

Colossians 4

Request for Prayer Greetings to and from Various Believers

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Introduction:

Verse 1 of chapter 4 is the final verse in a section of instructions on love addressed to various demographic groups, which began in verse 18 of chapter 3. This is one of those unfortunate chapter breaks that leaves you scratching your head and asking, “Why?”

Instructions in Love for Various Demographic Groups — Continued (v. 1)

(1) Masters, give unto *your* servants that which is just and equal; knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven.

(Repeated from the notes for chapter 3.)

Paul had just explained how Christians who were servants or ultimately serving their Lord Jesus Christ. By the same token, Paul now explains that masters were to treat their servants with equity and fairness, because their Master in heaven is Jesus, and that’s what He would have them to do. So even if a Christian is the CEO of a company, or the president of a nation, he has a Master over him as well, and that Master is Christ. Bosses should deal with their employees in a way that is fair and just, in a way that would be pleasing to Christ, who is their ultimate boss.

Final instructions for the church (vv. 2-9)

General Instructions Regarding Prayer and the Christian Walk (vv. 2-6)

(2) Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving; (3) Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds: (4) That I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak.

Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving: ... (v. 2):

The word rendered “Continue” at the beginning of verse 2 [*Greek: προσκατερεῖτε (proskartereite)*] means “Be earnest toward,” i.e., *Persevere*, or, *Be constantly diligent*. Many of the modern Bible translations render the word as “Devote yourselves to,” or “Continue steadfastly in.” The idea is that our prayer life should be a constant, 24/7 effort on our part. Prayer is one of the most important, essential aspects of the Christian life. One commentator expressed it this way:

“... when we pray, we are calling on God to work, and we express our faith in Him. ... The Christian who does not pray is demonstrating independence from God (cf. John 15:5 [*I am the vine, ye are the branches ... without me ye can do nothing*]). It is only as we ask God to work that He will accomplish many things (James 4:2 [*... ye have not, because ye ask not*]).” [Dr. Thomas L. Constable; *Notes on Colossians, 2021 Edition* ([online](#)); notes at Colossians 4:2 (*italicized comments mine*).]

Dr. J. Vernon McGee expressed the thought well when he said:

“This is like breathing: inhale by prayer, exhale by thanksgiving.” [J. Vernon McGee; *Thru the Bible with J. Vernon McGee*, 5 volumes; Pasadena, CA: Thru The Bible Radio; and Nashville: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1983; 5:363]

Dr. Harry Ironside expressed a similar sentiment:

“The soul flourishes in an atmosphere of prayer. ... We need to pray as much as we need to breathe. Our souls will languish without it, and our testimony will be utterly fruitless if we neglect it.” [Harry A. Ironside; *Lectures on the Epistle to the Colossians*; Reprint ed. New York: Loizeaux Brothers, 1945; pp. 166-167]

One of the biggest problems I face when I sit down to pray is getting distracted, and losing concentration, and I’m sure I’m not alone in this. Perhaps this is why Paul added the exhortation to “watch in the same with thanksgiving.” The verb “watch” [*Greek: γρηγοροῦντες (gregorountes)*] is a present participle that literally means “staying awake.” The word carries the connotation of a guard staying awake at his post. We are to remain alert and focused when we pray, as if we were on duty at our guard-post.

Paul also adds that we are to do all this “with thanksgiving.” As previously noted (*see notes for v. XXX*), some variant of the word “thanks” (thanks, thankful, thanksgiving) occurs 6 times in this rather short, four-chapter epistle, making it one of the most thankful of all of Paul’s writings.

(↓ Continued ↓)

... Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, ... (v. 3a):

Paul now offers up a specific prayer request — that God would open to them “a door of utterance,” i.e., a door of opportunity allowing them to speak. Today, we would probably call it “a window of opportunity.” What exactly was it that they hoped to be able to speak? Paul refers to it as “the mystery of Christ” — i.e., the mystery of the Messiah. He is, of course, referring to the gospel message. Paul often looked for these “windows of opportunity” to share the gospel, and even prayed for them:

(8) But I will tarry at Ephesus until Pentecost. **(9)** For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and *there are* many adversaries. [1 Corinthians 16:8-9]

(12) Furthermore, when I came to Troas to *preach* Christ’s gospel, and a door was opened unto me of the Lord, **(13)** I had no rest in my spirit, because I found not Titus my brother: but taking my leave of them, I went from thence into Macedonia. [2 Corinthians 2:12-13]

(1) Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as *it is* with you: **(2)** And that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men: for all *men* have not faith. [2 Thessalonians 3:1-2]

We too should be constantly vigilant, *always on the lookout* for these “windows of opportunity” to share the gospel message. We never know when the Lord is going to bring someone across our path who needs Jesus. As the apostle Peter put it:

(15) But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear: **(16)** Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ. [1 Peter 3:15-16]

Now the Jews had long been waiting for their Messiah, and they are still waiting to this day. The fact that the Messiah was promised was no mystery; the mystery lay in the saving power of Jesus Christ. This is a mystery to Jewish people to this very day.

But Paul is not speaking just of Jews when he uses the word “mystery.” Remember, as Paul is writing this epistle, he is currently under house arrest in Rome. The gospel of Jesus Christ certainly was a mystery to the Gentiles, who had likely never heard anything about a messiah.

... for which I am also in bonds: ... (v. 3b):

Paul’s current situation — under house arrest in Rome, awaiting his audience with Caesar — was specifically due to his sharing of the gospel message back in Judea.

... That I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak. (v. 4):

Paul’s goal, throughout his ministry, was to make the mystery of Christ manifest — unveiled, open, and clear. This really should be our goal as well, to make the mystery of Christ manifest to as many lost souls as possible — as we too ought to speak.

(5) Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time.

Next, Paul tells them to “walk in wisdom” toward those outside the church, “redeeming the time.” The word “time” could also be translated as “occasions” or “opportunities,” as some of the modern Bible versions render it. The idea is that we should make the most of every opportunity we are given — opportunities to share the gospel message, opportunities to disciple others, opportunities to serve Christ and His Church, and opportunities to minister to those in need, both within and without the Church.

What exactly does it mean to “walk in wisdom”? It means to be wise in everything you do. Specifically, we are to be wise in our dealings with “them that are without,” i.e., outsiders, lost people who aren’t part of the Church. We are to be wise as we deal with lost people, making the most of every opportunity we are given. Making the best use of your time with a nonbeliever may or may not always involve sharing the gospel message. Maybe you’ve already shared the gospel with them, or maybe this particular opportunity is an opportunity to minister to their needs. The idea is to make the very best use of each and every opportunity the Lord gives us. The Lord has given each of us a fixed amount of minutes to spend on this earth — be wise in how you use them.

(6) Let your speech *be* always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.

Verse 5 dealt with the Christian *walk*; verse 6 deals with the Christian’s *talk*. Paul tells them that their speech should always be with grace, and seasoned with salt. To speak with grace means to be gracious in everything we say. What exactly is grace, and how does that apply to our speech? Grace means showing favor to others, and in the context of speech, means being courteous and polite, pleasant, considerate, compassionate, kind and tender. The opposite of being gracious in our speech would be to show cruelty, or harshness, having a condemning or condescending attitude, being tactless or mean spirited.

What does it mean to have our speech seasoned with salt? Salt has two main uses when it comes to food: (1) as a preservative, and (2) as a flavor enhancer. Since refrigeration was not available, salt was used often in the ancient world to prevent the spoiling of meat. The intended meaning here probably involves both meanings — its use as a flavor enhancer, and as a preservative against spoiling. Salt has the ability to take bland-tasting food and make it more flavorful and interesting. Even good food can often taste better with a little salt (e.g., watermelon, ice cream, potato chips, French fries, etc.). The way we speak to others should be similarly seasoned — not harsh or bitter, but tasteful and pleasant. And just as salt was used to delay or retard the spoiling of meat, our speech should not be sour, or in bad taste, but uplifting and edifying.

At the end of the verse, Paul states that *the reason* our speech should be with grace, and seasoned with salt, is *so that* we may know how we ought to answer everyone. In other words, the words that we speak should be chosen judiciously, in a calm, calculated manner, in order that we might know how to properly respond to questions that we are asked. In order to do this correctly, we need to carefully listen to the other person, and be able to analyze what it is that they are really wanting to know. Oftentimes, they may ask questions that are actually intended to sidetrack the conversation away from the gospel. I don’t know times, their questions may be for the purpose of trying to trip us up. We need to recognize these tactics for what they are. If we listen carefully, and take a brief moment to digest what they have said, we’ll be better able to address the root issue in our response. Albert Barnes expressed it this way:

“This remark . . . may be understood as meaning also, ‘be imbued with the spirit of religion, and you will be able to answer any man appropriately on any subject. If he asks you about the evidence or the nature of religion, you will be able to reply to him. If he converses with you on the common topics of the day, you will be able to answer him in a mild, kind, affable spirit. If he asks you of things of which you are ignorant; if he introduces some topic of science with which you are not acquainted, you will not be ashamed to confess your ignorance, and to seek instruction. If he addresses you in a haughty, insolent, and overbearing manner, you will be able to repress the risings of your temper, and to answer him with gentleness and kindness’” [Albert Barnes; *Notes on the Bible* ([online](#)); notes at Colossians 4:6, last paragraph.]

Specific Instructions Regarding Tychicus and Onesimus (vv. 7-9)

(7) All my state shall Tychicus declare unto you, *who is a beloved brother, and a faithful minister and fellowservant in the Lord:* (8) Whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that he might know your estate, and comfort your hearts; (9) With Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother, who is *one of you*. They shall make known unto you all things which *are done here*.

Paul now names two individuals who would soon be traveling from Rome to Colossae: Tychicus and Onesimus. These two individuals probably hand delivered this letter to the Colossian church. Tychicus is also mentioned at the close of the epistle to the Ephesian church (*Ephesians 6:21-22*), but not Onesimus. From this we can gather that once these two men arrived in Colossae and delivered this epistle to them, Onesimus remained on in Colossae, since that was his home town (“who is *one of you*”), while Tychicus travelled on to Ephesus to deliver the epistle of Ephesians to that church. Both of these men or described by Paul as “beloved brothers” and “faithful,” with Tychicus being also described as “a fellowservant of the Lord.”

In addition to delivering these two epistles, these two men would also relate to the churches in Colossae and Ephesus all that had happened to Paul in Rome, as well as find out for Paul how it was going for the Colossian believers. Tychicus would probably have related to Paul whatever he found out regarding the state of the Colossian church, as well as that of the Ephesian church, either by letter, or in person. We know that Tychicus was with Paul once again not too long after this epistle was written (*Titus 3:12; see last paragraph of this section*), and he could’ve relayed his findings personally.

The Onesimus mentioned here is the same as the one mentioned in the book of Philemon, who was a slave that had run away from his master Philemon, and had subsequently come to Christ under the preaching of Paul, and had ministered faithfully to Paul while in prison in Rome (*Philemon 1:10, 13*). Paul’s epistle to Philemon was written for the purpose of encouraging a reconciliation between Philemon and his former slave Onesimus, who was now a believer too. Aside from his mention here, and in Paul’s epistle to Philemon, Onesimus is not mentioned elsewhere in Scripture.

Tychicus is mentioned in the book of Acts, along with a man named Trophimus, as being residents of the Roman province of Asia, located in western Turkey, and as having accompanied Paul from Greece into Asia during the return portion of his 3rd missionary journey (*Acts 20:2-4*). After his mention here in Colossians 4, as well as in Ephesians 6, Tychicus is mentioned next in Paul’s epistle to Titus, written during the interval between Paul’s two imprisonments in Rome, where Paul was considering possibly sending him to Titus in Crete (*Titus 3:12*). We find Tychicus once again in Rome a few years later, as Paul is writing his 2nd epistle to Timothy just before his execution, and once again Paul is sending him to Ephesus (*2 Timothy 4:12*).

Greetings (vv. 10-15)

From Those in Rome (vv. 10-14)

(10) Aristarchus my fellowprisoner saluteth you, and Marcus, sister's son to Barnabas, (touching whom ye received commandments: if he come unto you, receive him;) **(11) And Jesus, which is called Justus, who are of the circumcision. These only are my fellowworkers unto the kingdom of God, which have been a comfort unto me.**

Paul now adds some personal greetings to those in the Colossian church from the people who were with him in Rome. A total of six names are mentioned in this section:

1. Aristarchus
2. Marcus (i.e., John Mark, a.k.a., Mark the Evangelist)
3. Jesus (also called Justus)
4. Epaphras
5. Luke
6. Demas

These same individuals, with the exception of Jesus (a.k.a. Justus), are also mentioned as sending greetings at the close of Paul's epistle to Philemon (*Philemon 1:23-24*), which makes perfect sense, as both epistles were written at about the same time, and Philemon was a resident of Colossae.

The three names mentioned in verses 10-11 are Aristarchus, Marcus, and Jesus (also called Justus). Aristarchus was originally from Thessalonica in Macedonia (*Acts 20:4*), and had accompanied Paul on his 3rd missionary journey, where, at one point, along with a man named Gaius, had been caught by an enraged crowd in Ephesus (*Acts 19:29*). Christian tradition says that he was the Bishop of Apamea in Syria, and was beheaded with Paul in Rome under Emperor Nero.

Marcus is almost certainly the same as John Mark, also referred to as Mark the Evangelist, the writer of the gospel by the same name. *Marcus* was his Latin name, while his Jewish name was *John* — actually **יְהוֹכָנָן** (Yêhōwchânân), occasionally shortened to **יֵרוּחָנָן** (Yêwchânân), which means “the grace of YEHOWAH.” The first times he is mentioned in the New Testament, he is referred to as “John, whose surname was Mark” (*Acts 12:12, 25*). Later, in Acts chapter 13, he's referred to simply as “John.” Starting in Acts 15:39, he is referred to thereafter in Scripture as either Mark, or Marcus. Mark had originally set out with Paul and Barnabas on their 1st missionary journey, but left them early and returned to Jerusalem (*Acts 13:13*). This became such a bone of contention between Paul and Barnabas that they ended up going their separate ways (*Acts 15:37-39*). Paul, Barnabas, and Mark would all later reconcile, since the next time Mark appears in Scripture, he is with Paul in Rome, as he is writing the four prison epistles of Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon (*Colossians 4:10, Philemon 1:24*).

Later, during Paul's second imprisonment in Rome, he urges Timothy to bring Mark with him to Rome (*2 Timothy 4:11*). The apostle Peter refers to him as “Marcus my son,” implying that perhaps Peter had personally led him to Christ (*1 Peter 5:13*). Interestingly, Paul refers to Mark here as “sister's son to Barnabas,” meaning Mark was the son of Barnabas's sister Mary, and thus was his nephew (*Acts 12:12*).

The parenthetical remark at the end of verse 10 regarding Marcus indicates that Paul had previously communicated to the believers in Colossae regarding Marcus. How and when Paul communicated this information to them, whether by word or by letter, is unknown. He could perhaps have mentioned Marcus when he was with them (if he visited Colossae in person — see Introduction to Colossians). Paul tells them in this letter that if Marcus comes to them, they should receive him with open arms. It may have been due to the previous rift between Paul and Mark that Paul had to write this instruction to the Colossian believers, so they wouldn't look at Mark with suspicion.

Nothing more is known of Jesus/Justus aside from what is written here. Jesus (Yeshua) was his Jewish name, while Justus was his Roman name. The phrase “who are of the circumcision” is referring to the two men Marcus and Justus, who were both Jewish, as opposed to Aristarchus who was a Greek from Thessalonica.

**(12) Epaphras, who is *one of you*, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always labouring {margin: or, striving} fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete {margin: or, filled} in all the will of God.
 (13) For I bear him record, that he hath a great zeal for you, and them *that are in Laodicea*, and them in Hierapolis.**

The next individual sending greetings to Colossae is a man named Epaphras, who Paul says “is one of you” — i.e., he is originally from Colossae himself. Epaphras is the same individual mentioned in chapter 1 who had told Paul about the Colossian believers’ love in the Spirit (1:7). There, Paul had described Epaphras as a “faithful minister of Christ” for the believers in Colossae. Paul says of him here that he is “a servant of Christ,” and that he was “always laboring fervently for [the Colossian believers] in prayers, so that they would be able to stand “perfect” and “complete” in all the will of God. The first word, “perfect” [Greek: τέλειοι (*téleioi*)], means whole, complete, or mature, while the second word, “complete” [Greek: πεπληρωμένοι (*peplērōmémoi*)], literally means “filled up to the brim,” almost to the point of overflowing. Epaphras wants his fellow Colossian believers to be whole and complete, filled up to the brim in all the will of God, and so he “labors fervently” for them in his prayers.

Paul goes on to say that this man Epaphras has a great zeal for the believers in Colossae, as well as for those in neighboring Laodicea and Hierapolis.

(14) Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas, greet you.

The final two people Paul mentions as sending greetings to Colossae are Luke and Demas. Luke is called “the beloved physician,” meaning that Luke had studied medicine at some point. This Luke is also sometimes referred to as Luke the historian, since he wrote the book of Acts as well, recording for the edification of all subsequent Christian generations the early years of the Church. He is also sometimes referred to as Luke the Evangelist, as he is the one who wrote the gospel of Luke. Tradition holds that Luke was a Gentile from Antioch in Syria (*cp. Colossians 4:11, 4:14*). As to when he converted to Christ is unknown.

Based on the transitions in the book of Acts from 3rd person plural to 1st person plural, and back again, we can deduce that Luke joined Paul’s company in Troas, during Paul’s 2nd missionary journey (*Acts 16:9*), and remained with them until Philippi, where Luke stayed behind as the rest of the company went on to Thessalonica (*Acts 17:1*). Luke rejoined Paul’s company in Philippi during Paul’s 3rd missionary journey (*Acts 20:5*), and remained with the group until they arrived in Jerusalem. The use of 1st person plural pronouns indicates that Luke was also with Paul during his voyage to Rome (*Acts 27:1*), and the book of Acts concludes with Paul under house arrest for two years in Rome (*Acts 28:30-31*).

Dimas is probably short for either Demetrius or Demarchus. Demas is mentioned three times in Scripture, once here, once in Philemon 1:24, and once in 2 Timothy 4:10. From his mention at the close of both Colossians and Philemon, it is clear that Demas was with Paul at some point during his 2-year house arrest in Rome. Later, during Paul’s second imprisonment in Rome, we learn that Demas had deserted the apostle, “having loved this present world,” and had gone on to Thessalonica (2 Timothy 4:10). Nothing more is known of this individual.

Greetings to Those in Phrygia (v. 15)

(15) Salute the brethren which are in Laodicea, and Nymphas, and the church which is in his house.

Paul now instructs the recipients of this epistle to pass along his greetings to the Christians in Laodicea as well.

Paul also asks the Colossian believers to pass along his greetings to a man named Nymphas and to the church which met in his house. Nothing more is known of this individual, other than he was apparently a man of some means in Laodicea, as his house would have been large enough to accommodate all the Christians in that city.

Most of the modern Bible versions have the name as *Nympha*, as if it were a woman, and refer to the church that is in *her* house. This change is based on three ancient Alexandrian manuscripts (Sinaiticus, Alexandrinus, and Ephraemi Rescriptus [*The Rewrite of Ephraim*]). From what I can gather, the manuscripts which make up the Textus Receptus uniformly read “Nymphas” and “his” house.

Various Closing Instructions (vv. 16-17)

(16) And when this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and that ye likewise read the *epistle* from Laodicea.

Paul instructs the Colossian believers that, once they had received this epistle, and had read it, they should make sure it gets read in the church in Laodicea as well. Laodicea and Heirapolis were the two neighboring cities nearest to Colossae. Laodicea was one of the seven churches addressed in Revelation chapters 2-3. The city apparently got this name from Antiochus Theos, in honor of his wife Laodice, and under Roman rule, thrived as a commercial city. Apparently, the warning in Revelation 3:16 (“**because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth**”) came to pass, as Laodicea is nothing but a memory now. The same is true of Sardis, a church that “*hast a name that thou livest, and art dead*” (*Revelation 3:1*), and which likewise lies utterly desolate today.

Paul instructs the Colossian believers to also “read the *epistle* from Laodicea.” There is quite a bit of debate regarding this “epistle from Laodicea.” There have been four possible explanations proposed over the centuries:

1. This is a letter written by the Laodicean church, addressed to Paul, asking the apostle certain questions of doctrine.
 - (a) If this reference is to a letter addressed to Paul, Paul would almost certainly have referred to it as such.
 - (b) If the letter had been addressed to Paul, it would probably have still been in his possession.
 - (c) If the letter had been sent to Paul by the Laodiceans, asking certain doctrinal questions, why were Paul’s answers addressed to the church in Colossae?
2. This is a letter written by the apostle Paul to Timothy, while Paul was in Laodicea, known to us today as 1 Timothy, based on the subscription found at the end of 1 Timothy, which reads, “The first to Timothy was written from Laodicea, which is the cheifest city of Phrygia Pacatiana.”
 - (a) The subscriptions at the end of the various epistles are of no authority whatsoever, and are in many cases demonstrably false.
 - (b) If this is the epistle Paul meant, he would most likely have referred to it by its addressee (i.e., the epistle to Timothy), rather than by those who wrote it.
 - (c) There is nothing in the first epistle to Timothy which would be of any particular importance to the residence of Laodicea, more so than to any other church.
3. This was a letter written by Paul to the church at Laodicea, intended to be a circular letter, and which is known to us today as the epistle to the Ephesians.
 - (a) To me, this one is rather absurd. The epistle to the Ephesians states in its opening verse that it was addressed “to the saints which are at Ephesus.”
4. This is a letter written by Paul to the Christians in Laodicea, which has now been lost.
 - (a) This, in my opinion, remains the only viable option.
 - (a) Since Scripture states in several places that God’s Word would never fail (*Psalms 119:89*), and would endure forever (*Psalms 12:6-7, Isaiah 40:8, Matthew 24:35, 1 Peter 1:25*), we can therefore deduce that because this epistle was lost to time, it was not inspired Scripture.

This epistle from Laodicea was to be read to the believers in Colossae as well. In other words, they were to exchange letters. Paul had apparently written to epistles, one to Colossae, and one to Laodicea, and both of them were to be read in each church. In fact, all of Paul’s epistles were likely circulated among the churches very early on, and of course they are read today by churches and Christians all around the world.

(17) And say to Archippus, “Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it.”

This man Archippus is only referred to one other time in Scripture, in the opening verses of Philemon, where he is said to have been a “fellow soldier,” and apparently part of the church that met in Philemon’s house. Since he is mentioned along with “our beloved Apphia,” a female name, some have surmised that Apphia was Philemon’s wife, and Archippus was his son, although this is conjecture.

Some scholars have supposed, by the language Paul employs here, that this man Archippus had somehow neglected his God-given ministry, and Paul was exhorting him to remain faithful to it. However, this is not necessarily true. Paul could simply have been encouraging a fellow soldier to stay the course. Even the most faithful servants of the Lord can always use some encouragement, and perhaps that’s what Paul is doing here.

Benediction (v. 18)

(18) The salutation by the hand of me Paul. Remember my bonds. Grace be with you. Amen.

{Subscript: Written from Rome to Colossians by Tychicus and Onesimus}

Paul closes this epistle with a hand written salutation, which was the usual custom for the apostle (*2 Thessalonians 3:17*). He then asked them to “Remember my bonds” — i.e., remember Paul’s state of bondage in their prayers. Finally, he closes the epistle by wishing them grace.

The subscription at the end of this epistle reads, “Written from Rome to Colossians by Tychicus and Onesimus,” meaning that it was written from Rome by Paul, and delivered to Colossae by Tychicus and Onesimus. In this particular instance, this subscription turns out to be true, but this is not always the case.