

Harmony in Ministry – Sunday, June 1, 2025

A. Background Scriptures:

Colossians 4:2 – 4:18

Further Instructions	Final Greetings and Benediction
<p>²Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with thanksgiving. ³At the same time, pray for us as well, that God will open to us a door for the word, that we may declare the mystery of Christ, for which I am in prison, ⁴so that I may reveal it clearly, as I should.</p> <p>⁵Conduct yourselves wisely toward outsiders, making the most of the time. ^[a] ⁶Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer everyone.</p>	<p>⁷Tychicus will tell you all the news about me; he is a beloved brother, a faithful minister, and a fellow servant in the Lord. ⁸I have sent him to you for this very purpose, so that you may know how we are ^[b] and that he may encourage your hearts; ⁹he is coming with Onesimus, the faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you. They will tell you about everything here.</p> <p>¹⁰Aristarchus my fellow prisoner greets you, as does Mark the cousin of Barnabas, concerning whom you have received instructions; if he comes to you, welcome him. ¹¹And Jesus who is called Justus greets you. These are the only ones of the circumcision among my coworkers for the kingdom of God, and they have been a comfort to me. ¹²Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, ^[c] greets you. He is always striving in his prayers on your behalf, so that you may stand mature and fully assured ^[d] in everything that God wills. ¹³For I testify for him that he has worked hard for you and for those in Laodicea and in Hierapolis. ¹⁴Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas greet you. ¹⁵Give my greetings to the brothers and sisters in Laodicea and to Nympha and the church in her ^[e] house. ¹⁶And when this letter has been read among you, have it read also in the church of the Laodiceans, and see that you read also the letter from Laodicea. ¹⁷And say to Archippus, "See that you complete the task that you have received in the Lord."</p> <p>¹⁸I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. Remember my chains. Grace be with you. ^[f]</p>

B. Background Setting:

The Book of Colossians

- Largely believed to have been authored by the Apostle Paul
- Colossae was located in modern-day Turkey. It was close to Laodicea and Hierapolis. At one point it was quite prosperous; but, a main road had been rerouted through Laodicea which by-passed Colossae and lead to the area's financial decline. The area was a mixture of Jewish and Gentile believers.
- The Church of Colossae was established by Epaphras, who had accepted Christ in Ephesus; but, after some time planted a church in Colossae.
- When the Book was written, Paul was already imprisoned...
 - Prison Epistles (60 – 62 AD)
 - Ephesians - *Church*
 - Philippians - *Church*
 - Colossians - *Church*
 - Philemon – *A Believer in Christ*
- *During this time, some scholars believed that Philemon was a part of the Church at Colossae. He was thought to have been a wealthy man who owned a house large enough to host a church congregation. The letter to Philemon is a request for the wealthy owner to receive a runaway slave, who has converted to Christianity and been helpful to Paul in ministry. Paul is asking the owner to receive Onesimus as a beloved brother in Christ upon his return.*
 - Parallel themes symbolic of life and the Body of Christ
 - Christian Reconciliation
 - Love
 - Spiritual equality
 - Slavery,
 - Forgiveness
 - Christian Fellowship
 - Galatians 3:28 – There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male or female; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.

C. Letter to the Church of Colossae delivered by

- **Tychicus** – The name means “fortuitous” or fortunate. He was one of the Gentile converts Paul took to Jerusalem as a representative of the Gentile Churches (Acts 20:4) He was a reliable companion of Paul and a capable leader since he was considered as a replacement for Titus and Timothy on separate occasions. He had the responsibility to deliver Paul's letters to the Colossians, the Ephesians and Philemon.
- **Aristarchus** – The Greek name of a Jewish native of Thessalonica. He was one of Paul's companions who was seized by a rioting mob in Ephesus and also accompanied Paul on his trip to Jerusalem and his voyage to Rome.

- **Archippus** – Most likely the son of Philemon. Paul’s message to him to fulfill his ministry is similar to the exhortation to Timothy.
- **Onesimus** – The runaway slave who returned to his master was the basis for Paul’s letter to Philemon.

D. Other Notable Biblical Figures in Colossians

- **Mark** – Who at one point had fallen out of favor with Paul for some time, is seen here as one of Paul’s key helpers. ☐ John Mark was not one of the 12 disciples, but he was a follower of Jesus and part of the early church. His mother’s house in Jerusalem was a meeting place for believers (Acts 12:12), which likely made him familiar with Jesus and the disciples. He was a companion of Paul and Barnabas on their missionary journey (Acts 12:25, 13:5). He left the journey early (Acts 13:13), which caused conflict between Paul and Barnabas (Acts 15:36–40). He later became closely associated with the apostle Peter. In 1 Peter 5:13, Peter calls him “my son Mark,” suggesting a mentor-mentee relationship. Early church tradition (like that of Papias, ~100 AD) holds that John Mark wrote the Gospel of Mark based on Peter’s teachings.
- **Epaphras** – Founder of the Church in Colossae
- **Luke** – Paul’s personal physician and close friend who traveled frequently with him on his missionary journeys and wrote the Gospel of Luke and Acts. A Physician and Historian, Luke is referred to as “the beloved physician” in Colossians 4:14. He is widely regarded as a careful researcher and historian, and his writings show attention to detail, names, dates, geography, and cultural context. A Companion of Paul, Luke, traveled with Paul during his missionary journeys. You can see this in the “we” passages in Acts (e.g., Acts 16:10), indicating Luke was present.
 - Paul mentions Luke in several letters:
 - Philemon 1:24 – Luke is called a fellow laborer.
 - 2 Timothy 4:11 – Paul says, “*Only Luke is with me.*”
 - Author of Two Books:
 - The Gospel of Luke, Written to Theophilus (Luke 1:1–4). Luke explicitly says he was not an eyewitness but had carefully investigated everything from the beginning.
 - The Acts of the Apostles - Also addressed to Theophilus (Acts 1:1), and acts as a sequel to his Gospel. “*I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning... so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught.*” — Luke 1:3–4

Question	Answer
Was Luke one of the 12?	No
Did he see Jesus personally?	Likely not, he says he investigated all accounts
Was he a follower of Christ?	Yes
Was he close to Paul?	Yes
What did he write?	Gospel of Luke & Acts of the Apostles

- **Demas** – A man who demonstrated substantial commitment to the Lord's work before the attraction of the world led him to abandon Paul and the ministry. (2 Timothy 4:9-10)
- **Nympha and the church** – A church met in her house, probably in Laodicea

E. Purpose of the Letter for the Colossians: To point out false teachings going on within the church. The message of Christianity was largely intertwined with traditional Jewish beliefs from the Old Testament and Greek ideologies. **Paul is establishing the deity of Christ** and asking the Laodiceans and Colossians to demonstrate Christ through their lifestyles.

Colossians 1:13-16: ¹³*He has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son,* ¹⁴*in whom we have redemption,^[h] the forgiveness of sins.* ¹⁵*He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation,* ¹⁶*for in^[i] him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through him and for him.* (NRSV)

Throughout the Book of Colossians, Paul calls for the rejection of any so-called knowledge, religions or secular beliefs that diminish the uniqueness of Christ. The way he does this is to ask the Colossians to reflect Christ's character in every area of their lives.

- Paul exalts Christ
- But he also earnestly advises the Colossians to do the same.

F. Purpose for the Church Today: Colossians addresses key topics like:

- The Deity of Christ (Colossians 1:15-20; 2:2-10) - the Apostle Paul proclaims that **Jesus Christ is fully divine**—not just a teacher or prophet, but **God in human form**, the visible image of the invisible God and the supreme ruler over all creation.
- Reconciliation (Colossians 1:20-23) - Paul explains that **Jesus Christ's death brought reconciliation between God and humanity**, transforming enemies into beloved children and restoring peace to a broken relationship.

- Redemption (Colossians 1:13-14, 2:13-14:3:9-11) - Paul's message in Colossians paints a powerful picture of **redemption**—the act by which God **rescues, forgives, and transforms** us through Christ. It's not just about being saved from sin, but being **transferred into a new identity and kingdom**.
- Election (Colossians 3:12) - The Apostle Paul addresses believers as **"God's chosen ones, holy and beloved"**, urging them to embody virtues such as compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. This verse underscores the concept of **election**, highlighting the identity and responsibilities of those who are in Christ.
- Forgiveness (Colossians 3:13) – The Apostle Paul addresses the importance of forgiveness.
- The Nature of the Church (Colossians 1:18, 24-25; 2:19; 3:11,15) - In his letter to the Colossians, Paul describes the **Church** as a **living, Christ-centered body**, unified by faith, held together by love, and called to reflect the fullness of Christ in the world. These verses reveal both the **identity** and **function** of the Church in God's divine plan.

G. Paul's Imprisonment

1. Philippi (Macedonia) – Acts 16:22–40

- Paul and Silas were beaten and jailed after casting out a spirit from a slave girl.
- They sang hymns in prison, and an earthquake miraculously opened the prison doors.
- This is an early example of Paul being physically bound for preaching the gospel.

2. Caesarea Maritima (Israel) – Acts 23–26

- Held under Roman custody for two years after being accused by Jewish leaders in Jerusalem.
- This was essentially house arrest under Governor Felix and later Festus.
- He appealed to Caesar, which sent him on a journey to Rome.

3. Rome (Italy) – Acts 28:16, 30–31

- Paul spent two years under house arrest in Rome, awaiting trial before Caesar.

- During this time, he had some freedom to preach and receive visitors.
- Many scholars believe Paul wrote the so-called Prison Epistles (Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon) during this period.

4. Final Roman Imprisonment (not recorded in Acts, but referenced in 2 Timothy)

- A second Roman imprisonment, likely in a harsher dungeon-like setting.
- Paul writes 2 Timothy as a farewell letter, sensing that his execution was near (2 Timothy 4:6–8).
- Theologians believe, Paul was eventually martyred under Emperor Nero, likely by beheading.

Location	Scripture Reference	Type of Captivity
Philippi	Acts 16	Jailed and beaten (<i>Paul and Silas locked in jail</i>)
Jerusalem	Acts 21-23	Arrested and interrogated
Caesarea	Acts 23-26	Held two years under Felix – former slave becomes governor of Judea (<i>Claudius</i>)
Rome (1 st Time)	Acts 28	House arrest
Rome (2 nd Time)	2 Timothy	Harsh prison, awaiting death

H. Disciples of Christ

Name	Also Know As	Brief Notes
Simon Peter	Peter, Cephas	Leader of the Twelve; a fisherman; denied Jesus three times; later a foundational leader of the early Church
Andrew	Brother of Peter	Former disciple of John the Baptist; first to follow Jesus
James (son of Zebedee)	James the Greater	Brother of John; part of Jesus' martyred early (Acts 12:2)
John (son of Zebedee)	The beloved disciple	Brother of James; inner circle; author of the Gospel of John, epistles, and Revelation
Philip		Asked Jesus to show them the Father (John 14:8); brought Nathanael to Jesus
Bartholomew	Believed to be Nathanael	An Israelite in whom there is no deceit (John 1:47)
Matthew	Levi	Tax collector; author of the Gospel of Matthew

Name	Also Know As	Brief Notes
Thomas	Also called Didymus	"Doubting Thomas"; declared Jesus, "My Lord and my God!" after the resurrection
James (son of Alphaeus)	James the Less	Less is known; not to be confused with James, the brother of Jesus
Thaddeus	Also called Judas son of James; possibly Lebbaeus	Asked Jesus at the Last Supper why He would reveal Himself to the disciples and not to the world (John 14:22)
Simon the Zealot		Possibly a former member of the Zealot political movement
Judas Iscariot		Betrayed Jesus; later replaced by Matthias (Acts 1:26)