
Epistola ad Laodicensis † LETTER TO THE LAODICEANS

INTRODUCTION

The existence of the *Letter (from Paul) to the Laodiceans* is implied by an instruction given by the Apostle in his Letter to the Colossians (Col 4:16) but this letter is widely regarded as being lost (we have no extant Greek text). However, at least two ancient texts claimed to be this missing epistle but these have generally been considered – both in antiquity and by modern scholars – to be attempts to supply a forged version of a lost document.

The only version that has survived is the Latin *Epistola ad Laodicensis*, first witnessed in the 6th Century *Codex Fuldensis* – and that is the text we present here (from [Ernest Ranke's 1868 transcription](#)). The English text is based on [M.R. James' 1924 translation](#).

PROVENANCE AND CANONICITY

The *Letter to the Laodiceans* is mentioned by various writers (notably Gregory the Great) from the 4th Century onwards and was included in medieval Bibles in Western (Latin) churches for centuries, only being removed after it was rejected by both the Protestant Reformers and the Council of Trent.

The text we have is a clumsy forgery; James says of it: *It is not easy to imagine a more feebly constructed cento of Pauline phrases.*

Ad Laodicenses

¹ *Paulus apostolus non ab hominibus. Neque per hominem sed per ihesum christum.*

Fratribus qui sunt laodiciae. ² *Gratia uobis et pax a deo patre et domino ihesu christo.* ³ *Gratias ago christo per omnem orationem meam.*

Quod permanentes estis in eo et perseuerantes in operibus eius promissum expectantes in diem iudicii. ⁴ *Neque destituant uos quorundam uaniloquia insinuantium.*

Ut uos euertant a ueritate euangelii quod a me praedicatur.

⁵ *Et nunc faciet deus ut qui sunt ex me ad profectum ueritatis euangelii deseruientes.*

Et facientes benignitatem operumque salutis uitae aeternae.

⁶ *Et nunc palam sunt uincula mea quae patior in Christo. Quibus laetor et gaudeo.* ⁷ *Et hoc mihi est ad salutem perpetuam quod ipsum factum orationibus uestris. et administrantem spiritum sanctum* ⁸ *siue per uitam siue per mortem. Est enim mihi uere uita in christo et mori gaudium.*

⁹ *Et in ipsum in uobis faciet misericordiam suam. Ut eandem dilectionem habeatis. et sitis unianimes.*

TO THE LAODICEANS

¹ Paul, an apostle not of men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ.

To the brothers that are at Laodicea. ² Grace to you and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. ³ I give thanks to Christ in all my prayers.

That you continue in him and persevere in his works, waiting for the promise at the day of judgement. ⁴ Neither do the vain words of some deceive you, which creep in.

That they may turn you from the truth of the Gospel preached by me. ⁵ And now shall God make those who are of me minister to the advancement of the Gospel.

And doing kindness and works of salvation, to eternal life.

⁶ And now my bonds are seen by all men, which I suffer in Christ, in whom I rejoice and am glad. ⁷ And to me this is for everlasting salvation, which also is brought about by your prayers, and the ministry of the Holy Spirit, ⁸ whether by life or by death. For, verily to me life is in Christ, and to die is joy.

⁹ And to him shall he work his mercy in you, that you may have the same love and be of one mind.

¹ James has 'by' in place of 'through' (twice in this verse).

² Note that Ranke does not generally capitalize proper nouns, even when the name of Jesus Christ is used.

³ In place of 'waiting', James has 'looking'.

⁴ James has 'overset' in place of 'deceive'.

⁵ In place of 'minister', James has 'continue ministering'.

⁶ James has 'of all me' in place of 'by all men'.

⁷ For 'Holy Spirit', James reads 'Holy Ghost'.

⁸ James includes, 'whether by life or by death' as part of v. 7.

⁹ Another opening suggested by James is 'And also shall he work'.

¹⁰ Ergo dilectissimi ut audistis praesentia meita retinete et facite in timore dei et erit uobis uita in aeternum. ¹¹ Est enim deus qui operatur in uos. ¹² et facite sine retractu. quaecumque facitis ¹³ et quod est dflectissimi gaudete in christo.

Et praecauete sordidos in lucro ¹⁴ omnes sint petitiones uestrae palam aput deum. et estote firmi in sensu christi ¹⁵ et quae integra et uera et pudica. et iusta et amabilia facite ¹⁶ et quae audistis. et accepistis. in corde retinete ¹⁷ et erit uobis pax.

¹⁸ Salutant uos sancti. ¹⁹ Gratia domini ihesu cum spiritu uestro. ²⁰ Et facite legi colosensium uobis ...

¹⁰ Therefore, beloved, as you heard in my presence, so hold fast and work in the fear of God, and you will have eternal life.

¹¹ For, it is God who works in you. ¹² And, whatever you do, do it without hesitation. ¹³ And for the rest, beloved, rejoice in Christ.

And beware of those filthy in lucre. ¹⁴ Let all your petitions be known to God; and be steadfast in the mind of Christ. ¹⁵ And do what is sound and true, sober and just, and loving. ¹⁶ And what you hear and receive, keep in your heart. ¹⁷ And you will have peace.

¹⁸ The saints greet you. ¹⁹ The grace of the Lord Jesus be with your spirit. ²⁰ And cause this *epistle* to be read to them of Colossae, and *the epistle* of the Colossians *to be read* to you.

¹⁰ James ends the verse, "and it shall be to you for life eternal."

¹¹ In place of 'who', James has 'that'.

¹² For 'hesitation', James has 'afterthought'.

¹³ Before 'beloved', James adds 'dearly' (as also in v. 10).

¹⁴ James has 'be made openly before God' in place of 'be known to God'.

¹⁵ For this verse, James reads, "And what things are sound and true and sober and just and to be loved, do."

¹⁶ James adds 'fast' after 'keep'.

¹⁷ For this verse, James reads, "And peace shall be to you."

¹⁸ James has 'salute' in place of 'greet'.

¹⁹ The punctuation marks in this text (like the mid-dot at the end of this verse) attempt to match those in Ranke's transcript, even though they often make little grammatical sense - as also with the paragraph breaks.

²⁰ The translation of this verse (following James) is largely speculative; the Latin text has only, "And do the law of the Colossians for yourselves," and then breaks off.