

Colossians

Chapter 4

Masters, treat your bondservants justly and fairly, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven.

Further Instructions

2 Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving. 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— 4 that I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak. 5 Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. 6 Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.

4:2 watchful. The Letter began with Paul’s emphasis on prayer (1:3, 9). (TLSB)

4:3 open to us a door. God provides opportunities to speak His saving Word and gives us the courage to do so (1Co 16:9). (TLSB)

in prison. Paul was in prison when he wrote this letter (see vv. 10, 18). (CSB)
In 2Co 11:23, Paul speaks of frequent imprisonments. (TLSB)

4:4 make it clear. Also translated “manifest” or “to make known.” The Law is already made plain (Rm 1:18–20), but the Gospel needs to be presented in Christ (Rm 3:21–26). We clarify the mystery of the Gospel by simply presenting it in its purity so that all people can understand it. (TLSB)

4:5 outsiders. Our life before unbelievers should put a favorable light on the Word we proclaim (Jas 3:13). (TLSB)

4:6 seasoned with salt. Salt is a preservative and is tasty. Similarly, the Christian’s conversation is to be wholesome (see 3:8; Eph 4:29). (CSB)

We should strive for sincerity, tact, and eloquence so that our conversational style is always tasteful. (TLSB)

Final Greetings

7 Tychicus will tell you all about my activities. He is a beloved brother and faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord. 8 I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are and that he may encourage your hearts, 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. 10 Aristarchus my fellow prisoner greets you, and Mark the cousin of Barnabas (concerning whom you have received instructions—if he comes to you, welcome him), 11 and Jesus who is called Justus. 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. 12 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. 13 For I bear him witness that he has worked hard for you and for those in Laodicea and in Hierapolis. 14 Luke the beloved physician greets you, as does Demas. 15 Give my greetings to the brothers at Laodicea, and to Nympha and the church in her house. 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. 17 And say to Archippus, “See that

you fulfill the ministry that you have received in the Lord.” I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. Remember my chains. Grace be with you.

4:8 Good ministry begins when we listen first to the people we serve and when we apply the appropriate Word of God to bring comfort. (TLSB)

4:9–17 Onesimus (v. 9), Aristarchus (v. 10), Mark (v. 10), Epaphras (v. 12), Luke (v. 14), Demas (v. 14) and Archippus (v. 17) are mentioned in Philemon. This suggests that the letters to Colosse and Philemon were written at the same time and place. (CSB)

4:9 *Onesimus*. A runaway slave from Colossae who came to Paul and was converted. Although Onesimus was a faithful Christian, Paul did not describe him as a Gospel worker because his availability for that service was still to be determined by Philemon, his master. (TLSB)

4:10 *fellow prisoner*. Or, “my fellow prisoner of war.” Aristarchus was from Thessalonica, and he accompanied Paul to Ephesus, to Jerusalem, and to Rome. He was probably with Paul while he was under house arrest and attended to his needs. Paul’s military language suggests that he viewed his ministry as a battle against evil (cf Php 2:25). (TLSB)

Aristarchus. A Macedonian, who is mentioned three times in Acts: 1. He was with Paul during the Ephesian riot (Ac 19:29) and therefore was known in Colosse. 2. Both he and Tychicus (Ac 20:4) were with Paul in Greece. 3. He accompanied Paul on his trip to Rome (Ac 27:2). (CSB)

Mark. The author of the second Gospel. Against Barnabas’s advice, Paul refused to take Mark on the second missionary journey because Mark had “deserted” him at Pamphylia (Ac 15:38). But now—about 12 years later—the difficulties seem to have been ironed out, because Paul, both here and in Phm 24 (sent at the same time to Philemon, who was in Colosse), sends Mark’s greetings. About five years later, Paul even writes that Mark “is very helpful to me in my ministry” (2Ti 4:11). (CSB)

Mark’s full name was John Mark. That he was a cousin to Barnabas explains why Barnabas supported Mark during the second missionary journey when Paul and Barnabas disputed over Mark’s service (Ac 15:37–40). It is encouraging to know that Paul and Mark were later reconciled. (TLSB)

Barnabas must have been well-known throughout the Pauline churches (see also 1 Cor 9:6). The references to him here and in 1 Corinthians (9:6) show that also he had been reconciled with Paul, and the reference here perhaps serves as a further commendation of Mark to the church at Colossae. (TLSB)

4:11 *Jesus who is called Justus*. This disciple is mentioned only here in the NT. “Jesus” was a common Jewish name. (TLSB)

men of the circumcision. Jews. Epaphras, Luke, and Demas (vv 12–14) were Gentiles. (TLSB)

4:12 *Epaphras*. Most likely the founding pastor of the Church at Colossae (cf 1:7). (TLSB)

one of you. A Colossian. ((TLSB)

fellow workers – δοῦλος Χριστοῦ—For the concept of “slave” as a designation of one in the ministry of the Gospel. (CC)

struggling ... in his prayers. His intercessory prayers are conspicuous and commendable. Prayer is not always relaxing or meditative, as the Psalms attest. (TLSB)

πάντοτε ἀγωνιζόμενος ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν ἐν ταῖς προσευχαῖς—Paul had used ἀγωνιζόμενος, “struggling,” at 1:29 (see the textual note on it there) to describe his labor of proclaiming the Gospel of Christ. Here the word refers to the task of prayer by the laborer in the Gospel on behalf of those in his care. Such prayers are closely related to the task of proclamation, for the purpose of the prayers of Epaphras (designated by ἵνα plus the subjunctive) is accomplished through the proclamation of the Word (see the following textual note). Epaphras is diligently praying that his people would stand faithful to the status first bestowed on them through the Gospel and that continues to be theirs in the Gospel. In view of the temptations confronting them to abandon that status, his prayers were certainly needed and apropos. (TLSB)

mature. The focus of his prayers indicates the overall message to the Colossians—that they would remain steadfast and grow to maturity in Christ. (TLSB)

4:13 *Hierapolis.* A town in Asia Minor (present-day Turkey), about 6 miles from Laodicea and 14 miles from Colosse. Its church may have been founded during Paul’s three-year stay in Ephesus (Ac 19), but probably not by Paul himself (cf. 2:1). (CSB)

Paul’s concern extended to others in the Lycus Valley. He probably also served as pastor in these churches. (TLSB)

4:14 *Luke.* Wrote about Paul in the book of Acts, having often accompanied him on his travels (see note on Ac 16:10). He was with Paul in Rome during his imprisonment (Ac 28), where this letter was written. (CSB)

Only here is Luke described as a physician, but there are indications of his medical background in his writings (e.g., Lk 22:44; Ac 28:8). Early tradition holds that he was a physician from Antioch in Syria (e.g., *NPNF* 2 1:136). (TLSB)

Demas. A Christian worker who would later desert Paul (2Ti 4:10). (CSB)

He later turned away from the faith. (TLSB)

Δημᾶς—Demas is permitted to send greetings here and in Philemon (v 24), where he is called one of Paul’s fellow workers. In the apostle’s last letter, we learn that Demas, “having loved the present age, forsook” Paul and went to Thessalonica (2 Tim 4:10). That his departure from traveling with the apostle was also a departure from the faith is indicated by his being described as in love with “the present age,” an expression that denotes what is evil and set in hostility against God (Gal 1:3–4). As Jesus had his Judas, so Paul had one whom he counted as a fellow worker for Christ forsake the faith. Such may also be the experience of Christian workers of lesser stature. (CC)

4:15 *Nympha.* Probably a Laodicean. (CSB)

Some texts read “his house.” The name Nympha can be either feminine or masculine. There is no way to be certain of gender, but we can be certain of this person’s generosity and support for the Gospel. Cf Ac 2:46. (TLSB)

church in her house. For the most part, the early church had no buildings, so it usually met for worship and instruction in homes. It often centered around one family, as, e.g., Priscilla and Aquila (Ro 16:5; 1Co 16:19), Philemon (Phm 2) and Mary the mother of John (Ac 12:12). (CSB)

4:16 *when this letter has been read to you.* The practice of the early church was to read Paul’s letters aloud to the assembled congregation. (CSB)

Read publicly (Lk 4:16; Ac 13:27). Paul places his own Letters and teaching on par with the OT Scriptures. (TLSB)

letter from Laodicea. Does not necessarily mean a letter by the Laodiceans. Rather, it could have been a letter that the Laodiceans were to lend to the Colossians—a letter that Paul had originally written to the Laodiceans. This may have been a fourth letter that Tychicus carried to this area in what is present-day Turkey, in addition to Ephesians, Colossians and Philemon. Or this letter was Paul's letter to the Ephesians—a circular letter making the rounds from Ephesus to Laodicea to Colosse. (CSB)

A lost Letter by Paul or the general Letter to the Ephesians. (TLSB)

4:17 *Archippus.* Phm 2 calls him Paul's "fellow soldier." (CSB)

Called Paul's "fellow soldier" (Phm 2). Some think he was Philemon's son. (TLSB)

ministry that you have received in the Lord. We cannot be sure of the nature of this ministry. Paul's encouragement demonstrates that ministry belongs not to us but to Christ, who distributes gifts of service and callings. (TLSB)

4:18 Paul's custom was to dictate his letters (see Ro 16:22) and pen a few greetings himself (1Co 16:21; Gal 6:11; 2Th 3:17; Phm 19). His personal signature was the guarantee of the genuineness of the letter. (CSB)

Paul's mark of authenticity (cf Gal 6:11; 2Th 3:17). (TLSB)

my chains. See vv. 3, 10. (CSB)

Although Paul often expressed hope and joy in the face of persecution, he needed always the prayers and encouragement of his fellow believers. (TLSB)

Grace. Paul concluded all his Letters by directing readers to God's grace. (TLSB)

4:2–18 Paul presents to the Colossians and to us a beautiful explanation of Christ's person and work. We do not need to turn to ourselves, to angels, or to anything else. Jesus is our true God and Savior. This "grocery list" of concluding instructions shows that the Gospel is not an abstract idea. It is the essential truth that transforms individual lives, such as those mentioned here, and continues to transform one person after another. • Dear Father, thank You for the individuals You use to proclaim to me the Gospel of forgiveness in Christ. Continue to use me to bring that saving message to my relatives, friends, and acquaintances. Amen. (TLSB)