



Session 11: Our Legacy—Colossians 4:7-18

Purpose: We are invited to Share in the Legacy & Global ministry of Christ! We should pursue Godly Community and Live our Lives for Jesus as Lord

Application: Pursue Community, Give to Christ Sacrificially, Live for Him with Everything

1. Announcements:

2. Context:

Author: The epistle was written by Paul and Timothy, with Timothy likely serving as Paul's secretary.

Date of Writing: While Paul was imprisoned, probably in a Roman prison around 62 AD (Page 20), he composed this letter. This period coincides with the time he wrote Ephesians and Philemon (Acts 27-28).

Audience: The church in Colossae was founded during Paul's ministry in Ephesus when Epaphras, a Colossian, was inspired to return home and start the church after hearing the gospel. At the time of this letter, Epaphras was with Paul in Rome and relayed concerning news about false teachings threatening the Colossian church. Paul's letter aims to address these issues and guide believers towards maturity in Christ. The church mainly consisted of Gentile believers facing doctrinal and practical challenges.

The Purpose of the letter: The primary purpose of Paul's letter to the Colossians is to address the false teachings infiltrating the church and to reaffirm the centrality, supremacy, and sufficiency of Christ in all things.ⁱ In this, Christology (who Christ is) is the theological heart of this letter.

Paul aims to correct their misunderstandings and encourage the believers in their faith and growth in Christ. He emphasizes the importance of understanding the true nature of Christ and living a life that reflects His teachings. The letter serves as a guide to combat heretical teachings and to cultivate a mature, Christ-centered faith within the community.ⁱⁱ

Core Verse: Colossians 1:28 (ESV) : "Him we proclaim, warning and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present mature in Christ."

3. Recap:

Week 1 Intro: Christ is the Foundation of our Life and Community (Colossians 1:1-3)

Week 2 Christ Redeems Us and His Gospel Bears Fruit (Colossians 1:4-12)

Week 3 Christ is Preeminent over Creation & Redemption (Colossians 1:13-23)

Week 4 Christ is the Mystery Revealed (Colossians 1:24-2:5)

Week 5 Christ is the Triumphant King (Colossians 2:6-15)

Week 6 Christ is the Head of the Body (Colossians 2:16-23)

Week 7 Christ is our Eternal Identity (Colossians 3:1-11)

Week 8 Christ is our Purpose (Colossians 3:12-17)

Week 9 Christ is our Authority (Colossians 3:18-4:1)

Week 10 Christ is our Motivation (Colossians 4:2-6)

4. Introduction:

- 1) What are some things that you are known for by people of your past?
- 2) How do we generally want to be known in regards to our future?

5. Prayer:

6. Scripture Reading

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⁷Tychicus will tell you all about my activities. He is a beloved brother and faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord. ⁸I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are and that he may encourage your hearts, ⁹and with him Onesimus, our faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you. They will tell you of everything that has taken place here.

¹⁰Aristarchus my fellow prisoner greets you, and Mark the cousin of Barnabas (concerning whom you have received instructions—if he comes to you, welcome him), ¹¹and 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. ¹²Epaphras, 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. ¹³For I bear him witness that he has worked hard for you and for those in Laodicea and in Hierapolis. ¹⁴Luke the beloved physician greets you, as does Demas.

Christ is Our Living Legacy

Q: What do you notice in this passage? What do all these individuals have in Common, and why are they brought up by the Apostle Paul?

- Vs 7-14 Paul's Ministry Team
 - Paul was not Alone
 - Paul was not alone in his Gospel work. While he receives credit for the majority of his missionary work, he is the first to thank and lead believers in the 1st century to recognize the team of men women who equally worked along side him. These personal remarks are vital to recognizing that this letter was both inspired by the Holy Spirit, and written by a real man.
 - **Illustration:** Lone Ranger Mentality in Life: *Have you ever been around the type of person that is a true loner? Do we feel (or choose to be) this way when following Christ?*
 - **Conviction:** The Call to Community is a vital part of Christianity. We often think in "Hero mindset" and envision the life of following Christ to be one done alone. However, all Christ followers share the Legacy of Christ together and are never alone.
 - **As this writer is reminded of this I am thankful to walk beside beloved co-laborers even in this mission – (Keith & Niki Henderson, Kayla R, Zach F, Mike & Laurie W, James & Lori T, Kevin H, Ken, Jerry, Ali & Richard... Thanking God for each of you!)
 - Paul included the encouragement of his team, because this was his family. As an unmarried man, God gave him richly the family & Community that kept him going. The six people who greeted the Colossians were connected with Paul in Rome, during the time of his house arrest and custody before appearing on trial before Caesar. This shows that during this imprisonment — unlike the later one described in 2 Timothy — Paul, though chained, enjoyed at least the occasional company of many friends and associates.ⁱⁱⁱ His team and their characteristics were as follows:

- **Tychicus (TIH-kih-kuhs):**

- Paul calls him (Col. 4:7) “**our beloved brother and faithful servant and fellow bond-servant.**” He was a Gentile from Asia Minor (Acts 20:4) who had traveled with Paul at the close of his third missionary journey. He was obviously **trustworthy**, since Paul sent the letters of Ephesians, Colossians, and probably Philemon back to Asia with him as Ephesus and Colossae were 120 miles apart. He also may have been sent to relieve Titus in Crete so that Titus could join Paul for a while (Titus 3:12). Later, as Paul faced the end of his life in prison in Rome, he sent Tychicus to Ephesus again, where he took over Timothy’s pastoral duties so that Timothy could leave to join Paul (2 Tim. 4:12, 21).
 - **Background:** Gentile turned Christian
 - **Character:** Faithful- Guy always in the Background, Faithful Servant and Substitute for the Church, the Guy that is Always there

- **Onesimus (o-NEH-sih-muhs):**

- “**faithful and dear brother**” He accompanied Tychicus on this trip. He was a runaway slave/thief whom Paul led to Christ during his house arrest in Rome. Paul was now sending him back to his master, Philemon. But he doesn’t mention that fact in this public letter to the church. If it hadn’t been for the private correspondence to Philemon, which later became public, we wouldn’t know that Onesimus was a slave, let alone a runaway. Paul calls him (Col. 4:9), “our faithful and beloved brother, who is one of your number.”
 - **Background:** Slave turned Christian
 - **Character:** Redeemed- Faithful brother, a family member to the church, A guy who was now living all in for Christ

- **Aristarchus (ehr-ihs-TAHR-kuhs):**

- Paul calls him (Col. 4:10), “**my fellow prisoner.**” In Philemon (23, 24, written about the same time), Paul calls him a fellow worker and calls Epaphras (Col. 4:12) his fellow prisoner. It may be that the two men traded off living in the same quarters with Paul. Or, perhaps they were arrested for their own preaching activities. He had been grabbed by the angry mob in Ephesus and dragged into the arena during the riot there (Acts 19:29). Aristarchus traveled with Paul when he took the financial gift to the needy saints in Jerusalem (Acts 20:4). He at least began the journey with Paul from Caesarea to Rome (Acts 27:2), he so he may have gone through the shipwreck with Paul. Tradition says that he was martyred under Nero in Rome.
 - **Background:** Jewish believer
 - **Character:** Sacrificial- Fellow sufferer with Paul, Sacrificial individual who had walked the walk and talked the talk. This was a guy that stuck close to the action, and took on the costliness of being a disciple.

- **Mark (John):**

- Son of the women whose house the early church of Jerusalem met. We learn here (Col. 4:10) that he was a cousin of Barnabas. It’s surprising, but encouraging, to see him on Paul’s team. John Mark had deserted Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey (Acts 13:13) right after the ministry in Cyprus when ministry was slow but demonic opposition was strong. When Barnabas insisted on giving Mark another chance on the second journey, it led to a split between him and Paul, (Ad 29) who was sharply opposed to taking a

deserter with them (Acts 15:36-41). But here, twelve years later, Paul tells the Colossians to welcome Mark without reservation.

- **Background:** Jewish believer
- **Character:** Restored- Once a quitter and a flaky guy, he overcame and became the guy known as being restored and recommitted to giving His life for Christ!

- **Jesus, called Justus:**

- Colossians 4:11 is all we know about him. He was a Jew whom Paul calls, “a fellow worker for the kingdom of God.” Along with the other two Jews, Mark and Aristarchus, Paul says that Jesus Justus had been an encouragement to him.

- **Background:** Jewish believer
- **Character:** Encourager- Someone who was in Paul’s corner, who was an evangelist, did the work and encouraged Paul.

- **Epaphras (EH-puh-fras):**

- We’ve already met him (Col. 1:7-8). He was probably converted and disciplined during Paul’s extended stay in Ephesus (Acts 19:1-10). He then returned to his home town of Colossae and planted the church there, as well as in the neighboring Laodicea and Hierapolis. When problems with false teachers arose, Epaphras went to Rome to get counsel from Paul, who calls him (Col. 4:12), “a bondsman of Jesus Christ,” and commends him for his prayers and concern for these three churches.

- **Background:** Gentile believer
- **Character:** Passionate- A guy who has leveraged his skill and influence to start churches, praying deeply for them that they mature. He is a guy who cares deeply about those God has brought to Him.

- **Luke: “The beloved physician”:**

- it is only here that we learn that Luke was a doctor. We can deduce that he was a Gentile, since Aristarchus, Mark, and Jesus Justus were the only team members “from the circumcision” (although some scholars argue that the phrase is not identical with “Jewish”). Luke was the only Gentile author in the New Testament, writing almost one-fourth of it (Luke and Acts) He accompanied Paul on some of his missionary journeys, including his shipwreck on the way to Rome. He was the only worker with Paul near the end of his second imprisonment as he faced execution (2 Tim. 4:11).

- **Background:** Gentile believer, wealthy, educated
- **Character: Devout-** The man who was smart, sophisticated and who used every bit of his skill for the advancement of the Gospel.

- **Demas:**

- It is striking that Paul says nothing to commend him, in contrast with the others. In Philemon (Philemon 2:4), written just before Colossians, Paul calls him a fellow worker. Here he says nothing. In 2 Timothy 4:10, he reports sadly, “Demas, having loved this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica.” Perhaps Paul sensed the seeds of Demas’s disloyalty already. So Demas warns us of the possibility of defection, while Mark encourages us with the hope of restoration for those who have failed.

- **Background:** Gentile person interested in the ministry but not committed.

- **Character:** Disloyal- The man who was not all in, who flaked out.

Q: What do we learn from the various backgrounds and character profiles of Paul's Missionary team? How does such a list make you think about those you surround yourself with?

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."

¹⁸ I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. Remember my chains. Grace be with you.

Gospel Ministry = Global Ministry

Q: What do you note in this final section? What do we learn about Paul and the Gospel Ministry?

- *Vs 15 The Global nature of Ministry and Historic Method of Multiplication*
 - Other Ministries Were Present
 - In addition to the team with Paul in Rome, there are the teams in Colossae and Laodicea. There is Nympha who hosted the church in her home.^{iv} Archippus (ahr-KIHP-uhs) was probably the son of Philemon. He may have been pastoring the church in Colossae during Epaphras' absence. Paul gently exhorts and gives greeting to these global ministries that the Colossian church would have been familiar with.
 - Gospel Multiplication Method Revealed
 - **Now when this epistle is read among you:** When Paul and other apostles wrote letters to churches, the letters were simply publicly read in the congregations. It was a way for the apostle to teach that church even when he could not personally be there.
 - **Illustration:** How we Respond to Information vs the 1st Century: *How do we generally respond to sermons, messages etc?*
 - **Conviction:** If the next generations of Christians were going to learn about Christ from what we knew, shared or relayed the world might be in uncertain place but rich in tik toks & 30 second reels. We have the books of the Bible because of the passion & sacrifice of the saints who received these letters and recognized Spirit & Power in them.
 - **See that it is read also in the church of the Laodiceans:** It was the general practice to distribute all apostolic letters among the churches, especially those close to each other.
 - i. "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." (Wright)
 - ii. This helps us to understand how and why the letters would have been copied almost immediately, and how slight mistakes in copying the manuscripts could come in at an early date.
 - **And that you likewise read the epistle from Laodicea:** Apparently, Paul wrote a letter to the Laodiceans that we do not have. 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 pen to paper.

○ The Life Well Lived

- Paul concludes this letter with both the words to a minister and sobering picture of ministry. Paul wanted Archippus to be encouraged and strengthened, but he did not make this appeal to Archippus directly. He asked that it come to Archippus *through* the Colossians (or the Laodiceans).
 - i. “Presumably he would be present when the letter was read, either in the Colossian church or, later, when it had been sent to Laodicea. This was perhaps calculated to impress him the more with the solemnity of his responsibility to carry out his service.” (Bruce)
 - ii. Therefore, it was *more fitting* for the Colossians (or Laodiceans) to say this to Archippus than for Paul himself to say it to him. He needed to hear this from the people around him: “Fulfill your ministry.” When the Colossians spoke up, then Archippus knew his ministry was *wanted*. We learn so much of Christian ministry in that:
 - God gives **ministry** to His people (not just pastors).
 - True **ministry** is **received in the Lord**.
 - **Ministry** may be left *unfulfilled*....
 - One must **take heed (or see to)** their ministry in order for it to be **fulfilled**.
 - We should encourage *others* to **fulfill** their **ministry**.
- After this encouragement to his fellow minister, Paul concludes his letter with a picture of true ministry. **Remember my chains, grace be with you.**
- ii. “Paul’s references to his sufferings are not pleas for sympathy; they are his claims to authority, the guarantees of his right to speak.
 - **Revelation:** The essence of a genuine Christian ministry—or any mission, service, effort, project or endeavor we undertake for Christ—is captured in these simple, yet profound, words. As one who earnestly seeks to hear Christ say, ‘Well done, my good and faithful servant’ (Matthew 25:21), We must recognize that faithfulness and servanthood are invariably accompanied by one undeniable aspect in this world: **sacrifice**.
 - The remembrance of Paul’s chains is a countercultural charge to the Christian world. Paul was not showcasing a life done wrong, but a life for Christ lived right. He would be freed from these chains within 2 years of being in Rome, only to be imprisoned a second time in Rome years later. His second imprisonment and set of chains would lead to his death.... and thus to him hearing the words that all should so desperately desire to hear. (Matt 25:21).
 - **May our Lives bear the marks of those who belong to Christ as we daily live for who HE IS**

Q: How does Paul’s conclusion inspire your conclusion about Life? How do you hope your life ends for Christ?

- ❖ **Conclusion:** *We are invited to Share in the Legacy & Global ministry of Christ! We should pursue Godly Community and Live our Lives for Jesus as Lord*
- ❖ **Application:** *Pursue Community, Give to Christ Sacrificially, Live for Him with Everything*

Resources:

Life Change Series: Colossians and Philemon. (1996). NavPress.

Moo, Douglas J. *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008.

Wright, N. T. *Paul for Everyone: The Prison Letters*. Westminster John Knox Press, 2004.
Barclay, William. *The Letters to the Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonians*. Westminster John Knox Press, 2003.

ⁱ The letters to the Colossians, and to Philemon, the pillar, New Testament commentary. (Page 61)

ⁱⁱ <https://www.gotquestions.org/Book-of-Colossians.html>

ⁱⁱⁱ https://www.blueletterbible.org/comm/guzik_david/study-guide/colossians/colossians-4.cfm

^{iv} . **Nymphas**: There has been some considerable debate as to if Paul referred to a *man* or a *woman* with this name. Some manuscripts have the masculine form and some have the feminine.

i. “Much ink has been spilt over the question whether the individual here mentioned is a woman (Nympha) or a man (Nymphas). Both forms are found in the manuscript tradition, and certainty seems impossible on this (fortunately not very significant) point.” (Wright)

The gender of Nympha in Colossians 4:15 has been a topic of debate among scholars due to variations in ancient manuscripts. The confusion arises from the different spellings of the name and the associated pronouns in the manuscripts. Here's a detailed look at why Nympha is often considered to be a female:

1. **Greek Manuscript Variants**: In some of the ancient Greek manuscripts, the name appears as Νύμφας (Nymphas), which would be a masculine form. However, in other manuscripts, it is Νύμφη (Nympha), which is distinctly feminine. The textual variant influences whether the associated pronoun and grammatical endings are masculine or feminine.
2. **Majority Textual Evidence**: The majority of reliable Greek texts and most modern translations use Νύμφη (Nympha), indicating the person was female. The feminine form matches the context of the greeting, which would be more typically directed in this personal and familiar manner to a woman in the early Christian context.
3. **Church Tradition and Scholarly Consensus**: Church tradition and a majority of biblical scholars have leaned towards the feminine interpretation, treating Nympha as a notable female figure in the early Church. This interpretation aligns with the known practice of early Christian communities meeting in the homes of prominent members, including women like Lydia in Acts 16.

<https://biblehub.com/text/colossians/4-15.htm>