

JESUS CHRIST, OUR ALL IN ALL

A Study of Colossians

STUDY TEN

A Fond and Friend-Filled Farewell

Colossians 4:7–18

There is no book like the Book of God. No other book can read your intention; can penetrate to your soul, to your spirit. No other book remains alive, regardless where you may turn in its pages. It is relevant. It is in touch. It is penetrating. It is real. We are learning in our study of the Scriptures how valuable these pages, these writings, these truths can be.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

DRIVEN. *Single-minded. Undeterred. Accomplished.* Just a few words to describe the apostle Paul, famous for his gospel-zeal and risky travels to proclaim the gospel of Christ where it had not been heard. With these personality traits, some might think of Paul as a lone ranger . . . but he wasn't.

Many of Paul's letters end with specific greetings. Not in a stiff, cold manner but in a fond, warm one, revealing his affection and dependence upon close friends who were his co-laborers.

We arrive at such an ending in this tenth and final study of the book of Colossians. Pastor Chuck Swindoll emphasizes the immense importance of friendships—how they help us like a sheltering tree, shading us from the blistering heat of life and blocking us from biting winds of the world.



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Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

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PREPARE YOUR HEART

Begin with a request to your Father in heaven. Ask Him for His spiritual provision. Pray that the theological seeds of Colossians might mature you into producing spiritual fruit for many more seasons beyond the weeks you have spent in Colossians.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

Before examining the details of Colossians 4:7–18, read through the *whole letter* once more. Do so slowly. Recall what you learned earlier in this series. Reflect on how your perspective has changed, the old practices you shed, and the new habits you picked up.

When I think of friends, I think of companionship. I mean a circle of friends that meets many needs in the realms of your life that a family member can't meet. Individuals who get to know you because you allow that, and you in turn get to know them. They know your weaknesses, and they know your struggles. They understand the times when you can't put thoughts into words and other times when you say more than you should, and you don't want anyone else to hear. A friend hears all of that. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Observation: Paul's Close Circle of Friends

Using your observation skills, determine the location and significance of the friends Paul mentioned in *Colossians 4:7–18*.

Who were the two individuals Paul sent with his letter to the Colossian church?

1. _____

2. _____



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Who were the six individuals who remained with Paul in Rome?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

Who were the two individuals Paul addressed in Colossae?

1. _____
2. _____

How did Paul characterize Epaphras in *Colossians 4:12–13*?

How valuable is a friend who is that kind of prayer warrior! In every circle of Christian friends I've observed, at least one is known as a person of prayer. We look to him or her. We rely on him or her. When some great need occurs, these prayer warriors are the ones we contact. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



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Paul ends the letter with three statements in *Colossians 4:18*. What three components make up these statements?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

What a special insight into Paul's social circle as well as the man himself! We read his comments, concerns, and requests. These glimpses show us how the high-minded apostle kept his feet on the ground and his heart on his sleeve.



Interpretation: Traits Worth Modeling

During interpretation, we discover the significance of what Paul wrote. This process helps us build a bridge between past and present, allowing the timeless, biblical truths to travel across the ages.

In this study, we pay close attention to the role Paul's friends played in the early church, and we note those traits worth emulating. For this exercise, you will need your Bible dictionary.

Begin by looking up the article on *Tychicus*. Summarize his importance in Paul's ministry. Then record one timeless principle we see in the relationship between Paul and Tychicus—especially from what we read in *Colossians 4:7–9*.



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Next, look up *Demas* (*Colossians 4:14*). What tragic change occurred in Demas' life that we can see in the New Testament story? How is Demas' life an important warning for Christians today?

Not all friends remain loyal. Not all friends stay strong. I could name some who were once very close, but for various reasons they turned on the things of God. And today, they wouldn't even want to be named alongside the things of God. They are the Demases of our times. Be careful dealing with people like this. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

From Paul's comments about *Epaphras* (*4:12–13*), what Christian traits do we find in Epaphras worth modeling in our own lives? List two or three that you find most significant.

When Paul commanded, "Remember my chains" (*4:18*), he likely wanted the Colossian church to pray for his circumstances. Based on your reading of Colossians, what specifically did Paul want the Colossian church to pray for? Why is this important for the church today, as some church members enjoy freedom while others suffer imprisonment?



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Paul ended this letter the way he began—with an extension of grace. Paul knew personally the power of grace which had radically transformed him and then sustained him. Paul wanted the church in Colossae to abide in grace, to never forget the benefits available to us in Jesus Christ.



Correlation: A Story of Grace

The apostle of grace did not always keep his anger at bay. As you will read, Paul felt like young John Mark had deserted him, that John Mark had proven himself unworthy of Paul's gospel-spreading mission. Their relationship, highlighted in *Colossians 4:10*, demonstrates the power of grace to change a heart.

First, review *John Mark* in a Bible dictionary.

Summarize the conflict in *Acts 13:13–14* and *15:35–41* that arose between Paul and John Mark during Paul's first missionary journey between AD 47 and 48.

Based on Paul's statement in *Colossians 4:10* (circa AD 61) and *2 Timothy 4:11* (circa AD 66), how had the relationship between Paul and John Mark changed? How is this change instructive for Christians today?



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Through the years, John Mark matured. He became reliable. He saw the failure of his early decision when he abandoned these wonderful friends. And he probably came full circle and maybe even made it right with Paul. So much so, Paul said of Mark, “Welcome him if he comes your way.” Isn’t that great? Here’s a man who had been abandoned by Mark now saying, “I speak in his behalf.” By the way, next time you read the gospel by Mark, remember John Mark. He’s the one who wrote it. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Paul never stopped growing in grace. He did not let the root of bitterness take hold of his heart toward a co-laborer in the gospel. Paul knew the value of spiritual partnerships, not only for the special support they provide but also for the unique delight they bring. That’s why he nourished these relationships. That’s why we must follow his example.



Application: Grace Be with You

First, consider the spiritual partnerships you enjoy. Whether your letter would end with many names or just a few, jot those names down below. Give thanks for them. Pray for their needs and spiritual strength. Model Epaphras’ prayer requests from *Colossians 4:12*.

Now consider one timeless truth and one application you learned from the book of Colossians that you would like to keep with you and cultivate more fully in your life. Write those down below and make a plan for incorporating them into your attitude and habits.



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Paul cared more for the spiritual maturity of local churches than for his own ease. He could endure the chains because he surrendered the outcome of his life to God. He trusted in God's grace no matter what God chose for him—even if it meant chains. End this study by praying Horatius Bonar's hymn below that you might have the same heart and mind as Paul.



A FINAL PRAYER

Thy Way, not Mine, O Lord

I dare not choose my lot;
I would not if I might:
Choose Thou for me, my God,
So shall I walk aright.
Choose Thou for me my friends,
My sickness or my health;
Choose Thou my cares for me,
My poverty or wealth.
Not mine, not mine, the choice
In things both great and small;
Be Thou my guide, my strength,
My wisdom, and my all!¹

ENDNOTE

1. Horatius Bonar, "The Way, not Mine, O Lord," hymnary.org (1857), https://hymnary.org/text/thy_way_not_mine_o_lord.

