

CONCLUSION (4:7–18)¹

As was Paul's custom in his undisputed letters, so here the letter is rounded off with a sequence of personal messages, first, as most important, regarding Paul's own communication with the Colossians (4:7–9), then a series of greetings with personal comments attached (4:10–17), and finally a greeting, prayer request, and benediction in Paul's own hand (4:18).

4:7–9	travel plans	im. 15:22–32; 1 Cor. 16:1–18; 2 Cor. 13:1–10; Eph. 6:21–22; Phil. 4:10–18; 2 Tim. 4:9–18; Tit. 3:12–13; Phm. 22
4:10–15	greetings	im. 16:3–16; 1 Cor. 16:19–20; 2 Cor. 13:12–13; Phil. 4:21–22; 2 Tim. 4:19–21; Tit. 3:15; Phm. 23–24
4:16–17	final instructions	Cor. 16:15–18; 1 Thes. 5:27; 2 Tim. 4:21
4:18	personal note	im. 16:17–20(?); 1 Cor. 16:21–24; Gal. 6:11–18; 2 Thes. 3:17–18; Phm. 19 or 21
	final benediction	im. 16:20; 1 Cor. 16:23; 2 Cor. 13:13; Gal. 6:18; Eph. 6:24; Phil. 4:23; 1 Thes. 5:28; 2 Thes. 3:18; 1 Tim. 6:21; 2 Tim. 4:22; Tit. 3:15; Phm. 25

For a thesis of pseudonymous or post-Pauline authorship of some of the Pauline letters, the most puzzling feature is usually the very personal character of the final section (see also p. 37 above). Zeilinger, “Träger,” tries to turn the personal notes to good account for such a thesis by arguing that the structure and content of 4:7–18 indicate that in Colossians the basic concern of the Pastorals, the preservation and defense of the apostolic tradition, was already being addressed. And the view is common that the post-Pauline authors used such material as a way of strengthening their own authority (e.g., MacDonald 126–30).

But, as we will see, the character of the detail makes much more sense if it was penned by Timothy while Paul was confined in prison (see pp. 37f. again); all we need envisage is Paul's approval in substance if not in detail and sufficient occasion for him to add 4:18 in his own hand. Eph. 6:21–22, on the other hand, is such a close echo of Col. 4:7–8 that it has probably been modeled on the latter. In the event, it was probably in this way that the tradition of such letters was established in the circle of Paul's associates and carried on into the Pastorals — the tradition, that is, of letters by Paul's immediate circle and incorporating authentic personal notes from Paul himself. In each case the concern would be not for personal legitimation so much as to claim the letter's authentic Pauline character — Pauline, that is, in continuity of personnel (after all, many of the lines of communication indicated under “travel plans” above were in fact maintained by Paul's associates acting in his name) and continuity of theological emphasis, however much developed to take account of changing circumstances (see also pp. 19f. above).

Yates, *Colossians* 84, draws attention to the social mix of those named — large householders (4:15), a doctor (4:14), those with sufficient financial freedom (or support) to travel on the business of the gospel (4:7, 10, 12), as well as slaves (4:9) — also to the task-oriented designations — “fellow worker,” “servant/minister,” “brother” — also “fellow slave” and “fellow prisoner.”

¹James D. G. Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, Mich.; Carlisle: William B. Eerdmans Publishing; Paternoster Press, 1996), 269.