

## Colossians

### The Scoop on the Letter to the Colossians

As far as we know, Paul never visited Colosse. We infer this from his comments in this letter that he “heard of their faith” (1:4), that their teacher was Epaphras (1:7), and that he had not seen them “face to face” (2:1). Nevertheless, he speaks authoritatively to them as their apostle, indicating that not only did he reserve this right as the apostle to the Gentiles but that as the mentor of Epaphras he was indirectly the Colossians’ mentor as well.

We are told in Acts 19:10 that Paul spent two years in Ephesus and that “all the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks” and this likely included Colosse, Hieropolis and Laodicea, cities or towns in the interior of Asia Minor. Epaphras probably heard the gospel in Ephesus and went to what we may presume was his home town Colosse to tell them how he had found the Savior. Paul, now years later, was sending them this letter, to be shared with Hieropolis and Laodicea, the three towns being relatively close to each other.

The problem they were facing was false teaching. We can reconstruct the false teaching from what Paul says about it directly and indirectly how he responds with the truth in contradiction of the teaching. Here are the salient points:

- Paul terms it “philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world (2:8)
- It was critical of how these church members’ diet and of whether or not they attended certain (Jewish?) festivals and observed new moons and Sabbaths (2:16)
- It encouraged asceticism (denying pleasures to the body), worship of angels, interpretations of visions (2:18)
- There was a singular proponent of this teaching, the him of “his sensuous mind” (2:18)
- It forbid touching and tasting certain things as a means of being godly (2:21-23)
- Paul’s emphasis on Christ’s pre-eminence suggests that this false teaching did not give adequate honor to Jesus (chapter 1)
- Paul’s emphasis on being the true circumcision suggests there was a strong Jewish slant to the false teaching (chapter 2)

### Colossians 1:1-2

*Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, To the saints and faithful brothers in Christ at Colossae: Grace to you and peace from God our Father. (ESV)*

Paul’s apostleship was granted to him by God’s determination, a determination that moved Him to have the Son, the Lord Jesus, confront Paul in a vision of himself while Paul was going to Damascus to arrest Jews

## Notes and Exegetical/Communication Ideas

1:1,2 What the apostle Paul, along with Timothy, desires for the believers at the church in Colosse is the Father’s grace and peace.

### Preaching/teaching/devotional Idea

- 1) Apostolic Christianity always celebrates grace
- 2) Apostolic Christianity always leads to peace

who believed in Jesus (Acts 9). Jesus told Paul that he was crucifying him, Jesus, but that he, Paul, would bear Jesus' name before Gentiles and kings as well as the children of Israel (Acts 9:15). Jesus made Paul, along with the 12 apostles who were with Jesus from the beginning (Acts 1), official holders of the information concerning Jesus and his teaching for handing down to succeeding generations. The apostles performed this service by planting churches all over the world and, most importantly for us, by writing Scripture to objectively commemorate their knowledge.

Paul is representing apostolic Christianity to these readers, whom he calls "saints" and "faithful brothers," a description that focuses on their holy standing before God as those forgiven and cleansed by Jesus' sacrifice and on their solid adherence to the true gospel. We may presume that by brothers he includes female believers as well.

Paul sends grace and peace from the God the Father. "Grace" was the typical way Greek writers greeted one another in letters and "peace" or *shalom* was the way Jewish people greeted one another, but Paul likely invests these common greetings with Christian content. Grace is God's unmerited favor granted because of Christ's redemptive work and peace is the resulting nature of the relationship now between those who have believed and God. There is no more enmity but only gracious acceptance in the Beloved.

Timothy is included in this greeting most likely because he is Paul's amanuensis or secretarial scribe, writing what Paul dictates, Paul writing in his own handwriting only the concluding remark in 4:18 to give some authentication. Timothy is not mentioned again and Paul speaks in first person throughout the remainder of the letter after his prayer report in 1:3-8.

Colossians 1:3-8

*We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints, because of the hope laid up for you in heaven. Of this you have heard before in the word of the truth, the gospel, which has come to you, as indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit and increasing—as it also does among you, since the day you heard it and understood the grace of God in truth, just as you learned it from Epaphras our beloved fellow servant. He is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf and has made known to us your love in the Spirit. (ESV)*

Wiles (Paul's Intercessory Prayers, Cambridge 1974) has shown demonstrably that Paul's reports of prayer are thematically tied to the body of his letters. In them we get a preview of the topics he will address. The first part of his prayer report, as usual, is what he thanks God for in his prayers for the recipients. And he is thankful for their faith, love and hope, the three qualities that characterize true believers. He is not likely

1:3-8 The reason for Paul's gratitude to God in prayer for the Colossians is the report from Epaphras, their teacher, that they have faith in Christ Jesus, love for all believers, and hope of heaven consistent with the gospel they learned and that is bringing similar results everywhere.

Preaching/teaching/devotional Idea  
The preaching of the true gospel leads to

- 1) Faith in the true Christ
- 2) Love for other true believers
- 3) Hope of heaven

saying that they have faith in Christ and love for the saints because they have the hope of heaven but rather he is thankful because they have the hope of heaven.

Paul could expand on each of these attributes, but he only expands on faith in Christ Jesus when he says the readers heard the word of truth, the gospel, the one that bears fruit everywhere it is preached and that they learned from Epaphras, who faithfully represents apostolic tradition, Paul specifically. Paul is readying them for a treatise on the true gospel.

Colossians 1:9-14

*And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; being strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy; giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. (ESV)*

What Paul prays for the Colossians is also in accord with the challenge they are facing in false doctrine. But with “knowledge” and “spiritual wisdom and understanding” he expects there will come a worthy walk that bears the fruit of good works. This is what the false teaching claims it can do for its followers but Paul will expose that falsehood.

Paul also asks for God’s strength to help them endure in joy and stay attached to the true gospel that alone gives us an inheritance with all the saints in the kingdom of light, the kingdom of God’s Son, Jesus, who provided our redemption. God qualifies us for this kingdom, not, as Paul will show, our feeble, worldly efforts at spiritual living that the false teachers suggest.

Colossians 1:15-20

*He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross. (ESV)*

Paul now launches into basic apostolic teaching on the core tenets of the gospel, beginning and ending with Jesus, his person and his work.

1:9-14 What Paul and Timothy are consistently asking God for on behalf of the Colossian believers is fuller knowledge of the gospel and experiential power from God that results in gratitude-filled lives worthy of God and the kingdom of His Son to which they have been transferred from the darkness of their previous unredeemed and unforgiven lives.

#### Preaching/teaching/devotional Idea

To stay true to the gospel of the kingdom we need the prayers of others for

- 1) Knowledge and spiritual wisdom
- 2) Fruit bearing walks that are worthy of the Lord
- 3) Divine power to persevere in joy and faithfulness

1:15-20 The character of the Son of God who rules this kingdom is the pre-eminent one over all creation and over all the church by virtue of being the exact replica of God in whom all God’s attributes dwell and in virtue of having reconciled to God by his sacrificial death all those who believe.

#### Preaching/teaching/devotional Idea

The core of the gospel is twofold:

- 1) The deity of Jesus
- 2) The sacrifice of Jesus

As to his person, Jesus is an exact replica of the Father and the most pre-eminent being in the universe. Though the use of the descriptor “invisible” of the Father might seem to suggest that it is in his visible aspect that he is an exact representation of the Father, Paul and all other Scripture rejects the view that a physical representation of God is given to us as an aid to worship. Rather, Jesus is the image of God in the sense that he is in every way just like the Father, though, as other Scripture would show, unique in his personality. We are talking here about the attributes of God.

A convenient and powerful description of God’s attributes is afforded us in the Westminster Confession of Faith catechism referring to God as “infinite, eternal and unchangeable in His being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice and truth.” Jesus fits this “definition” perfectly. And so, he is the “firstborn of all creation.” We see from the use of this term in Scripture that firstborn does not necessarily refer to birth order (Israel is called God’s firstborn even though as a nation it was not God’s first “child,” Jeremiah 31:9, and king David in Psalm 89 is made firstborn, defined as the “highest” of all the kings). Rather, the intent of the word “firstborn” in contexts like this is ‘the highest honored one’, the one who, like the firstborn child in a family, was given extra honor and privilege and responsibility for the family.

If, like the Jehovah’s Witnesses, we focus instead on the birth aspect of this word, we still do not get the result they get, that Jesus is the highest created being in the universe. Being born is not the same as being created. If we think of Jesus being “born” we must consider him as an exact DNA-like replica of the Father, generated by the Father from all eternity, there never being a time when he was not so generated. This is usually referred to in theology as eternal generation and refers to the Son’s personhood rather than nature. Though there is merit in this view it is not being taught explicitly here. “Firstborn” is not being used here as a reference to generation but to position, as is further explained in what follows.

Jesus is the Creator to whom all must submit and who continues to sustain the universe, holding it together. Likewise, this makes him the head of the church. And in relation to the Church he is the first one raised from the dead, the one whose resurrection is first and most honored and the evidence that his work of sacrifice was effective and that he was sinless.

We are speaking now of the work of Christ. His work was to make a reconciliation of all rebellious creatures possible through his sacrificial death on the cross. He makes that *shalom* possible by paying the price for our sins, death, in our stead, just like the sacrificial animals of Jewish ritual did, though they could not really take away sin. Only the “firstborn” of all creation can do that.

#### Hebrews 10:1-10

For since the law has but a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form of these realities, it can never, by the same sacrifices that are continually offered every year, make perfect those who draw near. Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, since the worshipers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have any consciousness of sins? But in these sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year. For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said,

“Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body have you prepared for me; in burnt offerings and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure. Then I said, ‘Behold, I have come to do your will, O God, as it is written of me in the scroll of the book.’”

When he said above, “You have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings” (these are offered according to the law), then he added, “Behold, I have come to do your will.” He does away with the first in order to establish the second. And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. (ESV)

## Colossians 1:21-23

*And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister. (ESV)*

The goal of Christ's work on the cross as sacrifice is not just to forgive our sins and give us a ticket to heaven. It is to present us holy and blameless to God, no longer doing evil deeds. It is not just to remove our guilt. It is to remove our sinful hearts. This is in accord with the provisions of the new covenant, best explained in Jeremiah 31:31-34, where forgiveness of sins and the writing of the law on our hearts is promised.

But this reconciliation is only for those who truly believe and this belief is evidenced in continuing in the faith and in adherence to the true gospel. If they shift from the hope of the gospel Paul is a minister of, they give evidence that they are not truly Christ's disciples, not genuinely saved. It would be as the apostle John described in his first letter. Unbelievers who once professed faith but depart from the faith go out from the believers because they are not really "of" them (1 John 2:19).

Paul is really putting it on the line here. He wants to encourage them in the faith and he rehearses the faith for them to help them, but in the end he must warn them that how they respond determines whether they are really in the faith at all. As Jesus taught, "You will recognize them by their fruits" (Matthew 7:20).

## Colossians 1:24-29

*Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church, of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God that was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known, the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints. To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me. (ESV)*

Christ is still suffering via his church and Paul is part of the Body called upon to suffer for the sake of reaching Gentiles and Jews with the gospel. This actually causes Paul joy to suffer this way. It is what Jesus promised him he must do (Acts 9:16), it came with his stewardship given him by God to make the gospel fully known, and it resulted in many coming to know the risen Christ.

1:21-23 The guarantee that these Colossian believers are reconciled to God by Jesus' death is their perseverance in the doctrine and holiness of the gospel they heard from Epaphras via Paul.

### Preaching/teaching/devotional Idea

- 1) The evidence of true faith
- 2) The result of true faith

1:24-29 The nature of Paul's calling that God has given him energy to accomplish through preaching to and suffering for the Gentiles is to bring the previously unrevealed truth to light that the Jewish Messiah Jesus is the Gentile hope, as well, so that both Jews and Gentiles will become mature in their relationship with Christ.

### Preaching/teaching/devotional Idea

- 1) We are called to be stewards of the gospel
- 2) We are called to suffer for the sake of His church
- 3) We are called to bring all to maturity in Christ
- 4) We are called to do this in His energy



Paul's message was a mystery, a previously unrevealed "secret" that God made known with the coming of His Son. What was clearly revealed in the Old Testament was that the Messiah would bring all nations into relationship with God, not just Israel (see, for example, Genesis 12:1-3). But what was not revealed was that Gentiles would come to God apart from requirements to keep the Law of Moses, without, in effect, becoming Jews, but simply by faith in Messiah. This was part of the new wineskins of Jesus' ministry, the new form faith would take (Matthew 9:17).

So now Paul is focused on proclaiming Christ and making sure everyone who comes to faith is warned against ungodly living and taught to become mature followers of Christ. This consumes all his energies but, in fact, the energy he has comes from God.

Colossians 2:1-5

*For I want you to know how great a struggle I have for you and for those at Laodicea and for all who have not seen me face to face, that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. I say this in order that no one may delude you with plausible arguments. For though I am absent in body, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and the firmness of your faith in Christ. (ESV)*

The false teachers have made inroads at Colosse and Laodicea and though these congregations were not planted by Paul they are still under his purview and care. He is struggling on their behalf to insulate them against false teaching. True teaching will lead to loving unity and full assurance in the gospel.

Contrary to what the false teachers must be saying, in Christ are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. There are no "secrets" out there, special knowledge that needs to be discovered to lead us to holy living and assured salvation. Their arguments may seem plausible but they are a delusion. The Colossians will cause Paul great joy if they see this and maintain good order (right living) and firmness of faith (right doctrine).

Colossians 2:6-15

*Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.*

*See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ. For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority. In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made*

2:1-5 Part of Paul's struggle on behalf of these Colossian believers and those in their immediate territory is for them to have a strong faith in the gospel as he has preached it so that they are not deluded with a false gospel.

Preaching/teaching/devotional Idea

- 1) True doctrine never remains unchallenged
- 2) True doctrine always leads to unity and assurance
- 3) True doctrine centers on the truth of who Jesus is and finds him sufficient

2:6-15 The gospel that Paul wants these believers to adhere to is the gospel that is freed from human reasoning and demonic falsehoods, centered in the Messiah who is fully God and fully man, and the one that provides true circumcision of the fleshly nature, death to sin's debt, and resurrection to spiritual life.

*without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead. And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him. (ESV)*

Paul begins rehearsing the gospel for the Colossians. It is the gospel that saved them originally (see Galatians 3:1-5) and thus they must not depart from it but continue in it like a tree rooted in the soil of Jesus, like a temple built on him, the true foundation. They should abound in thanksgiving that God rescued them with the truth.

The philosophy that was being offered them at Colosse was empty, not full, like the faith, and captive-taking, not freedom-giving. This is because it springs from two useless and dangerous sources, human tradition, what human beings have used to explain God's world in opposition to how He explained it, and the elemental spirits, the demons who seek to keep people diverted from the truth.

The gospel, instead, is based in Christ, the one in whom the "whole fullness of deity dwells bodily." Human religions spoke often of semi-gods who only partly embodied the Creator. But Jesus is the Creator, 100% God and 100% man, not some semi-god. And so he is able to fill us. The circumcision this false philosophy was requiring was done in the flesh, in the body, but believers have received a circumcision of the heart from Christ, the cutting away of that hardness which prevented us from receiving the truth. Our baptism took care of this circumcising by showing our burial and resurrection with Christ, his death to sin and rising to life becoming ours by virtue of us being attached to him.

We were previously dead in our sins and incapable in our uncircumcision. We still had the flesh nature hardening our hearts from the truth. We couldn't gain life except that God made us alive with Christ and forgave all our sins. That record of debt we owed to God, the record that the law condemned us with because we had failed to keep its demands, Jesus nailed to the cross. And by doing that he effectively nullified the elemental spirits, the demons, the rulers of darkness who were keeping us from the kingdom of light, and exposed their foolishness. They thought they had won when he died but his victorious resurrection showed their victory celebration was premature.

Colossians 2:16-19

[Sidebars are great for calling out important points from your text or adding additional info for quick reference, such as a schedule. They are typically placed on the left, right, top or bottom of the page. But you can easily drag them to any position you prefer. When you're ready to add your content, just click here and start typing.]

*Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ. Let no one disqualify you, insisting on asceticism and worship of angels, going on in detail about visions, puffed up without reason by his sensuous mind, and not holding fast to the Head, from whom the whole body, nourished and knit together through its joints and ligaments, grows with a growth that is from God. (ESV)*

The reason the Colossians should not submit to elemental spirits again and become disqualified from the Son's kingdom is these things are shadows of the real thing in Messiah, come from an arrogant and sensuous mind, and fail to give the Colossians the healthy growth that comes from being connected to the head of the church, Messiah.

Colossians 2:20-23

*If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the world, why, as if you were still alive in the world, do you submit to regulations—“Do not handle, Do not taste, Do not touch” (referring to things that all perish as they are used)—according to human precepts and teachings? These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion and asceticism and severity to the body, but they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh. (ESV)*

The big problem with reconnecting to the ascetic worldly requirements of religion to which the Colossians died is though they appear to be wise they are actually valueless in stopping sin.

Colossians 3:1-4

*If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. (ESV)*

The solution to stopping sin for those who have been spiritually resurrected with Messiah is to turn attention away from earthly things to heavenly things where believers' lives are centered in Messiah and from where Messiah will return to share His glory with us.

Colossians 3:5-11

*Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. On account of these*



*the wrath of God is coming. In these you too once walked, when you were living in them. But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all. (ESV)*

The requirement and ability of those who have put off the old self and been given a new self is to radically kill our earthly and sinful thoughts and practices and to be renewed in knowledge about God's likeness without regard for sinful human categories and statuses.

Colossians 3:12-17

*Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. (ESV)*

The requirement and ability of those chosen and loved by God is to wear all aspects of love like a garment and be at peace with all fellow believers, being ruled by gratitude to God, enriching yourselves in Christ's word, teaching and warning fellow believers with wisdom and song, doing all you do for the sake of the Lord Jesus.

Colossians 3:18-4:1

*Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them. Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged. Bondservants, obey in everything those who are your earthly masters, not by way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord. Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ. For the wrongdoer will be paid back for the wrong he has done, and there is no partiality. Masters, treat your bondservants justly and fairly, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven. (ESV)*

The way this Christian living will look in the household is wives submitting to their husbands, husbands loving their wives and children, children obeying their parents, fathers tenderly teaching their children, slaves obeying their masters sincerely with confidence of God's reward and His pay back for any masters who do wrong, and masters treating their slaves fairly as their Master in heaven treats them.

Colossians 4:2-6

*Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving. 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—that I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak.*

*Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person. (ESV)*

The way this Christian living will look in relation to the spread of the gospel to unbelievers is steadfast prayer for those like Paul who are engaged in evangelism that the message will be clear, and personal winsomeness and wisdom in one's own engagement with unbelievers that leads to appropriate spiritual interaction.

Colossians 4:7-18

*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, 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.*

*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), 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. 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. Luke the beloved physician greets you, as does Demas. Give my greetings to the brothers at Laodicea, and to Nympha and the church in her house. 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."*

*I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. Remember my chains. Grace be with you. (ESV)*

The instructions in Paul's concluding remarks **are** to receive Tychicus and Onesimus, the bearers of this letter, as commended believers who can inform the church about Paul, know that the Colossian believers are loved by Paul's only Jewish co-workers, Aristarchus, Mark and Jesus Justus, remember that Epaphras is working hard on behalf of the Colossians and all the believers of their territory, receive love and greetings from Luke and Demas, give greeting to believers in Laodicea and to sister Nympha and her house-church, read the letter from Laodicea and pass this one on to them, charge Archippus to fulfill the Lord's ministry given to him, and remember to pray for Paul in his imprisonment.