

The Book of Colossians

Lesson 13: Fellow Workers and Final Greetings -- Colossians 4:7-18

We are tempted to skim the end of a letter. The greetings, the names we cannot pronounce, the personal notes that seem to belong to someone else's world. But slow down here, because this list of names is one of the most beautiful pictures of the church in all of Scripture. Paul is in prison, yet he is not alone. Around him is a little band of brothers, and behind them stands a whole web of believers stretched across cities and households, all bound together by the gospel. Christianity, it turns out, is never a solo journey. It is a fellowship of named, ordinary people who carry one another and carry the gospel together.

Look at who they are. There is Tychicus, the faithful courier who will deliver this very letter and tell the Colossians how Paul is doing. There is Onesimus, a runaway slave who once fled in disgrace and now returns as a faithful and beloved brother, living proof of what the gospel can do with a broken story. There is Mark, who had failed Paul years before and abandoned a mission, now restored and useful again. There is Aristarchus, willing to share Paul's imprisonment, and Luke the beloved physician, and faithful Epaphras, the man who first brought the gospel to Colossae and who now labors for them the only way a man in another city can, on his knees.

And tucked into these final lines are quiet treasures. We learn that Epaphras is always wrestling in prayer for the Colossians, that they may stand mature and fully assured. We learn that Paul wants this letter read aloud in the church, and exchanged with the neighboring congregation, so the inspired word would circulate among God's people. We hear a personal nudge to a man named Archippus: see that you fulfill the ministry you have received in the Lord. And we feel Paul take the pen into his own chained hand to write the last line himself: Remember my chains. Grace be with you.

This is how the great letter ends, not with a soaring doctrine but with people. Because all the towering truths about the supremacy and sufficiency of Christ are meant to come down to earth in exactly this: real believers, with real names and real histories, serving Christ and one another in the ordinary fellowship of the church. As we close our journey through Colossians, read these names slowly. They remind us that you, too, have a name on God's list, a place in His church, and a ministry to fulfill. Grace be with you.

Group Discussion: The letter ends with a long list of named, ordinary believers serving Christ and one another (vv. 7-17). What does this picture of the church, a fellowship of real, named people carrying one another and the gospel, say to a culture that often treats faith as a private, individual matter?

Personal Reflection: Paul tells Archippus, see that you fulfill the ministry you have received in the Lord (v. 17). If that same word were spoken to you by name, what ministry has God given you that you sense you have not yet fully taken up? What would fulfilling it look like?

Read Colossians 4:7–18

Study Questions

1. Paul commends Tychicus as a beloved brother, faithful minister, and fellow servant, and sends Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother, now one of you (vv. 7–9). What do these descriptions reveal about how the gospel spreads and about the kind of people God uses, and what is striking about Onesimus, a runaway slave, being called a faithful and beloved brother (compare the letter to Philemon)?
2. Paul honors the quiet faithfulness of dependable servants like Tychicus. Would the people who depend on you describe you as faithful and dependable in the work God has given you? Where are you tempted toward unreliability, and what would greater faithfulness look like this week?
3. Paul includes Mark among his fellow workers (v. 10), the same Mark who had earlier abandoned a mission and caused a sharp split between Paul and Barnabas (Acts 15:36–39). What does Mark's presence here teach us about restoration and second chances in the kingdom of God, and how does it encourage those who have failed?
4. Mark was restored after failing, while elsewhere we learn that Demas, named warmly here, later deserted Paul out of love for the world (2 Timothy 4:10). Is there someone who failed you or the church whom you have quietly written off? And where do you yourself most need either restoration or the resolve to keep from drifting away?
5. Paul says Epaphras is always struggling, or wrestling, on the Colossians' behalf in his prayers, that they may stand mature and fully assured in all the will of God (vv. 12–13). What does it tell us that Epaphras labored this hard in prayer for others, and what does it mean to pray for someone's maturity and assurance rather than just their comfort?
6. Epaphras wrestled in prayer for the spiritual maturity of people he loved. Who are the people God has given you to carry in prayer this way? Are you praying mainly for their comfort and circumstances, or also, like Epaphras, that they would stand mature and fully assured in Christ?
7. Paul directs that this letter be read aloud in the church, exchanged with the church at Laodicea, and read there too (v. 16). What does this practice tell us about how the apostolic letters were received and circulated as authoritative Scripture, and why does it matter that the church today still stands on this same completed, written word rather than looking for new revelations (compare 2 Timothy 3:16–17)?
8. Paul expected the word to be read and heard among the gathered church. How do you regard the public reading and teaching of Scripture in the assembly, and your own time in the word during the week? Where might you give the word of Christ a more central and attentive place in your life?

9. Paul sends a pointed personal word: say to Archippus, see that you fulfill the ministry that you have received in the Lord (v. 17), and the whole passage is full of named workers and even a church meeting in Nympha's house. What does this teach about the church as a body in which every member has a God-given ministry to fulfill, and about the high value God places on the faithful service of ordinary members in the local congregation?
10. As we close the book of Colossians, look back across this passage, and across the whole letter. Paul has lifted Christ to the highest place, grounded us in Him, and now sends us out to serve Him with named, ordinary faithfulness. Name one specific way you sense Jesus forming you through this passage. What is the single truth from Colossians 4:7–18, or from this study as a whole, that you most need to carry forward?

Now or Later

Reflect on these passages: Romans 12:3–8, one body with many members and differing gifts to be used; 1 Corinthians 12:12–27, the body of Christ where every member is needed; Philemon 8–18, Onesimus received no longer as a slave but as a beloved brother; 2 Timothy 4:9–11, Demas deserting and Mark found useful for ministry; 2 Timothy 3:16–17, all Scripture breathed out by God and sufficient.