

COLOSSIANS 4

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to Colossians chapter 4 as we finish up this letter that Paul wrote to the church in Colosse.

As we have seen in our study of this letter, the first two chapters of Colossians deals with doctrine.

And the reason this was so important was that Paul was trying to counter the heresies that were trying to get into the church there in Colosse.

So Paul shows us that Jesus is God and he makes this powerful point by showing us the preeminence of Christ in creation, in redemption and in the church. And we saw that in Colossians chapter 1.

As he continues on in Colossians chapter 2 he shows the emptiness of the world's philosophies, religious legalism like that of the Judaizes, as well as that of mysticism or a man-made spirituality, and he concludes by showing the emptiness of asceticism or a life of denial to attain a relationship with God.

You see, if Jesus is God, if He reigns supremely, why go after things that won't help you to be complete but will leave you outside of a relationship with God, incomplete! Don't let these false religious teachings cheat you of all that you have in Christ!

It is as Paul said in Colossians 2:9-10, "**For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.**"

Then, as we moved into chapters 3 and 4 of Colossians, Paul shows us how we should walk, how we should apply the things of God to our life.

He has spent two chapters on doctrine and now he wants us to apply those truths of God to our lives and walk accordingly!

You see, the old life, that sin nature we need to remove like filthy clothes and discard them and put on the garments of Christ, the new man who has been cleaned by Christ.

And the only way you are going to be able to do this, as Paul said, is to “**Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.**” Colossians 3:2. Get refocused on the Lord and as you do, you will be able to walk accordingly!

And we saw as Paul concluded chapter 3 he spoke of the family life; that wives are to submit to their husbands because it is fitting in the Lord, husbands are to AGAPE love their wives and encourage them in the Lord, children are to obey their parents because in this the Lord is pleased, and parents are to encourage their children that they might grow in the Lord.

He then moves on to work life and how slaves or as in our case, employees are to do their best for their employer in the fear of the Lord because we are serving the Lord.

We are to do our best when our boss is there and watching and when he is not!

Now as I said last week, verse 1 of Colossians chapter 4 should really be part of chapter 3 as it deals with masters or employers and how they are to treat their slaves or employees. Why is it like that?

First of all, the chapter divisions and the verse divisions were placed at a much later date for our convenience, they are not inspired.

Just for your information, Stephen Langton the Archbishop of Canterbury divided the Bible into chapters in 1228 A. D.

Then, in around 1551 A. D., Robert Stephanus divided the chapters into verses. He did most of this work while riding horseback from Paris to Southern France.

Maybe that explains some of the bumps with the divisions!

Of these divisions Von Soden remarks:

The verse divisions of Stephanus which he, according to an incidental remark made by his son, made during a trip from Paris to Lyons, frequently do not do service to the sense of the text. There is no consistent method at work in this system. The verses sometimes coincide with a single sentence, and sometimes they include several sentences; sometimes a single sentence is divided into two verses, with the result that the reader is led to consider the second verse while forgetting the point of view of the first verse. Especially objectionable is the way in which words introducing a direct quotation sometimes belong to the preceding verse and sometimes to the verse in which the quotation is found.

- Dr. Von Soden

So then what should we do? Should we redo the Bible?

Of course not but just understand that they are not inspired but they are there to help us locate things in the Bible more easily.

And with any help, it may not be perfect, but it does work and when it doesn't, read on, don't stop the thought, read into the next verse or next chapter to get the whole thought!

As we will see tonight, this chapter is going to focus on our communication with God and how Paul wants the Colossians to enjoy the fullness in their communication with God. And that is where it will start inwardly, and then it is expressed outwardly as we look at our communication with unbelievers and really believers as well. The order is very important as we will see!

One writer put it like this,

For me, one of the most beautiful phrases in all of Scripture is the Apostle John's identification of Jesus as the "Word": "In the beginning was the Word" (John 1:1). Before the creation of all things, Christ was eternally continuing as the Word. As the "Word," Jesus is the ultimate communication of God.

Before there was time or earth or water or fire, before we were, God had determined to communicate with us. "In the Beginning was the Communication." John further writes, "The Word [the Communication] became flesh and lived for a while among us" (John 1:14). When Christ did this, he became to us the ABC of God, the alphabet of Deity. "We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14).

Because he is the Word, we understand something of how much we have always been loved. He spelled out God's love for us (John 3:16)!

This chapter's text calls us to fullness in communication with God, and to the fullness in communicating with the world. Since Christ is the fullness of the universe and we have been made partakers of his fullness, our fullness should flow back up to him and out to the world.

- R. Kent Hughes, *Colossians and Philemon – The Supremacy of Christ*, p.135

And here is the thing. You will never be able to communicate accurately with the world until you first communicate with God. That relationship needs to be in line before we can ever minister to the world.

And let's face it, when the world looks at us, what do they see?

It all depends who we are communicating with!

With that as our background, let's begin reading in Colossians chapter 4, and we will pick up in verse 1 and expound on what we touched on last week and then we will finish up this letter that Paul wrote to the church in Colosse.

COLOSSIANS 4

VERSE 1

The thing we need to keep in mind is that in Christ, as Paul tells us, "**There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.**" Galatians 3:28.

Here in this first verse in Colossians chapter 4 Paul speaks of masters or employers and how they should treat their slaves or employee's fairly, just as they expect the Lord to treat them.

If not, Paul says that they will be judged accordingly.

The key, of course, for all of us is what Paul said in Colossians 3:23, "**And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men.**"

May we do that, in our words and in our deeds, that all we do we do unto the Lord, as His representative.

If we do, we won't have to worry about the other things because we are manifesting the nature of Jesus in all we do!

But, the key in relationships, and we saw this in Ephesians chapter 5, is that we need that filling of the Holy Spirit in our lives and we are to be "**submitting to one another in the fear of the God.**" Ephesians 5:21.

And we will see that here in Colossians, that our communication with God will affect our communication with others!

VERSE 2

First of all, Paul tells us that we are to “**continue**” in prayer and this word is telling us “to give constant attention to.”

Not only are we to give constant attention to prayer but we are also to “**earnestly**” pray, and this Greek word is telling us “to continue to do something with intense effort.”

So notice what Paul is saying, the intensity in regard to prayer. He is telling us that we need to give constant attention to prayer, and we are to continue praying with intense effort!

I don’t know about you, but I am convicted here. I can honestly say that my prayers are not always with constant attention or with that intense effort.

And you may be thinking, “*What is the big deal? Why do we have to be that determined in our prayers, that we are to be earnest in our prayers?*”

I will tell you why we need to. Look at this world, look at all that is going on as Satan is destroying lives. And he is not only concerned with keeping the unsaved in that condition, but he wants to destroy our witness of God to those that are not saved!

And think about it. We begin to pray and what happens?

The enemy brings distractions across our path so as we begin to pray the phone rings, the doorbell rings, you begin to think of all you have to do and before long, prayer is over before it even starts.

Thus, be alert! Be wise to what the devil is trying to do. He is trying to keep you off your knees!

We are to be persistent in prayer, we are to hold fast to the promises of God and not let go!

Not only are we to give constant attention to prayer, and to continue praying with intense effort, but we are also to be **“vigilant”** in our prayers and the idea here is “to watch diligently and not to fall asleep.”

And how easy that is to do, even when we are not tired!

Remember in Matthew 26:40-43, as Jesus is in the Garden of Gethsemane, we are told, **“He came to the disciples and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, ‘What! Could you not watch with Me one hour? Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.’ Again, a second time, He went away and prayed, saying, ‘O My Father, if this cup cannot pass away from Me unless I drink it, Your will be done.’ And He came and found them asleep again, for their eyes were heavy.”**

And like these men of Jesus, we do fall asleep many times and Paul admonishes us in Romans 13:11-14, **“And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.”**

It is time to wake up from our spiritual sleep, to pay attention to what is going on around us and be in communication with God, be in prayer!

And keep in mind that prayer is not to change the mind of God, but to get our will in tune with the Lord. We might say that He will change our mind to conform to His.

And that is what we need as we live out our faith!

And this is all to be done with **“thanksgiving.”**

It is easy to become unthankful as we focus on all our past problems, on all our present situations, and what may happen in the future.

But we are missing out on what God has done, is doing and will do in our lives and thus, we are not thankful because of it!

I think many times that we take what God is doing in our lives for granted. So much so that we don't even see what He is doing and thus, we are not thankful. Martin Luther put it like this, “If in his gifts and benefits [God] were more sparing and close-handed, we should learn to be thankful. . . . The greater God's gifts and works, the less they are regarded.”

We also see, in regard to prayer, that Paul tells us in I Thessalonians 5:17, that we are to, **“pray without ceasing.”** I Thessalonians 5:17.

And in Ephesians 6:18 Paul tells us, **“praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints.”**

How in the world can we prayer always, without ceasing?

That is not Paul's point here because you can't.

I believe what Paul is saying to us is that we are to have a God consciousness, that we are to be in tune with God in all that we do so that we are directed by Him and we are prepared to pray at any time!

You see, every life experience can be brought before God and directed by Him and that is so important, especially in the days we are living in when things seem so confusing as we look at the world.

That is who we are to look to, Christ. May we keep our eyes focused on Him!

Notice what Paul wants these believers to pray about regarding his life.

VERSES 3-4

First there was the communication we have with God and now Paul asks for the fullness in his own communication with the world!

Now, when Paul wrote this letter to the Colossians, where was he?

He was in prison in Rome. Yes, he was under house arrest but don't think he was wearing an ankle bracelet and could go anywhere he wanted.

He was chained to a Roman guard twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. He had limited mobility and yes, people could visit him, but this is not a pleasant situation that Paul was in.

Now, if you were in prison for something you didn't do, when you ask believers to pray for you, what are you going to ask them to pray about?

It might go something like this, ***“Dear brothers and sisters in the Lord, you know that I am in this filthy prison for preaching Christ and you know the conditions of this prison and they are not good. Please pray for my release, that I can be freed of these chains! Release me, please release me let me go!”***

I feel a song coming on! Sorry about that but that is what I would do, but not Paul.

Paul is asking for prayer that while he is in prison doors of opportunity might be opened up for him to minister the Gospel of Jesus Christ to people.

And not only that, but that when he shares his faith, when he speaks it would be clear so that people would receive Jesus as Lord and Savior of their life.

And that is exactly what happened when he was in prison – doors of opportunity were opened for him.

The Palace guard or those soldiers who were chained to Paul guarding him, came to know the Savior of the world, Paul had a captive audience. (Philippians 1:13).

Also, some of Nero's family was saved, Paul must have intrigued them, and they came and listened to Him and they came to know Jesus. (Philippians 4:22).

And the Christian brethren were strengthened in the faith, encouraged by what they saw in the life of Paul, what he was able to do even in prison. (Philippians 1:14).

May you keep the leadership of this church in prayer, that God would open doors for us to minister the Gospel of Jesus Christ, that God would raise up others to assist in the work of the ministry, all of you, and we as leaders will pray for you!

Prayer is powerful and Paul understood that, and we too need to understand that. You may remember the story of some young men who came to hear Spurgeon at Spurgeon's Tabernacle in London and they got there early and one of the people there asked these young men if they wanted to see the power for this church. They did not know it was Spurgeon himself!

They thought he as the janitor and that he was going to show them the boiler room. And not wanting to be disrespectful, they followed him down to this room.

And as he opened the door and they saw all these people gathered together, he told these young men, ***"It is here that we get our power, for while I am preaching upstairs, hundreds of my people are in this room praying."***

Then they realized that the man who was showing them this room was Spurgeon himself and they understood that the power for the work that he was doing was the prayers that were lifted up before the service and during the service!

That is my prayer and again, I would ask that you would keep me in prayer that as God's Word is spoken, it is spoken in the power of God and people's hearts would be open to what God is showing them!

VERSES 5-6

So as we are in communication with God through prayer, through His Word, then Paul tells us that we are to **“Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time.”** Colossians 4:5.

And Paul is speaking of those who are outside the faith or unbelievers.

I will tell you this, if your walk with the Lord is not right, then how you treat unbelievers, how you speak of them will not be in line as well.

We must be wise in how we relate to non-Christians, how we relate to unbelievers!

I don't think we realize how much people are watching our lives. And they are judging God by the way we act, the things we say, the things that we do! It truly is our ***CHRISTIAN WITNESS!***

And when Paul says that we need to not only walk in this wisdom, but we are to be **“redeeming the time.”** And what Paul is saying here is that we are to “buy out” or we are to “purchase completely.” You will see Paul's point in a minute.

And the word for **“time”** speaks of opportunities.

In other words, we are to walk in ***WISDOM*** towards unbelievers and to ***PURCHASE COMPLETELY*** the ***OPPORTUNITIES*** that come our way to share our faith!

Now we can see how we are doing in this area for Paul tells us in Colossians 4:6, **“Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.”**

When you speak to unbelievers, how do you sound? Is your speech seasoned with grace?

Now you may wonder what that is all about, so I will show you.

Remember in John chapter 8 as the Scribes and the Pharisees brought before Jesus a woman caught in the act of adultery. And they challenged Jesus to do something about it, to follow the Law of Moses, that she should be stoned to death.

These religious leaders did not care for this woman and what about the man, if she was caught in the midst of adultery the man had to be there as well. And what were they doing looking in the window to see them?

And Jesus bends down and begins to write in the sand and I think he was writing the sins and possibly the names of these religious leaders next to their sins, and they began leaving until they were all gone!

What I want you to see here in John 8:10-11 is what Jesus said to this woman who was left before Jesus. We are told, **“When Jesus had raised Himself up and saw no one but the woman, He said to her, ‘Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?’ She said, ‘No one, Lord.’ And Jesus said to her, ‘Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more.’”**

This woman deserved death and what does Jesus show her? He shows her ***GRACE!***

Make no mistake about it, gracious speech is kind, loving communication with even unbelievers that doesn't condone sin but doesn't condemn the sinner either.

Remember what we are told in John 3:16-17, “**For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.**”

Did you see that? Jesus came the first time not to condemn us but to reach out in love to save, and so must we as we extend the grace and mercy of God to the lost!

Not only must our speech be with grace, but it is to be seasoned with salt!

Does our speech, does our living cause a thirst in people to know God? That is the idea here. Also, salt does burn and sometimes as you share the Gospel people will be pained by what you are saying, but before there can be healing, there is some pain involved as they see their sin! And salt was a preservative and thus, our lives, our speech should help people to do the right thing just because they are around us!

Jude put it this way in regard to how we are to be a witness to people, “**And on some have compassion, making a distinction; but others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garment defiled by the flesh.**” Jude 22-23.

Some need to hear what awaits them outside of Christ, but others, and for most people, they need to hear the love and grace of God.

Let’s face it, there is so much negative things out there, to hear that God loves them and died for them and to be saved from their sin all they must do is receive Jesus by faith is a great blessing to them and to us.

May our words be filled with the grace of God towards others as God has extended His grace to us!

The key is to do these things all in love! Be ready; redeem the time for the days are evil!

And Paul concludes this by saying, “**. . . that you may know how you ought to answer each one.**” Colossians 4:6.

Peter tells us in I Peter 3:15 this very thing, to be ready. He says, “**But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear.**” May we be ready to share our faith as God brings people across our path!

And, of course, that means that we need to know what we believe!

So, may your communication with God draw you close to Him and as you do, then your communication with unbelievers will manifest the grace of God. In other words, they will see Jesus in you!

As we read on, we might call this next section, from verses 7-18 or the end of the letter, “*With a little help from my friends.*”

You see, we are part of the body of Christ, working together to bring glory to God and see the kingdom of God grow. The work is not done by a select few, but by the body of Christ as Paul shows us here.

How often in the church do we see a few do the work and are out on the field and the rest are spectators sitting on the benches? That should not be, Christianity is not a spectator sport, but all need to be involved, all the body of Christ needs to be actively involved in the work of God!

VERSES 7-8

Here we see that Paul is sending Tychicus back to Colosse with this letter for them and to let them know how Paul was doing.

Also, Tychicus was to listen to their concerns, to hear what was going on in Colosse so that he may encourage them.

Tychicus probably got saved when Paul spent those three years in Ephesus considering that he was a native of Asia Minor. (Acts 20:4)

If you remember, Tychicus hooked up with Paul on his third missionary journey, towards the end of it as Paul was heading toward Jerusalem.

When Paul needed a temporary replacement for Titus, the pastor of the church in Crete, Tychicus was one of the men Paul was thinking of sending to them, (Titus 3:12).

At the end of Paul's life Paul wanted to see Timothy one last time as his life was coming to an end and Paul sent Tychicus to Ephesus, (II Timothy 4:12).

He also carried the letter to the church in Ephesus, (Ephesians 6:21).

And it is possible and probable that he carried the letter to Philemon also, (Colossians 4:9).

And keep in mind that this was a dangerous and difficult journey, but Paul trusted this man with these letters.

His name means "*fortunate*" and he truly was fortunate to not only know the Lord, but to minister with a man like Paul.

Paul also makes this interesting point. He says that Tychicus is a "**fellow servant of the Lord.**"

Paul didn't use his position to elevate himself above others, but he called himself a slave, along with Tychicus.

Folks, you can never be too small to be used by God, but you can be too big, at least in your own eyes.

Humble yourself before God and let Him lift you up, to use you for His glory not because you are so great, so talented, so gifted, but you are a slave and ready to serve your Master wherever He leads!

VERSE 9

As We see here, the traveling partner for Tychicus was Onesimus.

Who is this man?

He was a runaway slave whose master, Philemon; was a Christian leader in the church in Colosse and it was probably his home where the church met.

As this slave escapes, he ends up meeting Paul in Rome, in prison and this slave gets saved!

How lucky is that?

It had nothing to do with luck, it was a God ordained appointment!

Now, as Onesimus gets saved, Paul sends him back home and probably the letter to Philemon was carried by Tychicus as Paul urges Philemon to receive his runaway slave as a brother in the Lord and if this man owes anything to Philemon, Paul says to charge it to his account.

What a great picture of all of us. We were slaves to sin but have been set free in Christ, all our debt was paid in full by Jesus and thus, as Paul said in II Corinthians 5:17, “**Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.**” That is the power of God to change lives like Onesimus and you and me!

VERSE 10

Aristarchus was a native of Thessalonica, (Acts 20:4, 27:2) who was a Jewish believer who had a Greek name as did many of the Jews of the Diaspora.

Aristarchus first met up with Paul during his three-year stay in Ephesus on his third missionary journey.

There the crowd seized him because Paul and his companions were turning people to Jesus, (Acts 19:29).

He also returned with Paul to Jerusalem, (Acts 20:4) and he was with Paul on his voyage to Rome, (Acts 27:2) which meant he experienced the storm and shipwreck, along with Luke.

Now it seems that this man ministered to Paul during his imprisonment in Rome and was a fellow prisoner in a sense, sacrificing his freedom to care for Paul!

What a powerful lesson of putting others ahead of himself!

And I like this because Paul also mentions John Mark who accompanied Paul on his first missionary journey, and he was the cousin of Barnabas.

The problem for John Mark is that when things got tough, when the situation was rough, he got scared and returned home, not finishing the work, (Acts 13:13).

Then, as Paul is preparing for his second missionary journey, we are told in Acts 15:37-40, **“Now Barnabas was determined to take with them John called Mark. But Paul insisted that they should not take with them the one who had departed from them in Pamphylia, and had not gone with them to the work. Then the contention became so sharp that they parted from one another. And so Barnabas took Mark and sailed to Cyprus; but Paul chose Silas and departed, being commended by the brethren to the grace of God.”**

Obviously a big schism between Paul and Barnabas and John Mark.

What is interesting to me, as you read that story, the Bible doesn't tell us who was right and who was wrong. Why?

Because they both were probably wrong to some degree and that is not the real issue.

You see, even godly men can let their feelings get in the way. It doesn't make it right; the Bible just tells it like it is.

Now, the great thing here is the story does not end like this for John Mark.

John Mark is restored and not only wrote the Gospel according to Mark, but he was a fellow servant with Paul!

Paul tells us in II Timothy, at the end of his life, **“Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for ministry.”** II Timothy 4:11.

What does this tell us?

Our God is the God of second chances, and third chances and-so-on. God forgives, God restores, God will give us a second chance if we would only be broken of self and say, ***“Lord, here I am, send me!”***

VERSE 11

Justus was his name among his fellow Romans and Jesus, or Joshua was his name before his fellow Jews.

I tend to think he mostly went by Justus because it would be hard to live up to the name of Jesus.

We don't know much about this man, but he was a fellow servant of Christ and with John Mark and Aristarchus, they were of the circumcision or they were believing Jews.

Now let me add this because Adam Clarke drew out a logical conclusion from the words, *These are my only fellow workers for the kingdom of God who are of the circumcision:* He wrote, “It is evident, therefore, that Peter was not now at Rome, or else he certainly would have been mentioned in this list; for we cannot suppose that he was in the list of those who preached Christ in an exceptionable [offensive] way, and from impure and unholy motives: indeed, there is no evidence that Peter ever saw Rome.”

Not sure if Peter ever made it to Rome, like we just read and Peter was not an apostle to the Gentiles, he was an apostle to the Jews!

VERSES 12-13

Remember that Epaphras was the man who found the church in Colossae. He was led to Christ through Paul’s ministry in Ephesus and returned home to share the Gospel with family and friends.

Not only that but it seems likely that Epaphras also founded the churches in Laodicea and Hierapolis (Col. 4:13) all of which were located in the Lycos Valley about 100 miles east of Ephesus.

Now, why did Epaphras labor in prayer, agonize for them in prayer?

First of all, if he was their pastor, he loved them so much and was concerned that they would fall prey to the heresy that was knocking at their door, so he prayed that they “**may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.**”

He labored in prayer because the enemy knows the power of prayer and if he can get us not to pray, he knows we will be weak, ineffective; for prayer is the heavy artillery in our spiritual armor!

Folks, when you have a concern over a situation, a person, a group of people, it will be seen in fervent prayer for them or the situation you are in!

Of this, F. B. Meyer tells us, “This is a very beautiful epitaph on a good man’s life. Amid all the crowding interests of Epaphra’s visit to Rome, his heart was with his friends. He strove for them in prayer. It was no passing thought that he voiced; no light breathing of desire; no formal mention of their names. It seemed as though he were a wrestler, whose muscles strained as he agonized for the prize. He labored. We shall never know, till we stand in the clear in the light of heaven, how much has been wrought in the world by prayer. Here at least, there is mention of a man’s labors. Probably the work on the results of which we are inclined to pride ourselves is due less to us than we suppose, and more to unrecognized fellow laborers. Let us be careful to mingle much intercession with all our prayers, especially on behalf of Christian workers, that they may realize we are actually working and laboring beside them.”

The power of prayer!

VERSE 14

First we will deal with Luke. As you know, Luke is the author of the Gospel according to Luke and the book of Acts. He was a physician and maybe the slave of Theophilus, who was a believer.

It is possible that after he was saved Theophilus let him go and he traveled with Paul on his second missionary journey, ministering to Paul’s physical problems, the recurring illnesses he had.

Now some argue if Luke was a Jew or a Gentile. It is not a big deal but keep in mind that back in Colossians 4:11 we are told of some of the people Paul spoke of, that they “**. . . are of the circumcision . . .**”

That tells me they were Jewish.

After that Paul speaks of others who were assisting him, friends of his and thus, these were not Jewish. Which tells me Luke was a Gentile believer!

Then Paul speaks of Demas, and Demas is one who might have started out well, but he doesn't finish well.

We are told in II Timothy 4:9-10, “**Be diligent to come to me quickly; for Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world, and has departed for Thessalonica . . .**”

The pull of the world was too strong for him and was drawn back into it.

How did that happen?

When we take our eyes off of Jesus, when we are not satisfied with what He has given to us and we are enticed by what the world has for us.

And like sugar coated poison that may taste good, it will eventually kill you, that is what the world has.

The Lord has all that we truly need, and we need to learn to be satisfied in Him for in Him is where true satisfaction found!

Let me show you the progression downward for Demas, as he is only mentioned some three times in Paul's letters, and it truly is a sad story to tell, as you have seen.

First he is called “**Demas . . . my fellow laborer.**” (Phile. 24)

Then he is simply called “**Demas,**” and there is no special word of identification or Commendation. (Col. 4:14)

But the third reference tells what became of Demas, and we have read this already, but listen again, “**For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world.**” (2 Tim. 4:10)

At one point in his life, John Mark had forsaken Paul; but he was reclaimed and restored.

Demas forsook Paul and apparently was never reclaimed. His sin was that he loved this present world. And the word *world* refers to the whole system of things that runs this world, or “society without God.”

A powerful lesson for us as we can fall prey to these schemes of Satan!

VERSE 15

Paul sends his greetings to the believers in Laodicea, which was a neighboring city of Colosse and Hierapolis.

Then Paul speaks of Nymphas, not a city but a name. And the problem is that is this the name of a man or a woman and we are not sure because in this verse it could be “*his house*” or “*Her house.*”

And you can spend a lot of time on this issue, but why? Did they meet in his or her house, yes, one is right!

Keep in mind that the early church didn’t meet in churches, buildings but in homes. It wasn’t for a few hundred years before they began to meet in buildings.

In fact, Barclay reminds us of this, as he wrote, “We must remember that there was no such thing as a special Church building until the third century. Up to that time the Christian congregations met in the houses of those who were the leaders of the Church.”

VERSE 16

Paul wants them to share this letter with the church in Laodicea and for the letter he is sending to Laodicea to be read in the church in Colosse.

We don't have the letter that Paul wrote to the church in Laodicea, but we do have a letter that Jesus wrote to them in the book of Revelation.

When Jesus wrote that letter the church in Laodicea was big, it was growing, they had lots of programs, they had everything they needed, they didn't need anything else.

The sad thing is that Jesus is on the outside of this church knocking to get in. They had everything but Jesus and thus, the reality is they had nothing.

And I guess that is a good question for us this evening.

Where are you at this evening?

Are you too big, too strong, too wealthy, are you in need of nothing?

You see, we can be so full of things that Jesus is outside knocking to get back into our lives.

We are told of this in this letter, as Jesus said, "**Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come into him and dine with him, and he with Me.**" Revelation 3:20.

Don't crowd him out of your life, let Him in, you won't be sorry!

I want to deal with one more subject here and that is the copying and passing on of these letters to other churches.

Wright put it like this, “Here we undoubtedly have the principle reason for the preservation of Paul’s letters in the sub-apostolic period, and their eventual adoption as part of the canonical ‘new covenant’ books: their author intended them to carry, in writing, the authority which had been invested in him as an apostle.”

This helps us to understand how and why the letters would have been copied almost immediately!

Now we also see that apparently, Paul wrote a letter to the Laodiceans that we do not have, as I have said. We should not assume from this that our treasure of inspiration is incomplete. The Holy Spirit has chosen to preserve those letters that are inspired for the church in a universal sense. Paul was not inspired in this way every time he set his pen to paper.

VERSE 17

We don’t know a lot about Archippus, but he is probably the son of Philemon. (Philemon 2)

And he was ministering in Colosse, maybe doing this since Epaphras was with Paul in Rome.

And Paul wants to encourage Archippus to look out for the dangers in the ministry, or **“take heed”** and to complete the work that God has given to him!

With the false teaching that was going on in Colosse it was important for Archippus to take a stand and not hide away or give in to it!

And I think this applies to each of us.

What has God called you to do?

Whatever it is, fulfill it and do the work to the best of your ability.

And it is possible that Archippus was down, maybe discouraged, maybe he wasn't seeing much fruit from his labor, or maybe the opposition was getting to him, and Paul encourages him to continue on, don't stop, don't give up, keep forging ahead in the work that God has called you to do.

Remember what Paul said in Acts 20:22-24, **“And see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me. But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.”**

May nothing move us from the course that God has for us!

And, know that what you do, even though you may not see results as quickly as you like, Paul reminds us in I Corinthians 15:58, **“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.”**

What a glorious promise, one that I hold onto and I hope you do too!

VERSE 18

Paul dictated his letters and then signed the postscript with his own hand.

And Paul understood the reality of his imprisonment, the loneliness, the possible death, and so he asks the Colossian believers to remember him and what he is going through by keeping him in prayer.

How beautiful is that, a heartfelt cry for help from the brethren. We all can use that from time to time depending on what we are going through, what has us in chains!

Charles Dickens was asked the secret of his success and this is how he answered that question.

He said, “Whatever I have tried to do in life, I have tried with all my heart to do it well: whatever I have devoted myself to I have devoted myself to completely.”

May we as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ do no less, may we do our best and may we do it well whatever we are doing for the Lord for we are his servants.

Let me share this with you and then I will close our study in this letter that Paul wrote to the church in Colosse.

We are told,

Our minds and hearts must consistently be focused upward. We cannot be too heavenly-minded! Sometimes we hear people say, “He is so heavenly minded, he’s no earthly good.”

But they are wrong. He may be so self-righteous, so pious, so “goody-goody,” but never too heavenly minded.

This is, I believe, what made Paul stand above even the other apostles. He wrote, “I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven. Whether it was in the body or out of the body I do not know – God knows. And I know that this man . . . was caught up to paradise. He heard inexpressible things, things that man is not permitted to tell” (2 Corinthians 12:2-4).

Paul was the man in this vision, but he humbly used the third person. This experience marked his life with the eternal, and it made him different. . . .

Finally, this fullness brings fullness of communication with God in prayer and fullness of communication with the world (4:2-6).

Paul ended this letter by elaborating the fullness of fellowship with believers, in a final greeting. . . .

May we be filled to overflowing with Jesus Christ!

- R. Kent Hughes, Colossians and Philemon – The Supremacy of Christ, pp. 157-159

May that be our hearts desire, to be overflowing with Jesus!

Remember, Paul wrote to the church in Colosse and Paul was dealing with the heresy spreading through the church, the works relationship with God, the worlds ideas, the secret mysteries and he concludes his letter by showing them it is only by grace that we are saved and that it is only by grace we continue on.

Paul's conclusion is the only one possible for the apostle of grace, confronting a heresy emphasizing elaborate hidden mysteries and righteousness through works. We can only go forward safely in the Christian life if grace is with us.

You see, we began with the grace of God in our lives when we were saved.

We are kept by the grace of God as we are being sanctified.

And, in the end, it is the grace of God that will bring us home to glory at last!

Praise the Lord for His grace and may we, as His representatives, share the grace of God with others!