

Colossians 4:14-18

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/col/col-4/colossians-414-18/>

This letter is to be read to the believers in the nearby community of Laodicea, just as a letter sent to the Laodiceans is intended to be read to the Colossians. Paul gives a personal message for a man named Archippus, then signs off wishing his readers God's favor.

In the previous section, Paul listed greetings from three men—Aristarchus, Mark, and Justus. He refers to them as the only ones “from the circumcision” who are with him. The phrase “from the circumcision” is a euphemism for the Jewish people. This suggests that the list of people in this new section consists of Gentiles.

The first man is *Luke, the beloved physician* (vs 14). *Luke* is believed to be the author of both The Gospel of Luke and The Book of Acts. He was not one of the original twelve apostles, but clearly had an intimate knowledge of Jesus' life and was a traveling companion of Paul during his missionary journeys. He is mentioned as being with Paul in 2 Timothy and Philemon. *Luke sends the Colossians his greetings.*

The next man to *also* send greetings is *Demas*. *Demas* is a traveling companion of Paul, who is also mentioned in Philemon and 2 Timothy. However, the 2 Timothy reference suggests that *Demas* deserts Paul and the mission, indicating that 2 Timothy was written after Colossians,

“for Demas, having loved this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica.”
(2 Timothy 4:10)

Having concluded the list of his greetings from his companions, Paul then moves to instructing the Colossians to share his greetings with those nearby: *Greet the brethren who are in Laodicea and also Nympha and the church that is in her house* (vs 15). *Laodicea* is a neighboring community. ([See Map](#)) Paul instructs the Colossian to greet those *brethren*, or fellow believers, who reside there.

Nympha was a Laodicean believer who hosted a *church* gathering in her *house*. It is interesting that Paul calls out this specific gathering; there were likely others. It suggests a familiarity or particular fondness with *Nympha* and her work. There are numerous references to churches that gathered at specific houses (Romans 16:5; 1 Corinthians 16:19; Philemon 1:2). It appears the organization of the early church was largely centered around people's homes.

Paul's letters are mostly written to groups of believers in particular communities he has visited. He instructs the Colossians: *when this letter is read among you, have it also read in the church of the Laodiceans* (vs 16). There is instruction in the letter to the Colossians that Paul no doubt wants the *Laodiceans* to read. There also may be a sense of accountability—if the *brethren* next door see what Paul is instructing, it puts everyone on the same page and it is easier/clearer to hold to a standard.

This is a two-way street. Paul says, *and you, for your part read my letter that is coming from Laodicea*. This letter that Paul wrote to Laodicea has been lost to antiquity. Clearly, Paul wrote a letter to the church in Laodicea and the plan was for the two communities to swap letters after reading their own. Paul gives the Colossians a sense of responsibility for sending their letter to Laodicea as well as a sense of responsibility for retrieving the letter from them.

Paul then gives a specific instruction to a specific person: *Archippus*. It is not clear if *Archippus* is Colossian or if he is Laodicean. But the letter instructs the believers in Colossae to *Say to Archippus, "Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you fulfill it"* (vs 17).

In this instruction to *Archippus*, Paul gives a cryptic kind of message, not sharing the details, but something of which *Archippus* at least was expected to comprehend. We do not know anything about *Archippus* or the *ministry* to which he was called. Perhaps this is evidence of a relatively recent conversation that needed fortifying, a brother who needed a deeper level of encouragement, who would undertake a vital (perhaps dangerous) ministry requiring an extra dose of courage.

In the custom of the day, Paul's letter was likely dictated to a scribe. To sign off, Paul takes the pen himself and writes, *I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. Remember my imprisonment. Grace be with you* (vs 18).

That Paul writes directly to *Nympha* and *Archippus* shows what kind of letter he has penned. It is deeply personal. Paul has an intimate relationship with the community of believers in Colossae and the individuals who make up that community.

The apostle leaves the believers in Colossae with two salutations: *remember my imprisonment*; and *grace be with you*.

He wants his fellow believers to not forget the cost of following the Kingdom of God, that Paul himself is paying the price and that all believers are called to unify amidst the sufferings of Christ. Paul continually teaches that suffering the sufferings of Christ is in our best interest, because it is the path that leads to winning the great prize of life (Romans 8:17b; 1 Corinthians 9:24-25; Philippians 2:5-11).

Secondly, Paul leaves them with an encouragement: the word *grace* can also be translated "favor." It is Paul offering well-wishes. That the favor of God might rest with the believers.

Biblical Text

¹⁴ Luke, the beloved physician, sends you his greetings, and also Demas. ¹⁵ Greet the brethren who are in Laodicea and also Nympha and the church that is in her house. ¹⁶ When this letter is read among you, have it also read in the church of the Laodiceans; and you, for your part read my letter that is coming from Laodicea. ¹⁷ Say to Archippus, "Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it." ¹⁸ I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. Remember my imprisonment. Grace be with you.