

Lesson
40

“I Can Do All Things through Christ”

Philippians; Colossians; Philemon

Purpose To encourage class members to develop the characteristics of true followers of Jesus Christ.

Preparation

1. Read, ponder, and pray about the following scriptures:
 - a. Philippians. Paul thanks the Saints in Philippi for aid they have sent him and encourages them to be unified, faithful followers of Christ.
 - b. Colossians 1. Paul reminds the Saints in Colosse that redemption comes only through Jesus Christ.
 - c. Colossians 2:1–8, 16–23; 3; 4. Paul teaches the Colossian Saints about things they should do and attributes they should develop as the elect of God.
 - d. Philemon. Paul encourages Philemon to be forgiving toward Onesimus, a runaway slave.
2. Additional reading: Bible Dictionary, “Pauline Epistles: Epistle to the Philippians,” 745–46; “Pauline Epistles: Epistle to the Colossians,” 746; and “Pauline Epistles: Epistle to Philemon,” 746.
3. Suggestion for teaching: A lesson outline or scripture block may contain more material than you have time to use in class. As you prepare each lesson, prayerfully decide which doctrines and principles are most useful for your class. Plan to teach these first, including other parts of the lesson if time is available. As you teach, however, be sensitive to the Spirit and flexible enough to change your plan if you feel prompted to do so. (See *Teaching—No Greater Call*, 113.)

Suggested Lesson Development

Attention Activity As appropriate, use the following activity or one of your own to begin the lesson.

Write on the chalkboard several key words from the thirteenth article of faith, such as *true*, *honest*, *virtuous*, and *praiseworthy*.

- Which article of faith contains these words? (If class members do not know, have them look in the Articles of Faith, which are found at the end of the Pearl of Great Price.)

When class members have answered correctly, ask a class member to recite or read the thirteenth article of faith. Then have the class member again recite the first half of the article of faith, through “the admonition of Paul.”

- What is “the admonition of Paul”? Where is it found?

Have class members turn to Philippians 4:8 and compare it to the thirteenth article of faith. Explain that when Joseph Smith mentioned the admonition of Paul in the thirteenth article of faith, he was referring to Philippians 4:8, which is part of a letter that Paul wrote to the Saints in Philippi. Today’s lesson will

cover this letter and Paul's letters to the Colossians and to Philemon, all of which were written during Paul's imprisonment in Rome. These letters discuss attributes we should seek to develop as faithful followers of Jesus Christ.

Scripture Discussion and Application

As you teach the following scripture passages, discuss how they apply to us today just as they applied to the Saints in Paul's time. Encourage class members to share experiences that relate to the scriptural principles.

1. Paul encourages the Philippian Saints to follow Jesus Christ.

Discuss Paul's epistle to the Philippians. Invite class members to read selected verses aloud.

- Paul was imprisoned in Rome when he wrote to the Philippians. How did other members of the Church react to Paul's imprisonment? (See Philippians 1:12–18.) How have you been helped by seeing or hearing about others who were courageous in serving the Lord?
- In Philippians 2:2–3, what did Paul exhort the Church members to do? In what ways should Church members be “of one mind”? (See Philippians 1:27; 2:14–15.) Why do we sometimes do things for “vainglory”? Why do you think Paul counseled against this? Why is it important that we not think we are better than other people? (See D&C 38:24–26.)
- What did Paul teach about Jesus in Philippians 2:5–8? How did Jesus set the perfect example of being humble and submissive to the will of his Father? (See John 8:29.) How can we become more humble and submissive to Heavenly Father's will?
- What do you think Paul meant when he told the Philippians, “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling”? (Philippians 2:12).

President David O. McKay explained: “‘Work out your own salvation’ is an exhortation to demonstrate by activity, by thoughtful, obedient effort the reality of faith. But this must be done with a consciousness that absolute dependence upon self may produce pride and weakness that will bring failure. With ‘fear and trembling’ we should seek the strength and grace of God for inspiration to obtain the final victory” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1957, 7).

- Paul repeatedly counseled the Philippians to “rejoice in the Lord” (Philippians 3:1; 4:4). How can we rejoice in the Lord?
- Paul told the Philippians that he had sacrificed all things for Christ (Philippians 3:7–8). What had Paul sacrificed? Why is it important that we make sacrifices for Christ? (See Philippians 3:9–12.)

The Prophet Joseph Smith taught: “A religion that does not require the sacrifice of all things never has power sufficient to produce the faith necessary unto life and salvation; for, from the first existence of man, the faith necessary unto the enjoyment of life and salvation never could be obtained without the sacrifice of all earthly things” (*Lectures on Faith* [1985], 69).

- How can we obtain the “peace of God” mentioned in Philippians 4:7? (See Philippians 4:6–7.) When have you felt the peace of God?

- How can we apply Paul’s counsel in Philippians 4:8? (See also Articles of Faith 1:13.) How are we blessed when we follow this admonition?
- Paul testified, “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me” (Philippians 4:13). How do you think Paul gained this testimony of Christ? How have you seen that you can “do all things through Christ”?

2. Paul reminds the Colossians that redemption comes only through Christ.

Discuss Colossians 1. Invite class members to read selected verses aloud. Explain that the Saints in Colosse, a small city east of Ephesus, were being influenced by teachings that minimized the importance of the Savior and focused on attaining perfection by observing ordinances and worshipping angels. In his letter to the Colossians, Paul warned against these teachings, exhorting the Saints to continue to be “grounded and settled” (Colossians 1:23; see also Colossians 2:5–7) in the knowledge that redemption comes only through Jesus Christ.

- What truths about Jesus Christ did Paul teach the Colossians? (See Colossians 1:12–22. List class members’ responses on the chalkboard.) Why was it important for the Colossians to understand these truths? How does your knowledge and testimony of Jesus Christ affect the way you live?
- What is the “inheritance of the saints” that we may receive from our Father in Heaven? (See Colossians 1:12; 2 Nephi 9:18; D&C 50:5.) Who makes this inheritance possible? (See Colossians 1:12–14.) What must we do to receive this inheritance? (See Colossians 1:10–12; 2 Nephi 9:18; Alma 5:51; D&C 50:5.)
- What did Paul mean when he exhorted the Colossians to be “grounded and settled” in the gospel? (See Colossians 1:23.) What causes some people to be “moved away from the hope of the gospel”? (Colossians 1:23). What can we do to strengthen our testimonies?

3. Paul teaches the Colossians what they should do as the elect of God.

Discuss Colossians 2:1–8, 16–23; 3; 4. Invite class members to read selected verses aloud.

- Paul wanted the Saints to have their hearts “knit together in love” and in the knowledge of God the Father and Jesus Christ (Colossians 2:2–3). How can we accomplish this in our own ward or branch?
- What does it mean to be “rooted and built up” in Christ? (See Colossians 2:7.) How can we become rooted in Christ? How can being “rooted and built up” in Christ help us in times of trial? (You may want to compare a tree with short, shallow roots to one with long, deep roots. Discuss which tree is more likely to survive trials such as storms or droughts.)
- What attributes of “the elect of God” are listed in Colossians 3:12–15? (List class members’ answers on the chalkboard.) How has Jesus Christ set an example in these attributes? (Ask class members to think of specific instances in which Jesus exemplified each attribute.) How can we more fully develop these attributes?
- How can we let the word of Christ dwell in us, as Paul admonished? (See Colossians 3:16–17; see also D&C 1:37; 18:34–36.) How can hymns strengthen our understanding and testimony of the word of Christ? How can we make better use of hymns and other sacred music?

Elder Dallin H. Oaks said: “We need to make more use of our hymns to put us in tune with the Spirit of the Lord, to unify us, and to help us teach and learn our doctrine. We need to make better use of our hymns in missionary teaching, in gospel classes, in quorum meetings, in home evenings, and in home teaching visits. Music is an effective way to worship our Heavenly Father and his Son, Jesus Christ. We should use hymns when we need spiritual strength and inspiration” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1994, 13; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 12).

- Paul repeatedly emphasized the importance of being thankful (Colossians 2:7; 3:15, 17). Why is it important that we be thankful? How can we show gratitude to Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ in all circumstances?

4. Paul encourages Philemon to be forgiving toward Onesimus.

Discuss Paul’s epistle to Philemon. Invite class members to read selected verses aloud. Explain that Paul wrote a personal letter to Philemon, a member of the Church in Colosse, regarding Philemon’s slave Onesimus. Onesimus had robbed Philemon and run away to Rome, where he met Paul and was converted to the Church. Paul asked Philemon to forgive Onesimus and accept him as a brother in the gospel.

- What can we learn about Paul from his letter to Philemon?
- How did Paul show respect for Philemon’s agency? (See Philemon 1:14.) How did Paul show his commitment to Onesimus’s welfare?
- What can we learn from this epistle about the gospel’s power to transform human relationships? (See Philemon 1:16.) How does the gospel affect your relationships with the people around you?

Conclusion

Testify of the importance of developing attributes that help us become more like Jesus Christ, such as those mentioned in Paul’s letters to the Philippians, the Colossians, and Philemon. Invite class members to read Philippians 4:8 and Colossians 3:12–15 and choose one attribute from those verses to work on developing this week.

Additional Teaching Ideas

The following material supplements the suggested lesson outline. You may want to use one or more of these ideas as part of the lesson.

1. Relationships between parents and children

Have a class member read Colossians 3:20–21.

- According to Paul, what is a child’s obligation to his or her parents? What is the parents’ obligation to a child? How can you improve the relationship between parents and children in your family?

2. “Ye serve the Lord Christ” (Colossians 3:24)

Have a class member read Colossians 3:23–24.

- How can we follow Paul’s instructions in these verses? (See also Matthew 25:34–40.) What difference might this attitude make in how we serve?