

# Colossians

## New Life: Full and Free

### Introduction

Parting words are special. We tend to wait until the very last minute to tell another person the things that are really on our hearts. Friends parting at an airport finally say how valuable their friendship has become. Parents leaving children at college part with words of encouragement —“We’re so proud of you!” or “we know you’ll do well!”

Partings are also times of warnings or advice. We often sent our son out to a friend’s house with words like, “Behave yourself!” or “Have a good time!” To which he would jokingly reply, “Make up your mind!” And what parent has not said to a departing teenager “Drive carefully!”

Paul has some important words for the Colossian church as he closes his letter. He sounds like a concerned parent as he leaves them with a list of instructions for their spiritual growth. He also gets personal as he gives them a glimpse into his own ministry and his relationships with his fellow workers. ~D.S.

## Pressing On

### Col. 4:2–4:18

### Observe & Interpret

1. *Read Colossians 4:2–6.* What things does Paul encourage the Colossians to do? Why do you think each of these things is important for individual Christians and for a growing church?
2. Judging by these verses, what role does prayer play for Paul as he shares the gospel with others? What does this tell you about the role of prayer as you tell your friends about Jesus?
3. What do you think Paul means when he says to let your conversation be “seasoned with salt?” Why is this important when speaking with people outside the church?

## Study Notes

4. *Read verses 7–18.* (Don't let the unusual names intimidate you—just pronounce them the best you can and say them with authority!) Paul indicates that some of the people he mentions were Jews like him; others were “one of you,” meaning that they were from Asia Minor like the Colossians. Use your imagination to try to picture the diversity that existed among this group. (Consider things like language, accents, customs, diet and perhaps even hygiene.) How might this diversity have caused division or conflict in this young church or in Paul's ministry team?
  
5. In verse 9, Paul refers to Onesimus. This man was a runaway slave who was probably converted by Paul in Rome. Not wanting Christianity to gain a reputation for encouraging lawbreaking, Paul encouraged Onesimus to return to his owner, a Christian man named Philemon who lived in Colossae. The letter to Philemon was probably sent along with the letter to the Colossians. In that letter, Paul encourages Philemon to welcome Onesimus as a brother in Christ. How would Philemon and Onesimus' relationship change if they both followed Paul's instructions? How would your working relationships change if your boss, your colleagues or your employees became Christians?
  
6. Paul commends both Epaphras and Aristarchus. Some scholars believe that these two men may have taken turns as voluntary prisoners with Paul so they could help him while he was confined (New Bible Dict., p. 82). How might their help behind-the-scenes have been crucial to Paul's ministry? What are some of the behind-the-scenes roles that people play in your church community to enable others to do their ministry?

## Study Notes

7. Epaphras was very likely the founder of the church at Colossae. Paul tells the Colossians that Epaphras is working hard for them and for other churches (v. 13). What does his work consist of? Would you describe this ministry as “hard work?” Why or why not?
8. Look back to Paul’s instructions to the Colossians in verses 2-6. How do Paul and his co-workers serve as examples of what it looks like to live out Paul’s instructions?

## Apply

9. Paul says, “Devote yourselves to prayer.” On a “Devotion Scale” with 1 being ‘not at all’ and 10 being ‘fully devoted’ where would you rate your prayer life? If you would like to move forward in this area, think of a ministry or event in our church that God has put on your heart recently. Try praying daily for that ministry for a week. If you are in a small group, let the group know your plan and hold one another accountable.
10. If you were writing a letter such as Paul’s, what people would you mention for their help in your own spiritual development? In what ways did they help you?

