

# Colossians 4

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## **Summary**

- Paul has finished the major part of the letter, in which Paul denounced the false teachers threatening the church at Colosse.
- He will now turn his attention to exhorting his readers to pray and give them practical advice for living in the pagan world. Some personal matters are given attention in the closing of the letter.

## **Christian Duties (4:1-6)**

- Now Paul turns to the duty of masters toward their slaves in terms of dealing justly and equitably with them. Though in the Roman world slaves had few rights, Paul does not hesitate to teach that duty is not all on the side of slaves. Masters are accountable to God for how they treat their slaves.
- The word for "continue" is built on a root meaning "to be strong." It always connotes earnest adherence to a person or thing; here it implies persistence and fervor (cf. Acts 1:14; 2:46; 6:5; Romans 12:12). "Watch" suggests constant spiritual alertness. Thanksgiving is the spirit in which all prayers should be offered.
- Paul requests prayer for himself while being imprisoned in Rome. His concern was that he and his coworkers might have clear opportunities for teaching and that Paul can preach the mystery of Christ in a worthy manner.
- Two appeals are made in vss. 5-6 -- one having to do with how Christians live and the other relating to how they are to speak. Paul's words in vs. 5 imply that Christians are to be cautious and tactful so as to avoid antagonizing or alienating those outside of Christ. It also implies that Christians should conduct themselves so that the way they live will attract and convict non-Christians and give others a favorable impression of the gospel.
- Like his Lord and also like James the brother of the Lord, Paul knew the importance of a Christian's speech (Matthew 12:36; Ephesians 4:24; Titus 2:8; James 3:1-12). Old Testament Jews used salt in their sacrifices, symbolizing purity and the preservation of all that is good. The Greeks called salt *charitas* or "grace" because it flavored foods. Our speech must not be corrupt; salt holds back corruption. A thoughtless word of criticism, a questionable remark, an angry word -- any of these could tear down in a moment whatever a Christian has worked hard to build.

### ***Final Commendations (4:7-9)***

- While we hold Paul in great esteem as an apostle and preacher of the gospel, we must never forget the many dedicated Christians who assisted Paul in his work. No elder or evangelist can do the Lord's work alone (1 Corinthians 3:9).
- Tychicus was probably the bearer of both this letter and the one we know as Ephesians (Ephesians 6:21-22). He was a native of the province of Asia and was earlier selected to accompany Paul on his last visit to Jerusalem as a custodian of the offering that was given by the churches for the needy in Jerusalem (Acts 20:4). The terms used to describe Tychicus show that he was loved much by Paul.
- Accompanying Tychicus was Onesimus, the runaway slave who, in the providence of God, had met Paul in Rome and had apparently been converted by him. Paul is now sending Onesimus back to Colosse. Onesimus carried the letter to his master, Philemon.

### ***Final Greetings (4:10-15)***

- Three of the six persons mentioned in these verses are Jewish Christians. Aristarchus, a native of Thessalonica who had been arrested at the time of the riot in Ephesus (Acts 19:29), accompanied Paul to Jerusalem (Acts 20:4) and later was with him on the journey from Caesarea to Rome (Acts 27:2).
- Mark, here referred to as the cousin of Barnabas, wrote the gospel that bears his name. We know more about him than about any of the others mentioned in this passage (Acts 12:12, 25; 1 Peter 5:13). Mark had "fallen out" with Paul years before (Acts 13:13; 15:36-41). It is possible that the Colossians knew about Mark's failure, but Paul wanted them to receive this young man and show him love. When he wrote his last letter, Paul admitted that Mark was "profitable" in his work (2 Timothy 4:11).
- There is a note of poignance in Paul's remarks about these three men. They were the only Jews who were Paul's fellow workers. Paul keenly felt his alienation from his countrymen (Romans 9:3). But these three were a "comfort" to Paul in times of trouble and difficulty.
- Paul reminds the Colossians that Epaphras was always "laboring fervently" for them in his prayers. This is the same word used for the struggles of athletes in contests. He was concerned that they stand firm. He also had toiled heavily to the extent of pain for the Colossians. Luke and Demas are mentioned very little in this letter.

### ***Final Instructions And Admonitions (4:16-18)***

- After reading this letter, the Colossians were to see to it that it was

read also in the Laodicean church. In return, the Colossians were to read the letter sent to the church at Laodicea. Most likely Paul wrote to the Laodicean church a letter that has not been preserved. But it may also be that the epistle to the Laodiceans is our Ephesians.

- Archippus, to whom Paul sends a special message, appears again Philemon 2. From the context there some think he was a member of Philemon's household, perhaps even Philemon's son. He closes by warning Archippus not to faint but to fulfill his ministry in the Lord.

### ***Thought Questions***

- Comment on the appropriate ways to fulfill the command in vs. 5.
- For what reason is Tychicus sent to the saints at Colosse (vs. 8)?
- How do you think you can be more like Epaphras and his work with the Colossians?
- Comment upon the fact that we do not have the letter to the Laodiceans.