

<sup>1</sup> Masters, give unto *your* servants that which is just and equal; knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven.

Paul, having dealt with the slaves (whether to a master or to the Master), now turns his attention to the masters in his audience. *Masters, what is right and fair provide for the slaves, you know that you also have a Master in heaven* (literal).<sup>1</sup> This completes the master-slave relationship: the slave is to work for his master as for the Lord, and the master must act justly toward the slave, knowing that he, too, has a Master in heaven Who is watching how he lives.

Solomon declared: “Withhold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thine hand to do *it*” (Proverbs 3:27). In our context, this challenges the masters to provide what is beneficial to their slaves who, through good service, have earned it. However, there is also a less obvious application that is quite interesting. *To whom it is due* comes from a Hebrew word (*ba'al*) that means owner, lord, or ruler.<sup>2</sup> In other words, if it is within your means to provide for someone in need, at that moment they have become your master – you owe it to them. Wealth is a matter for good stewardship, not accumulation.

An account from Jesus’ ministry vividly illustrates this: the man who came to Jesus we call the rich, young ruler (Matthew 19:20 tells us that he was *young*, and Luke 18:18 says that he is a *ruler*). This young ruler, who was also very rich (Matthew 19:22, Mark 10:22, Luke 18:23), came to Jesus with a question: “Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” (Luke 18:18). Even though he told Jesus that he had kept all six of the Ten Commandments that deal with our relationship with others, he evidently still felt like something was missing – something wasn’t quite right. Jesus’ answer was very simple: “Yet lackest thou one thing: sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me” (Luke 18:22). There was one thing that this rich, young ruler lacked, and it was this: “Thou shalt have no other gods before me” (Exodus 20:3) – his possessions had become his god. When Jesus, Who had clarified to him that He was God, asked him to commit himself entirely to His care, it was too much for him – he could not part from what he had accumulated. God provides for us so that we, in turn, are able to provide for others who are in need. Within the Mosaic Law, God wove a tithe of ten percent that the people were to provide to the

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<sup>1</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT; Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>2</sup> Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew Definitions, *ESword*.

Levites (it was *holy unto the Lord*, Leviticus 27:32) as their inheritance, and of this, the Levites were required to also tithe to the Lord (Numbers 18:26). We are stewards of what the Lord has given to us, and we bear the responsibility to use it wisely – ensuring that it does not become our priority in life.

## **2. Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving;**

As Paul nears the end of this letter, he provides some concise instructions on various topics – something that is quite characteristic of his writings.

*Be diligently occupying yourselves with prayer, remaining vigilant in it with gratitude* (literal).<sup>3</sup> It is interesting that *being vigilant* (*watch*) and *prayer* are brought together. Peter makes a similar association: *and the end of all things has come near, accordingly, be ye of sound mind and be sober [watch] unto prayer* (1 Peter 4:7, literal).<sup>4</sup> We generally understand prayer to be communication with God, and, therefore, it is based upon an underlying belief in Him. Our prayers, for the most part, center on petitioning God for what we perceive to be our needs. However, the pattern that Jesus gave (Matthew 6:9-13) includes several elements: acknowledging God's holiness (*hallowed be Thy name*), a submission to His will (*thy will be done*), our petitions (*give us, forgive us, and lead us not*), and then an acknowledgement that the *kingdom, power, and glory* are His.

Let's take a moment to consider a passage in John that, I'm sure, has given us all pause at some time in our lives; we will include the context so as to help us in our study. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater *works* than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father. And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do *it*. If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:12-15). Ponder a literal translation of this passage: *truly, truly, I am saying to you, the one who is believing in Me, the works that I am doing, he also will do – even greater than these he will do, because I to My Father am going; and whatever ye may ask in My name, this I will do in order to glorify the Father in the Son; if anything ye ask in My name, I will do; if ye are loving Me, My commandments ye must keep.*<sup>5</sup> *Truly* (or, *verily*) comes from a transliteration into Greek of the Hebrew word meaning *certainty*, and when it is

<sup>3</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT; Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

repeated (as here), it provides an emphasis on the importance of what follows.<sup>6</sup> The phrase, *whatever ye ask*, includes a small Greek word *an* that makes the action of *ask* (the verb) “dependent on some circumstance or condition”;<sup>7</sup> this little word instills into the phrase an element of uncertainty, or possibility.<sup>8</sup> *Ask* is in the subjunctive mood, which we understand bears the thought of probability but not certainty; however, this little word (*an*) focuses the uncertainty on how the *asking* will be done, whereas the subjunctive mood is limited to whether we will *ask*, or not. In other words, Jesus is not saying, “Ask whatever you want, and I will do it,” rather, the condition that must be met is this: if you *ask* in keeping with My name, then I will do it. John explained this further: “And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us” (1 John 5:14). This is the reality that our English fails to bring out; we think that we are told to ask for anything that we want, and if we close our prayer with “in Jesus’ name,” then we have it! Wrong! Earlier (Colossians 3:23), we learned that we are to do all things as to the Lord, and that this could not include anything that was in disobedience to Him. Likewise, we are not to ask for anything from Him that is not in keeping with His will – His name. Do we understand His will in every circumstance? Clearly, not. Therefore, we must ever include *Thy will be done* to show our willing submission to His will. Paul demonstrated this personally, concerning his *thorn in the flesh* (2 Corinthians 12:7-10); even though the Lord had used him to heal others, this time he was asked to allow the Lord to be his strength.

If we ask for anything from the Lord, it must come from a heart that is actively in tune with Him – we must be loving Him. As Jesus closed the passage that we’ve just considered (from John 14), He did so by providing a concise statement as to how we are to demonstrate that we love Him: *if ye are loving Me, My commandments ye must keep* (John 14:15). *Keep* (from *tereo*) primarily means to preserve, or to guard; the only way that we can *preserve* Jesus’ commands is by doing them. Locking His commands away in a safe will only protect that copy, but the real preservation comes through obedience, so that others are able to see His commands being lived out and then, hopefully, follow our example (1 Corinthians 11:1). It is our *faith* in the Lord that makes His commandments of concern to us, and it is very clear that, unless such faith is accompanied by works that are in agreement with it, that *faith* is dead (James 2:17)! Consequently, as we have noted before: *faith* and *obedience* are inseparable!

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<sup>6</sup> Vine’s, “verily”; *Theological Wordbook of the OT*, #116.

<sup>7</sup> <https://archive.org/details/a-greek-english-lexicon-of-the-new-testament-and-other-early-christian-literature/page/49/mode/2up>.

<sup>8</sup> Friberg Lexicon.

Returning to our verse, it is now abundantly clear why we are to be alert, watchful and vigilant as we pray – we must remain faithfully obedient to the Lord, allowing His holiness and righteousness to flow through us (Ephesians 4:24). James noted: *much prevailing is working in the prayer of the righteous* (James 5:16b, literal);<sup>9</sup> it is the *righteous*, those who are faithfully *in Christ*, whose prayers will prevail because they are made in submission to His will. Paul exhorted the Corinthians regarding their need for vigilance concerning their relationship with Christ: “Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves” (2 Corinthians 13:5a). *Examine* and *prove* are commands in the present tense – they are to be a continuous action on our part. *Examine* (from *peiradzo*) means to test carefully and thoroughly, looking particularly for weaknesses or failures; Satan is called *the tempter (ho peiradzon)* because he is always tempting us to fail.<sup>10</sup> This examination is to be carried out within ourselves (and by ourselves) to ensure that we are *in the faith*: are we believing that Christ is the Son of God Who gave Himself for our sins, and are we living in obedience to His Word (His commands), or are we only endeavoring to maintain a façade of faith in Him in order to hold our social status, or living in subtle disobedience to Him? It is fundamentally and eternally important that we remain *in the faith*, for Jesus made it very clear that it is only through faithful enduring to the end that we will one day be awarded the salvation that He purchased for us (Matthew 24:13). *Prove* (from *dokimadzo*) means to evaluate through examination in order to ensure that the subject of the testing is genuine, with the intent of approval; it describes assessing metals in order to determine if they are the real thing.<sup>11</sup> The purpose of *prove*, in this case, is to be very sure that our *faith* is Biblical – genuine, according to God’s Word. As we consider the Lord’s instructions through this verse, we understand that His purpose is that we not permit anything that is not according to His Word to creep into our lives. Even though we might anticipate that all will be well, we are exhorted to conduct this examination to be sure that we are following the Lord, and that we are doing so faithfully.

We learned from Colossians 3:17 that gratitude is to attend all that we are doing for the Lord; now we are told that this same heart of thanks is to accompany all that is involved in the vigilance that we have in prayer.

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<sup>9</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT; Albert Barnes’ Notes on the Bible, *ESword*.

<sup>10</sup> *The Complete Word Study New Testament*, #3985.

<sup>11</sup> Strong’s Online.

<sup>3</sup> Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds: <sup>4</sup> That I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak.

*At the same time, praying for us that God will open to us a door for the Word, to speak the mystery of the Christ, for the sake of which I have been bound, in order that I will make it [the mystery] known as I am obligated to speak.*<sup>12</sup> Paul calls upon the Colossians to pray that God would provide him and Timothy (*us*) with opportunities to proclaim His Word, but, more specifically, the amazing *mystery of Christ*. It is evident that Paul never lost his enthusiasm for the *mystery* that God opened through the New Covenant in Christ's blood (Luke 22:20). As a zealous Pharisee, he would never have paid much attention to the prophecies that pointed so specifically to the coming Messiah, Jesus, and God's inclusion of the Gentiles in His salvation; even under the Law of Moses, God included the Gentiles (Leviticus 24:22), but the religious leaders were blindly focused on their own righteousness. The religious Jews, for the most part, refused to accept Jesus as the fulfillment of OT prophecy, and saw Him as a threat to their carefully crafted theology that elevated them over the common people. The Gospel of Christ is for everyone, without any special positioning for the Jews; it was the elimination of the Jewish traditions and the levelling of their social positions at the foot of the cross that were particularly distasteful to the Jews. It was their animosity toward the Gospel message as taught by Paul that resulted in them forcing him to appeal to Caesar and be taken, as a prisoner, to Rome (Acts 25:7-12).

Nevertheless, Paul asks the Colossians to pray that he and Timothy will have an open door to proclaim the Gospel of "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (the *mystery*, Colossians 1:27). Beyond that, Paul was keenly aware of his personal commission by the Lord. *Ought* is a rather anemic translation for the Greek word *dei*; the word is so much stronger: *it must be*, or *it is necessary*.<sup>13</sup> Paul says that he cannot refrain from teaching the *mystery* of Christ: "For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity [*angke*, divine constraint] is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!" (1 Corinthians 9:16).<sup>14</sup> Having been commissioned by the Lord Jesus to bear His name to "the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel" (Acts 9:15), Paul felt the weight of divine constraint to bring the Gospel

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<sup>12</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT; Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>13</sup> Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>14</sup> Theological Dictionary of the NT, "angke";  
<https://archive.org/details/theologicaldicti0000unse/page/54/mode/2up>.



message to all people. It is noteworthy that it was through the animosity of the Jerusalem Jews that Paul was able to proclaim the Gospel to Felix and Festus (Roman rulers), and Agrippa, who was a Roman appointee with some Jewish heritage – thereby fulfilling his commission to appear before *kings*.

**5. Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time.**

*Ye are to be living in wisdom before those without, making the most of the opportunity* (literal).<sup>15</sup> *Those without, or them that are without*, is a reference to those who are not *in Christ* – those who are bound by the activities of this world. We are to live wisely before those who are not part of the faith of Christ, so that they can see the righteousness of God being lived out through us (Romans 8:4). Clearly, this *wisdom* includes a proper reverence for the Lord (the basis for all wisdom), which can only be revealed to others through our obedience to His commands (Psalm 111:10). Once again, it is very apparent that, unless we are living in obedience to the Lord’s commands, we are not being wise nor do we have a Biblical fear of the Lord.

It is as we are living under the guidance of the Spirit of God that we will be able to use every opportunity to His glory. James asks a very interesting question: “What *doth it profit*, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?” (James 2:14); the Greek construction of the question, *is such faith able to save him?* (literal), requires the answer to be: No!<sup>16</sup> James goes on to explain: “... faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone” (James 2:17). Yet we know that *faith* (*pistis*, a noun) is key to our salvation: “He that believeth [*pisteuon*, verb form of *pistis* (present tense, active voice)] on the Son hath everlasting life ...” (John 3:36a).<sup>17</sup> As he endeavors to steer the Galatians away from compromising with those who sought to add Jewish customs to faith in the Lord, Paul makes this statement: ... *faith* [*pistis*] *is active through love* (Galatians 5:6b, literal).<sup>18</sup> Jesus said, “If ye love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15); therefore, an active faith in the Lord (*through love*) must include obedience to His commands (*keep* is in the imperative mood – it is a command)! If there is no obedience (*keep my commandments*), then there is no *love* for the Lord; if there is no *love*, then *faith* is not active – it is dead! James is right: faith without works is dead!

<sup>15</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT; Friberg Lexicon; Vine’s, “redeeming.”

<sup>16</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT; <http://www.drshirley.org/greek/textbook02/chapter50-questions.pdf>.

<sup>17</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT; Gingrich Lexicon.

<sup>18</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT.

Jesus provided an example of such dead faith: “Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity” (Matthew 7:22-23). Jesus describes those who have proclaimed His truth, cast out demons, and performed miracles **in His name** – by all appearances, they have done many things *in faith* and *in His name*, yet Jesus says that He *never knew* them. *Never* (*oudepote*, not at any time), *knew* (*egnon*, from *ginosko*, come to know/recognize, implying a relationship);<sup>19</sup> despite giving every appearance of being very spiritual, the Lord has *never known* them – they performed many spiritual works, but clearly they were done in the flesh and through the orchestration of Satan. We must be very careful that we do not attribute to God what has been done by the power of Satan, who is more than capable of presenting himself as an angel of light (2 Corinthians 11:13-15). Therefore, when we hear of miracles in answer to “prayer” (even in the name of Jesus), but the “pray-er” has no regard for the truth of God’s Word – that is the work of Satan. Consider what Paul wrote in this regard: “For to be carnally minded [*phronema tes sarkos*, purpose of mind according to the flesh] *is* death; but to be spiritually minded [*phronema tou pneumatos*, purpose of mind according to the Spirit] *is* life and peace. Because the carnal mind *is* enmity against God: for it is not subject [*obedient*] to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God” (Romans 8:6-8).<sup>20</sup> Those who are not guided by the Spirit of God cannot please Him, even if they appear to do many wonderful things in His name. Just before Jesus provided the illustration of those who gave every appearance of being very spiritually minded, He said this: “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth [*is doing*, present tense] the will of my Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 7:21).<sup>21</sup> Such a person is *in Christ* through faith, **and** he is living in obedience to His commands!

As Paul provided Timothy with instructions regarding how a local gathering of saints was to function, he specifically dealt with the qualifications for a bishop, or overseer, of such a group. “Moreover he [the bishop] must have a good report [*reputation*] of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach [*disgrace*] and the snare of the devil” (1 Timothy 3:7).<sup>22</sup> The overseers of a local assembly must live in

<sup>19</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT; *Vine’s*, “know”; Bauer Lexicon, <https://archive.org/details/a-greek-english-lexicon-of-the-new-testament-and-other-early-christian-literature/page/177/mode/2up>.

<sup>20</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT; Strong’s Dictionary.

<sup>21</sup> Strong’s Online.

<sup>22</sup> Friberg Lexicon.

such a way that those outside of the *ekklesia* will behold proper living. Today, we must be sure to qualify this: a *good report* must **never** come at the expense of obedience to God's Word. For a majority of today's society, a *good report* would require the acceptance and support of homosexuality and its many related aberrations – hence, the need to use godly *wisdom* as we develop our reputation in obedience to the Lord, before such a world. In many cases today, such a *good report* would be an abomination to the Lord, and so we must live wisely. “And have no fellowship [*participation*] with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove [*expose*] *them*. For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret. But all things that are reproved [*exposed*] are made manifest [*revealed*] by the light: for whatsoever doth make manifest is light. Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light. See then that ye walk circumspectly [*carefully*], not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming [*making the most of*] the time, because the days are evil” (Ephesians 5:11-16).<sup>23</sup> In this day of *evil*, the shameful things are no longer done *in secret*, but are openly practiced along with a resolute determination to have them accepted as being *normal*. A poll taken of Americans in 2004 showed that 60% opposed same-sex marriage, with 31% in favor; a scant 15 years later, a poll showed that only 31% opposed same-sex marriage, with 61% in favor – in such a short time, the polling numbers reversed!<sup>24</sup> Indeed, we must live *carefully* in honor of the Lord Who bought us, lest we join the many compromised Evangelicals who have chosen expediency over obedience.

*Redeeming the time* is used in both our text and Ephesians 5:16, and I have shown it as *making the most of the opportunity*. It is as we are living in godly wisdom (obeying the Lord in all things) that opportunities will present themselves when we can proclaim our allegiance to Him. Paul's words to Timothy are fitting: *stand ready to proclaim the Word: at a favorable time, an inconvenient time ...* (2 Timothy 4:2, literal).<sup>25</sup> Paul exhorts Timothy to be ready to proclaim the Word, whether the opportunity is convenient or not – that carries the essence of *redeeming the time*. We must be ready when an opportunity presents itself.

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<sup>23</sup> Friberg Lexicon; Gingrich Lexicon.

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/fact-sheet/changing-attitudes-on-gay-marriage/>.

<sup>25</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT; Friberg Lexicon; Bauer Greek-English Lexicon: <https://archive.org/details/a-greek-english-lexicon-of-the-new-testament-and-other-early-christian-literature/>.



<sup>6</sup> Let your speech *be* always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.

*Your word, always with grace, having been seasoned with salt, knowing how ye are to be answering every one* (literal).<sup>26</sup> The immediate context is living with godly wisdom before those who are not *in Christ* (the worldly), which provides the setting for this instruction on the words that we use.

First of all, our word is to always be gracious – that which brings a sense of delight, joy or favor to the hearer.<sup>27</sup> From the Greek word *charis*, it is most often thought of within the context of God extending His *grace* to mankind – a grace that we do not deserve. *For the grace of God, bringing salvation to all men, has appeared ...* (Titus 2:11, literal); *for by grace ye are brought to salvation through faith, and, not out of yourselves, this gift [is] of God* (Ephesians 2:8, literal).<sup>28</sup> It is through the *grace of God* that the means of salvation is made available to everyone; Christ paid the price for the sins of all of mankind (1 John 2:2), and our faith in what He accomplished, brings us to salvation in Him. As we abide *in Christ*, God’s favor rests upon us – in Him, we are free from the condemnation that sin brings (Romans 8:1). Therefore, we understand that our communication with others must contain the grace of God, even as we have experienced it *in Christ*.

However, Paul adds that our words are to be *seasoned with salt* – words that are beneficial to the hearer; words that are wisely spoken.<sup>29</sup> The Greek word for *seasoned* (*ērtymenos*) literally means to prepare, or make ready; it is typically applied to food where such preparation includes the use of salt in order to enhance the flavor and make it more palatable. Our words are to be *flavored* with the wisdom that comes from above – a wisdom that is only possible through an active guidance by the Spirit of God, Who abides within us to *guide* us into *all truth* (John 16:13). However, even though our wisdom-flavored words are favorable, that does not mean that they will be readily accepted; because the Spirit is our Guide, we cannot compromise the truth of God in any way – we must be tactfully forthright! Compromised truth is no longer the truth – it is a lie: the devil is the father of all lies (John 8:44), and all liars are destined for the Lake of Fire (Revelation 21:8).

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<sup>26</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT; Friberg Lexicon; Vine’s, “answer.”

<sup>27</sup> Vine’s, “grace”; Strong’s Online.

<sup>28</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT; Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>29</sup> Friberg Lexicon.

Just as the Spirit of God will season our words with wisdom from above, He will also guide our words so that they are both true and of benefit to the hearer. We certainly would not have the most appropriate word for every situation, but by yielding to the Spirit, we can be assured that He will provide what we need, even if that is silence. Jesus, our ultimate example (since He is God), was misunderstood (John 8:43), maligned (John 7:20), hated (John 15:24), and crucified out of envy (Mark 15:10) – our expectation should be nothing less. Peter says, “Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may [will] be glad also with exceeding joy” (1 Peter 4:12-13).<sup>30</sup> Such *rejoicing* can only take place if we hold the truth of God without compromise! We must be completely committed to obeying the Lord in all things under the oversight of His Spirit, for only then will we have that appropriate answer for everyone.

***7: All my state shall Tychicus declare unto you, who is a beloved brother, and a faithful minister and fellowservant in the Lord: 8: Whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that he might know your estate, and comfort your hearts;***

*Tychicus, a beloved brother, faithful servant and fellow slave in the Lord, will make known to you all concerning me, whom I send to you for this very reason: so that he will learn of you, and encourage your hearts (literal).*<sup>31</sup> As Paul nears the end of his letter, he identifies Tychicus as the one who will take it to the Colossians. What is evident (from Ephesians 6:21) is that Tychicus was also the one who delivered Paul’s letter to the Ephesians.

Paul describes him as a *beloved brother* (a dear brother in Christ), a *faithful servant (diakonos)*, and a *fellow slave (sundoulos) in the Lord*.<sup>32</sup> Once again, Paul places himself into the category of *slave* to Christ; this is significantly downplayed in our western culture – perhaps, because slavery still gives rise to some strong feelings, but I think that it is mostly that we do not like to consider ourselves to be slaves to anyone. Yet, Jesus bought us out of slavery to sin; therefore, He is our Master and we are now enslaved to righteousness (Romans 6:18). During a time

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<sup>30</sup> [https://www.ntgreek.org/learn\\_nt\\_greek/subj-purpose.htm](https://www.ntgreek.org/learn_nt_greek/subj-purpose.htm).

<sup>31</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT; Friberg Lexicon; Gingrich Lexicon; [https://www.ntgreek.org/learn\\_nt\\_greek/subj-purpose.htm](https://www.ntgreek.org/learn_nt_greek/subj-purpose.htm).

<sup>32</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT.

when slavery was prolific everywhere, Paul had no qualms about calling himself a *slave* of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Tychicus would update the Colossians on Paul's situation, as well as get to know them and be an encouragement to them. What is not stated, but seems to be implied, is that Tychicus will provide Paul with a report of what he finds in Colossae.

**<sup>9</sup> With Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother, who is *one of you*. They shall make known unto you all things which *are done here*.**

Tychicus will not be travelling alone; Onesimus, who is from Colossae, will be making the trip as well; together, they will report on Paul's situation.

Onesimus is the runaway slave of Philemon who met Paul in Rome – Paul being a prisoner of the state, but who also had much freedom. He was allowed to live in his own rented lodging with a single soldier as his guard; it was here that he welcomed all who came to him (Acts 28:16, 30). We're not told how, but Paul came into contact with Onesimus, a slave on the run, whom Paul came to call *my child to whom I became a father in my bonds* (Philemon 10, literal) – a spiritual *father* and a new spiritual *child*.<sup>33</sup> Although it is very difficult to make an accurate determination, it is estimated that the population of the city of Rome (which was about one million at this time) was comprised of about 30% slaves – making it an easy place for a runaway slave to disappear.<sup>34</sup>

It was this Onesimus, a runaway slave who was now returning to his master, who was to accompany Tychicus with Paul's letters. Indeed, Onesimus had first-hand knowledge of the influence that Paul was having from his “prison” in Rome.

**<sup>10</sup> Aristarchus my fellowprisoner saluteth you, and Marcus, sister's son to Barnabas, (touching whom ye received commandments: if he come unto you, receive him;)<sup>11</sup> And Jesus, which is called Justus, who are of the circumcision. These only *are my fellowworkers unto the kingdom of God, which have been a comfort unto me*.**

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<sup>33</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT; Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>34</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Slavery\\_in\\_ancient\\_Rome](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Slavery_in_ancient_Rome); <https://davidgalbraith.org/trivia/graph-of-the-population-of-rome-through-history/2189/>.

Now Paul sends greetings from some who are with him. Aristarchus is a *fellowprisoner* (*sunaiχmalotos*: *sun*, with and *aichmalotos*, literally, taken with the spear, or a *captive*) with Paul.<sup>35</sup> Marcus is a *cousin of Barnabas*, and is generally considered to be the same John Mark who left part way through Paul and Barnabas' second missionary journey (Acts 13:13), the reason that Paul and Barnabas parted company for a time (Acts 15:39), and the one whom Paul urged Timothy to bring because he “is profitable to me for the ministry” (2 Timothy 4:11). The Colossians have been given commands to welcome Marcus, should he come to them; it appears that these instructions were issued by Paul, indicating that Marcus had gained his favor by this time.

Marcus and Justus were Jews (*of the circumcision*), the only Jews who were laboring with Paul (*fellowworkers*), and had proven to be a comfort to him.

**12. Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God. 13. For I bear him record, that he hath a great zeal for you, and them that are in Laodicea, and them in Hierapolis.**

Epaphras is the one from whom the Colossians had heard the Gospel, and from whom Paul received a full account of the work in Colossae. He also sends his greetings, which means that he will not be returning to Colossae anytime soon. Paul



calls him a *slave* (*doulos*) of Christ, who *is always contending on your behalf in prayer so that ye will stand mature and complete in the whole will of God* (literal).<sup>36</sup> Nothing could be better than to be *mature and complete* in our obedience to the Lord (the *will of God*)! Being from Colossae, Epaphras would have been familiar with the towns of Laodicea and Hierapolis, which were located very close by – his passion for the Colossians extended to those from these neighboring towns as well.

<sup>35</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT; Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>36</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT; Bauer Greek-English Lexicon.

<sup>14</sup>. Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas, greet you. <sup>15</sup>. Salute the brethren which are in Laodicea, and Nymphas, and the church which is in his house.

The Greek shows the greeting being from Luke, with Demas added. This epistle was written in the early AD 60s; by the time that Paul wrote his second letter to Timothy (the latter AD 60s), he noted that Demas had left for Thessalonica, having forsaken him because he was distracted by the world (2 Timothy 4:10).

Paul extends greetings to those in Laodicea, as well as to Nymphas and the assembly that was in his house. This is an affirmation that there were those who were following the instruction and example of Paul who came together in a home. This was a time of great uncertainty and persecution; it was not the wealthy and influential who were being reached with the Gospel, but those of lowly means. James chided the recipients of his letter for showing partiality toward those of means: “But ye have despised the poor. Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment seats?” (James 2:6). Meeting together in a home required nothing more than the hospitality of the host; oppression by the wealthy was evidently already a reality – in all this time, nothing has changed!

<sup>16</sup>. And when this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and that ye likewise read the *epistle* from Laodicea.

Paul is calling on the Colossians to ensure that his letter to them is also read before the assembly in Laodicea, and that they hear the one directed to the Laodiceans. This tells us that the letter to the Laodiceans has been lost; however, whenever something is missing, there will always be someone to “find” it. William Hone, a radical journalist of the early 1800s who focused on political and social abuses,<sup>37</sup> published a book of manuscripts that were not included in the canon of Scripture; contained in it is the “The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Laodiceans.”<sup>38</sup> It is clearly not authentic.

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<sup>37</sup> <https://www.britannica.com/biography/William-Hone>.

<sup>38</sup> William Hone, *The Lost Books of the Bible*, p. 94 (1926 edition).



**17. And say to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it.**

A word of challenge to Archippus (who had an assembly meeting in his home, Philemon 2) that he look carefully to the ministry that he had received from the Lord, and perform it.<sup>39</sup>

**18. The salutation by the hand of me Paul. Remember my bonds. Grace *be* with you. Amen.**

It is not unusual for Paul to sign the letters that he dictated for someone else to write (2 Thessalonians 3:17), and to then offer a closing blessing.

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<sup>39</sup> Bauer Greek-English Lexicon.