



COLOSSIANS

(For access to all available commentaries and written sermons of Charlie's click [HERE](#))

...and Jesus who is called Justus. These *are my* only fellow workers for the kingdom of God who are of the circumcision; they have proved to be a comfort to me. Colossians 4:11

The name "Justus" is found in Acts 1:23 & 18:7, but it is a surname which is not necessarily speaking of the same person. The name "Jesus" is Jewish, meaning "Salvation." It could also be a form of "Joshua," meaning the Lord is Salvation. This Hebrew name was probably the name used among the Jews. "Justus" is Latin, and means "The Just One." It would have been the name used among the Gentiles. This is not at all uncommon in the New Testament. He is not mentioned in the Epistle to Philemon, even though all the other names here are. Paul, however, includes his greeting of the brethren here.

After this, he says something rather important which is often overlooked, but which teaches us an essential point. He says, "These *are my* only fellow workers for the kingdom of God who are of the circumcision." Why is this important? It is because he will continue with other names of people who greet the congregation at Colossae, including Luke. This then signifies, without any doubt at all, that Luke was a Gentile. Thus, at least two books of the Bible, Luke and Acts, were in fact written by a Gentile.

Despite this being as obvious as the nose on one's face, there are still people who will argue against this, demanding that Luke was a Jew. They base this on Romans 3:2 where Paul notes that it is to the Jews that "were committed the oracles of God." This is what is known as a category mistake. Luke and Acts were not yet a part of the canon of Scripture. Paul was speaking of the Old Testament which pointed to Christ. It further means that they were entrusted with these oracles, not necessarily that they had all been written by Jews. Job was a Gentile, and he may (we do not know) have been the author of his book. Regardless of Job, the New Testament is not the Old, and Paul's words do not apply to what is being referred to in Romans 3:2. And yet, despite Paul's clear and obvious words here, people will still make up false analyses concerning Luke in order to justify their presuppositions. This is a very bad way of handling the word of God.

ἐν ᾧ ἔχομεν τὴν ἀπολύτρωσιν διὰ τοῦ αἵματος αὐτοῦ, τὴν ἄφεσιν τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν·

The people Paul has thus far mentioned are the only ones of the circumcision, or Jews, who were with him. He then says about them, "...they have proved to be a comfort to me." The word "comfort" is *parégoria*. This is the only use of it in the Bible, and it is used in a medical sense of quieting or soothing. It is where the English word paregoric comes from. Whatever affliction Paul was facing – be it medical or mental – they were there to take away the unnecessary pain and discomfort which he faced. They were as if a soothing balm to him.

Life application: If the Bible teaches that Luke was a Gentile, which it does, but you are stuck with a presupposition that he was a Jew (or a proselyte to Judaism), get over it. Luke was a Gentile.

Epaphras, who is *one of you*, a bondservant of Christ, greets you, always laboring fervently for you in prayers, that you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.

Colossians 4:12

Paul now re-introduces Epaphras whom he calls "one of you." He was a fellow of those at Colossae and obviously well known to them. He was an evangelist, having taught the word of the Lord to those at Colossae. This was seen in verse 1:7. He is also called "a bondservant of Christ." It is a title which Paul uses of himself elsewhere, as do both James and Jude. One other person that Paul calls a bondservant is Timothy. It is true that all Christians are servants of the Lord, but this term is certainly being used in these five instances as a particular designation. What is possible is that the others, like Paul, would often refuse wages for the work they accomplished. This is speculation only, however.

This Epaphras "greet you, always laboring fervently for you in prayers." The word "fervently" is *agónizomai*. It means "to struggle" as a person would in an athletic competition, reaching for a prize with all their might. One can see a hint of the word agonize in it. The prayers of Epaphras were as if in such a struggle. He so cared about those he was praying for that it was as if a struggle existed, and he was going to obtain the prize by making his petitions in a favorable manner. This was his intent so that, as Paul says, "you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God."

The idea which we obtain from these words is that those he was praying for would be found perfect in their doctrine, not mixing in false philosophies or other errors. In this, they would be able to be fully pleasing to God in all ways. The idea of one "standing" in the Bible is that of being firm and fixed. When a wind blows, a person can get toppled over. But the prayers of Epaphras were that they would be able to stand against every wind of doctrine, and not be tossed about by the trickery of false teachings. To stand in this perfect way would then show them complete in all the will of God, meaning every precept by which the Christian should live. This was his great hope for those he cherished at Colossae.

ἐν ᾧ ἔχομεν τὴν ἀπολύτρωσιν διὰ τοῦ αἵματος αὐτοῦ, τὴν ἄφεσιν τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν·

Life application: How fervently do you pray for others. There are true prayer warriors out there who literally weep over those they pray for. And then there are those who say they will pray and then never do. Between the two there are certainly many different levels. What we should each do is to attempt to move up the ladder of intensity until we are mature as people of prayer, able to pour out our hearts to God in sincere hope that He will hear and respond to our petitions.

For I bear him witness that he has a great zeal for you, and those who are in Laodicea, and those in Hierapolis. Colossians 4:13

Paul, still speaking of Epaphras, says, “For I bear him witness.” He is testifying to the character of Epaphras, having personally come to know him and to learn of that which motivated him and consumed his thoughts. Paul’s witness was “that he has a great zeal for you.”

This is the only time that he uses this word in his letters. It gives the sense of labor, but it is a labor of pain, as if struggling to make ends meet in the fields, but ending up each day in poverty. The word is used by John three times in Revelation where it clearly signifies physical pain. Epaphras was willing to expend himself in concern for his beloved church in Colossae, “and those who are in Laodicea, and those in Hierapolis.”

Colossae and both of these other cities were in Phrygia. It is known that Laodicea had a church (Colossians 4:15, 16 & Revelation 1:11 & 3:14), but nothing more is said of Hierapolis in Scripture. Whether there was a church there, or just a group of believers who traveled to another church is not known. Vincent’s word studies gives a brief description of these locations-

“The cities are named in geographical order. Laodicea and Hierapolis faced each other on the north and south sides of the Lycus valley, about six miles apart. Colossae was ten or twelve miles farther up the stream. Hierapolis owed its celebrity to its warm mineral springs, its baths, and its trade in dyed wools. It was a center of the worship of the Phrygian goddess Cybele, whose rites were administered by mutilated priests known as Galli, and of other rites representing different oriental cults. Hence the name Hierapolis or sacred city.”

Life application: Many people are willing to expend themselves in great labor for something. What is it that you would be willing to give your greatest exertions for? There are things which are temporary and futile, and there are things which have true meaning and which will earn eternal rewards. How shallow we can be when exerting our energies for that which has no true and lasting value. Let us redirect, and let us be willing to expend ourselves in a great way for others, and especially for the building of the church.

ἐν ᾧ ἔχομεν τὴν ἀπολύτρωσιν διὰ τοῦ αἵματος αὐτοῦ, τὴν ἄφεσιν τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν·

Luke the beloved physician and Demas greet you. Colossians 4:14

As noted in verse 4:11, from this verse it becomes obvious (like the sun shining at midday) that Luke is not a Jew, but a Gentile. The earlier verses gave a list of names which were followed by the words, “These *are* my only fellow workers for the kingdom of God who are of the circumcision.” This means “Jews.” As Luke is now named, it verifies that he was, in fact, a Gentile.

This is the same Luke noted in Acts 17:10, and he is recorded as being with Paul in 2 Timothy 4:11. He is cited here as a physician, something readily supported by his annotations in both the Gospel of Luke and in the book of Acts. His carefully worded statements demonstrate an observant eye and an understanding of both health and healing issues.

The wording about him in the Greek is more emphatic. It says, “Greet you Luke, the physician, the beloved.” The emphasis is on Luke’s status as the beloved doctor. Following this high note of acknowledgment, Demas is noted, almost as an afterthought. It appears obvious that he was there with Paul and said something like, “Oh, tell them I said ‘Hi’ also.” But the highlighting is on Luke. What can be inferred from a later note concerning him in relation to the warm comments about Luke is that Demas was not of the same caliber as Luke. In a sad note towards the end of his life, Paul writes concerning these two men –

“Be diligent to come to me quickly; ¹⁰for Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world, and has departed for Thessalonica—Crescens for Galatia, Titus for Dalmatia. ¹¹Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for ministry.” 2 Timothy 4:9-11

Demas may have been with Paul at the time of his writing to those at Colossae, but it is apparent that his heart was not in his assignment. All of the others mentioned in this chapter have something extra added in about them except Demas.

Life application: Question: “If your pastor was to describe each person in his church, when he got to you what do you think he would say?” “Albert is a wonderful soul, always helping out. Max is such a blessing to be around. Sperry... ummm Sperry is usually at church. Anita makes the life of everyone else a bit brighter. Marigold? Marigold... ummm. She... ummmm.” Do you want to be remembered as an “Um?”

Greet the brethren who are in Laodicea, and Nymphas and the church that *is* in his house. Colossians 4:15

What seems like a simple and easy to understand verse is actually a bit complicated. First, Paul says to “Greet the brethren who are in Laodicea.” In verse 16, he will say, “also in the church of

ἐν ᾧ ἔχομεν τὴν ἀπολύτρωσιν διὰ τοῦ αἵματος αὐτοῦ, τὴν ἄφεσιν τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν·

the Laodiceans.” It is argued by some then that this is a special body of Christians which are being referred to here. Others feel it simply refers to all of the Christians in Laodicea in both verses. Individually, they are “the brethren,” and collectively they would be “the church.” It’s hard to be dogmatic, but that makes complete sense. It would be like saying, “Pass along our greetings to any brethren you meet, and be sure to greet the church as a whole.”

He then says, “and Nymphas.” Who Nymphas is cannot be determined. This is the only mention of the name in the Bible. And further, it isn’t known if this is a male or a female, or if this is the full name or a shortening of a longer Greek name. From there, Paul goes on to mention “the church that *is* in his house.” Again, there are disputes between manuscripts. Some say “his house,” some say “her house,” and some say “their house.” If “their,” then it would be speaking of Nymphas and the family. Again, it’s hard to be dogmatic, but scholars put their trust in one manuscript or another and will often, dogmatically, claim to be correct. Nothing is lost in doctrine by any possibility.

The same term of “church that is in their (your) house” is used in Romans 16:5 and 1 Corinthians 16:19 – both speaking of Aquila and Priscilla. It is also mentioned in Philemon 1:2 when speaking of the church in the house of Philemon. The word simply means “a general assembly.” Wherever the saints gathered to meet, fellowship, study, etc., that was considered the church. This is the idea which is seen here.

Life application: Way too often, we spend our time worrying about the church building we attend in relation to our walk with the Lord – as if it is the source of our walk. But this is incorrect. The gathering together of the brethren, in any place, can be the church to us. As long as it is focused on a right application of the word of God, then we can consider it to be our church. The walls of a building do not define our walk with the Lord, but rather that which occurs within whatever walls is the church. Today with the internet, the church can be a gathering of people in that way – streaming online as a single body. Just keep the word and proper worship of the Lord at the center of the meeting, and you will be in the sweet spot.

Now when this epistle is read among you, see that it is read also in the church of the Laodiceans, and that you likewise read the *epistle* from Laodicea. Colossians 4:16

Paul’s words of this verse show that it was meant that his letters be read openly, and thus they are intended as church doctrine. “Now when this epistle is read among you” shows us this. It is similar to his words to those in Thessalonica –

I charge you by the Lord that this epistle be read to all the holy brethren.

-1 Thessalonians 5:27

ἐν ᾧ ἔχομεν τὴν ἀπολύτρωσιν διὰ τοῦ αἵματος αὐτοῦ, τὴν ἄφεσιν τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν·

The letters he wrote were not intended only for the leadership, but they were written for all to hear and understand. It is an amazingly similar sentiment to what it says in the Old Testament at the giving of the Law. Time and time again, the words “Speak to the children of Israel, saying:” are used. At times, it specifically says, “Speak to Moses [and/or] Aaron,” but these are usually within a section which has already been addressed to all of the children of Israel, and they are those things which are specific to the priestly duties.

The same is true with Paul’s letters. They are addressed to the church, and give doctrine for all to hear. It is an important thing which is done, showing that the word of God was to be open to all, and not held in private by a select few who would then have control over it.

After the letter to those at Colossae was read to the congregation, Paul says, “...see that it is read also in the church of the Laodiceans.” The intent here is that the letter was to be circulated for others to know proper doctrine as well. It is possible that the original itself was circulated on to the next church, especially because it contained Paul’s personal signature with his own specific handwriting. It is also possible that a copy was made and sent. Or, if the original was sent, it is certain that a trustworthy copy was kept back in case the original was lost. The letter would be cherished and referred to often as questions or disputes arose.

Finally, he says, “and that you likewise read the *epistle* from Laodicea.” There are about seventeen hundred miles of commentary on these words. As there is no letter to the “saints and faithful brethren in Christ who are in Laodicea,” it is speculated that this is a lost epistle. As if Paul wrote a letter to them and it just disappeared. This is unlikely because, as stated above, a copy would have been made, and either the original or that copy would have been retained.

There is a forged letter known as the “Epistle to the Laodiceans,” but as scholars know that it is an obvious forgery, that is not what is being referred to here. This is sure because Paul says, “from Laodicea,” not “to Laodicea.” There was no letter written to Laodicea, but rather there was a letter written to someone else which was carried to Laodicea for their instruction. This letter was then to be passed on to Colossae. As this is so, it is rather certain that Paul is referring to the letter to the Ephesians.

Both letters are similar in content in some areas, but both contain many great differences as well. Also, Tychichus was used to convey Paul’s words to both Ephesus and Colossae (see Ephesians 6:21 and Colossians 4:7). Because of this, it can be deduced that there is no lost letter, and also that the letter he is referring to is that of Ephesians. If this is not the case, it would then be another letter which we possess and which was picked up by Tychicus and brought from Laodicea to Colossae.

Life application: We have a sure word, and that sure word is not to be secreted away, but it is to be openly read and proclaimed. Its truths are not for a “pope” and his magisterium to

ἐν ᾧ ἔχομεν τὴν ἀπολύτρωσιν διὰ τοῦ αἵματος αὐτοῦ, τὴν ἄφεσιν τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν·

determine what it means, nor is it meant for any other select individual to interpret. Instead, it is intended for all of God's people to open, research, and delight in. It is also intended for our doctrine.

And say to Archippus, "Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it." Colossians 4:17

Paul's words here are taken by many scholars as a rebuke of Archippus which are intended to urge him back to a proper fulfillment of his duties. Why anyone would come to this conclusion is a bit hard to understand. Paul begins with, "And say to Archippus." The letter is written to the church at Colossae. It was to be read to all there, and then it was to be read to the church at Laodicea. To rebuke someone like this at the very end of the letter would be inappropriate at best.

Instead, the words, "Take heed to the ministry which you have received," are certainly a note of encouragement. Paul's letters are written as notes of doctrine. They are intended to instruct the churches in how to handle false apostles, false teachings, and heretical ideas which crop up. Archippus had received a "ministry" which he was responsible for. In Greek, it is *diakonia*, or a deaconate. But rather than being a deacon, it is probably meaning that he was in charge of the deacons. Some take this to mean that he was the lead pastor, or at least in a similar position.

This position he received "in the Lord." Rather than saying, "from the Lord," Paul uses this term. It means that he was not an apostle, but rather had received his ministry from someone who was already in the Lord, and was acknowledged and ordained to the position that he held. This is an implicit reference to the idea of the "apostolic age" which was coming to an end. When those who had received their ministry "from the Lord" were all gone, there would be no more apostles from the Lord. Rather, all would be ordained "in the Lord" from that time on.

As he was in such a ministry, Paul was encouraging him. Being in the position of a pastor brings with it many headaches as people come forth with a constant stream of ideas about what they think, despite have little or no theological training, and having spent limited time in Scripture itself. It can be maddening at times to live in a world full of "specialists" to lead. Archippus apparently bore this type of thing as well, and Paul was encouraging him to apply the words of his epistles to his ministry. It would allow him to "fulfill it." By relying on his ordination, and by applying OT Scriptures and whatever New Testament writings were being circulated, including apostolic epistles, he would be strengthened to perform his duties in an effective manner.

Archippus is mentioned just one more time in Scripture, in Philemon 1:2. There he is called "a fellow soldier." As these two letters were written at approximately the same time, we can see that Paul's note in this epistle is not one of rebuke, but of encouragement. Archippus was in

ἐν ᾧ ἔχομεν τὴν ἀπολύτρωσιν διὰ τοῦ αἵματος αὐτοῦ, τὴν ἄφεσιν τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν·

the battle, and he was working effectively, but he needed the additional encouragement of Paul's apostleship to strengthen him.

Life application: When going to your pastor, or some other person you might correspond with who has a ministry, it is courteous to ask rather than dictate. The person you are speaking to is fallible and could very well be wrong on an issue, but to charge at him like a bull can only put up a wall which is then hard to later break down. Let your words be seasoned with salt, and work without belligerence. Remember, you are one person coming to an individual who probably hears from many people over the course of a week. How easy it is to get eroded down if everyone is on the attack!

This salutation by my own hand—Paul. Remember my chains. Grace *be* with you. Amen.
Colossians 4:18

This is the final verse of Colossians. The book has spanned four chapters totaling 95 verses. To close out this masterpiece of wisdom and instruction, Paul begins with, "This salutation by my own hand – Paul." The letter was probably written by an amanuensis (one who takes dictation), but then Paul signed the letter to confirm that it was from him. This is the standard with most of his epistles. His handwriting was very distinct, having large letters (Galatians 6:11).

In closing, and concerning himself, he says, "Remember my chains." Numerous times in his letters, he refers to his bondage and chains, even in verse 4:3 of this letter. It is probably for a twofold reason. The first obvious reason is that he desired their prayers, and he wished that they would have sympathy for him and empathize with him. The second reason is because his bondage was to remind them of his love for them. He, a Jew, was imprisoned for the sake of the Gentiles. Thus it was for their sake and for the glory of Christ. There was nothing shameful in his chains. Instead, it was the Lord's will that he should be where he was. These ideas are to be inferred from a similar sentiment found in Hebrews 13:3 –

"Remember the prisoners as if chained with them—those who are mistreated—since you yourselves are in the body also."

Paul finishes his personal greeting with, "Grace *be* with you. Amen." In Greek, it literally states, "the grace," and thus he is speaking of "the grace of Jesus Christ" specifically. This is a condensed form of that sentiment which is unique to this letter and the two letters to Timothy. Most other epistles give a fuller form of the thought. Paul desires them (and thus us!) to have and live in the grace of Jesus Christ. He then closes with "Amen," or "So be it."

ἐν ᾧ ἔχομεν τὴν ἀπολύτρωσιν διὰ τοῦ αἵματος αὐτοῦ, τὴν ἄφεσιν τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν·

Life application: Having read and studied the book of Colossians, you are now admonished to continue reading it, along with the rest of Scripture, every day of your lives. Pursue the Lord, cherish His word, and be ready to share both with others at all times. Always be prepared!

ἐν ᾧ ἔχομεν τὴν ἀπολύτρωσιν διὰ τοῦ αἵματος αὐτοῦ, τὴν ἄφεσιν τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν·