

THE EPISTLE TO THE COLOSSIANS

INTRODUCTION

- A. An outline of the Epistle to the Colossians
1. Introduction (1:1-14)
 2. Doctrinal Instruction (1:15-29)
 3. Warnings against false teaching (2:1-23)
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 - a. An introduction of the bearers of Paul's letter to the Colossians (7-9)
 - b. Greetings from Paul's fellow workers (10-14)
 - c. Greetings from Paul to the church at Laodicea (15)
 - d. Instructions from Paul (16-17)
 - e. Benediction (18)
- B. Review from last week
1. Prayer for Christians is not optional but essential.
 2. Christians need to have a view of prayer that is greater than themselves.
 3. A person's speech speaks volumes to who they truly are.
- C. Comments on Colossians 4:7-18
1. T. Constable, *Paul concluded this epistle with personal information and instructions. He did this to bond his readers more tightly to the body of Christ from which they were in danger of separating due to the influence of the false teachers.*
 2. M. Anders, *Verses 7-18 are more than a mere list of names. They are real, ordinary people, who helped Paul carry out an extraordinary ministry for the sake of an extraordinary Savior. We, too, will need others if we are to maintain the vitality in ministry which Paul exemplifies.*

COLOSSIANS 4:7-18, FINAL GREETINGS

- A. An introduction of the bearers of Paul's letter to the Colossians (7-9)
1. Tychicus (7-8), ***Tychicus will tell you all about my activities. He is a beloved brother and faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord. I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are and that he may encourage your hearts,***
 - a. Background information on Tychicus
 - 1) He was from the province of Asia, Acts 20:3-4, *There he spent three months, and when a plot was made against him by the Jews as he was about to set sail for Syria, he decided to return through Macedonia. Sopater the Berean, son of Pyrrhus, accompanied him; and of the Thessalonians, Aristarchus and Secundus; and Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy; and the Asians, Tychicus and Trophimus.*
 - 2) He probably carried the letter to the Ephesians, Ephesians 6:21, *So that you also may know how I am and what I am doing, Tychicus the beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord will tell you everything.*
 - 3) He ministered with Titus, Titus 3:12, *When I send Artemas or Tychicus to you, do your best to come to me at Nicopolis, for I have decided to spend the winter there.*
 - 4) Eventually, he served at Ephesus, 2 Timothy 4:11-12, *Luke alone is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is very useful to me for ministry. Tychicus I have sent to Ephesus.*
 - b. Tychicus was well-respected by Paul as noted in verse 7.
 - 1) He was a beloved brother, a coworker with Paul.
 - 2) He was a faithful minister of the Gospel.
 - 3) He was a faithful servant of the Lord, G. Osborne, *The key to all three descriptions of Tychicus is the final phrase in verse 7, "in the Lord" - for it is in Christ that all this is made possible. Only through his lordship can we rise above our petty selfhood to make an impact in this world.*
 - c. Reasons why Paul had Tychicus deliver the epistle to the Colossians.
 - 1) He was to inform the Colossians of Paul's ministry and imprisonment.
 - 2) He was to share how Paul and others were doing as emphasized in verse 9.
 - 3) He was to encourage the Colossians in their faith.

2. Onesimus (9), *and with him Onesimus, our faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you. They will tell you of everything that has taken place here.*
 - a. Background information on Onesimus
 - 1) He was from Colossae, a runaway slave of Philemon.
 - 2) He became a Christian and faithful brother to Paul, Philemon 15-16, *For this perhaps is why he was parted from you for a while, that you might have him back forever, no longer as a bondservant but more than a bondservant, as a beloved brother—especially to me, but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord.*
 - b. Onesimus was sent back to Philemon by Paul for reconciliation as a dear brother.
 - 1) Paul does not mention his status as a slave but *who is one of you.*
 - 2) He was tasked along with Tychicus as an emissary from Paul who *will tell you of everything.*
 - 3) This is a beautiful illustration of Colossians 3:11, *Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all.*
 - 4) G. Osborne, *In Christ, social strata are nullified; both slave and free find a new calling and status in the service of the gospel. Of course, this did not mean that all secular social categories were reversed; rather, in the church slave and free served side by side and regarded one another as “brothers and sisters.” This should be the case in our day as well, as business owners and menial workers serve together in the congregation. If the board of a church (or Christian organization) is made up only of wealthy people, priorities have become skewed.*
3. Tychicus and Onesimus traveled from Rome to Colossae, probably through Ephesus and Laodicea, delivering letters from Paul.
 - a. To Colossae, as noted in this section, 4:7-9.
 - b. To Ephesus, Ephesians 6:21-22, *So that you also may know how I am and what I am doing, Tychicus the beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord will tell you everything. I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are, and that he may encourage your hearts.*
 - c. To Laodicea, Colossians 4:16, *And when this letter has been read among you, have it also read in the church of the Laodiceans; and see that you also read the letter from Laodicea.*
 - d. To Philemon, Philemon 10, *I appeal to you for my child, Onesimus, whose father I became in my imprisonment.*

B. Greetings from Paul’s fellow workers (10-14)

1. Jewish Christians (10-11)
 - a. Aristarchus (10a), *Aristarchus my fellow prisoner greets you,*
 - 1) He was from Thessalonica, Acts 20:4, *Sopater the Berean, son of Pyrrhus, accompanied him; and of the Thessalonians, Aristarchus and Secundus; and Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy; and the Asians, Tychicus and Trophimus.*
 - 2) He had served with Paul in Ephesus, Acts 19:29, *So the city was filled with the confusion, and they rushed together into the theater, dragging with them Gaius and Aristarchus, Macedonians who were Paul’s companions in travel.*
 - 3) He accompanied Paul to Rome, Acts 27:2, *And embarking in a ship of Adramyttium, which was about to sail to the ports along the coast of Asia, we put to sea, accompanied by Aristarchus, a Macedonian from Thessalonica.*
 - 4) *my fellow prisoner* is considered by most to refer to Aristarchus as a prisoner (servant) of God instead of a prisoner of Caesar, Philemon 23, *Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, sends greetings to you,*
 - b. Mark (10b), *and Mark the cousin of Barnabas (concerning whom you have received instructions—if he comes to you, welcome him),*
 - 1) This is John Mark, cousin of Barnabas, who had traveled with Paul on his first missionary journey but left Paul, note Acts 12:25; 13:5, 13.
 - 2) He eventually rejoined Paul in Rome, 2 Timothy 4:11, *Luke alone is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is very useful to me for ministry.*
 - 3) He wrote the Gospel of Mark.
 - 4) Johnson, *John Mark is an encouragement to everyone who has failed in his first attempts to serve God. He did not sit around and sulk. He got back into the ministry and proved himself faithful to the Lord and to the Apostle Paul.*

c. Justus (11a), **and Jesus who is called Justus.**

- 1) He is only mentioned here in the New Testament.
- 2) Jesus was his Jewish name and Justus was his Roman name.

d. Paul's personal note concerning these three (11b), **These are the only men of the circumcision among my fellow workers for the kingdom of God, and they have been a comfort to me.**

- 1) They were the only Jewish Christians mentioned by Paul. It is probably a distinction between the others mentioned not that there weren't other Jewish Christians in the churches.
- 2) T. Constable, *Paul's mentioning them helped the Colossians realize that what he had written about Jews and Gentiles being equal in Christ was a reality in his ministry.*
- 3) Paul's use of *kingdom of God* is a future look to Christ's kingdom on earth which will come after God declares an end to the Church Age.
 - a) Acts 19:8, *And he entered the synagogue and for three months spoke boldly, reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God.*
 - b) Colossians 1:13, *He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son,*
- 4) *comfort*
 - a) It is only used here in the New Testament and means *comfort* or *help*.
 - b) It was used elsewhere as a medical term, implying *soothing relief*.
 - c) G. Osborne, *Paul's point is that these men had proven to be a great "comfort" to him, encouraging him both by their ministry of the gospel and through their personal fellowship with him.*

2. Gentile Christians (12-14)

a. Epaphras (12-13), **Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ Jesus, greets you, always struggling on your behalf in his prayers, that you may stand mature and fully assured in all the will of God. For I bear him witness that he has worked hard for you and for those in Laodicea and in Hierapolis.**

- 1) He was from Colossae and was instrumental in founding the church there, Colossians 1:7, *just as you learned it from Epaphras our beloved fellow servant. He is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf*
- 2) Paul called him a servant or slave of Jesus Christ which is high praise from Paul.
- 3) He intensely prayed that they would mature in their faith.
 - a) *struggling* means to *strive with intensity; to put forth every effort.*
 - b) T. Constable, *His concern for the Colossians is clear from his zealous prayers for their maturity and their full perception of God's complete will for them.*
 - c) M. Anders, *For Epaphras prayer was not a game, it was a battle. He prayed continually, fervently, and with purpose. Aware of what the Colossians were facing, he knew their need was to grow to maturity in Christ in order to continue to resist the alluring lies of the false teachers.*
 - d) H. Lees, *Epaphras grasped, what many of us are slow to realize, that the tactics of the Christian battle are born of the strategy of prayer.*

4) His ministry spread from Colossae to two major cities in the Lycus Valley, Laodicea and Hierapolis.

b. Luke (14a), **Luke the beloved physician greets you,**

- 1) It is believed that Luke was converted at Troas and soon joined Paul's team on his first voyage to Europe. He was left behind at Philippi and rejoined him six years later on Paul's journey to Jerusalem. Then, Luke went with Paul to Rome and his imprisonment, 2 Timothy 4:11, *Luke alone is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is very useful to me for ministry.*
- 2) He wrote the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles, more New Testament material than all of Paul's letters combined.
- 3) By tradition, Luke was one of the 72, Luke 10:1, *After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them on ahead of him, two by two, into every town and place where he himself was about to go.*
- 4) Some believe Luke was the anonymous disciple on the Emmaus Road, Luke 24:13, *That very day two of them were going to a village named Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem,*

- c. Demas (14b), ***as does Demas.***
 - 1) He ministered to and with Paul during imprisonment.
 - 2) Later, Demas deserted Paul, 2 Timothy 4:10, *For Demas, in love with this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica...*
 - 3) G. Osborne, *It is possible that the prospect of losing his life for Christ terrified Demas, who chose life in this world over death for the Lord.*
- C. Greetings from Paul to the church at Laodicea (15), ***Give my greetings to the brothers at Laodicea, and to Nympha and the church in her house.***
1. Paul greeted the members of the Laodicean church.
 - a. Normally, a letter from Paul to one church would be distributed to others churches in that area.
 - b. It is assumed that *brothers* would be understood as *brethren*, men and women.
 2. The church at Nympha's house (15b)
 - a. It is normally understood that Nympha was the hostess of the Laodicean church, not another church meeting in Laodicea.
 - b. J. Lightfoot, *There is no evidence that Christians met in church buildings until the third century.*
 - 1) Philemon 2, and *Apphia our sister and Archippus our fellow soldier, and the church in your house:*
 - 2) 1 Corinthians 16:19, *The churches of Asia send you greetings. Aquila and Prisca, together with the church in their house, send you hearty greetings in the Lord.*
- D. Instructions from Paul to the Colossians (16-17), ***And when this letter has been read among you, have it also read in the church of the Laodiceans; and see that you also read the letter from Laodicea. And say to Archippus, "See that you fulfill the ministry that you have received in the Lord."***
1. They were to read the letter and have it read by the church in Laodicea.
 - a. These churches were closely allied.
 - b. They were both being attacked by false teachers.
 2. They were to read the letter from the church at Laodicea (16b)
 - a. What the letter to the church at Laodicea was remains a mystery.
 - b. Some believe it was the letter to the Ephesians but many believe Ephesians was written several months later.
 - c. Most agree that the letter Paul referred to was lost.
 3. That Archippus fulfill his God given ministry (17)
 - a. It is believed that he was the son of Philemon.
 - b. He was ministering in Colossae, possibly as the pastor, in Epaphras' absence.
 - c. Others believe he was ministering at the church in Laodicea based on the placement in verse 17 next to the command to read the letter to the Laodicean church.
 - d. M. Anders, *Perhaps he needed this word of encouragement so as not to give up in the face of the fierce battle with the false teachers.*
 - e. G. Osborne, *We should not surmise that Archippus was failing in this ministry or needed to be stimulated. Paul's remark here can just as easily be read as encouragement to persevere (as I prefer to see it).*
- E. Benediction (18), ***I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. Remember my chains. Grace be with you.***
1. Paul's final greeting was written by him to authenticate the letter. (18a)
 - a. Paul normally had an amanuensis (secretary) write his letters for him.
 - b. He would add a personal note with his signature at the end of the letter to authenticate his authorship, note 1 Corinthians 16:21; Galatians 6:11; 2 Thessalonians 3:17; Philemon 19.
 2. Paul requested prayers for himself (18b)
 - a. He specifically requested prayer concerning his imprisonment in Rome.
 - b. Colossians 4:3, *At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison-*
 - c. Note other instances of Paul's request concerning his imprisonment, Romans 15:30-32 and Ephesians 6:18-20.

3. He prayed that God's grace would be with them (18c)
 - a. Paul began and ended his letter with a request that they receive grace, God's unmerited favor, Colossians 1:2, *To the saints and faithful brothers in Christ at Colossae: Grace to you and peace from God our Father.*
 - b. G. Osborne, *Still today, the people of God need the grace of God to survive in this evil world—and that divine grace, which will guarantee our final victory and carry us home to God, is an ever-present reality in our lives.*

<i>CONCLUSION</i>

- A. Be thankful for the ministry of others because the Gospel of Jesus Christ is much greater than any one of us.
- B. The grace of God keeps a Christian secure despite circumstances or conditions.