

Dr. Daniel K. Darko, Prison Epistles, Session 7, The Closing, Colossians 4

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This is Dr. Dan Darko in his lecture series on the Prison Epistles. This is session 7, The Closing, Colossians 4.

Welcome back to the Biblical Studies lecture series on prison epistles.

I hope you've been having fun so far studying this wonderful epistle called Colossians with us. We have covered a few things in Colossians so far. We have gone through introductory material and have covered chapter one, chapter two, and chapter three.

As you follow chapter two and chapter three in particular, you probably noticed that Paul narrowed down to begin to address internal issues in the church. He highlighted a few things. He spelled out what his core aim is.

And if you remember me saying it in strange accents several times, as you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him. He builds on that outlines some elements of the false teaching and goes on to encourage the church to live up to their faith. The last part of the third chapter that we discussed has to do with household relationships.

You probably saw a funny word in the process: Haustafel. Haustafel is the German word for household codes, like household laws. Scholars use that term to express Paul's discussions or the New Testament discussion on household relationships.

Paul ends that internal discourse by highlighting the need for families to work together, all under the umbrella of the Lordship of Christ and in the spirit of Christ, so that there will be solidarity, cordiality, and decency that will actually speak to society about the genuine qualities that Christians have. In chapter four, verse two, we see a major shift now where Paul is going to look outward as he brings his letter to a close. This is where we'll be focusing today, looking at Paul's final admonitions and closing remarks.

Perhaps let me just give you some markers. Sometimes I call it the light bulb. Sometimes, I call it the flashlights so that you can have it ringing at the back of your mind as we begin to look into this text.

One, as we look to verses 2 to 18, 18 being the last verse of Colossians, look for these three things happening in the text. First, the fact that Paul is going to make a direct

appeal that his letter to the Colossians should be passed on to another church to read. Very unusual in Pauline writings, indeed.

I'll also ask that you make some very important observations about the way Paul writes personal greetings. Perhaps so far, that is one of the most boring parts of your readings of the New Testament. I hope that today you ignite a new passion to actually like this part of the New Testament.

As you observe the personal greetings, also observe the details that Paul brings into this because those details speak to two things. As you remember, at the beginning of the discussion on Colossians, we went through the issue of whether Paul was the author of Colossians or not. As you observe the personal details that he brings in chapter four, you may want to ask, if Paul was not writing this letter, was someone putting this information out to convince or persuade a church that has people who knew Paul or who knew about Paul's ministry, to make them believe that somehow Paul was writing this? Is it likely that the specifics that Paul brings into this discussion, if Paul were not writing, will actually betray the one hiding behind Paul to put this letter forward? Or, think through the fact that, and this is what I hold, these details further affirm the fact that no one could be writing this letter except Paul.

And if not Paul penning every detail, as we see in verse 18, perhaps Paul writing along with one of his friends, which he did for several of his letters, including Corinthians, for instance. As you make those two initial observations, note the third observation there. Pay attention to how Paul emphasizes spiritual discipline.

Pay attention to how he draws the reader's attention to devotion to a Christian life. Also, you want to observe how Paul is interested in relationships. Again, if you are going to pay attention to this or have this at the back of your mind, then you will begin to like, actually, what is going on in Paul's greetings.

Or, I want to encourage you to begin to like them. So, let's begin to look at the first part of this passage. Verse 2 of chapter 4 reads, continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful with thanksgiving.

This simple verse, as is often seen, is what I have called hesitation for prayer and discipline. Paul does not actually use the word to continue in prayer. The word can translate to devote yourselves to prayer.

That is why, in your English translation, you may find different scholars translating that expression differently. The idea is that Paul is actually establishing the fact that this is not supposed to be a one-time event, but it's supposed to be something that should continue. Now, note here that this is a connecting factor between the internal discussion and what he is going to do, as his focus is outward at this time.

And guess what the link is? Paul will talk about prayer. Wow. How often do you hear discussions about prayer from the last chapters, the last few verses of Paul, or the early parts of Pauline writings? Paul is interested in prayer.

In fact, he began Colossians in the very first chapter, giving thanks and praying. He would end with prayer. Now, I want to encourage you to also pay close attention to figures like Jesus Christ.

You will also notice how prayer has been part of these early Christian leaders. In Jesus's case, specifically as our Lord, our master, our savior, and our model, he began with prayer. Do you remember him fasting and praying and being tempted? Do you remember that event? Do you also remember in the gospel accounts at the end of his life when he prayed, Father, in your hands, I commend my spirit.

In between the gospels, if you notice even in Jesus's life, how often he would stop and pray or how often he would teach his disciples prayer, about prayer, and sometimes how he would call his disciples and say, well, it's time to retreat from one place to the other. And even in the course of the time, he will actually go out and be alone by himself. Specific to Jesus before we return to Paul, you will also notice that in the most difficult times, he goes to pray, like in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Prayer is, for me, one of the least emphasized themes in the discussion on Paul. Paul will bring Colossians' attention to devote themselves continually to prayer. As they do that, they should do it with the right attitude.

Prayer must be marked by vigilance. He says, be watchful. In Paul, the language of being watchful or alert usually has the implication of being watchful because of the end time or the eschatological season.

Here, he seemed to be leaving that open to suggest that you want to be watchful, you want to be vigilant because, in the first place, there are false teachers in the church, there is possible infiltration of false teaching, and the early believers who are susceptible or potentially susceptible to the influence of false teaching and all kinds of things that are not worthy of the Lord must be watchful, must be vigilant, must be on their guard in the spirit of prayer in a time where they are calling on God and asking for his strength and grace to lead their lives. The second attitude beyond vigilance is gratitude. Gratitude.

Wow. Let me remind you about this quality of Paul, and I will show you in Colossians alone how Paul brings thankfulness to emphasize an important quality that Christians should have. But before we go to gratitude, let me take you back to chapter one of Colossians to refresh your memory about how Paul began his ending, emphasizing prayer.

Look at how he began in verse three of chapter one. We thank God, and we always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you since we heard of your faith because of the hope laid up for you in heaven. Of this, you have heard before the word of the truth of the gospel.

Notice verse three: we always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and he will go on to pray. And then in his prayer, if you remember the discussion on that, I drew your attention to Paul's prayer from verse 10 or 11, when he says, may you be strengthened with all power according to his glorious might for endurance and patience with joy, giving thanks to the Father who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of our sins.

Paul, in the very first chapter, brings our prayer and thanksgiving and meets them together. Here, he says, pray, pray constantly. You know, there's this Bible quiz that we used to have. Sometimes, we have these Bible quizzes, and we get free Bibles and sometimes some goodies for reciting memory verses that we know.

I don't know if you had that experience, but you probably have come across someone who has actually asked you, what is the shortest verse of the Bible? We like that line. And it may intrigue you to recall that actually, the shortest verse of the Bible is the one that says pray without ceasing. Pray always, 1 Thessalonians 5 17.

Paul's tone of prayer is for them to continue in that spirit of prayer. It's not a one-time event. Let prayer be part of their lives.

That is why when you look at the ESV or some of the other translations, they will actually supply the word that is not in Greek and continue in prayer. And, of course, the spirit is gratitude. And just in case you forget about Paul and the sense of gratitude, let me remind you from chapter one: may you be strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all the endurance and patience with joy.

Verse 12, giving thanks to the Father. In other words, they should understand their life should be exemplified and live with this sense of gratitude to the Father who has qualified them to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. It is he who has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved son in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

This is worthy of thanksgiving and gratitude. Let me remind you of another passage we pass through quickly in this discussion on Colossians, where Paul also highlights thanksgiving. In verses six and seven, if you remember in that lecture, I call it the heart of the matter.

That particular heart issue ends with being rooted and built up in him and established in faith just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving, being full or full of thanksgiving as you establish your roots firmly in Christ Jesus. In chapter three, you probably remember talking about thanksgiving again. Paul writes in verse 15, let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body.

And then, at the end of verse 15, he brings out this thankfulness or gratitude again, and be thankful. And then he goes on with verse 16 and then verse 17, he will go on to say, and whatever you do in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. Let's get back to Colossians 4.2, our passage.

So, when Paul begins this part, the last part of his discussion in Colossians, with this verse, continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving. You know that this is a Christian leader encouraging a church to have a spirit of gratitude. How many of you like to hang around with mooners? That's an expression we used back in England. In America, I've learned that sometimes we use the expression grumpy people.

You know, sometimes, beneath some grumpiness is a sense of ingratitude and entitlement. When people think they are entitled to all that comes to them, and all the people they meet, and all that God does to them, they feel God is doing his job by saving them. God is just doing his job by giving them forgiveness and taking the debt and guilt and shame that is supposed to be their portion.

And so they have no sense of gratitude whatsoever. Paul in Colossians would say that for a Christian living, this is an attitude that should be part of how life is lived. This is the attitude that we should bring when we come before God in prayer.

This is an attitude that should be part of how we live and interact with people, a sense of gratitude. I have learned personally in life that I do not deserve the good things people do to me. They exercise their rights and their will to do good to me.

The least I can do is to pause and say thank you and to show a sense of gratitude. And the more I do that, the more I realize I tend to be at peace with myself, and at peace with people, because I could see all that they put in to reach out to me. Lack of gratitude or ungratefulness is one of the seeds of discord, and it invites all kinds of thoughts into the community to cause problems.

In a church where Paul had just mentioned the potential effect of false teaching, it is important that as they continue in prayer, being vigilant, they also do this in the spirit of gratitude. This brings Paul to specific prayer requests. If they will continue in prayer, and they will continue in prayer with the right attitude, then he needs their prayer support.

In fact, he needs their prayer support so that doors may be open to him for the gospel. I read from verse 3. At the same time, pray also for us that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison, that I may make it clear which is how I ought to speak. Paul asks for prayer support specifically so that doors may be open for the gospel.

Would you just like to pause and think about this? This is a man in jail for the sake of the gospel. This is a man behind closed doors, so to speak, for the sake of the gospel. He has prayer requests for those he had the opportunity to communicate with.

What was the first prayer item? Pray that I'll get out of here quickly, right now or tomorrow. Or pray that all my gospel dies so that I will just sneak out. Or pray that the magistrate who is responsible for my case will die, and they'll miss the files, and for some reason, they will just write the case off, and I'll be free, and I can preach the gospel then.

No, no. Paul was still concerned about the gospel being preached. Prison doors had not stopped him, and if he had the first prayer item to send out, it was so that doors could be opened to them to proclaim the gospel.

He goes on to even ask for more, that they may actually pray that God will give them the ability to proclaim the mystery of Christ because it is this mystery of Christ that is responsible for sending him to jail. The message of the gospel, as we will see in Ephesians, is that God has inaugurated a new event in human history, an event beyond salvation or a covenant community of the Jews. That in Christ Jesus, God is bringing Jews and Gentiles and uniting them into the community of God, into the household of God, as Ephesians 2:19 will put it.

Paul says, pray that we might be able to proclaim that. So, pray that open doors will be there, and when the open doors are there, pray that we don't keep our mouths shut. Just imagine that.

Just imagine having prison guards around you. Just imagine being in jail, even if it is house arrest. Just imagine the limitations that one has.

And if you have prayer requests to put out, are they the first two to put out? For Paul, he is what he's been called to do. That is his passion, and nothing will stop him for carrying out the mission of Christ. He needs prayer support to that effect.

Unless he starts off to speak boldly and mumbles, he asks that they pray that he may speak with clarity. Wow. He might not miss anything, and he will speak with such clarity that there will be no ambiguity whatsoever.

Well, maybe we should ask ourselves, as I would like to ask myself, how often is prayer put on such top priority in my life? And if Paul sees prayer not only as a lifestyle for the Colossians to adopt or develop but he realizes his need for prayer in this area. How much do I need prayer? And how much do I need the grace and the strength of God to live life and not be contaminated with all forms of teachings, all forms of deceptions around me, even in the 21st century? Paul will go on after asking for this prayer to make specific what I call concluding admonitions. Let's take note of some keywords that he brings out here.

In his concluding admonitions from verse 5, he walks in wisdom toward outsiders. Note wisdom. Some translators have translated that; be wise.

Be wise in the way you conduct yourself towards outsiders. The word I explained earlier on in this lecture, the word to walk here, is the word to conduct yourself, not literally walking. Be wise.

Being wise is not just an intellectual activity in ancient Greek understanding. Being wise is being able to make wise choices in life. And so, the wise person is not only wise intellectually but applies wisdom in the way they conduct themselves.

Wisdom manifests itself in the way people interact and deal with people, in the decisions they make private or public. Here specifically Paul says, be wise in the way you conduct yourself, in the choices you make about how you live your life. I saw an incident with a couple recently.

A young lady was preparing for her wedding, and she had several tattoos on her chest. It became apparent as the parents were choosing the wedding dress that her mother was very embarrassed by the tattoo. And so, the mother was trying to do everything for them to get a wedding dress that would cover the tattoo.

I am not suggesting for a minute that I am against tattoos. But I'm just saying that this is a decision that this girl had made. It's a decision about how she will make some life choices.

It was interesting to observe how one particular choice she made in life was creating confusion and animosity between her and her mother in one of the most important events in her life. I am not suggesting it is a sin to have a tattoo. That is not a subject matter here in Colossians.

But I'm just pointing out the fact that Paul asked the Christians to be wise. Now, not in the way they conduct themselves in the church, but in the way they conduct themselves towards outsiders. It matters that outsiders find Christ in the way Christians live.

Paul, looking outward, is very concerned that the world out there may not see us as exemplary. Now, make no mistake about this. Paul is not suggesting that Christians compromise.

No, if anything, he's actually suggesting that Christians set high moral standards for the rest of the world to follow. Be wise in the way you conduct yourself. The way you conduct yourself is not only good for you and for the believing community, but it is also good for the way outsiders look at us.

He'll go on and make another important admonition. And this regards the use of time. Back in Africa, there is something called African time.

Pardon me for my word or my language here. It drives me crazy. African time is one hour beyond the actual Swiss time.

So, we say let's meet at four o'clock. And what everybody else here is people show up at five. Paul tells the Christians to make use of every time, every opportunity.

In fact, the Greek reads like this. It is a business term that is used here. Buy time out, buy out the time.

Don't seize the time. Don't let the time, the opportunity, the Greek word used here is not the word that is like time. It is a word that is often used for some special opportunities that may come.

And he says, seize the time, make good use of all the time. And don't play around with time. By the way, do you know that? If God were to put us in front of him to account for how we lived our lives, he may just ask us one question.

And that one question may be related to time management. How did you live your life on earth? And if you are 24 years old, it may begin to go like this. You know, God, I like to sleep eight hours a day.

So, I'm 24 years old, so I actually slept eight years of my life. And God will say, yes, so let's go on. And you say, well, for some part of my life, I was going to work, and for some part of my life, I was doing other things for my parents.

So, when I put the work for my parents and the work for my workplace together, maybe out of the 16 left, maybe, maybe I used six years of my life working. Oh, that's impressive. So now let's talk about a 10.

Oh, God, maybe, maybe I used five of those times playing computer games and watching television. What? I could imagine God going, what? Five years of your life? This must be an exaggeration. And obviously, it was an exaggeration.

But think about this. Paul is asking the believers to make the most of every time that is available in his concluding admonition to the believers. They can't make mistakes about certain things, they need the wisdom they need to live their lives and conduct themselves well, and they need to make good use of time.

Then he goes on to touch on a very important area: speech, the way they speak, their conversation; let your conversation be always full of grace. Seasoned with salt, your conversation and the way you talk to people should be full of grace. Sometimes I wish that is the true story whenever Christians meet.

But you see, Paul is touching in his concluding admonition to the Colossians, perhaps applying to us today. It is important that Christians apply wisdom in the way they live their lives. And it's important that we take time seriously.

By the way, there is nothing called African time, Puerto Rican time. There is something called time. Five o'clock is five o'clock.

And God would expect his people to realize that he who has given us life has given us the resources we need to make good use of the time he has given us. And as we observe these three areas, Paul says this will be the ultimate purpose or accomplishment. You may be able to know how to answer people who approach you and ask you questions.

Everyone here is the language, including outsiders or insiders, because you are prepared well enough. Imagine living in the Colosseum. Paul has talked about all these issues within the church.

He's now about to conclude his remarks. And then he's challenging you to pray continuously. And he's challenging you to adopt the right attitude or the right posture to be watchful and full of gratitude.

And as you thought it was all about you, he said, no. He said, pray for me. Pray for me and my team so that we can do what God is calling us to do.

We need your prayers. And then you began thinking, hey, maybe, maybe that is it then. We are going to say amen.

He said no. Before I say amen, we need to address core issues you can't forget. If you forget everything I have taught you so far, you can't forget this.

Be wise. Make good use of time. Speak appropriately with grace.

And let your words be seasoned with salt. We find the expression in Matthew when Jesus talks about being the salt of the earth and being the one who brings sweetness of flavor in that which is tasteless or bitter.

We find in Jesus' discussion, I think in Luke, how useful that will be if the salt loses its saltiness. In other words, having the language or diction that edifies, blesses, admonishes, and encourages. As you do that, those who approach you on any other issue may leave satisfied because you are able to answer their questions well.

Paul now will close down to begin to remind the church of some key people that they need to know about and some key people whom, if they know something about, will be helpful both to him and to them. In that discussion, I divided verses 7 to 18 into these five segments. One is Paul's comments about the guy who is going to carry the letter to Colossae and another figure who is with Paul.

We'll hear about him when we get to another letter in prison epistles. And then we'll see Paul's greetings. And then we'll see Paul's appeal that they circulate this letter or at least send it to Laodicea, 12 miles away from Colossae.

Then, we'll see his brief hesitation to one of his colleagues and his final signature. So, let's begin by looking at the note that he sends about the guy's carrying the letter. Tychicus, sometimes his name is pronounced Tychicus, will tell you all the news about me.

He is a dear brother, a faithful minister, and a fellow servant in the Lord. I am sending him for the express purpose that you may know about our circumstances and that he may encourage your heart. He is coming with Onesimus, our faithful and dear brother who is one of you.

They will tell you everything that is happening here. That is to say, Paul is saying Onesimus and Tychicus will tell you about our circumstances here in jail. And I'm sending them with a specific mission for communication, to communicate certain things to you.

If you want to look at that communication closely, you can do so in this way: You will look at how he describes it in verse 7. They will tell you all the news about me. In verse 9, they will tell you everything that is happening here.

Then, he will spell out why this is important. As he goes on to say, I am sending him, Tychicus, to you for the express purpose that you may know about our circumstances and that he may encourage your heart. This guy, Tychicus, gets good amount of attention.

So, let's look at some of the qualities Paul outlined about him. If he is somebody with Paul and he is going to deliver a message of Paul to the people, then actually, in fact, Paul is trying to say, I want you to trust this guy. And I want you to know that this guy is so close to me.

And here, I want you to observe the relationship here. Paul is saying he is not giving the letter to anyone, just anybody going to Colossae to deliver it. This is an important letter that he is sending through a person he knows to be trustworthy and a person of integrity.

Let's look at a few qualities Paul mentions about this guy. He said he is a dear brother. He is a beloved brother.

He is one of the members of the community of faith. He is a brother in the family of God. He is one of us.

He goes on to say he's credible. He is a faithful minister. That expression, faithful, could actually carry the sense of one who is grounded in his faith or one who is credible or authentic.

So, you can count on him. This is my assessment of who Tychicus is. He's a person you can count on and you can trust.

He goes on to say you want to know that he's a fellow slave, doulos, servant in the Lord. We serve together. He's someone who shares our mission and who has been actually hands-on serving with us.

Paul will go on to say I want you to know that this is a guy that I trust to the standard. I sent him to you. But just in case you are wondering, how often does Paul work with this guy? Let me refresh your memory about how many times this guy's name appears in the writings of Paul.

Let me show you something which is parallel to the Colossian test in Ephesians 6:21-22. Paul writes, so that you may also know how I am and what I am doing, Tychicus, the beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord will tell you everything. I have sent him to you for this very purpose so that you may know how we are and that he may encourage your hearts. So, what you're seeing here is the same parallel passage.

There are a lot of words that overlap between what is going on in Colossians and Ephesians. Tychicus is mentioned here. This is why you will notice later on in this lecture that I would like to submit to you that I think Paul wrote Colossians, and actually, Paul probably wrote Colossians and Ephesians and Philemon and probably gave all to keep Tychicus and Tychicus. Who knows, Ephesus, just 120 miles away, delivers these letters.

It is so much of a coincidence to have this kind of overlap and the same person carrying the message, and if it is deception, that is a deception that even the dumbest person should catch. This is why I think the argument that Paul didn't write this letter is far from truth. Let me remind you of another incident where this guy's name appeared: Tychicus, Titus 3.12. Here we find in the pastoral epistles. When I send Artemis or Tychicus to you, do your best to come to me in Nicopolis, for I have decided to spend the winter there.

That is an instruction to Titus. Tychicus is somebody Paul loves to send. Do you notice that already? He loves this guy.

Somehow, he can count on him. Let me also mention something to you. Look at what he says about Ephesus when he is dealing with another companion of the years regarding this guy Tychicus.

He writes in 2 Timothy 4.12, Tychicus I have sent to Ephesus. If you are like me, sometimes you pause and ask, when do we see Tychicus' name in the Bible without the word sent or send? Well, you need to know that an important person would not send someone who is not trustworthy to transact business on their behalf. That is why I showed you in all these instances how Paul is using this guy Tychicus, a close companion of his.

It is not just that he is physically fit and can travel, but that he possesses the qualities of a brother, faithful minister, and fellow servant of the Lord Jesus Christ whom he can send on his behalf. He mentions another person in Colossians, Onesimus. As you look at the mention of Onesimus, you will see the qualities Paul spells out about Onesimus.

Onesimus is one of those figures we will come to know about. He is specifically mentioned in verse 9, and with him, Tychicus, Onesimus. Onesimus is our faithful and beloved brother who is one of you.

They will tell you of everything that has taken place here. Onesimus is the slave of whom Philemon was written. And when we get to Philemon, I will tell you more about the relationship.

But the point is that Paul even mentions that Onesimus seems to come from this church, and they know him. They have known him in the community, and Paul is sending Tychicus along with him. But notice something about Paul, and I hope you learn something from it.

Paul is the kind of person that would like you to know the true quality of the people who have served with him. He did that about Tychicus, and here you see he will

mention Onesimus. He wants you to know, not as a matter of flattery but as a point of commendation and genuineness.

And please, please, please, if you are a leader following this course, could you learn something about Paul to commend people who work with you? To let them know, because these are the guys carrying the letter, to let them know how you perceive them and the qualities you know they possess. Paul has great things to say about his friends. Just imagine working with someone you know who has this opinion about you.

How would you feel? From then on, now that he has introduced those who are sending the letter, with all these great words of commendation, he can now send greetings to a few. My fellow prisoners, my 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. Then he goes on to say, Jesus, don't mistake this Jesus with the other Jesus you've seen in the letter so far. And Paul doesn't want you to mistake him either.

So, he said, you want to know, this Jesus is also called Justus, his Latin name. He also sends greetings. These are the only Jews among my co-workers for the kingdom of God.

And they may prove a comfort to me. Let me just highlight a few things in this passage before we move on quickly. You see the mention of Mark there.

Before Paul will mention Mark, he wants to highlight that Aristarchus is special. He was in jail. He's in jail with him.

But he doesn't want you to think that perhaps Mark is also in jail. So he separates Mark from Aristarchus to show that you have actually heard about him, and Mark, who is a free man, is going to be coming to you. So, when he shows up, welcome him.

You see the development and how he goes on here with the greetings. But you also want to take notice of something very interesting, or I find interesting. This Jesus, who is known as our Jesus Christ, but the Justus guy, they call him Justus, a Latin name, in a place where they were Greek-speaking.

And Paul says, actually, these are the only Jews with me. That is to say, the guy is a Jew. Can you imagine in the first century walking around and calling a Jewish guy, hey, Justus? I mean, it sounds different if you understand Latin culture.

But somehow, maybe internally, they don't want to confuse him with Jesus Christ. So maybe they call, let's give you a Latin equivalent or something. I'm just making that up.

Maybe that's what I think. Maybe not. But Paul mentions him anyway.

Notice the degree to which Paul is going to name those who were close to him. And you know this name very well, Epaphras. He mentioned him early on, and I spoke about him earlier on in the early lectures.

Epaphras, who is one of you. He had mentioned that Onesimus is one of you. Now he says, Epaphras, who is also one of you.

He's also a servant of Christ Jesus, the kind of qualification he gave when he was talking about Tychicus. He says greetings. He is always wrestling in what? In prayer for you.

Does that ring familiar with Paul? How often do you think about that? How important is prayer to Paul? Paul wants you to know that Epaphras is not just a great leader who started the church. Paul says I know him to be someone who is wrestling in prayer for you. For specific reasons.

That you may stand firm in the will of God. That you may be mature and fully assured. I vouch for him that he's working hard for you and for those in Laodicea and Hierapolis.

At the introduction, I told you Colossae is one of the tri-cities with Laodicea and Hierapolis. And Paul is actually bringing that into our recollection here. These are cities in close proximity.

One is 12 miles away, and Paul knows what is going on here. And he says, you know, Epaphras is doing a great job here. And he says, you know, Epaphras is doing a great job here.

And then he mentioned our dear friend. One of those guys I like about in the Bible is Luke: Luke, the doctor.

You may want to know that. We talk about Luke being a doctor, and we take it for granted. Where do you get that information from? You just want to know here is where Paul tells us who and what his profession is.

The doctor. And he mentioned Demas. Demas sends greetings.

Demas is an interesting character. Because Demas, we will be told in 2 Timothy that he has deserted Paul because he loved the world. But, you know, even if he's showing some attitude at this stage, Paul doesn't see anything disturbing.

So, he also wants to mention some of the great guys around him. And he asks Demas what I should know about him. Give my greetings to my brothers and sisters at Laodicea.

And Nympha and the church in her house. And then you go on to make that appeal. After this letter has been read to you, I want you to send it to the church in Laodicea.

I want the other believers to read it. I want you to share this with the other brothers and sisters. Wow.

We don't see Paul doing this anywhere. But here he is quick to say in verse 16. After 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.

Some scholars have said, oh, the letter to Laodicea, where is it? And all that. And we spend a lot of time on it. Well, definitely, Colossians is not that letter.

And so, we don't know where that letter is. Scholars are speculating about it. And at this point, all I can tell you is it's a very good speculating subject for us.

Sometimes, scholars enjoy talking about stuff that has no significance to the average Joe. So, let's leave it with them. Or may I say, you leave it with us.

In verse 17, he says, tell Archippus, give him this exhortation. Pass on this word to him for me. Archippus, see to it that you complete the ministry you have received in the Lord.

Simple. And then verse 18 will end Colossians. Verse 18 is actually the verse that I mentioned to you earlier on that you can actually look at and say. This verse tells that perhaps Paul had asked a friend to write for him and have him conclude, or he wrote the letter by himself and then signed it at the end.

But clearly, verse 18 is significant as we think about who wrote Colossians. If Paul didn't write Colossians, then whoever put these things there, if Paul has no hand at all as far as Colossians is concerned, then whoever put these words there is trying to be such a big liar. But this is the problem, though.

There are people in the church who knew Paul. At whatever date you put Colossians and the writing of Colossians, there are people in the church who knew Paul. There are people like Epaphras, and perhaps I should clarify that when I was trying to

emphasize the prayer and the wrestling of Justus, I was mentioning Epaphras instead.

I meant Justus. When all these people around, people like Epaphras, Odysseus, are around, and people like Philemon, whom we know about, are around, are we suggest in a matter of 10 to 15 years span, somebody faked a letter and put this verse underneath, and they put it in the church and said, we know exactly who Paul is, we know what he stands for, and we will believe this kind of fictitious element that somebody is bringing. I think it's difficult to believe that.

For that reason, I think we should really come to a point of saying Paul wrote Colossians as an increasing number of scholars are beginning to accept these days. And I personally believe Paul wrote Colossians. Colossians, he wrote, to address the infiltration or emergence or development of false teaching in the church.

He drew the church's attention to the need to center everything around Christ. And as he calls them to that life and commitment to Christ, he highlights what he knows about the false teachings in the church. He goes on to challenge them about Christian life and Christian conduct.

As he encouraged them towards the end, he tied it down to how they should live in their household so that as they work together in unity, with one purpose, with one mindset in Christ, that will be reflected in life in their own households as well. After all, the church met in people's homes. From there, Paul will conclude in the chapter we have just looked at.

He'll conclude by calling the church to pray, to pray continuously, to pray for him, and to make prayer part of their daily life. And yet he will also challenge them to observe some key things in their life, to be wise, to take time seriously, to be careful about how they speak, so that they could be good examples to outsiders. Then, he will tend to greet and mention specific names of people, both those who would deliver the letter and those who have been serving with him.

One of the intriguing things I find with Paul in closing the discussion on Colossians is how much he will pause and take time and think about his friends and the people around him one by one and write what he knows about them so that others will know. You also want to know that it is true. Paul is quick to tell some people that are so bad that he doesn't even want people to hang around with.

He's the guy who says, I hang somebody, I hang somebody over to Satan. Those harsh words. But Paul is also the guy who will say, I know the right people, and I know them for who they are.

And it is important, I will suggest to you, that we learn some of these Christian virtues, observe the qualities of the people around us, develop a heart of gratitude, and build a Christian life that is rooted and grounded in Christ, in Christ alone, the Christ who is all in all. I hope your journey with us on Colossians so far has been a learning experience if not a growing experience. Please stay with us and keep learning with us in this Biblical Studies series on Prison Epistles.

As we go on with this lecture, you'll begin to learn more about Paul, more about your life, and more of how to become a better person in the society you live in. Thank you very much for studying with us and God bless you for making that time.

This is Dr. Dan Darko in his lecture series on the Prison Epistles. This is session 7, The Closing, Colossians 4.