

Embracing Each Moment:

Everyday Grace in the Fullness of God

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Colossians 4:2-18

² Devote yourselves to **prayer**, keeping watchful in it with **thanksgiving**. ³ At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open for us **a door for the message** (*logos*), for us to tell the **mystery of the Christ**. That's why I'm **in shackles**, ⁴ but I want everyone to see it clearly. That's the way I just have to speak.

⁵ **In wisdom, you too should walk** toward those outside, **redeeming each opportune moment**. ⁶ Let your **message** (*logos*) always be bathed **in grace** (*charis*), seasoned with **salt**, so that you may know how you ought to **answer** each person.

⁷ **Tychicus** will tell you everything about me. He's our beloved brother and faithful minister (*diakonos*) and fellow-slave in the Lord. ⁸ I'm sending him to you for this very purpose, so you may know all about us and so he may encourage your hearts. ⁹ I'm sending him with **Onesimus**, our faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you. They'll tell you about everything here.

¹⁰ **Aristarchus**, who is in prison with me, greets you, and so does **Mark** the cousin of **Barnabas**. I've told you about him before – if he's able to come to you, welcome him warmly.

¹¹ Greetings too from **Jesus** also called **Justus**. These three are the only men of my Jewish heritage that are right now among my fellow workers for God's kingdom. They've really been a comfort to me.

¹² **Epaphras**, who is one of you, a slave of Messiah Jesus, greets you, always struggling (*agonizesthai*) 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 on behalf of you and those in **Laodicea** and those in **Hierapolis**. ¹⁴ **Luke**, the beloved physician, greets you, as does **Demas**.

¹⁵ Give greetings to **the brothers and sisters at Laodicea**, and to **Nympha** and the assembly in her house. ¹⁶ And when this letter has been read aloud among you, make sure that it also is read in the assembly of the Laodiceans. Also make sure that you read the letter from Laodicea. ¹⁷ And say to **Archippus**, "Take care of the ministry (*diakonia*) that you have received in the Lord. Really fulfill it."

¹⁸ Greetings from **Paul**, written with my own hand. Remember my chains. Grace be with you.

Colossians 1:15-17

¹⁵ Jesus is a visible image of the God who cannot be seen, firstborn of all creation, ¹⁶ because in him the universe was created, ... the universe was created through him and for him. ¹⁷ And he himself is before all things, and in him the universe holds together/is embraced.

Colossians 2:2

² in order that their hearts, being drawn together in love (*agapé*), may be encouraged toward all riches of the full assurance of understanding, into recognizing the mystery of God, namely, Christ, ³ in whom are all the treasuries of wisdom and knowledge hidden.

Colossians 3:14 (Expanded translation)

¹⁴ The reality that incorporates all of this growth and binds it together in a complete and mature life is Love: self-giving love that is the heart of God, that gives grace to us and flows through us to others.

Philemon 1:1-2, 5-6, 10, 15-16

¹ Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother, To Philemon our beloved fellow worker
² along with Apphia our sister and Archippus our fellow soldier, and the church in your house:

⁵ I hear of your love and of the faith you have toward the Lord Jesus and on behalf of all God's people, ⁶ and I pray that the partnership (*koinonia*) that belongs to your faith may come to full effect in recognizing every good thing that moves in us toward Christ.

¹⁰ I appeal to you for my child, Onesimus, whose father I became in my imprisonment.

¹⁵ For this perhaps is why he was parted from you for a while, that you might have him back forever,

¹⁶ no longer as a slave but much more than a slave, as a beloved brother— especially to me, but how even more to you, both in your ordinary ties and in the Lord.

Fullness in Creation, Mystery, and Community

Paul is concluding this relatively short, packed letter to the believers in Colossae, written from prison in Ephesus. It's full of practical guidance for everyday life. Practical in the sense that Paul knows is necessary. Their roots are all alien to Paul's message. If they're to give their lives to this, they need to see how it makes sense of the world, their story, their relationships. Not in abstract arguments or instructions but in one person, Jesus.

Paul teaches people to think Jesus Christ, and here he shows how. First, as creator of all things, who holds everything together in his embrace. Second, Jesus as the deep river running through all of God's history with humanity, the mystery, the aim of astonishing love and grace unseen till it broke forth in his cross and resurrection. Third, our lives are drawn together across barriers into his life sharing that grace, freeing us from what destroy our life, making genuine forgiveness, love and gratitude our new identity in him.

That's the practical guide: God's vision and work for our lives. We're not stuck with self-help. God's love embraces us in a community centered on Jesus that enriches all of life.

Shared Prayer, Open doors, a Message of Grace

Here Paul weaves the web of fellowship with these distant believers. Prayer and thanksgiving, both focus on God, what he's doing, what he has done. Paul the old apostle asks for prayers of new believers and models participation in God's work – an opening for the word, clearly drawing people into God's wonderful mystery. Being used by God for his grace.

It was a dangerous world: Paul's in prison. Still, with wisdom, these young Christians should walk/live toward (not away from) those outside. Any moment (*kairos*) may offer an opportunity to serve, to tell the story, to love someone. Prepare. Learn deeply the experience of God's Grace. Engage and flavor real life, how this Grace changes things. Listen to people's questions and stories. God meets every person he's created.

Different lives embrace around God's Fullness

Paul draws them closer by sending Tychicus and Onesimus, and a list of greetings, each name a story of God's grace. Aristarchus also in jail, John Mark, Jesus Justus, Jewish co-workers. Epaphras, the one who brought them the Gospel. He got thrown in prison with Paul too.

Luke, a physician, perhaps cares for Paul, studies and tells Jesus' story, becomes "we" in Acts.

Then Onesimus, a whole drama of transformation that unfolds in the little letter to Philemon & Archippus. Within enforced structures of Roman society, change not by command, but being drawn into the embrace of this eternal/new reality in Jesus. A New Humanity.