

PREACHING FROM AN EPISTLE, Pt. 1

Background issues to be aware of when preaching from the Epistles:

1. The epistle or letter is the clearly the “dominant literary form” within the N.T. Canon!

-20 of the 27 N.T. Books present themselves as letters.

(Also Acts and Rev. Contain epistolary material; Acts 15:23-29; 23:26-30; Rev. 2-3)

-Church’s ‘LORD’ is most clearly disclosed in Gospels!

-Church’s ‘LIFE and CHARACTER’ shaped by the Epistles!

2. The letter has been the most common form of written communication for centuries!

-Virtually every literate person writes letters, even if they don’t write poems, essays, or books.

3. Letters can be formal or informal.

*- ‘**Dear Sir**, I would like to be considered for your job opening.’*

*- ‘**Tom and Susan**, How are you? We haven’t heard from you for ages, so thought we’d drop you a quick note.’*

4. Letters have a variety of purposes.

-Provide information: ‘We are getting ready to visit you in June!’

-Register a complaint: ‘Dear Timex Watch Company, I am unhappy with the performance of my new V-10 Watch!’

-Extend an invitation: *'You are cordially invited to the wedding of our children, John and Marie.'*

5. Letters are generally from a specific person or group to another specific person or group in a specific context.

-Identity of the **SENDER** and **AUDIENCE**--and '**CONTEXTUAL**' time and place issues are very, very important in comprehending the meaning of a letter.

-'**OPEN**' letters are different: *'To whom it may concern'*

6. Letters are the closest thing to oral conversation.

-They represent **us** and **our presence** in a tangible way; are almost like *'being there.'*

*Yet, they are a different way of *'being there!'*

***Birthday card** is 'intimate,' yet 'distant;' a 'makeshift substitute for face-to-face communication.

*Blends personal **presence** with **absence**.

-They are '**Dialogical**': *'Jim, you were right! We are having one of the worst winters we've ever had here in Michigan. How did you predict it?'*

-Even the writer's and recipient's **PERSONALITY** can be projected and interpreted in a letter.

-Letters are different from oral conversation in that they are not *"tied to the moment" and "fleeting,"--but tend to "transcend time and space"*

-They have a more **ENDURING QUALITY**, because their messages are set down in writing.

7. Letters have a stylized format and function according to specific rules!

The Standard Form of the N.T. Letter!

Opening

Thanksgiving

Body

Exhortation

Closing

8. The Traditional Greek Letter had Three Primary Rhetorical Functions!

Philophronesis -evocation of a friendly relationship

Parousia -establishment of presence

Dialogos -creation of a dialogue

Drawn from Preaching and the Literary Forms of the Bible, pp. 107-126

PREACHING FROM AN EPISTLE, Pt. 2

Scott Hafemann, Professor of N.T. has suggested that the “goal of preachers in preaching from the ***EPISTLES*** is the same as when preaching from any other part of the Bible--to impact the congregation with the character and truth of God and move it closer to living out the Gospel.

He suggests that, in order to do this, preachers must do TWO THINGS:

1) Faithfully recover the author’s message about God to his original audience.

2) Relate that message relevantly to a contemporary audience.

This reminds us that preaching is a “theological” act of interpretation and translation--focusing on God!

Sidney Greidanus clarifies that because preaching from the epistles, like preaching from all of the Bible, is a theological act--revealing God--it must ask and answer several crucial questions about each text.

“Why was this text preserved in the canon?”

“What does God reveal in this text about Himself and His will?”

“And what does the message of this text mean in light of the whole Bible?”

After acknowledging the “**COMMONALITY**” between preaching from the epistles and preaching from other parts of scripture, we must also notice several things which are “**DISTINCT**” OR UNIQUE about preaching from the N.T. Letters!

Hafemann highlights 4 “**DISTINCTIVES!**”

1) THE EPISTLES ARE DISTINCT IN THAT THEY ARE HISTORIC -ALLY “SPECIFIC” IN NATURE!

-More even than the Gospels and Acts, the epistles are aimed at particular churches or individuals as they face concrete situations.

-They must be understood in light of particular points being made in sharply-defined circumstances and in view of the author’s use of intentionally-composed literary and rhetorical devices.

-While all N.T. Documents were written in specific historical situations, the epistles are the most direct and particularized of all --usually written as ‘*second person address*’ (i.e., ‘you’) rather than a ‘*third person narrative*’ (i.e., ‘they’) such as Acts.

-The “occasion” and “theological assertions” must be even more carefully attended to because of this directness.

-**Hafemann** suggests that the preacher should ask of each epistolary passage:

First, “**WHAT has been said?**”

Second, “**WHY was it said?**”

Third, “**WHY was it said in that particular way?**”

(i.e., given the historical setting)

Another “distinctive,” about preaching from an epistle is that:

2) EPISTLES ARE “DISCURSIVE” IN STRUCTURE! (i.e., proceeding on the basis of reasoning or argument!)

-They are based on proposition, argumentation, and logical assertions.

-They are dominated by the “**paragraph**,” as noted by **Haddon Robinson** and others.

-**Hafemann** puts it this way:

“The discursive nature of the epistles therefore demands that we take as the smallest unit of meaning to be interpreted, not the word or the proposition, nor even a compound sentence, but the paragraph” (emphasis mine).

From “Preaching in the Epistles” by Scott Hafeman in Handbook of Contemporary Preaching, p. 366.

3) EPISTLES ARE LARGELY MADE UP OF LARGER CENTRAL POINTS!

-These “central points” are undergirded by important--but lesser--supportive propositions, but the central points are usually the primary assertions or spiritual “structural beams” of individual paragraphs--the “big truths” that they bear.

-They are often stated in various ways to reinforce and clarify the spiritual truths that they represent

4) EPISTLES EMPHASIZE “IMPERATIVE EXHORTATIONS.”

-They speak to the Christian's way of life in the here and now and sharpen how the truths of God are to impact individual and corporate life in the future.

-They command "outcomes" and explain "implications" of the Gospel.

-See **Ephesians 3:10-11**, for example:

"His (God's) intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord. In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence." (NIV)

-In preaching from the epistles these "imperatives" should be duly noted and their claims pressed on the listeners.

(Adapted from Scott Hafemann's chapter entitled "Preaching in the
pp. 361-377)

Epistles" in

EPISTLES performed a real PASTORAL MINISTRY to the Early Church!

(Adapted from Beverly Gaventa, "Epistles" in Concise Encyclopedia of Preaching, pp. 116-117)

They addressed real-life struggles of particular congregations over questions ranging from matters of **leadership** (1 Tim. 1:5-9), **worship** (1 Cor. 14), **theology** (Phil. 2:5- 11), **ethical standards** (Rom. 12-13), and **community life** (2 Thess. 3:6-13).

In the letters of the N.T., we see many of the **problems encountered by modern churches** leap from their pages--and advice offered about how to deal with them.

But epistles also present a certain DIFFICULTY to the modern preacher:

They present only ONE SIDE of a dialogue between one or more parties.

-There is danger in treating them as mere essays, rather than part of a two-way conversation.

-Preachers must try to understand the other conversation partners and their positions, if the letters are to be brought to life and speak adequately to contemporary congregations.

-While this is difficult, preachers must try to re-construct these conversations.

+Even in 1 Cor. 7:1 where the fact that dialogue is going on, it is not easy to know details

1 Cor 7:1 -- "Now concerning the matters about which you wrote"

+In Colossians and Philippians, things are less clear.

In summary, Gaventa suggests:

"While it is never possible to peek 'over the shoulder' of the first-century Christian in the act of writing an epistle, the preacher who attempts to do so comes closer to proclaiming the gospel in continuity with the way in which it was first proclaimed . . . to an ancient community." (p. 117)

Developments in the study of N.T. Epistles can help the preacher hear the epistles as authentic exchanges between people.

1) New understandings about ancient letter writing!

-Mention of prayers, supplications, and gods was common.

2) New information about the Social World of the first century!

-Peter's language about "*aliens and exiles*" takes on new meaning when understood in the context of the social, economic, and legal dislocation of Christians in Asia Minor at the end of the first century.

-Questions in 1 Corinthians about eating meat offered to idols become comprehensible when it is understood that most meat was sacrificed in a temple before being made available in the public marketplace.

Beverly R. Gaventa. "Epistles" in Concise Encyclopedia of Preaching, pp. 116-117)

KEY STEPS IN PREACHING FROM A BIBLE BOOK!

(Adapted from Expository Preaching: The Art
of Preaching Through a Book
of the Bible
by Harold T. Bryson, pp. 41-66)

Before taking the steps, first ASK TWO IMPORTANT QUESTIONS!

1. Can I sustain my own interest in focusing on one book over an extended period of time?

2. Can I sustain the interest of my congregation over several weeks in the texts and topics that come out of one particular book of the Bible?

It is not an easy thing to do.

-Personally, **one must be committed to studying the book for several months** doing extensive *academic* and *devotional* analysis and then be willing to work hard *week after week* on individual passages from that same book!

-A preacher must pay a huge price in studying the historical background and literary structures of the book, as well as doing detailed exegesis, interpretation, and what Bryson calls “homiletical plotting.”

-To keep the congregation from being bored, the preacher must work hard to creatively interpret and then apply the book’s message to the **contemporary scene** and **bring fresh insights** from familiar passages.

+It’s important to: stay **relevant**, use **interesting illustrations**, and **examples**, aim for **variety** in the **way material is presented!** **Know the needs** of the congregation as well as the meaning of the text.

After asking these TWO OPENING QUESTIONS, take
STEP ONE -

1) PREPARE A PAPER ON THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE TEXT!

(Bryson, pp. pp. 44-66)

-Do 3 to 4 months before the sermon series begins.

-Explore the **identity of the author** and his **readers**, the **occasion** and **purpose** of the book.

-Uncover everything possible about the **context**.

+Culture, politics, religious customs, etc.

+Don’t look for sermon material, at this point; only **backdrop info.**--which will help highlight sermon material later on.

-Writing the paper is not just “busywork” but a vital discipline to help clarify, organize, and express all of the facts about the book.

THIS PAPER SHOULD:

-Reconstruct the Book’s Story!

+Use dictionaries, commentaries, atlases, encyclopedias, etc. to get under every factual rock!

+Get at *more than academic data*--come to the point where you feel that YOU are the **writer** and YOU are an original **reader** of the letter--and that what is happening is happening to YOU!

+Sense the action in “sanctified imagination!”

+Use empathy and intuition!

-Relate the Life Situation to Today’s Life!

+Seeing **what the book meant** helps one to move naturally to what the books *means now!*

+**THEN** and **NOW** must come together, but only after one really understands the original time and place situation. (Too often, **preachers want to rush texts into the 21st Century** before they have been understood in their own time.)

TOOLS to help do the paper:

-**One-volume O.T. or N.T. Introductions:** Often have good, to-the-point articles summarizing individual books.

-**Commentaries: *Two basic kinds-*** (*Use balance of both*)

+**Critical commentaries**- provide more technical information.

The International Critical Commentary
The Interpreter’s Bible

The Anchor Bible
Word Biblical Commentary
The Expositor's Greek Testament

+**Devotional commentaries**-provide inspirational insights.

The NIV Application Commentary
The Communicator's Commentary
Study Bible Commentaries

Devotional/Critical- (dual-purpose commentaries):

Tyndale Old and New Testament Commentaries
The New International Commentary on the New and Old Testaments.
The Broadman Bible Commentary
New American Commentary

Take **STEP TWO** -

2) MAKE A DETAILED ANALYSIS OF THE BOOK AND ITS STRUCTURE!

-Either do *alongside* of the historical investigation of the book, or *after* it!

What this 'analysis' does!

GIVES AN OVERVIEW-

-Provides knowledge of the book's contents from start to finish.

-i.e., it offers a panoramic view of the book's structure.

ACTS AS A GUIDE FOR EXEGESIS-

-Organizes material into an outline so that exegesis is easier to do.

-Reveals the “flow” of the book which enables the preacher to better analyze and understand the **message** and its **organization**.

-Sets up a good “teaching” outline for the book.

***Bryson** suggests that the preacher “teach” the book, before actually preaching from it (working through its entire structure and message).

*Teaching could be in the form of a prayer meeting series or a special Sabbath School class.

HELPS THE PREACHER “PLOT” A STRATEGY FOR THE SERIES-

-Seeing the book laid out from beginning to end shows the various themes and forms of the book--and allows the preacher to plan the approximate **number of sermons** to be included in the series.

+Can help spot the natural “blocks” or “preaching portions” of scriptures are and whether the series should be 5 or 10 sermons in length (or more or less).

+**Bryson** uses the *analogy* that sermon “plotting” is like **real estate planning and development**.

-The developer buys hundreds of acres of land for a housing development and then studies the terrain, soil composition, trees, lakes, etc.

-Next the developer plots the acres by dividing them up into lots for individual houses. (Sermon plotting studies a book’s “lay of the land” and divides it up into manageable sermon segments.

-Resources for Analysis:

- +Original languages
- +English translations (good variety)
- +Study Bibles
- +Commentary outlines of the book should be helpful

FACILITATES EXEGESIS-

-Definition of Exegesis: *It is the work of studying and deciphering what the original author said and meant as he communicated with his original audience.*

-Detailed exegesis comes after the *historical background paper* and *structural analysis* is done!

TWO WAYS of doing exegesis:

1. On **whole book** before the sermon series begins.
2. On **each passage** as series continues each week.

-Remember to do a kind of **“devotional” exegesis** as well as a “scientific” or technical kind--in order to really understand the deeper spiritual message and communicate it effectively as a sermon.

-Good exegesis is foundational to good preaching!

-As **Bryson** observes: *“Exegesis helps get the authentic biblical message of the text, and the discipline of homiletics seeks to shape the message of the text into a sermon. Homiletics without exegesis often results in mere religious talk rather than the message of God’s Word. Exegesis without homiletics may present a lot of exegetical information, but the end result might be deficient in communicating God’s Word to people. Exegesis and homiletics belong together.”* (Expository Preaching, p. 55)

-RESOURCES for exegesis:

+The words, phrases, structure, and context of a Bible book (which are carefully examined by the preacher).

+**The “text,”** itself, as it appears in its original language.

+**Other specialized tools**, however, are important and useful. Tools such as: Lexicons (have articles on Hebrew and Greek words), concordances, theological dictionaries, and commentaries. (Expository Preaching, pp. 55-56)

After one gathers his/her exegetical tools they are ready to actually exegete the text.

-Remember that **exegesis** and **interpretation** are two different steps and two separate disciplines.

+Exegesis deals primarily with what the author meant and how what he said was understood by the original audience.

+Interpretation deals mostly with translating the meaning of the text and applying it to contemporary audiences and situations.
(Expository Preaching, p. 57)

HOMILETICAL GUIDELINES FOR PREACHING FROM A BIBLE BOOK

1) Choosing a Book of the Bible.

Start by **praying earnestly** and choosing wisely!

(Don't just preach from two or three books all of your

minist

CONSIDERATIONS:

1. Congregational Needs:

-Match congregational needs with an appropriate book of the Bible.

+Exegete 'people,' as well as the text!

+Each book was intended to meet various personal and social human needs: Division, worldliness, heresy, persecution, etc.

-Conflict and worldliness- 1 Corinthians

-Suffering under persecution- James

-Questions about creation- Genesis

-Applying faith to practical situations- Micah, Proverbs, or James

2. Lectionaries:

-Lectionaries give four scriptural choices each week, and for special occasions (Xmas, Easter, etc.)

-Are arranged in 3-year cycle (usually).

-Precedent comes from ancient Jewish synagogue, which divided the Hebrew Scripture into reading to be completed in 3 years. [See Bryson, p. 71]

3. Preaching through the Bible:

-Comes from desire to preach straight through Bible systematically (or through Old or New Testament).

+**W.A. Criswell**, pastor of First Baptist Church in Dallas, Texas, began to preach through the entire Bible on March 3, 1946 and completed the journey on Oct. 6, 1963 (took 17 yrs). [Much on some and slightly on others; used order of books in English translations.]

+**Harold J. Ockenga**, formerly of Park Street Church in Boston, preached consecutively through the New Testament. Began in 1936 and finished 21 yrs. later (morning and evening services).

4. Other suggestions about selection:

-Members suggest a book

-Denominational emphasis

-**Holy Spirit** should be the BIGGEST FACTOR OF ALL!

2) THE NUMBER OF SERMONS

VARIOUS LENGTHS:

1. No absolute length:

-**Bernard of Clairvaux**, a Frenchman (1091-1153), preached 86 sermons from just the first two chapters of the Song of Solomon (for 18 yrs. Until his death).

-**Donald Grey Barnhouse** former pastor of Tenth Street Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia, preached from Romans for 3 1/2 yrs [for 3 years straight with no break]. (A member reported an excellent response).

-**D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones**, former pastor of Westminster Chapel in London, loved to preach long series from a single book. He preached 60 sermons from the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew. Preached 161 sermons from Romans 3:20-8:39 alone. (See Bryson, pp. 74-75)

2. Factors to Consider about Series Length:

A. Book's Length- Longer books may require a longer series (Genesis, Psalms, Revelation, etc.)--but not necessarily.

-Size influences length--but does not dictate it.

-Can either preach THROUGH a book of the bible (which takes much longer), or FROM a book (could be short).

B. Preacher's Personality & Talent- Decide on length based on your stamina, interest, comfort level, and TALENT.

C. Congregation's Characteristics & Temperament- Some churches may enjoy a long series, others will easily get bored and want you to move on.

-**Bryson** suggests general rule of from 6-24 sermons [i.e., 6 weeks to six mths.]

-I would suggest, 3-10 (Max)!

3) INDIVIDUALITY OF EACH SERMON

-Sermons in a series should not run together; each should be DISTINCT and powerful in its own way.

-Sermons should have a different text, subject, and special relevance; YET be INTERRELATED by the unity of the book.

OBSTACLES:

1. **Over-advertisement** of **PARTICULAR UPCOMING sermons!** By constantly drawing attention to them.) (Or series either)

2. **Over-review** of **PAST sermons!** (OR constant references to them)!

INTERRUPTIONS (for other sermons):

1. *Can a preacher take a break from a series?*

-OF COURSE!

2. **WHEN to interrupt!**

+ To speak to "Seasonal Themes" (Xmas, etc.)

+ To meet "Congregational Crises" (National tragedy, local natural disaster, church conflict raging out of control, etc.)

+ To give pastor or church a **needed break!** (You sense a need to break up the pattern)

3. Pick up from where you left off! (after week or more--doesn't matter!)

THE UNIQUENESS OF EACH SERMON:

1. Each sermon is a special *THEOLOGICAL* event!

Donald G. Miller - *"To preach is not merely to stand in a pulpit and speak To preach is to become a part of a dynamic event wherein the living, redeeming God reproduces his act of redemption in a living encounter with man (humankind) through the preacher."* Fire in Thy Mouth, p. 17 (quoted by Bryson on p. 81)

2. Each sermon is a unique *CONGREGATIONAL EXPERIENCE*!

-God "Does something" IN the preacher FOR the people AT that occasion that is special and unrepeatable!

3. Each sermon is *HOMILETICALLY* distinct!

-Each message has, not only a different text, but a different theme, outline, set of illustrations, literary devices, and homiletical structure

4. Each is linked in some ways, Yes!

-Sermon are linked by Bible book and historical background, and, perhaps, by overall theme; otherwise--it is distinct!

4) HOW TO CHOOSE A 'PREACHING PASSAGE' FROM A BIBLE BOOK!

TWO MAIN APPROACHES: Successive or Selective

1. *Successive*:

-Selecting a text in sequential order.

-No text is missed.

-Uses either "running commentary," or "paragraph" method.

-Some books not suitable: (Can be done, but not easy)

Psalms (written by many people in many places and times)

Jeremiah (not arranged chronologically)

Proverbs (a collection of misc. sayings and teachings without distinguishable order)

2. Selective:

-Preacher searches through Bible book and decides on certain texts to preach from.

-How decision is made!

+Preacher's Choice! (Certain texts “grab attention,” during devotional study; preacher feels “impressed” to preach on key passages.

+Chapter by chapter! (Pick key verses)

+Great Personalities/Events! (Paul/Saul)

+Great Questions/Statements/Sentences! (What must we do?)

+Key words/phrases (love, faith, grace, “in Christ”)

INTRODUCTION TO THE EPHESIANS

1) AUTHOR, DATE AND LOCATION OF WRITING:

-*The author identifies himself as Paul* (1:1; 3:1, etc.)

-*Some have vigorously questioned Paul's authorship*, despite its specific claim to be written by Paul, because it lacks the usual personal greetings that Paul used, and because it is so similar to the letter to the Colossians.

-But the lack of greetings can be explained by the idea that it was likely intended to be a “circular letter” intended for other churches--as well as for the Ephesians; therefore, it would be inappropriate (or unnecessary) to address specific individuals.

-It is true that Ephesians and Colossians are similar.

+No other two N.T. Letters are so similar as Ephesians and Colossians.

+Some have calculated that 75 of the 155 verses of Ephesians are found in Colossians (in varying degrees of similarity). [Tyndale N.T. Com., p. 25]

+The plan and argument are similar; both begin with a doctrinal section that highlights the glory of Christ and then apply this to personal life, and deal a lot with ‘human relationships.’

+There are many, many parallel expressions.

-***The traditional explanation*** for this similarity is that Paul simply wrote the two letters about the same time.

+He wrote Colossians to meet a particular situation--and while his mind was still full of the theme of the glory and greatness of Christ--he wrote Ephesians without any particular problems or theological errors in mind, (now with the emphasis on the place of the church in God’s plan). [Tyndale N.T. Com., pp. 27-29].

-Those who don’t accept Pauline authorship believe that someone wrote Ephesians by copying heavily from Colossians, and then attaching Paul’s name to the new work.

-But the fact that there are so many similarities and few differences, to many, only strengthen their belief that the two books were both written by the same person--i.e., **Paul!**

-Those who accept Pauline authorship tend to believe that both Ephesians and Colossians were written at about the same time!

-- i.e., around **A.D. 60**), while Paul was in prison at Rome (3:1; 4:1; 6:20) [NASB Study Bible, p. 1716]

THE TARGET AUDIENCE:

-The traditional view is that it was sent to the Ephesian church, but intended to be an open letter to other churches as well.

-It does seem unusual that Paul would not have made at least some reference to the people with whom he had spent over two years when the church was founded.

-One alternate suggestion is that it was, indeed, a circular letter, but that it was simply sent to Gentile believers in south-western Asia Minor, and that it ***became identified with Ephesus as the most important city between Rome and Antioch.*** [NIV Applic. Com., p. 21]

EPHESUS: (As a city!)

-Ephesus was the most important and most populous city in western Asia Minor (now Turkey).

-It ranked with Rome, Corinth, and Alexandria as one of the greatest urban centers of the empire.

-It had an inland harbor (now silted up) which opened to a narrow channel of the Cayster River which, in turn, emptied into the Aegean Sea (about 3 miles away).

-Ephesus became a commercial center, because it was located on the most direct sea and land route to the eastern provinces of the empire.

-It had impressive civic monuments; **the most prominent** of which was the **famous pagan temple of Artemis** (Roman = Diana)--one of the 'Seven Wonders' of the ancient world. (Acts 19:23-31)

-Paul made Ephesus an evangelistic center for about 2 years preaching to large crowds, and apparently established a prosperous church. (*Later it needed the warning of Rev. 2:1-7.*)

-This was the longest stay that Luke records for Paul in one place (actually 2 yrs. and 3 mths.) [See note on Acts 19:8, 10 - NASB Study Bible note]

-Paul had a miraculous escape from a huge mob in the theater whipped up by the silversmiths who were angered over his criticism of Artemis--and by the fact that Paul was hurting their business of selling silver statues of the goddess.

-Paul's evangelistic efforts must have had a huge and wide-spread impact, as he was accused by his enemies of stirring up trouble in the whole province of Asia (Acts 19:26; see also Acts 19:8-10)).

MESSAGE:

-Klyne Snodgrass, in the NIV Application Commentary on Ephesians, makes this observation:

"Ephesians may well be the most influential document ever written. Within the history of Christianity, only the Psalms, the Gospel of John, and Romans have been so instrumental in shaping the life and thought of Christians Ephesians has justly been described as . . . 'The crown and climax of Pauline Theology,' and 'one of the divinest compositions of man.' The explanation of the gospel and of life with Christ provided here is powerful and direct. If read receptively, it is a bombshell." (p. 17)

He also calls it *'the most contemporary book in the Bible,'* and suggests that apart from a few terms, and the discussion of slavery, *'Ephesians could have been written to a modern church.'* (p. 10)

As to the letter itself, what do we find?:

-**Tychicus** is identified as the one who delivered the letter (6:21-22), but there are *no other personal references, no greetings, no reminiscences, no messages for specific people*--unlike in most of Paul's other letters. [Tyndale N.T. Com. on Eph.'s, p. 19]

-Ephesians does not address any special heresies or problems—either doctrinal or practical; **Ralph Martin** notes that in ALL of his

other letters, Paul writes to deal with specific issues and situations. [Tyndale N.T. Com. On Eph., p. 19]

-Some even suggest that Ephesians reads more like a sermon than a letter (and, in parts, like a mighty prayer) [see Martin in Tyndale's N.T. Com., pp. 19-20].

-And this sermon is based on the broadest possible THEME:
'God is fulfilling his eternal purpose though Jesus, his son, and His church!'

+It's been suggested that the *DOCTRINAL* part of this SERMON'S theme is expressed in **chapters 1-3**, while **chapters 4-6** teach the PRACTICAL CONSEQUENCES

+But there is no sharp division between **ethics** and **doctrine**; the two are woven together throughout the letter.

-The sermon, however, is in the form of a LETTER.

But a letter filled with **doxologies**(1:3-14; 3:20-21), **prayers** (1:15-23; 3:14-19), **Old Testament quotations** and, possibly, at least one **early Christian hymn**
(5:14).

+Some have even suggested that the writing is more of liturgical guide (J.C. Kirby), than a letter.

+But most agree that, while it contains liturgical material, it is placed in an epistolary format. [Tyndale N.T. Com., p. 20]

-Paul's intention seems to be to "expand the horizons" of his readers so that they can better understand the great dimensions of God's love and grace--and to appreciate the high goals He has for His church!

-Paul opens with a series of statements about God's blessings.

+He continues with the thought that we have not been saved for our personal enrichment, butto bring honor and praise to God.

-He makes it clear that God wants to bring all creatures--and all of the universe--together under Christ 'in the fullness of the times' (1:10). (See his prayers to this effect in 1:15-23; 3:14-21)

-Paul then talks about the 'steps' which God is taking to achieve his goals for his church:

1. God has reconciled individuals to Himself as an act of grace (2:1-10).

2. God has reconciled people to each other by breaking down barriers by his own death (2:11-22).

3. God has also united these individuals into the "mystery" of the church (3:1-6).

4. He continually speaks of 'heavenly places' (1:3, 20; 2:6; 3:10; 6:12) to reinforce the idea that life has more than an earthly dimension.

5. He talks about how Christ is exalted at the 'right hand of God' (1:20).

6. He points out that (since people must still work on the earth for now), God has given them wonderful "GIFTS" to help them serve each other and to help achieve maturity (4:1-16).

7. He reminds us all that Christ is the 'head' of the church (1:10), and that--under his "headship"--all will eventually be united.

8. He contrasts the 'old life' with the 'new life' in Christ, in sharp terms (4:17-6:9) and assures his readers that by being 'strong in the Lord,' they can have complete victory over the devil--esp. through the power of PRAYER (6:10-20).

9. '**In Christ**' a favorite term highlighted by Paul in this letter.

INTRODUCTION TO PHILIPPIANS

1) AUTHORSHIP, DATE, AND LOCATION OF WRITING:

The early church was in agreement that Philippians was written by the apostle Paul (See 1:1). Numerous personal references by the author (within the letter) clearly point to Paul as the author, as they fit Paul's 'signature style,' as expressed in other NT books.

It is clear that Paul wrote Philippians from **PRISON** (Phil. 1:13-14).

-Some, such as J.B Lightfoot, say it may have been the first 'prison epistle' [St. Paul's Epistle to the Phil.'s, chap. 2)

-From Acts, we know of three imprisonments: [Tyndale Com. On Phil., p.21]

1. at **Philippi**, during his first visit (Acts 16:23-40)

2. Two years detention in **Caesarea** (Acts 24:27) after being arrested in Jerusalem (Acts 21:33-23:30) [c. 57-59?].

3. Two years imprisonment in **Rome** (Acts. 28:16, 30), after the voyage as a prisoner to Rome (Acts 27-28:16).

-Most evidence, points to the fact that the letter was written while he was imprisoned in **Rome** (c. 61) while under "*house arrest*" in his own rented house for two years (Acts 28:14-31).

-However, some references in the letter point to a time of 'worsening circumstances' for Paul in his relation to the authorities; he appears to be threatened by the possibility of death (Phil. 1:20-23, 30; 2:17).

-So his 'house arrest' situation may have changed to a more restrictive and ominous one. [Tyndale Com. On Phil., p. 22]

-Most commentators believe that he was **NOT** in the **Mamertine dungeon** as he was when he wrote 2 Timothy.

THREE REASONS that SUPPORT ROME as the location of Paul when he wrote Philippians:

1. Paul mentions the "**palace guards**" (1:13).

2. He refers to "**Caesar's household**" (4:22).

3) **The outcome of his trial would be FINAL** (i.e., without appeal) (1:19-24).

-Only in Rome would this be true as Rome was the place of “final appeals.”

2) PURPOSE OF PHILIPPIANS:

Paul's primary objective in writing to the Philippians was **to thank them for the gift which they had sent**, after they heard of his arrest in Rome (1:5; 4:10-19).

However, there were secondary purposes:

1. To encourage the Philippians to **remain strong in the face of persecution** and **rejoice regardless of their circumstances** (1:27-30; 4:4)
2. To **give an update on his own situation** (1:12-26; 4:10-19).
3. To **call them to humility and unity** (2:1-11; 4:2-5)
4. To **commend Timothy and Epaphroditus** to the Philippian church (2:19-30).
- 5) To **warn the believers against** the teachings and actions of the legalistic '**Judaizers**' and the libertarian '**antinomians**' (chap. 3).

3) RECIPIENTS OF THE PHILIPPIAN LETTER:

Those living in the city of Philippi!

When Paul chose a place to work and to preach, he always chose it with the EYE OF A STRATEGIST.

-He selected a place not only for its own importance but because it was a key to a much wider area.

-Many of the places which Paul chose as preaching centers are still great road intersections and railway junctions. So it is with Philippi!

Now Philippi was an important city which at least at least **THREE CLAIMS TO DISTINCTION:**

1. Philippi was ***a great commerical center.***

-There were **GOLD & SILVER MINES** nearby, which had been worked as far back as the time of the Phoenicians. Though exhausted by this time, they had made Philippi famous as a trading center

2. It was ***one of the most strategic military and economic sites in all of Europe.***

-The city had been founded by--and named after—Philip II, the Greek King (father of Alexander the Great) because here he could command the traffic from East to West (approx. 360 BC).

-There is a range of hills which divides Europe from Asia- -the East from the West. At Philippi those hills dip into a pass, allowing those controlling Philippi to control the road from Europe to Asia, as it went through the pass.

3. ***Philippi was a ROMAN COLONY***, and the most important city in the district of Macedonia.

-Roman colonies were focal points of the famous Roman road system, constructed so that soldiers could (in times of crisis) be speedily sent to any area within the empire.

-Also, parties of Roman soldiers, usually about 300 at a time, were sent to these cities along with their families to retire.

These soldiers often were given land in the area in exchange for military representation in and around the city.

-So Philippi had a heavy Roman military presence.

-Wherever these colonies were, they were little fragments of Rome (i.e., miniature cities of Rome). They had pride in their Roman citizenship.

+Roman language was spoken

- +Roman dress was worn
- +Roman customs observed

-Perhaps this is why Paul referred to “**heavenly citizenship**” as being so important(3:20-21).

-The heavy Roman presence in the city may explain why there apparently weren't enough Jews for a synagogue to exist.

-Nevertheless, **Acts. 16:13** acknowledges the existence of a Jewish community (Lydia, etc.) before Christianity came.

-This may also be why Paul doesn't quote from the Old Testament in the letter.

3) CHARACTERISTICS OF THE LETTER TO THE PHILIPPIANS:

1. No direct O.T. Quotes

-No “It is Written” statements. (Even though he weaves in O.T. Ideas (“intertextuality” and sometimes seems to presume some knowledge of the O.T.) [See New Intern. Com. On the N.T. : Paul's Letter to the Phil., by Gordon Fee, pp. 17-18]

2. Serves as a *missionary thank-you letter* in which the missionary (Paul) reports on his progress.

3. *Highlights a vigorous Christian lifestyle:*

- +**humbling oneself** (2:1-4)
- +**living without anxiety** (4:6)
- +**earnestness**- ‘pressing toward the goal’ (3:13-14)
- +**ability to do all things** (4:13)

4. It is *known as the ‘**letter of joy**,’* since the term is used in various forms about 16 times.

5. Contains one of the most profound ‘**Christological passages**’ in the NT (2:5-11).

4) THE PHILIPPIAN CHURCH ESTABLISHED:

-It was on the *SECOND MISSIONARY JOURNEY*, perhaps between **A.D.49-52**, that Paul first came to Philippi.

-Paul had been *urged to come by the vision of the ‘Man of Macedonia’ to ‘come over and help us.’*

-Paul had sailed from from Alexandrian Troas in Asia Minor, landed at Neapolis in Europe--and then made his way to Philippi.

-Marks entrance of the gospel into **EUROPE!**

-Story of Paul’s stay in Philippi is told in **ACTS 16! (READ)**

+**Centers around 3 people**: **Lydia** (seller of purple, the **demented slave girl**, and the **Roman jailor**.

+Paul had to leave after a storm of persecution broke on him, and after he had been illegally imprisoned; some believe that Luke remained to carry on the work (See Tyndale Com. On Phil, p. 20)

+But Paul left behind a strong nucleus of believers which would carry on the gospel work; most who were converted appear to have come into the church from the ranks of the gentile/pagan world.

+There developed a strong bond of friendship between Paul and the Philippians that was closer than that which existed between him and any other church. We might say that it was his ‘favorite church!’

+In **chapter 4:1** he calls the Philippian believers ‘**My joy and my crown**’ and ‘**My brethren and longed-for.**’

5) LITERARY FEATURES & DYNAMICS OF PHILIPPIANS:

*Philippians does not appear to be dependent on any other literature, though some believe that a well-known **Christological hymn** is quoted in chapter **2: 6-11***

-GENRE= a letter

+Follows 3-part format of typical Greco-Roman letter style

-evokes friendly relationship, establishes context, has dialogue

+Simply organized

+4 major sections:

-Paul's account of his current circumstances

-Paul's appeal to have the attitude of Christ

-Paul's appeal to have the knowledge of Christ

-Paul's appeal to have the Peace of Christ

-SUB-GENRES=

Metaphor:

-Phil. 1:11- 'Having been filled with the fruit of righteousness which comes through Jesus Christ. . .'

-Phil. 1:21- 'For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.'

Simile/Analogy:

-Phil. 2:15- 'That you may prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world.'

-Phil. 2:17- 'But even as I am being poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, . . .'

Hyperbole/Metaphor:

-Phil. 3:2- 'Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers
beware of false circumcision. . .'

-Phil. 3:19- 'Whose end is destruction, whose god is their
appetite, and whose glory is in their shame, who set their minds
on earthly things.'

Literary devices/forms:

- Simple organization
- Repetition; 'joy & rejoicing' (4:4)
- Use of a list (4:8)
- Series of Commands: (1:27; 2:2, 14, 18, 29; 3:2;

Elements of the author's personality Expressed:

-Authority: As Apostle, founding pastor of the Philippian church, he speaks with authority.

-Concern: Pastoral care, sincere desire for the believer's spiritual growth and joy.

-Authentic Christian and Model of True Disciple: Talks of Christ and his own relationship with Him over and over.

(Some of the important Sources: The New International Commentary on the N.T.: Paul's Letters to the Philippians, Barclay's Commentary on Philippians, Tyndale N.T. Commentary on Phil.'s,

I

Brief Historical/Literary Analysis of JAMES

**1) Determine as much as possible about the author , date,
circumstances, recipients & development of the text.**

Authorship:

4 possible men named James:

1. **apostle James** (died too early [44 AD]),
2. **James the brother of Jesus**,
3. **Two others** with little stature or influence.

***Some alternate views** suggest James was a pseudonym,
etc.

The traditional view seems to have best support -- most likely was **brother of Jesus** and head of the Jerusalem Council [*Acts 15*].

- Oldest of Jesus brothers based [*Matt. 13:55*];
- Origen, Eusebius and Jerome hold this view. Martyred in 62 AD. according to Josephus.
- Vocabulary of James in speech and letter of *Acts 15* similar to that in epistle of James.

Date & Circumstances:

A time of persecution for Jewish Christians.

Range of dating from **45 AD** to **early 60s**.

Many believe it was written before 50 AD because:

1. Jewish tone suggests it was written when church primarily still Jewish.
2. Reflects a simple church order --officers are “teachers” and “elders.”
3. No reference to controversy over Gentile circumcision.
4. Greek term *synagogue* (meeting) is used to refer to church’s meeting or meeting place [*James 2*].
5. Seems to precede Paul’s letters in format.

This could be the earliest of all N.T. writings, if early dating

correct -- with possible exception of *Galatians*.

-James probably wrote from Jerusalem.

Recipients:

12 tribes scattered among the nations;

-Some feel that it may apply to Christians in general.

-But most feel that it is addressed to Jewish Christians who were scattered as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus & Syria [*Acts 11*] -- possibly by the persecution that broke out after Stephen's martyrdom

-*James 2* clearly indicates that they were Christians.

+Used Jewish phrase: *kyrios sabaoth* [*James 5*] i.e.,
Lord Almighty--and other Jewish features are
evident.)

-Some believe that they were from the **Jerusalem church** in particular.

Literary sources used:

Apparently not dependent on other literature;

-a personal correspondence from James.

-Many attempts have been made to show relation to biblical and extrabiblical writings.

-Most relationships cannot be determined with any certainty.

However there are **two literary relationships** which scholars consider important:

1. Shows awareness of Jesus' Sermon on Mount in [*Chap.s' 2 & 3*]
May have drawn on early written documents, oral traditions -- but many feel that he draws more on his own personal recollections and experiences with Christ (Abramson) than on either oral or written sources.

2. Similarity to O.T. wisdom literature -- *Proverbs*;

-Some have called it “N.T. wisdom literature”

-However, Ropes and others say it cannot be formally classed as “wisdom literature” as it does not reflect the same style of having long series of proverbial statements in parallel form of

-Does have a pithy proverbial style.

-There are quotes and illustrations which can be traced to *Proverbs*.

-Use of the word “wisdom” in both.

-The book’s *canonicity* was disputed among some.

-**Eusebius** suggests it was not accepted earlier because few ancient writers had referred to it, not because of any doctrinal error.

-**Reasons for it not being quoted much:**

*Its non-theological nature,

*brevity,

*and fact it was not written by one of the 12 apostles may have all been factors.

It was recognized unanimously by the ***Council of Carthage*** (397 AD).

-**Luther** treated it as a lesser scripture, but most modern scholars feel Luther made a mistake.

-And Luther did treat it as a valid part of the canon and even expressed some positive things about it; so he did not throw James out as invalid, as some have tried to suggest.

2) Determine the author’s intention and theological purpose in the text.

Since it may not depend on other writings, as a personal letter, we **must look within the letter itself for clues** of intention and purpose.

-Purpose: If James was the leader of the Church of Jerusalem -- and these believers were those scattered from Jerusalem by persecution,

-James may have been writing as their pastor.

-James may have been writing to encourage them as they faced persecution and to give advice about how to cope.

-James wrote to counsel them about other problems:

+The rich were oppressing them, discrimination had crept in, fights and divisions had developed.

+We have no other clear indication of editorial work from other writings that show another special intention -- this is the most logical conclusion.

+This would explain James's knowledge of readers, his knowledge of trials, and his authoritative approach.

-Theme: Vital Christianity is characterized by faith that produces good works.

-Theology: called "the least theological of all NT books" except for Philemon.

(Gabelein)

+The book is not without theological value, however:

+3 doctrines most prominent:

-Doctrine of God -- God is generous, the source of good, and sovereign.

-Doctrine of Sin -- Sin is universal, results in death, expresses itself in other specific evil actions--bitterness, discrimination, etc.

-Doctrine of End Times -- End time is when Lord returns, judgment is meted out, rewards are given.

***James believes he is in the end time.**

3) Determine the literary features and dynamics of the text through literary analysis of “STYLE” (i.e., language, forms & devices).

A. Genre -- *Letter (traits)*

- 20 of the 27 N.T. books are letters
- Most common form of written communication
- Closest thing to oral conversation; but different -- blends closeness and distance
- Dialogical flavor-- something revealed about both writer and recipient
- Written for specific set of circumstances; but usually ends up transcending a single time and place;
- Read over and over and usually by more than one audience/congregation
- Letters tend to have a stylized format -- are written according to compositional “rules.”
- Paul set the standard for N.T. letters and established a new “genre”
- Since *James* may have been written before Paul’s letters -- with possible exception of *Galatians* (?) -- it was ***probably not affected by Paul’s model.***

Typical Greek letter (Paul used Greco-Roman style, but Christianized it)

1. evokes friendly relationship

2. establishes presence (bridges gap of physical sep.)
3. homily and dialogue

James -- specific traits as a letter!

-A general letter -- not directed to a specific person or localized group; but to a general audience;

-Simple organization.

-Early form of letter -- Has greeting and body, but no opening thanksgiving or closing. Gets right to point -- very direct.

-More practical than theological

Sub-Genre –

Metaphor:

-James 1: 18 “He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of first-fruits of all he created.”

-James 1:21 “the word planted in you, which can save yo.”

-James 2: 13 “Mercy triumphs over judgment!”

-James 3:18 “Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness.”

Siimile/analogy:

-James 1: 23 “Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror . . .”

-James 1: 6 “because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind.”

-James 1:10,11 “But the one who is rich should take pride in his low position, because he will pass away like a flower. . . . In the same way, the rich man will fade away even while he goes about his business.”

-James 3:6 *"The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body."*

Personification:

-James 1:14 *"But each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death."*

-James 4:1 *"Your desires that battle within you?"*

hyperbole:

-James 1:8 *"He is a double-minded man."*

-James 4:2 *"You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight."*

B. What literary devices & forms are used?

-Simple organization (see throughout)

-Repetition: James 2: 14-16 *"What good is it . . .?"*

-Questions: James 3: 11-12 *"Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring? My brothers, can a fig tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs?"*

-Lists: James 3: 17 *"But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy, and good fruit, impartial and sincere."*

-Imaginary opponent (or "diatribe)": James 2:20 *"You foolish man, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless?"*

-Series of commands: James 4: 7-10 *"Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come Near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord and he will lift you up."*

-Examples: James 5: 17 "*Elijah was a man just like us.*"

C. What elements of the author's personality are expressed?

Unique use of language -- words, sentences, & phrases

Authority -- May have been a key church leader in Jerusalem;

-speaks with authority

-uses ***46 imperatives***.

Experiences -- pastor -- shows pastoral concern; very aware of readers' needs and circumstances

-Excellent use of Greek; knew Septuagint well---used terms unique to biblical Greek: "cleanse your hands" meaning -- *give up sinning*.

-Used number of uniquely "Jewish" terms: Hebraisms "*hearer of forgetfulness*" (Ropes & Adamson)

-Constant allusions to sayings of Christ; seems to draw on personal recollections of experiences with Jesus(Hort)

SERMON POSSIBILITIES

SUBJECT: Trials

TOPIC: The Positive Aspects of Trials & Temptations

THEME: There are positive aspects in trials & temptations!

TITLE: The Silver Lining in Trials & Temptations (James 1:1-16)

INTRODUCTION: As we carefully examine James chapter one, we notice that the subject of trials and temptations come to the forefront. Evidently those being addressed are facing some very, very difficult times. And James, as a caring pastor, wants to encourage them about these trials. So he points out that, despite their awful suffering, there is a silver lining--i.e, there are some positive aspects about their situation.

1) Trials and temptations develop perseverance and maturity. (Vs.3,4)

- We learn to “hang tough” under fire; develop determination and fortitude.
- We become mature; the rough edges of faith are refined.
- We become realistic about hardships and see how we profit from them; gain insights, etc.

Examples/Illustrations:

- *Battle-hardened soldier is best kind -- Schwarzgoff
- *stop being spiritual “wimps.”

*Sgt. Turner endured prejudice on Phila. police force.

2) Trials and temptations give us access to God's generous wisdom.
(Vs. 5.

- God promises wisdom to meet every situation, every crisis
- There will be no lack whatsoever
- Key is to fully trust God
- We can even pass the tests of poverty and wealth through God's wisdom
- We can pass the trials of dealing with our sinful human natures

Example/Illustration:

*Daniel was a pampered youth, but became a wise administrator after being faithful in trials. God gave him wisdom to interpret king's dream in Daniel 2, and to give wise counsel to king Nebuchadnezzar.

3) Trials and temptations lead to the reception of the crown of life.
(Vs.12)

- "Blessed is the man who perseveres"* (Vs. 12.
- The end of the story is that we will have success
- We will wear the victor's crown.

Illustration:

- +In ancient times it was a wreath placed on the heads of victorious athletes.
- Represents eternal existence with Christ.

Illustration:

*Paul Harvey has a series telling us "the rest of the story" about famous people, important historical events. God promises that the rest of the story for the faithful will be satisfying.

We have every reason to face the trials and temptations of life with joy and confidence, because the testing process will ultimately help us be

God's successful, saved people. There is a "silver lining" to going through difficult circumstances.

End

SUBJECT: Favoritism

TOPIC: The Destructive Nature of Favoritism

THEME: Favoritism is Destructive in Nature!

TITLE: Why Favoritism Must Go! (James 2:1-13)

INTRODUCTION: In James, chapter one, we find the apostle James initiating an all-out attack against the practice of favoritism, which he feels may be subtly threatening the church itself. James carefully lays out the destructive nature of favoritism by highlighting three negative facts about it.

1) *Favoritism is based on faulty thoughts and perceptions.* (Vs. 1-5.

-Judges by outward appearance; financial and educational success or fame.

-Driven by thoughts of selfish advantage; We honor those who can benefit us.

-Fails to consider that the financially "poor" tend to be spiritually "rich" in God's eyes.

Illustration:

***Greatness of "little people" like George at CUC.**

2) *Favoritism blinds us to the exploitive nature of powerful people.* (Vs. 6-7.

-We don't realize how they take advantage of their favored status; We treat them differently than "average" people, therefore they play by different rules – in society and in church.

-They drag people to court; they harass others to get their way.

-Their power and wealth often lead them to work at odds with Christ and his kingdom.

Examples/Illustrations:

***Lady at church holding church hostage over sale of**

land to get her way.

***Political leaders** are often brought down by ties with people whom they have favored because they have given to their campaigns. Those donors are only looking to extend their power and influence; they enjoy control.

-We are responsible for allowing them to continue wielding abusive power; we can stop them!

3) Favoritism clashes with the “royal law” of love which calls us to love and favor all people -- as neighbors. (Vs.8-13)

-Law of love is supreme governing principle for Christians; individual commandments are all based on love.

-Anything less than love and sacrifice is law-breaking.

-We will be judged by how we relate to the law of love; if we show no fairness -- and even beyond that -- mercy, we will receive none from the Lord.

Illustrations/Examples:

***Pastors** must learn the importance of treating all of their parishoners with equality; young or old, rich or poor, attractive or unattractive if they are to be faithful shepherds.

***Sgt. Turner** showed no favoritism in relating to white officers. Honored by God with tremendous heroics; Used to break down barriers of racial prejudice on Phila. police force. Promoted at last.

By God's grace let's not practice favoritism, since it is such a destructive force in society and in the church!

End

The Power of Little Things (James 3:1-12)

In life, we see examples of the power of little things:

***few small grains of sand** in shoes of marathon runner can tear his feet up and prevent him from completing the race.

***The little computer chip** permits the plane's computer to operate and to land safely.

The Bible gives examples also: bit in horse's mouth controls horse, rudder guides ship, spark sets great forest fire, and tongue can "corrupt the whole person" and affect the whole course of a person's life.

1) The tongue -- small as it is -- can have a great impact on a person's life -- for good or evil.

-Can encourage, educate, express love, praise God, etc.

-Can hurt feelings, discourage, anger, deceive, curse God, etc.

* Evangelist who always hurt people, even as a talented, powerful speaker.

2) The tongue can't be controlled by human power alone.

-Expresses our sinful nature

-Heart must be changed -- *"out of the overflow of the heart, the mouth speaks."* Matt. 12:34

3) Within the Christian family, the tongue must be and can be controlled -- by God's Grace.

-It's important to have the tongue under control within the community of faith.

-James 1:21- *"Get rid of the moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you."*

-James 4:7- *submission to God can give us control.*

The indwelling Christ can give us back control of our minds and our tongues through the new birth caused by the word springing up within us.

End

The Need for Change (*James 4:1-11*)

1) How Things Are (*James 4:1-4*)

- Evil desires/inner sinful tensions -- create divisions within the church
- Submission to “worldly ties” create division with God
- Self-centered, pleasure seeking, proud.
- God opposes us!

2) How Things Could Be (*James 4: 4-6*)

- Spirit lives in us

-We receive grace and humility

-We become God's friend

3) How Change Can Occur (James 4: 7-11)

-Submit to God & Come near to Him -- i.e. accept His Grace.

-Resist the devil; -Wash hands; -purify heart; -grieve, mourn
& wail (show sorrow and repentance)

-Humble yourselves;

-Stop slandering each other

We all desperately need change in our lives. Things can be different as we come to the Lord and submit to Him -- accept His grace, and follow James' counsel about how to reflect a new Christian lifestyle.

End

PREACHING FROM AN EPISTLE, Pt. 1

(OLD VERSION)

While the church in its preaching and liturgy has tended to place its greatest emphasis on the 4 Gospels, the **"epistle" is the "dominant literary form found with the N.T. Canon**

-at least 20 of the 27 books in the N.T. Are letters

-2 other books use epistolary or letter forms (Acts and Revelation)

- Tom Long says: "if it is true that the identity of the church's
(Preaching and the Literary Forms of the Bible, p. 107)

Lord was di

Letters have been considered "the most common form of written communication." for centuries."

(Long, p. 107)

-Letters are the "closest literary form to oral conversation.

-They tend to be dialogical in nature. (Long, p. 108) But they are not the same thing as direct oral conversation.

- They are “another way of being there.”
- They are the next best thing to being able to dialogue directly with someone. p. 109
- They blend “closeness” and “distance.”
- Letters tend to transcend time and place and be less “fleeting” than conversation; so there is a kind of “durability” to letters. (Long, p. 109)
- Letters reveal a bit of the personalities of both the writer and the recipient. (p. 108)
- Letters are geared toward a specific time, place, and audience, and circumstances.

Adolph Deismann tried to distinguish between “letters” and Epistles = more formal essay-like documents for a general, non-specific audience.

“epistolary”

Letters=spontaneous expressions for specific individuals

-This is no longer emphasized in modern scholarship.

Letters are stylized in format and written according to certain “rules.”

A Traditional Greek Letter had 3 primary rhetorical functions:

1. Expression of friendly relationship
2. To establish a sense of “presence” or
3. Creation of a dialogue

contact

A Typical N.T. Letter had several parts:

Opening: Identification of writer, then an identification of recipients, and a theological greeting

Thanksgiving:

Body: discussion of crucial matters at hand, and practical ethical issues--including exhortation.

-Chiasms were common.

Closing: Ancient letter typically said something equal to

“farew

(See “new” outline for Pt. 1 prepared for video projection)