <sup>15</sup> You too should be on your guard against him, because he strongly opposed our message.

<sup>16</sup> At my first defense, no one came to my support, but everyone deserted me. May it not be held against them. <sup>17</sup> But the Lord 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. <sup>18</sup> The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom. To him be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

### Final Greetings

<sup>19</sup> Greet Priscilla<sup>[a]</sup> and Aquila and the household of Onesiphorus. <sup>20</sup> Erastus stayed in Corinth, and I left Trophimus sick in Miletus. <sup>21</sup> Do your best to get here before winter. Eubulus greets you, and so do Pudens, Linus, Claudia and all the brothers and sisters.<sup>[b]</sup>

<sup>22</sup> The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you all.

Footnotes:

- a. 2 Timothy 4:19 Greek Prisca, a variant of Priscilla
- b. 2 Timothy 4:21 The Greek word for brothers and sisters (adelphoi) refers here to believers, both men and women, as part of God's family.