

# Study of Colossians

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## Introductory to Colossians

### I. The City

Colosse was one of a trio of cities (Hierapolis and Laodicea being the other two) located about 125 miles southeast of Ephesus. This was a rich area both in mineral wealth and merchandising, with a large population, both Jewish and Gentile. These three cities were almost within view of each other.

### II. The Church

Paul had never visited Colosse (see 2:1). During his three years of ministry in Ephesus, “all Asia” heard the Gospel (Acts 19:10, 26). One of Paul’s converts in Ephesus was a man named Epaphras, whose home was in Colosse. Epaphras had taken the message of the Gospel back home, and through his ministry the church was founded (1:4–7; 4:12–13). This fellowship may have met in the home of Philemon, for he lived at Colosse (Col. 4:9 and Philemon).

### III. The Crisis

Paul was now a prisoner in Rome. Epaphras had come to visit him and to report that a new teaching was invading the church and causing trouble. This heresy today is generally called “gnosticism,” from the Gk. word *gnosis* which means “to know.” The Gnostics were “in the know”—that is, they professed to have a superior knowledge of spiritual things. Their doctrine was a strange blending of some Christian truth, Jewish legalism, Greek philosophy, and Eastern mysticism.

For one thing, these heretics taught that all matter was evil, including the body; and therefore God could not come in contact with matter. How, then, was the world created? By a series of “emanations” from God, they claimed. And, since Christ had a human body, He was only one of these “emanations” and not truly the Son of God. The Gnostics proposed a complex series of “emanations” (including angels) between man and God and thus denied the preeminence of Christ.

Their system was supposed to give the believer a special “full knowledge” not possessed by others. The Gnostics loved to use the word “fullness,” and so you find Paul using it many times in this letter. Their doctrine called for legalistic practices (2:16) and strict discipline of the flesh (asceticism, 2:18–23). “Touch not, taste not, handle not!” was one of their rules. They taught that certain days were holy and certain foods sinful. The Gnostic system had a semblance of spirituality but was of no real spiritual value (see Col. 2:21–23).

#### **IV. The Correspondence**

It is likely that Paul sent Onesimus and Epaphras, along with Tychicus, back to Colosse with the letters to the Colossian Christians, to the Ephesians (Eph. 6:21–22), and to his friend Philemon. Some students think that the letter to the Laodiceans (Col. 4:16) is our Ephesians.

Colossians emphasizes the preeminence of Christ. As you read it, note the repetition of the words “all” and “fullness” or “filled” (see 1:9–11, 16–20, 28; 2:2–3, 9–10, 13, 19; 3:8, 11, 14, 16–17, 20, 22; 4:9, 12). Paul’s theme is that “Christ is all and in all” (3:11) and that we are “made full in Him” (2:10). Since believers are made full in Christ, Christ is all they need! Legalism, man-made philosophies, strict diets, compulsory observance of holy days, discipline of the flesh—all of these must go when Christ is given His place of preeminence. Colossians is a letter pleading for spiritual maturity (note the prayer in 1:9–12). Religious practices done in the flesh may appear to be spiritual, but they are of no value in the inner life of the person. How easy it is even for evangelical Christians to substitute man-made rules for true spirituality.

## **Colossians 1**

Many people today, like the false teachers at Colosse, will give Jesus Christ a place of eminence, but they will not give Him His rightful place of preeminence. He is not a “great man among great men”; He is God’s Son, preeminent in all things! In this first chapter, the apostle declares Christ’s preeminence in several areas of life.

### **I. Preeminent in the Gospel Message (1:1–12)**

The false teachers had a message, but their message had no power to it. They taught about angels, “emanations” from God, legalistic rules, and bodily disciplines, but their message had no power to transform lives. In these verses Paul reviews the effect the Gospel of Christ had on the Colossians. He had not visited this church personally but had heard from Epaphras the good news of their salvation (vv. 4, 7).

#### *A. How they were saved.*

Epaphras apparently had heard the Gospel of Christ from Paul at Ephesus and had taken this life-changing message back to Colosse (v. 7). Witnessing ought to begin at home (Mark 5:19). Epaphras gave them “the word of the truth of the Gospel” (v. 5) in contrast to the lies of the false teachers. Faith comes by hearing; these people heard the Word, believed, and were saved.

#### *B. The evidences of their salvation.*

These believers demonstrated faith, hope, and love (vv. 4–5, 8). Only Jesus Christ can give faith, change a selfish heart into a heart of love, and then give a blessed hope for the future. The Word brought forth fruit in their lives (v. 6); fruit is the evidence of true salvation (Matt. 13:23).

### *C. Paul's prayer for their growth (vv. 9–12).*

Since salvation is a personal experience with Jesus Christ, and not merely the acceptance of a set of doctrines, a believer can experience daily growth and development. The heretics taught a mystical “fullness” that their followers would gain; but here Paul states that every believer in Christ can be filled. We have been “made full in Him” (2:9–10); now he prays that they might experience this fullness in their daily lives. Note the requests he makes: (1) that they might know His will; (2) that they would walk so as to please God; (3) that they would work to bear fruit; (4) that they would understand the Word better; and (5) that they would know His glorious power. These are things the heretics falsely promised their followers, but these blessings can be found only in Christ. He is preeminent!

## **II. Preeminent in the Cross (1:13–14)**

It is His cross that causes Jesus Christ to stand out head and shoulders above any other person in history. Religious leaders have died, but only Christ, God's Son, died on the cross for the sins of the world. The picture in these verses is that of a great general setting a nation free from bondage and moving the people into a new land of blessing. What angel ever died to redeem sinners (set them free)? What religious rules ever produced forgiveness? It is the cross that lifts Jesus Christ high above all.

## **III. Preeminent in Creation (1:15–17)**

The Gnostic teachers claimed that God made the worlds through a series of “emanations” from Himself and that Christ was one of these emanations. Paul asserts that Christ is not an emanation from God, but God Himself! “Image” means “the exact reproduction.” Christ is not one of God's creatures, but the highest (firstborn) of all creation. The term “firstborn” does not refer to time (as though Christ were the first thing God created) but to position. All things were created by Him (see John 1) and for Him; He holds all things together! (“Consist” means “to hold together.”)

## **IV. Preeminent in the Church (1:18–23)**

The church is His body, and He is the Head. The church is the new creation, and He is “the Beginning,” that is, the Originator of the new creation. His resurrection gives Him title to the throne of preeminence, for He is “firstborn” from the dead, that is, first to rise from the dead, never to die again. Note the repetition of the word “all” in this chapter, showing the universal rule of Jesus Christ over everything that exists.

The details of the meaning of “the body” are given in Eph. 2:11ff; this passage describes how Christ made peace between Jews and Gentiles and reconciled both in one body, the church. But His cross not only reconciled Jews and Gentiles; it made possible the reconciliation of “all things”—the entire universe! Paul applies this to the believers personally (vv. 21–23), reminding them that Christ has completely changed their lives and reconciled them to God. The false teachers might spin spider webs of doctrine about angels and “emanations,” but Christ still has preeminence as the Head of

the church! He is “the firstborn” of creation (v. 15) and of the dead (v. 18), signifying His priority and sovereignty.

## **V. Preeminent in Paul’s Ministry (1:24–29)**

How foolish it would have been for Paul to suffer for a Christ who was only an “emanation”! Why risk death to tell people that Jesus Christ is not preeminent! Paul’s first words when he saw the glorified Savior were, “Who are You, Lord?” The lordship of Christ—His preeminence over all things—was the heartbeat of Paul’s life and ministry. He looked upon his personal sufferings as suffering for Christ’s sake. In v. 24, Paul is not saying that he suffered as Jesus did or that his suffering was a part of Christ’s suffering on the cross. Rather, he is saying that as Christ suffered for others, so he suffers for others, and his suffering is on behalf of the body, the church. The word for “suffering” here is never the one used for the sufferings of Christ on the cross. It speaks rather of His sufferings during His earthly ministry, sufferings that God’s people experience as they seek to live for Christ in a hostile world.

Paul next described “the mystery”—that truth about Christ and the church that had been hidden in times past but was now revealed (see Eph. 3). Actually, Paul speaks of a three-fold mystery: (1) the mystery of the church, vv. 24–26; (2) of the indwelling Christ, v. 27, and (3) of the Person of Christ, the fullness of God, 2:2–3.

Paul had a balanced ministry: he preached, taught, and warned; he sought to take the truth to all people, not just a few; and his goal was to present each believer mature (perfect) in Christ. Christian perfection is not sinlessness, but maturity—growing up unto Christ in all things (Eph. 4:15). The whole theme of Colossians is “Christ is all you need.” We are made full in Him, and that is all that is needed! How tragic when Christians substitute man-made rules, disciplines, and rituals for the fullness we have in Christ!

But Paul did not run his ministry by his own power: God worked in him, and then he worked for God. See Phil. 1:12–13 and Eph. 3:20–21.

# **Colossians 2**

In this chapter, Paul gets to the heart of the problem and denounces the false teachers. He asserts clearly the sufficiency of Christ for every need. He sounds three warnings, and these warnings are needed just as much today as in his day.

## **I. Beware of Empty Philosophies (2:1–10)**

So burdened was Paul, he was in spiritual conflict, wrestling in prayer against Satan who was seeking to lead these believers astray. Paul knew how to overcome Satan—prayer and the Word of God (Eph. 6:17–18). He longed to see the saints united in Christ, enjoying the riches of blessing in Him. The false teachers had their fascinating philosophies, but in Christ we have “all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (v. 3).

Any man-made philosophy that has no place for Christ is unworthy of our consideration. We are rich in Him; why lower ourselves to follow man-made doctrines? Let religious teachers come along with their “hidden doctrines”; we have all wisdom hidden in Christ, and we are “hid with Christ in God” (3:3).

Man’s philosophies are attractive. They give a show of wisdom and intelligence, and too often young Christians are “beguiled” by these “enticing words” (v. 4). How tragic it is when young people go off to secular schools and fall prey to man-made philosophies that deny Jesus Christ and the Bible. “Beware lest any man take you captive” (spoil you —v. 8), warns the apostle. How is the believer to overcome these philosophies?

*A. Walk in Christ (v. 6).*

As you were saved by faith, so walk by faith. As you were saved by the Word, so walk according to the Word. As you were saved through the work of the Spirit, so walk in the Spirit. The Christian life continues as it began, by faith in God.

*B. Grow up in Christ (v. 7).*

Have roots that dig down into the richness of the Word. Have foundations that are strong, laid upon Jesus Christ. How important it is to be taught the Word of God! Believers fall prey to religious philosophies unless they are rooted in Christ, grounded in the Word, and built up in Bible truth.

*C. Make Christ the test (v. 8).*

Test every high-sounding religious system by asking, “Does it give Christ the place of preeminence?” Almost every religious system today gives Christ an eminent place, but only true Bible Christianity gives Him the preeminent place.

*D. Draw on His fullness (vv. 9–10).*

Realize that there is no substitute for Christ and that in Him we have all that we need. When believers drift into worldly living, or are taken prey by man-made systems, it is usually because they feel they lack something that Jesus Christ cannot supply. “You are made full in Him!” What a wonderful position we have in Christ!

## **II. Beware of Religious Legalism (2:11–17)**

These false teachers had mixed oriental mysticism with Greek philosophy and Jewish legalism—what a mixture! But the flesh loves to be religious, so long as that religion does not have a cross to crucify the flesh. The Colossian believers were involved in Jewish legalism—rituals, diets, holidays, and so on. “You are going out of the sunlight into the shadows!” Paul cries (v. 17). “You are forsaking the reality (Christ’s body) for the symbol!” Like the child who admires his father’s photo while he ignores his father’s presence, so these Christians had turned from the fullness of Christ to the ABCs (“elements”—2:8, 20) of the world.

All that we need has been accomplished by Christ on the cross. The circumcision of v. 11 is not His physical circumcision as a child (Luke 2:21), but rather His death on the cross. Just as Christ’s water baptism was a symbol of His baptism of suffering on the cross (Luke 12:50), so His circumcision as an infant prefigured His “putting off the body” when He took our sins on Calvary. “Your spiritual circumcision in Christ is far more

wonderful than physical rituals!” Paul states. “Why replace Christ with Moses? Why have a physical cutting instead of a spiritual operation on your heart? Circumcision removes a fragment of the flesh from the body, but our identification with Christ puts off the whole fleshly nature.”

All of this is made possible through our union with Christ, when the Spirit baptized us into His body. We died with Him, and we are risen with Him. The Old Covenant laws are now set aside; Satan has been completely defeated (v. 15); therefore enjoy the liberty you have in Christ. “Let no man judge you!” Paul urges (v. 16).

### **III. Beware of Man-made Disciplines (2:18–23)**

How the flesh loves legalism: fasting, regulations about food, bodily disciplines. Special religious observances with their regulations make many people “feel spiritual.” “Let no man sit as an umpire in your life” (beguile you, v. 18). Beware of affected humility, a counterfeit that tries to imitate genuine spiritual humility. There is nothing wrong with exercising discipline in the Spirit of God, to the glory of God; but when it is done in the flesh and for our own praise, then it becomes sin. While we believe wholeheartedly that believers should not abuse their liberty and become stumbling blocks (1 Cor. 8:9–10), we do not for one minute believe that the giving up of certain habits or pleasures automatically makes a believer spiritual.

Our relationship to Christ is a living union—He is the Head, we are members of the body. A body functions through nourishment, not legislation. Who can say to his stomach, “Start digesting! Stop hurting!” How foolish! Yet people think the Christian life personally, and the church collectively, can be made spiritual by carnal regulations and disciplines. We believe in standards (“Love not the world”), but we reject the idea that outward obedience to standards necessarily produces inward spirituality. We are dead to the elements of the world; we are alive in Christ, and Christ is all we need. Obeying man-made religious regulations (vv. 21–23) might impress some people as spiritual, but Paul states clearly that these practices cannot control or overcome the flesh. Yes, these regulations appeal to us and might seem to help us develop piety and superior spirituality, but they are useless as far as God is concerned.

This, then, is the main theme of Colossians: all the believer needs is Jesus Christ. Man-made systems and regulations seem very spiritual, but they are merely worldly principles (rudiments, v. 20). This is “kindergarten” living; we must graduate into a higher level of Christianity. Man-made disciplines (asceticism) are attractive, but it is impossible for the flesh to control itself, better itself, or perfect itself. “Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?” asks Gal. 3:3 (NKJV).

Our union with Christ is a living union. This life cannot be controlled by man’s laws, but only by the principles that God has put into the body. Only another life can control life, and we have His life within us.

# Colossians 3

It is not enough for Christ to be preeminent in the Gospel, the cross, creation, and the church; He must also be preeminent in our lives. Paul states very specifically how we should “practice the preeminence of Christ.”

## I. In Personal Purity (3:1–11)

“Since you are risen with Christ, set your mind (affection) on things above!” (v. 1) In other words, let your earthly practice be worthy of your heavenly position. Once you were dead *in* sin (Eph. 2:1–3), but now you are dead *to* sin. Christ is in you, the hope of glory (1:27), and someday soon that glory will be revealed (v. 4). In brief, Paul says, “Live up to what Christ has done for you!” This simple principle of Christian living is more powerful than all the rules and regulations men can devise. “You are made full in Him” (2:10); now live out that fullness in daily life.

Oriental, Greek, and Roman religions said little or nothing about personal holiness. A person could bring sacrifices, say prayers, and go away from the altar to commit terrible sins, and nobody would think he or she was inconsistent. Not so with Christianity! The new life within demands a new life without. Since we have died with Christ, we should put to death (“mortify,” v. 5) impure behavior (see Rom. 6). “Don’t live the way you used to live,” Paul cautions, “the way the unsaved crowd lives. Christ is your life, and you died with Him. Now, let His life show through you day by day.”

In vv. 8–11, Paul compares the new life to a change of clothes: “Put off the old sins as you would take off a filthy garment, and put on the new life of holiness.” But notice that we are able to do this because in Christ we have already put off the old man (v. 9); that is, in Christ the body of flesh (the sinful nature) has been put off through His true circumcision on the cross (2:11). Physical circumcision to the OT Jew meant entering into a covenant relationship with God. Our spiritual circumcision in Christ means the old nature has been put off, and we may now walk in newness of life.

## II. In Christian Fellowship (3:12–17)

In Christ there are no barriers (v. 11); we are one in Him, and He is All. If Christ is preeminent in our lives, then we will be able to get along with others for His glory. If there are differences, the peace of God will be “umpire” (rule) in our hearts as we feed on the Word and worship Christ. Christian fellowship in the local church cannot be legislated by a constitution, although constitutions are useful; true fellowship must come from within, from the hearts of the believers. If a believer is out of fellowship with another believer, it is because one or both of them have gotten out of fellowship with God. “Do all in the name of Christ!” Paul admonishes (v. 17). Read James 4 and you will see that wars and fightings come when Christians do things for their selfish reasons and not for God’s glory. Compare 3:15–18 with Eph. 5:18–22, and you will see that being filled with the Word produces the same blessings as being filled with the Spirit. To be filled with the Spirit means to be controlled by the Word.

### **III. In the Home (3:18–21)**

The first place our Christian faith should go to work is in the home. “Let them learn first to show piety at home,” commands 1 Tim. 5:4. If the wife is drawing her spiritual nourishment from Christ, the Head (2:19), then she will be submissive and obedient for Christ’s sake. Read Eph. 5:22ff and 1 Peter 3 for additional information on this theme.

Of course, the husband too will show love and tenderness toward his wife and family. The headship of the husband in the home is a reflection of the headship of Christ in the church, according to Eph. 5:23ff.

Children are to obey their parents for Christ’s sake, to please the Lord. It is sad when children who are professing Christians rebel against their parents and thereby sin against Christ and the church. Christian sons and daughters need to live up to their high position in Christ as members of His body.

What blessings would come to our homes if each member of the family said, “I will live each day to please Christ and make Him preeminent in all things.” There would be less selfishness and more love; less impatience and more tenderness; less wasting of money on foolish things and more living for the things that matter most.

### **IV. In Daily Work (3:22–4:1)**

Slaves were attached to households in Paul’s day, but we can apply these same truths to Christian employers and employees today. Paul reminds servants that they have masters according to the flesh as well as a heavenly Master, Christ. The Christian employee is to work to honor and please Christ. “Eyeservice” (v. 22) means working when the employer is watching. But the heavenly Master is always watching! We are not to be men-pleasers, but Christ-pleasers.

“Singleness of heart” implies a heart fixed on one goal—to honor Christ. What a blessing it is to know that Christian employees are actually ministers of Christ as they operate their machines, use their tools, drive their trucks, or work at whatever vocation they might have.

Work must come from the heart: “Do it heartily as unto the Lord!” Half-hearted work is a poor testimony. The half-hearted, unfaithful worker will be judged when Christ returns, so it behooves all of us to do our best for Jesus’ sake.

Employers too must manage their affairs as Christians. It is not right for the Christian employer to shortchange his Christian workers because they are all in Christ. He should give them that which is just and equal. In these days of union contracts, government regulations, and competitive economic conditions, it is a challenge for the Christian employer to put Christ first in business, but God promises to honor the believer who will do so. If the employer works to put Christ first and gives Him preeminence, then he will be able to face his Master with a clean heart.

Too many Christians rejoice at the great doctrines of chapters 1–2 but ignore the duties of chapters 3–4. The believer who lives a shallow, disobedient life does not really believe in the all-sufficiency of Christ. Once the Christian depends on the Head—his risen, glorified Savior—for nutrition, guidance, and wisdom, he will discover mature Christian living in its fullness.



# Colossians 4

Paul continues his application of the preeminence of Christ in our lives.

## I. In Christian Witness (4:2–6)

Paul was a prisoner in Rome, but this did not stop him from bearing witness for Christ. He tells believers how to be effective witnesses for Christ.

### A. *Watch and pray.*

“Watch” carries the idea of being alert, praying with your eyes open. This truth first appears in Neh. 4:9, when the enemy threatened the Jews as they tried to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. “We made our prayer ... and set a watch,” was Nehemiah’s solution; and it worked! Prayer is never a substitute for our own alertness. Christ teaches us that to watch and pray is the way to victory over temptation (Mark 14:38). We should watch and pray for opportunities to witness and serve. Certainly Paul had his eyes open as he prayed for that Philippian jailer; when the apostle saw the man reaching for his sword, he cried out and stopped him (Acts 16:27–28). If each believer would pray for the lost, and watch for God’s open doors of opportunity for witness, we would win more people to the Savior.

### B. *Walk in wisdom.*

“Them that are without” refers, of course, to the lost who do not belong to the Christian family. What a sad thing to be “without”—without Christ, without hope, without peace, without forgiveness! It is important that we Christians live wisely when among the lost, for unsaved people look at our lives and try to find things to criticize. First Thessalonians 4:12 admonishes us to walk honestly toward them that are without. What a terrible testimony it is for a Christian to be dishonest with an unbeliever! Far better for believers to suffer loss than to ruin their testimony and bring reproach on the name of Christ. We wonder what unsaved people think of Christ and the Gospel when the Christians they do business with fail to pay their bills or keep their promises.

### C. *Have godly speech.*

The salt of holiness must always flavor our speech. Old Testament Jews used salt in their sacrifices, symbolizing purity and the preservation of that which is good. The Greeks called salt *charitas*—grace—because it gave flavor to things. Our speech must not be corrupt (Eph. 4:29); salt (God’s grace) holds back corruption. A thoughtless word of criticism, a questionable remark, an angry word—any of these could tear down in a minute whatever Christian testimony others have tried to build up.

“Redeeming the time” (v. 5) means “buying up the opportunity.” As Christians, we must be alert to seize every opportunity to witness for Christ and win others.

## II. In Christian Service (4:7–18)

While we honor Paul as the great apostle, we must never forget the many dedicated Christians who assisted Paul in his ministry. No pastor, evangelist, or missionary can do the Lord's work alone. "We are laborers together with God" (1 Cor. 3:9).

Tychicus (vv. 7–8) had been with Paul for several years. He accompanied Paul from Ephesus (Acts 20:4) as he returned to Jerusalem and possibly was a citizen of Ephesus. He had labored there with Paul for those three years. Tychicus was to carry the letters to the Colossians and the Ephesians (Eph. 6:21–22). This man had a long and dangerous journey ahead of him. How thankful we are that he was faithful to deliver the Word, otherwise we could not study it today! See also 2 Tim. 4:12.

Onesimus (v. 9) was the runaway slave of Philemon, whom Paul had won to Christ. The apostle was now sending Onesimus back home to Colosse. (Read the letter to Philemon.) He and Tychicus traveled together, with Onesimus carrying the precious letter to his master, Philemon.

Aristarchus (v. 10) is seen during the Ephesian riot (Acts 19:29), where he was singled out as a leading Christian. He also accompanied Paul (Acts 20:4) and was with him during that terrible storm en route to Rome (Acts 27:2). What a faithful Christian he was, to "stick by" Paul through thick and thin!

Marcus (v. 10) is John Mark, cousin to Barnabas. Mark had "fallen out" with Paul years before (Acts 13:13 and 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 the ministry (2 Tim. 4:11). We need to forgive the failures of others and give believers the opportunity to "make good" in the Lord's work.

Jesus-Justus (v. 11) was a Jewish believer. His Hebrew name was Joshua, which is translated "Jesus" in the Greek. His other name signifies one who obeys the Law (Justus). He worked with Paul and comforted (encouraged) him. What a help he was to the apostle during those days in prison!

Epaphras (vv. 12–13) was a Gentile and probably the founder-pastor of the church at Colosse. This godly man believed in the ministry of the Word of God and prayer (1:7 and 4:12). What a prayer warrior he was! He did not simply "say prayers"; "he labored [agonized] in prayer." It is the same word that is used for the struggles of athletes in contests. If Christians prayed as hard as they played, they would see more of God's blessings. Epaphras prayed that the Colossians might stand "mature and full" in God's will (see 1:28–29). He wanted them to live up to their "fullness" in Christ. Yet his prayers were not for the Colossians only; he was zealous for the saints in the neighboring cities as well. What Christian love!

Luke (v. 14) was the Gentile physician who joined Paul at Troas (Acts 16:10) and later wrote the books of Luke and Acts. Luke and Demas are linked again in 2 Tim. 4:10–11, "Only Luke is with me ... Demas has forsaken me" (NKJV). You can summarize the life of Demas in three verses: "Demas, my fellow laborer" (Phile. 24); "Demas ..." (Col. 4:14); "Demas has forsaken me" (2 Tim. 4:10, NKJV). Since Colossians and Philemon were written during the same time, Demas' backsliding must have been rapid. What a tragedy!

In his closing instructions, Paul sends a greeting to some of the saints and tells the Colossians and Laodiceans to share their respective letters with each other. It may be that the epistle to the Laodiceans is our Ephesians. "All Scripture is profitable" (2 Tim. 3:16), so we must not neglect any of God's Word. He closes by warning Archippus not to faint but to fulfill his ministry in the Lord. Perhaps he was the son of Philemon, since he is mentioned in that letter too (Phile. 2).

Paul's usual salutation of grace closes the letter, marking it as authentic.