

COLOSSIANS CHAPTER FOUR LIVING IN GRACE

“Let your speech be always with *grace* . . .
Grace be with you.”

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Living in grace involves:

1. *Persistent prayer*; 4:2-4
 - a. Pray with watching; 4:2a
 - b. Pray with thanksgiving; 2b
 - c. Pray for opportunities for the word; 4:3
 - d. Pray for ability to speak; 4:4
2. *A winsome walk*; 4:5
3. *Salty speech*; 4:6
4. *Faithful friends*; 4:7-14
 - a. Tychicus and Onesimus inform you and comfort you; 4:7-9
 - b. Aristarchus, Mark, and Jesus greet you; 4:10-11
 - c. Luke and Demas send greetings: 4:14
5. *Gracious greetings*; 4:15-16
6. *Excellent exhortations*; 4:17
“Fulfill your ministry.”

Paul’s salutation and benediction; 4:18

4:1. Masters, render unto your servants that which is just and equal; knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven.

Translation and Paraphrase

4:1. (You) masters, render to the slaves that which is just and fair, because you know that you also have a master in heaven. (As you treat your slaves, the heavenly Master will treat you.)

Notes

1. Paul commanded the masters (Gr. *kurios*, lord) to give to their slaves just and equal treatment. They must treat their slaves as they themselves desired Christ, the master in heaven, to treat them.
2. If masters gave their slaves just and equal treatment, they would pay the slaves the same wages that they paid other hired workers for the same services. They would allow the slaves the same freedom of movement that they themselves enjoyed.

The practical result of this would be the end of slavery in every household where it was done. Indeed in thousands of Christian homes over the Roman empire slaves became fully or nearly free men. Many slaves desired to stay and work for their masters, but their service became a blessing for both slave and master.

3. Perhaps the most prominent example of slave-master relationships is the case of Onesimus and Philemon. Philemon was urged to receive back his runaway slave, Onesimus, as a brother in the Lord. (Philemon 15-17).
4. Old Testament law forbade masters to rule over slaves rigorously. (Lev. 25:43, 53). New Testament law is an advance even over the benign commandments of God in the Old Testament.
5. Christ is truly Master of masters, Lord of lords, and King of kings. (Rev. 19:16; I Tim. 6:15).

2. Continue stedfastly in prayer, watching therein with thanksgiving; 3. withal praying for us also, that God may open unto us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds; 4. that I may make it manifest as I ought to speak.

Translation and Paraphrase

2. (All of you) continue constantly in prayer, being watchful in (doing) it, (that you may note the things you should pray for; and pray always) with thanksgiving.

3. Praying together for me also, that God may open for us a door (an opportunity) for the message, that we may speak the mystery (the revealed secret) of Christ, for which also I am in bonds.

4. (Do be praying for me) that I may make it (the mystery) plain (and speak) as I ought to speak.

Notes

1. Paul always urged the Christians to whom he wrote to pray. I Thess. 5:17; Rom. 12:12; Eph. 6:18.
2. They were to persevere in prayer, to continue steadfastly in it. Acts 2:47; 1:14. Persevere even when the answer is not immediately obvious.
3. They were to be watching as they prayed. It is so easy to go to sleep. Note Eph. 6:18; Acts 20:31; I Cor. 16:13; I Thess. 5:6; I Pet. 5:8; Rev. 3:2-3. The disciples of Jesus could not watch with Him one hour as he prayed in Gethsemane, but went to sleep. Matt. 26:40-41.

There are many things that we should watch as a preparation to prayer. We should be watching conditions in the world, in the church, in our own lives, in the lives of our brethren; and, most of all, let us be watching what God's word says.

Every Christian should be a Gregory! The name Gregory comes from the Greek verb *gregoreo*, meaning to watch.

4. In addition to watching, thanksgiving is necessary in prayer. Col. 4:2. This scripture seems to present thanksgiving as a part of our watching. We watch, not merely so we can be cautious and pray for corrections, but so we can observe things for which we can be thankful. Many things we see are hard to give thanks for, but we can give thanks for everything if we try. Compare I Thess. 5:18; Col. 3:17; Eph. 5:20.
5. Paul often requested prayers for his work. Eph. 6:18-20; Rom. 15:30; Phil. 1:19. If Paul needed the prayers of his brethren, we need them even more than he.
6. The word *withal* at the start of 4:3 means "together, at once, at the same time."

7. Paul asked prayers for two things concerning him:
 - (1) That God would open to them a door for the word.
 - (2) That he might speak as he ought; Col. 4:4.
8. Paul did not ask for release from prison, for successful outcome of his trial, for rest and peace, but only for an open door.

It is hypocrisy for us to pray for an open door if we are not fully prepared and willing to enter in through it when God provides it.
9. The New Testament frequently uses the word *door* to mean an opportunity to preach. Compare I Cor. 16:9; II Cor. 2:12; Rev. 3:8; Acts 14:27. Paul needed such a door just at this time. He was in prison and his work was therefore hindered.
10. Paul requested prayers for *us*, for himself and for others, doubtless the people named in 4:7-14.
11. Paul in 4:3 refers again to the gospel as the mystery (or the revealed secret) of Christ. Compare notes on Col. 1:27; 2:2; Eph. 3:3-4; 6:19. The term *mystery* was a favorite expression of Paul's.
12. Paul was bound for the sake of the gospel, not for wrongdoing. He was bound in chains. Eph. 6:20.
13. Paul wanted prayer that he might speak the message in the right way. A good message can be proclaimed in a bad way. The message should be proclaimed clearly (made *manifest*), boldly (Eph. 6:19), and graciously (Col. 4:6).
14. Paul wanted to speak as he *ought*. There is an "oughtness" lying upon every Christian. We ought to speak, and thus to make the gospel manifest.

5. Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time. 6. Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer each one.

Translation and Paraphrase

5. Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward those outside (of the church), buying up the time (by wise use of your opportunities).

6. (Let) your speech always be gracious, seasoned with (the) salt (of wit and enthusiasm and sparkle). (Study) to know how you ought to answer each one (who asks you about your faith).

Notes

1. In the times of the early church Christians were sometimes spoken of as atheists because they would not conform to the

state religions. They were regarded as unpatriotic and sometimes immoral. Toward such hostile outsiders they needed to behave wisely, both to prevent harm to themselves, and to persuade men of the truth of the gospel.

2. Those that are *without* are those that are outside the church. Mark. 4:11.
3. When Paul spoke about redeeming the time, he was not suggesting that we can redeem the time in the sense of buying back past opportunities that we have let slip by. The word *redeem* used here (Gr. *exagoradzo*) has the meaning of buying up for one's use, but not the meaning of buying back. Thus by wise use of every opportunity to do good, we can buy up the time so that the record of its use is on the credit side of our ledger with God. (Eph. 5:15-16).
4. While our speech and conduct should be done with wisdom so that the world will be attracted to the gospel and not unnecessarily repelled by our personal manners, we must remember that the gospel itself is the supreme wisdom, and that walking in wisdom cannot be done more perfectly than by walking according to the gospel. I Cor. 2:1-7.
5. Probably the primary part of our walking in wisdom toward outsiders is the speech we utter. Therefore Paul urges us to speak "with grace." (Eph. 4:29).
6. Our speech should be "seasoned with salt," as well as being wise. In our modern usage salty speech means profanity. But Paul meant almost the exact opposite: he referred to speech that was pungent, interesting, full of charm, witty, not repelling. Note Christ's use of the word *salt*. Matt. 5:13.
7. Paul's speeches had salt. Consider his words on Mars Hill (Acts 17), in Antioch of Pisidia (Acts 13), before King Agrippa (Acts 26), and on board the ship to Rome (Acts 27).
8. The wording of Col. 4:6 makes it sound as if we were to season our speech with salt as a means of learning how we ought to answer each one. This seems a little strange, and perhaps even backward: salty speech seems to us to be the goal we strive for in learning to speak, rather than the means of learning how we ought to answer each one. Perhaps Paul was suggesting that in our efforts to use speech seasoned with salt, we shall discover what types of answers are most effective and which are not.

9. We certainly do need to study and think and experiment until we learn the right ways to answer every one. I Peter 3:15; Prov. 26:4-5.

Study and Review

Questions on Colossians 3:1—4:6

1. What is the topic of 3:1—4:6 in the outline?
2. When are we raised with Christ? (3:1; 2:12)
3. What should we do because we are raised with Christ?
4. Where is Christ seated?
5. What are we to set our minds (KJV, *affections*) on? (3:2)
6. What are we not to set our minds on?
7. When did we die? How? (3:3)
8. Where is the Christian's life now?
9. Explain the statement that our life is *hid* with Christ in God? (3:3)
10. What is Christ to the Christian, according to Col. 3:4?
11. When shall Christ be manifested (appear)?
12. What shall happen to us when Christ is manifested? (3:4)
13. Define the word *mortify* in King James version. (3:5)
14. What are we to put to death? (3:5)
15. What sins are called "members which are upon the earth"?
16. To what does *uncleaness* refer?
17. What is covetousness?
18. Why is covetousness called idolatry?
19. What comes upon those who do the sins listed in 3:5? (3:6)
20. Explain the phrase *sons of disobedience*.
21. What does the *wherein* (KJV, *which things' sake*) at the start of 3:7 refer to?
22. Differentiate (if possible) between *anger* and *wrath*. (3:8)
23. What is *railing* (KJV, *blasphemy*)?
24. What does *shameful speaking* (KJV, *filthy communication*) deal with? (3:8)
25. What reason is given for not lying to one another? (3:9)
26. What is the *old man*?
27. What have we put on? (3:10)
28. What is the new man being renewed unto?
29. After what are we being renewed? (3:10)
30. Who created us? When? (Compare II Cor. 5:17; Eph. 2:10)

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31. Where is it that there can be no Greek or Jew, or other such distinction? (3:11)
32. Whom did the Greeks call barbarians?
33. What type of people were the Scythians? (3:11)
34. How can there be no bondman or freeman if slaves are still required to be obedient to their masters? (3:11, 22)
35. How important is Christ to the new man? (3:11)
36. Define the term *elect* in 3:12.
37. What are we to put on as God's elect?
38. What is *forbearing*? (3:13)
39. How are we to forgive one another? (3:13)
40. What are we to put on above all? (3:14)
41. Explain the phrase "the *bond* of perfectness."
42. What is to rule in our hearts? (3:15)
43. To what were we called?
44. What connection could there be between letting the peace of Christ rule in our hearts and being called in one body? (3:15)
45. How is the word of Christ to dwell in us? (3:16)
46. Which does "in all wisdom" refer to, to "dwell in you richly," or to "teaching and admonishing"?
47. With what are we to teach and admonish one another? (3:16)
48. What distinction can be made between psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs?
49. How do we go about singing with grace in our hearts?
50. How are we to do everything we do? (3:17)
51. What does "in the *name* of the Lord Jesus" mean? (3:17)
52. Through whom are thanks to be given?
53. What does it mean for a wife to be in subjection to her husband? (3:18)
54. Why is it fitting in the Lord for a wife to be in subjection?
55. Why should the husband be told to love his wife, when the wife is not told to love her husband? (3:19; Compare Titus 2:4)
56. Is the command against bitterness in husbands greatly needed? (3:19)
57. How far are children to go in obeying parents? (3:20)
58. Does Paul appeal for obedience of children by a threatening approach, or by some other appeal? (3:20)
59. What does *provoke* mean? (3:21)
60. What may be the result of provoking children?
61. How fully were slaves to be obedient? (3:22)

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62. In what one respect were masters really masters over slaves?
63. Were there respects wherein masters were really not masters over slaves?
64. What is *eye-service*? (3:22)
65. What is *singleness* of heart?
66. What does fearing the Lord have to do with a slave's obedience?
67. How were slaves to work? (3:23)
68. The slave was to work for his master as if he were working for whom?
69. What shall slaves (and others too) receive from the Lord as a result of their obedient labor? (3:24)
70. Whom were obedient Christian slaves really serving?
71. What shall wrongdoers receive? From whom? (3:25)
72. How does the statement that "there is no respect of persons" fit into Paul's argument?
73. Propose a title or theme or topic for Colossians chapter three.
74. What were slave-masters to give (or render) to their slaves? (4:1)
75. Give specific suggestions as to how masters might give this to their slaves.
76. Why was it essential that masters give slaves what was just? (4:1)
77. Who is the Master of masters?
78. What instructions are given about prayer? (4:2)
79. What necessity is there for watching in prayer?
80. What was to accompany prayer and watching?
81. For what did Paul request prayers? (4:3)
82. What does *door* in 4:3 mean?
83. What is the mystery of Christ? (4:3; Compare 1:27; 2:2)
84. What was Paul's situation with reference to the mystery of Christ? (4:3)
85. What did Paul want to do with the mystery of Christ? (4:4)
86. Who are the *them* that are without? What does *without* mean here? (4:5)
87. How were the Christians to behave before those without?
88. Explain the phrase "redeeming the time."
89. With what was their speech always to be uttered? (4:6)
90. Explain the phrase "speech . . . seasoned with salt."
91. What is the connection between "seasoned with salt" and "that ye may know how ye ought to answer"?

Outline of 4:7-18

- F. Conclusion (Personal notes); 4:7-18
1. Notes about Tychichus and Onesimus; 4:7-9
 - a. Tychicus will make known my affairs; 4:7
 - b. Tychicus was sent for this; 4:8
 - (1) That you may know our state.
 - (2) That your hearts may be comforted.
 - a. Onesimus is sent with Tychicus; 4:9
 - (1) Onesimus is a faithful and beloved brother.
 - (2) They will make known the things here.
 2. Greetings from Paul's companions; 4:10-14
 - a. Jewish companions; 4:10-11
 - (1) Aristarchus; 4:10a
 - (2) Mark; 10b
 - (3) Jesus called Justus; 4:11
 - b. Non-Jewish companions; 4:12-14
 - (1) Epaphras; 4:12-13
 - (a) He strives for you; 4:12
 - (b) He has much zeal for you and others; 4:13
 - (2) Luke 4:14
 - (3) Demas; 4:14
 3. Instructions to the Colossians; 4:15-17
 - a. Salute the brethren in Laodicea; 4:15a
 - b. Salute Nymphas; 15b
 - c. Read this epistle also in Laodicea; 4:16a
 - d. Read the epistle from Laodicea; 16b
 - e. Tell Archippus to fulfill his ministry; 4:7
 4. Paul's salutation and benediction; 4:18.

7. All my affairs shall Tychicus make known unto you, the beloved brother and faithful minister and fellow-servant in the Lord: 8. whom I have sent unto you for this very purpose, that ye may know our state, and that he may comfort your hearts; 9. together with Onesimus, the faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you. They shall make known unto you all things that *are done* here.

Translation and Paraphrase

7. Tychicus (the man who delivered Ephesians before he came to you) will make known to you all the things involving me. (He is) the beloved brother and faithful servant (or minister) in the Lord (Jesus).

8. (So ask your questions of Tychicus.) I have sent him to you for this very reason, that you may know the news concerning us, and that he may comfort (and exhort) your hearts.

9. Along with (Tychicus I have sent) Onesimus, the faithful and beloved brother, who is (now one) of you (though he was a slave). They (Tychicus and Onesimus) will make known to you the things (going on) here (in Rome).

Notes

1. Col. 4:7-9 tells of Tychicus and Onesimus. Tychicus delivered the letter to the Colossians from Paul in Rome, and he also delivered the epistle to the Ephesians on the same trip. Onesimus was a slave who had fled to Rome. In Rome he met Paul, and was converted to Christ. Paul sent Onesimus back to his master Philemon, who lived in Colossae. Onesimus was given the short epistle to Philemon, which we have in our New Testament. This letter requested Philemon to forgive him and receive him back as a brother in the Lord. Onesimus and Tychicus travelled together to Colossae. (Notice the drawings inside the covers of this book relating to Onesimus and Tychicus.)
2. Besides their work of delivering epistles, Tychicus and Onesimus were appointed to tell the Colossians all other personal news concerning Paul, and to comfort and exhort the hearts of the Colossians. Quite probably the news from Paul was good news. See Phil. 1:12.
3. Tychicus is referred to several places in the Scripture:
 - Acts 20:4—He helped bear the offerings to Judea. He was from Asia (Ephesus perhaps).
 - Eph. 6:21-22—He delivered Ephesians.
 - II Tim. 4:12—He was later sent to Ephesus on another trip.
 - Titus 3:12—Paul considered sending him on another mission.
 Tychicus is called a beloved brother, a faithful minister, and fellow servant with Paul. (Col. 4:7). This description is similar to that given to Epaphras in Col. 1:7.
4. Paul introduced Onesimus to the Colossian church here in this letter, along with Tychicus. Onesimus stood side by side with Tychicus.

Notice the honorable titles given to Onesimus: faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you.

The words "who is one of you" are loaded with emotion and pathos. The same expression is applied to Epaphras in Col. 4:12. Both the preacher Epaphras and the ex-slave are described the same way.

Onesimus' introduction to the Colossian church would serve as a powerful incentive to Philemon to receive him back. Philemon 10.

5. Good news from Paul through Tychicus and Onesimus would be a comfort to the hearts of the Colossians. Prov. 25:25.

10. Aristarchus my fellow-prisoner saluteth you, and Mark, the cousin of Barnabas (touching whom ye received commandments; if he come unto you, receive him), 11. and Jesus that is called Justus, who are of the circumcision: these only are my fellow-workers unto the kingdom of God, men that have been a comfort unto me.

Translation and Paraphrase

10. Aristarchus my fellow-prisoner greets you; also Mark, the cousin of Barnabas, (greets you). You have received instructions concerning him (Mark). If he comes to you, receive him (as you should).

11. Also Jesus (sends greetings), the one called Justus. These (men I have named are) the only fellow workers (now with me) for the kingdom of God from the circumcision, (they are Jews; and I assure you that they are brethren) who have been a comfort to me.

Notes

1. Col. 4:10-11 lists three Jewish companions of Paul who were with him at that time; Aristarchus, Mark, and Jesus called Justus. These three men sent greetings to the Colossian church. The verb *salute* in 4:10, 12, 14, etc., means to greet.
2. Aristarchus is mentioned in Acts 19:29; 20:4; 27:2; and Phm. 24. He was a Thessalonian. He was in Ephesus during Paul's long stay there, and was seized by Ephesian rioters looking for Paul. He was one of the bearers of the offering Paul collected for the poor Judeans. He travelled with Paul on his last ship journey to Rome. In Rome he was a fellow-prisoner with Paul. He seems to have had a bravery and valor about him that was unusual. Paul had several such companions about whom we

know little. We look forward to getting better acquainted with them in the new heaven and earth.

3. The reference to Mark here in Colossians comes as a pleasure to us. Mark (also called John, or John Mark) had once been a disappointment to Paul, because he had abandoned Paul and Barnabas midway during their first missionary trip. (Acts 13:5, 13). This so disturbed Paul that he would not take Mark on his second trip. (Acts 15:37-39). But now Paul is reconciled to Mark, and has given him a special important mission. We do not know what Paul had assigned him to do. But Paul had sent instructions to the Colossians concerning Mark, and here urges them to welcome him if he came to them.
4. The Mark referred to here in undoubtedly the same person who wrote the gospel of Mark in later years. In the gospel Mark never names himself, but seems to be the one referred to as a "certain young man." (Mark 14:51-52). In the book of Acts Mark is usually called John, or John Mark. His mother's name was Mary. We discover here in Colossians that Mark was a cousin of Barnabas. (Acts 12:12). (The Gr. word *anepsios* translated *cousin* here in Colossians is used in Num. 33:11 in LXX to refer to "father's brother's sons".) Perhaps the relationship between Barnabas and Mark explains why Barnabas was willing to take Mark on the second missionary trip when Paul was not.
 For information regarding Barnabas, see Acts 4:36-37; 11:22-26; 13:1-3.
5. Paul mentions another Jewish associate (the expression "of the circumcision" refers to Jews) who was with him, one Jesus called Justus. He was a Jew with a Roman name. We know nothing more about him.
6. The statement of Paul that only three men of his Jewish associates were with him in Rome has a sadness in it. See Acts 28:25; "They departed." Others had been no comfort to Paul, but these three had truly been a comfort to him. Paul calls them workers unto (or *for*: Gr. *eis*) the kingdom of God.

12. Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant to Christ Jesus, saluteth you, always striving for you in his prayers, that ye may stand perfect and fully assured in all the will of God. 13. For I bear him witness, that he hath much labor for you, and for them in Laodicea, and for them in Hierapolis.

Translation and Paraphrase

12. Epaphras greets you, (he being one) from your number, (and) a slave of Christ Jesus, (and) always striving for you in (his) prayers, that you may stand (as) perfect (saints), and be fully assured in all the will of God (never doubting God for an instant).

13. (Don't think that Epaphras has forgotten you.) For I will vouch for him that he has intense longing for you, and for the (brethren) in Laodicea, and in Hierapolis.

Notes

1. Col. 4:10-11 names three Jewish Christians who were companions with Paul. In Col. 4:12-14 Paul names three Gentile Christian companions: Epaphras, Luke and Demas.
2. Col. 4:12-13 tells of Epaphras, the preacher for the Colossians. See notes on Col. 1:7 for additional information about Epaphras.
3. Col. 4:12-13 tells us these facts about Epaphras:

(1) He was "one of you," that is, one of the Colossians. He was evidently a Gentile.

(2) He prayed much. He was striving in prayer for the Colossians. Compare Col. 2:1.

(3) His concern extended to other nearby churches in the Lycus valley, to those in Laodicea and Hierapolis.

(4) He was with Paul in Rome when Colossians was dispatched, and he sent greetings to his friends in Colossae. Philemon 23 refers to Epaphras as Paul's fellow-prisoner.

4. Epaphras was concerned that the Colossians might stand perfect, that is, stand for Christ without wavering, and be perfect in life. *Perfect* (Gr. *teleios*) means complete, not lacking in any part.

Also he desired that they might be fully assured in all the will of God. The participle "fully assured" (KJV, complete; Gr. *peplerophoremnoi*) is a word related to the term "full assurance" in Col. 2:2. The verb means "to make full; to make certain; convince; to fill with any thought, conviction, or inclination."

We should also pray for our brethren, that they may stand perfect and fully assured. Entirely too many are imperfect and partially developed, and have many doubts instead of full assurance.

14. Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas salute you.

Translation and Paraphrase

14. Luke, the beloved physician, greets you, and (also) Demas.

Notes

1. We learn from Col. 4:14 a fact stated nowhere else in Scripture; that Luke was a physician. When we read the gospel of Luke with this knowledge, we notice occasional medicinal comments that seem particularly appropriate for a doctor to make. Luke 4:38-39; 8:43.
2. Luke was the author of the third gospel story containing a life of Christ. He also was author of the book of Acts. Note that the books of Luke and Acts were both sent to the same man. Luke 1:1-4; Acts 1:1-2. It is interesting to notice that the authors of the second and third gospels were both with Paul at this time.
3. Luke was apparently a Gentile. He travelled with Paul, joining him at Troas during Paul's second missionary trip. (Acts 16:8-10). He seems to have stopped off and remained at Philippi until the returning portion of Paul's third missionary trip. (Acts 20:5-6). At that time he rejoined Paul, returning with him to Jerusalem, and apparently was with Paul during his trials and imprisonments in Judea, and during his trip to Rome, and was with Paul in Rome when Paul wrote Colossians and Philemon. (Phm. 24). He was still with Paul during Paul's later second imprisonment in Rome. (II Tim. 4:11). Paul refers to Luke as "beloved" and as a fellow-worker.
4. Some Christians have felt that they should not go to doctors, but only pray for healing. The fact that Luke was a doctor, even so long after his first travels with Paul, and that his occupation was not condemned, nor described as being past, no-longer-practiced, profession, argues rather strongly that physicians are approved by God for Christians in these times. We are indeed taught to pray for the sick, but we are not taught to avoid physicians.
5. Demas the disappointment! Here is Colossians and in Phm. 24, Demas is listed as one of Paul's companions. In Philemon he is grouped with others who are called Paul's fellow-workers. Nothing further is said of him, either in praise or blame.

However in II Tim. 4:10 a sad sentence reads: "Demas forsook me, having loved this present world, and went to Thessalonica." Demas could have been another Barnabas, a Timothy, a Titus, or Tychicus. It is as the poet said,

"Of all sad words in tongue or pen,
The saddest these: 'It might have been'."

15. Salute the brethren that are in Laodicea, and Nymphas, and the church that is in their house. 16. And when this epistle hath been read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and that ye read also the epistle from Laodicea.

Translation and Paraphrase

15. (Now please) greet the brethren in Laodicea (for us), and (particularly greet) Nymphas, and the church in her house.

16. And when (this) letter has been read by you, make arrangements that it also be read in the church of the Laodiceans; and (see to it) that you read the (letter which is coming) from Laodicea.

Notes

1. Paul encouraged acquaintance and fellowship among the local churches, such as between Colossae and Laodicea (twelve miles apart). "Salute the brethren that are in Laodicea." Churches can have wonderful free fellowship and cooperation with one another without belonging to a connectional denominational system. In fact under such a system their fellowship may easily be more legalistic than real. Churches in New Testament times were free independent congregations, united and cooperating together willingly under the authority of Christ alone.
2. "Salute Nymphas (or Nympha?), and the church which is in her (his? their?) house." Nymphas was apparently the leading Christian at Laodicea, the "Philemon of Laodicea," as Moule calls him. Compare Phm. 1-2.
3. There has been much dispute as to whether the name of this person was Nymphas or Nympha. (The Greek form *Nymphan*, an accusative sing., may stand for either spelling.) Also there is uncertainty as to whether the text should read "her" house, "his" house, or "their" house.

The 1966 Greek text of the United Bible Societies gives the reading "her" house, but gives manuscript evidence for the other readings in the footnotes. No certain decision about the reading here is possible at present.

4. The church in Laodicea assembled in the house of Nymphas. For other churches meeting in houses, see Rom. 16:5, 23; I Cor. 16:19; Phm. 2; Acts 12:2; 16:15, 40.
5. The epistle to the Colossians was to be read publicly in Colossae. Then it was to be taken to Laodicea, where it was to be read also. The Greek text reads in such a way as to suggest that they were to do whatever was necessary to see that the Letter was read at Laodicea. Public scripture reading, when done well, is powerful beyond imagination.
6. The Colossians were to read also a letter which was coming to them "from Laodicea." We know nothing definite about this letter "from Laodicea." The most common specific suggestion about it is that it was the same letter we know as Ephesians. There is some evidence that Ephesians was written to be a circulating letter, first delivered to Ephesus, and then taken about to various churches in Asia, finally to Laodicea, and thence to Colossae. This is a possibility, but it cannot be said to be proven.

17. And say to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfill it.

Translation and Paraphrase

17. And speak to Archippus (your new minister): See that you fulfill the ministry which you received in the Lord (for His service).

Notes

1. Paul's final exhortation to the church concerned their minister, Archippus. The church was to encourage him and exhort him to fulfill his ministry. The enthusiasm and effectiveness of a minister is determined to a great degree by the amount of backing and exhortation that his church gives him.
2. It appears that Archippus was the new (newly-ordained perhaps?) minister at Colossae, replacing Epaphras who was with Paul in Rome. Archippus may well have been the son of Philemon and Apphia. Phm. 2.

3. Two exhortations are given to Archippus, that may well be given to all who undertake the ministry:
 - (1) Look to the service;
 - (2) Fill it full.
4. Ministers should not let any work pass by without full-fulfillment. "Make full proof (or fulfill) of thy ministry." (II Tim. 4:5). "Be diligent in these things; give thyself wholly to them, that thy progress may be manifest unto all." (I Tim. 4:15).
5. Archippus' ministry had been passed on to him. He had received something transmitted, perhaps from Epaphras.
6. A ministry is received "in the Lord," and not just from men. It is a divine work. We must work as in God's sight. A minister may be held in honor with men for doing half his work, and be in displeasure with God for neglect of the other half.

18. The salutation of me Paul with mine own hand. Remember my bonds. Grace be with you.

Translation and Paraphrase

18. (I close with) the greeting in my own handwriting: Paul. Remember my bonds (in your prayers). Grace (favor) be with you.

Notes

1. Paul closed the epistle to the Colossians by signing it with his own hand. The chain linking him to his guard clanks in an act of authentication.
2. Several other letters of Paul were also written by one of his helpers serving as secretary (amanuensis) as Paul dictated. At the close of these, the last line or so was added by Paul in his own handwriting. Romans 16:22; I Cor. 16:21; Gal. 6:11; II Thess. 3:17; Compare Phm. 19.
3. In closing, Paul requests, "Remember my bonds." "Remember them in your prayers; remember them when you feel discouraged and depressed; remember that I have won many victories for Christ while wearing these bonds." Phil. 1:7; Eph. 6:20; Acts 28:20.
4. Paul closed with his customary benediction (used in all his epistles): "Grace (or favor) be with you." If God's favor is with us, what more can we ask in this life or in the world to come?

5. Paul finishes his epistle. The letter is dried, folded, tied shut, perhaps sealed, and given to Tychicus. Thence it went to Colossae. And now to us.

6. May we in our Christian life and faith make CHRIST SUPREME, as Paul exhorted the Colossians.

"And he is the head of the body, the church: . . . that in all things he might have the preeminence." (1:18).

"In him ye are made full, who is the head of all principality and power." (2:10).

"If then ye were raised together with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated on the right hand of God." (3:1).

"And whatsoever ye do, in word or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him." (3:17).

Study and Review

Questions on Colossians 4:7-18

1. What is the title of Col. 4:7-18 in the outline?
2. Who was sent to the Colossians to make known Paul's affairs? (4:7)
3. What is Tychicus described as being (3 things)?
4. For what two purposes had Paul sent Tychicus? (4:8)
5. Who was sent with Tychicus? (4:9)
6. How is the one who was sent with Tychicus described?
7. Why would the statement "who is one of you" in 4:9 be especially forceful?
8. Who is called Paul's fellow-prisoner? (4:10)
9. What else do we know about the one who is called Paul's fellow-prisoner? (See Acts 19:29; 20:4; 27:2)
10. To whom was Mark related?
11. What previous dealings had Paul had with Mark? (Acts 13:5, 13; 15:37-40)
12. What special instructions were given to the Colossians about Mark?
13. What group of people are those "of the circumcision"?
14. What companions of Paul were "of the circumcision"? (Give names)
15. What had Paul's fellow-workers been unto him? (3:11)

CHAPTER FOUR

16. Where was Epaphras from? (4:12)
 17. What does *salute* mean? (4:12)
 18. How is Epaphras' prayer life described?
 19. For what two things did Epaphras pray?
 20. Who bore witness to Epaphras? (4:13)
 21. For what people did Epaphras have zeal (or labor)?
 22. How is Luke described? (4:14)
 23. What else do we know about Demas? (Philemon 24; II Tim. 4:10)
 24. What were the Colossians to do toward the brethren in Laodicea? (4:15)
 25. Who was Nymphas (or Nympha)? Man or woman?
 26. Where did the Laodicean church meet?
 27. Where was the epistle to the Colossians to be read? (4:16)
 28. What other epistle were the Colossians to read? Identify this other epistle if you can.
 29. Who was Archippus? (4:17; Philemon 2)
 30. What had Archippus received?
 31. What was Archippus told to do?
 32. How did Paul make the closing salutation of this epistle?
 33. What did Paul ask the Colossians to remember? How would this remembering be done?
 34. What was Paul's final wish for the Colossians?
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