

## ***Faithful ... Like Epaphras ...***

**FAITHFUL SERVANTS OF JESUS CHRIST / EARNEST IN OUR PRAYERS**

**PASSIONATE FOR THE CHURCH / TEACHERS OF GOSPEL TRUTH**

Of this you have heard before in the word of the truth, the gospel, which has come to you, as indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit and increasing—as it also does among you, since the day you heard it and understood the grace of God in truth, **just as you learned it from Epaphras our beloved fellow servant. He is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf.**

(Colossians 1:5b-7 ESV)

Epaphras, a member of your own fellowship and a servant of Christ Jesus, sends you his greetings. **He always prays earnestly for you**, asking God to make you strong and perfect, fully confident that you are following the whole will of God. I can assure you that **he prays hard for you** and also for the believers in Laodicea and Hierapolis.

(Colossians 4:12-13 NLT)



## LESSONS FROM THE FINAL GREETINGS AND INSTRUCTIONS (COLOSSIANS 4:7-18 ESV)

### 1. Lessons from the examples of Tychicus and others, 4:7-11.

(Colossians 4:7-11 ESV) Tychicus will tell you all about my activities. He is a beloved brother and faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord. 8 I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are and that he may encourage your hearts, 9 and with him Onesimus, our faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you. They will tell you of everything that has taken place here. 10 Aristarchus my fellow prisoner greets you, and Mark the cousin of Barnabas (concerning whom you have received instructions—if he comes to you, welcome him), 11 and Jesus who is called Justus. These are the only men of the circumcision among my fellow workers for the kingdom of God, and they have been a comfort to me.

### 2. Lessons from the example of Epaphras and Paul's strong endorsement, 1:7, 4:12-13.

(Colossians 1:7 ESV) Just as you learned it from Epaphras our beloved fellow servant. He is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf.

- **EPAPHRAS WAS TRUE TO THE GOSPEL.**  
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- Epaphras was a beloved fellow servant and a faithful pastor.

(Colossians 4:12-13 ESV) Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ Jesus, greets you, always struggling on your behalf in his prayers, that you may stand mature and fully assured in all the will of God. 13 For I bear him witness that he has worked hard for you and for those in Laodicea and in Hierapolis.

- Epaphras was a servant of Christ Jesus.
- Epaphras was passionate in wanting the best for the church and faithfully and earnestly praying for them.
- Epaphras was passionate for the church and worked very hard for them as he agonized over their spiritual maturity.

**Very similar to Paul's passion ...**

(Colossians 1:29 NLT) That's why I work and struggle so hard, depending on Christ's mighty power that works within me.

(Colossians 2:1 ESV) For I want you to know how great a struggle I have for you and for those at Laodicea and for all who have not seen me face to face.

### 3. Lessons from the final greetings and instructions for reading the letter, 4:14-18.

(Colossians 4:14-18 ESV) Luke the beloved physician greets you, as does Demas. 15 Give my greetings to the brothers at Laodicea, and to Nympha and the church in her house. 16 And when this letter has been read among you, have it also read in the church of the Laodiceans; and see that you also read the letter from Laodicea. 17 And say to Archippus, "See that you fulfill the ministry that you have received in the Lord." 18 I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. Remember my chains. Grace be with you.

- A lesson in urgency: See that you read the letter.
- A lesson in shared concern: And when this letter has been read ... have it also read ...
- A lesson in duty: See that you fulfill the ministry you have received in the Lord.

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### **WE NOW HAVE GREAT HOPE ...**

Our hope is an undiminished, untouchable, objective reality that is waiting for us in heaven. It has been reserved, set aside, and "laid up" for us on the basis of God's promise through the finished work of Jesus Christ.

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**We have learned that our hope is ...** based upon the word of the truth, the gospel—the gospel of grace. This hope becomes ours when we understand the grace of God in truth and receive the true gospel. We are saved by grace alone through faith alone in Jesus Christ alone ... not a result of what we do ... not of works.

(Colossians 1:3-6 ESV) We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, 4 since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love

that you have for all the saints, 5 because of **the hope laid up for you in heaven**. Of this you have heard before in the word of the truth, the gospel, 6 which has come to you, as indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit and increasing—as it also does among you, since the day you heard it and understood the grace of God in truth.

**We have learned that we can live ...** worthy lives, pleasing to the Lord—fruit bearing and increasing in the knowledge of God.

(Colossians 1:9–10 ESV) And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, 10 so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.

**We have learned that we will ...** one day be presented holy and blameless and above reproach before God.

(Colossians 1:22 ESV) He has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him.

**We have learned that we must not ...** shift away from the gospel that Paul preached.

(Colossians 1:23 ESV) If indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister.

**We have learned that we must ...** work hard to present everyone mature in Christ.

(Colossians 1:28–29 ESV) Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. 29 For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me.

**We have learned that we must ...** struggle and agonize over and contend until everyone reaches the full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of Christ.

(Colossians 2:2 ESV) That their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God's

mystery, which is Christ.

These things—lack of full assurance and not working hard to bring everyone to spiritual maturity—were at least part of the failing of the church at Laodicea. What had happened? Did a false level of comfort bring on their lukewarm attitude toward the things of God—an attitude which eventually doomed their witness?

(Revelation 3:15–16 ESV) I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot! 16 So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth.

**We have learned ...** to build our lives on Christ and live under the blessing of his lordship.

(Colossians 2:6 ESV) Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, 7 rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.

**We have learned ...** to live in our freedom in Christ and to not be taken captive.

(Colossians 2:8 ESV) See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ.

**We have learned that we must ...** live wisely and not fall for the appearance of wisdom.

(Colossians 2:23 ESV) These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion and asceticism and severity to the body, but they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh.

**We have learned that we must ...** live our new risen life in Christ.

(Colossians 3:10 ESV) And have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.

**We have learned that we have ...** a solid foundation that provides strong confidence to speak the gospel clearly and boldly and make the best use of our time.

(Colossians 4:4–5 ESV) That I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak. 5 Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time.

## SO WHAT WENT WRONG AT LAODICEA?

They never reached the full assurance of understanding and spiritual maturity and were deluded with the plausible arguments of false teachers.



### *The Church at Laodicea: A Cautionary Tale of Riches to Rags!*

*THE DELUSION: THEY THOUGHT THEY WERE RICH, SUCCESSFUL AND NEEDED NOTHING.*

*THE REALITY: THEY WERE WRETCHED, PITIFUL, POOR, BLIND AND NAKED!*

The Apostle Paul and Epaphras had fought for and prayed over the Laodiceans, but somewhere between the time when Paul had written to the Colossians and Christ's letter to the Laodiceans, they had fallen.

### **c. AD 61**

For I want you to know how great a struggle I have for you and for **those at Laodicea**.

(Colossians 2:1a ESV)

For I bear him witness that he has worked hard for you and for **those in Laodicea** and in Hierapolis. ... And when this letter has been read among you, have it also read in **the church of the Laodiceans** ...

(Colossians 4:13, 16 ESV)

### **c. AD 95**

**And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write:** "The words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God's creation. I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot! So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth."

(Revelation 3:14-16 ESV)

### **c. AD 95**

For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked.

(Revelation 3:17 ESV)