

Now when this epistle is read among you, see that it is read also in the church of the Laodiceans, and that you likewise read the epistle from Laodicea. And say to Archippus, "Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it." This salutation by my own hand—Paul. Remember my chains. Grace be with you. Amen.

Colossians 4:16-18. NKJ

The letter and documents of the New Testament were spread and read by many. Paul instructs the church at Colossae to share, and when you read the earliest documents written after the apostolic age the knowledge of the New Testament is clear. The desire to know what God said was very high, so the inspired writings were widely shared.

Some have suggested that the letter to the Laodiceans was the letter to the Ephesians. Sadly, there have been documents written by men attempting to 'fill the gap' they perceive exists because the letter to the Laodiceans is not specifically named in the New Testament. But the documents they give were written too late, are inferior in writing and promote false teaching. Avoid them!

Archippus was told to take heed to his ministry and fulfill it. It is a great temptation for preachers to become involved in many things in life, but we must remember the eternal value which is the fruit of our work. Preachers can benefit greatly by reading the letters to Timothy and Titus daily to help them focus and fulfill their ministry. The salvation of souls is at stake! Let's focus on the eternal rather than the temporary!

The salutation of Paul. This was a personal touch by the apostle closing the letter to the disciples in Colossae. It appears that Paul had never visited Colossae (Colossians 2:1-5) but he loved them and wanted them to mature in Christ and serve Christ faithfully (Colossians 1:28). Each of us needs to look to our own spiritual growth and give great effort to learn the will of God and apply it to our lives each day.

"Remember my chains" was a reference to Paul's condition as a prisoner which Luke records in Acts 28. This letter and the letters to the Ephesians, Philippians and to Philemon were all written from Rome during his imprisonment. The reason for his imprisonment is recorded in Acts 21-28.

"Grace be with you" is Paul's desire for them. This is referencing God's grace by which we are saved [(Ephesians 2:6-10). Christians can also approach God through our High Priest, Jesus, to receive grace in time of need (Hebrews 4:16). We should always seek God's grace and live in His grace so we can one day be with Him eternally.

Geography. Colossae was in the Roman province of Asia in the Lycus Valley, 10 miles further up through the valley from Laodicea. It was important in the Lydian and Pergamene kingdoms (before Rome conquered this area) but waned in importance when the road route was changed and Laodicea became more prominent. The site is now uninhabited and lies 10 miles east of the town of Denizli in southwest Turkey. Source: J.D. Douglas, ed., *New Bible Dictionary*, p. 242.

A note. The simplicity we find in the New Testament is vastly different than what is seen in many religious groups claiming to be the church. A return to the teachings of the Lord and the practices He instructs is vital to our salvation. No person has the authority to change what God has given through the New Testament.