

The Last Impression

A Look at the Conclusions of Various Epistles

Colossians

Initial Meeting

There probably was not a formal meeting. See **Colossians 2:1**. Paul traveled through the region of Phrygia during his second and third mission journeys as mentioned in **Acts 16:6; 18:23; 19:10**. It's possible that he rubbed shoulders with some or many from the city of Colosse during his three year stay in Ephesus. This congregation was founded Epaphras, also called "Epaphroditus" by Paul elsewhere. Epaphras also started/served churches in Hierapolis and Laodicea. According to the historian Eusebius, a year after Paul wrote Colossians, an earthquake destroyed much of the city.

Current Situation

Epaphras had come to Rome to visit Paul during his first imprisonment not only to support him, but also to give report on the status of the Colossian Christians. Many commands of Jewish Ceremonial law were being imposed on this congregation, similar to teachings which threatened the Galatian churches. Additionally, the divinity of Christ was under attack by those who taught that Paul's gospel was insufficient, and that higher wisdom was required for true Christianity to flourish. This, in connection with law imposition on the gospel, resulted in harsh self-denial and hard treatment of the body. Paul needed to assert strongly that Jesus is full God in bodily form and as such, is the all-sufficient savior. See **Colossians 1:15-20**. Since we're rescued by Jesus, we're free and will not let people judge us on disputable matters. We're free to clothe ourselves in love and compassion as we say and do what builds others up in love. Written c. 62 A.D. and delivered by Tychicus who was accompanied by Onesimus, a slave and former unbeliever who was returning to Philemon in Colosse.

Last Impression

Colossians 4:7-18

Tychicus will tell you all the news about me. He is a dear brother, a faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord. ⁸I am sending him to you for the express purpose that you may know about our circumstances and that he may encourage your hearts. ⁹He is coming with Onesimus, our faithful and dear brother, who is one of you. They will tell you everything that is happening here. ¹⁰My fellow prisoner Aristarchus sends you his greetings, as does Mark, the cousin of Barnabas. (You have received instructions about him; if he comes to you, welcome him.) ¹¹Jesus, who is called Justus, also sends greetings. These are the only Jews among my fellow workers for the kingdom of God, and they have proved a comfort to me. ¹²Epaphras, who is one of you and a servant of Christ Jesus, sends greetings. He is always wrestling in prayer for you, that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured. ¹³I vouch for him that he is working hard for you and for those at Laodicea and Hierapolis. ¹⁴Our dear friend Luke, the doctor, and Demas send greetings. ¹⁵Give my greetings to the brothers at Laodicea, and to Nympha and the church in her house. ¹⁶After this letter has been read to you, see that it is also read in the church of the Laodiceans and that you in turn read the letter from Laodicea. ¹⁷Tell Archippus: "See to it that you

complete the work you have received in the Lord.”¹⁸ I, Paul, write this greeting in my own hand. Remember my chains. Grace be with you.

1. Paul commends Tychicus as a “beloved brother,” “faithful minister,” and “fellow servant in the Lord.” (v. 7) What qualities make someone a faithful minister or servant of Christ? How can you live out these qualities?
2. Paul says wonderful things about John Mark even though Paul and Barnabas had split company over Mark years before. What does John Mark being in prison with Paul say about the power of the gospel to reconcile one believer to another?
 - Why mention that John Mark and Jesus Justus were the only Jews among the kingdom workers with Paul and that they were a comfort to him?
3. Look at the list of diverse names. How cool. Why is it valuable to think of diversity of background, thinking, ability, culture, or whatever else as a strength?
4. Paul describes the great love their pastor, Epaphras, had for them and how much he prayed for them. (v. 12) What’s it mean to wrestling in prayer and how does such a mentality spur on your prayer life?
 - What does it mean to be mature in the faith?
5. What’s the value of Christian buddies like Epaphras, Luke, and (for now) Demas?
6. Other congregations are mentioned, namely, Laodicea, Hierapolis, and the church in Nympha’s house. How can we support and encourage other congregations in the area? (v. 13, 15)
7. This letter was to be spread around. Why?
 - Paul mentions another letter written to the Laodiceans. What happened to it? Why don’t we have the book of Laodiceans in the Bible?
8. Archippus is mentioned and encouraged to complete his work in the Lord. How can you identify and pursue an area of gospel service God has placed in front of you?
9. Why are his chains the last thing Paul wants them to associate with him. In light of that, what’s the force of the final send-off?