

Colossians 4:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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.

Analysis

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 letter circulation. "When this epistle is read among you" (hotan anagnōsthē par' hymin hē epistolē, ὅταν ἀναγνωσθῇ παρ' ὑμῖν ἡ ἐπιστολή) assumes public reading during church gathering—standard practice before widespread literacy or personal Bible ownership. "Cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans" directs sharing this letter with neighboring congregation.

"That ye likewise read the epistle from Laodicea" (kai tēn ek Laodikeia s hina kai hymēis anagnōte, καὶ τὴν ἐκ Λαοδικείας ἵνα καὶ ὑμεῖς ἀναγνῶτε) mentions another letter, likely Paul's letter to Laodicea (now lost, unless it's Ephesians as some speculate). This mutual exchange ensured both churches received comprehensive apostolic instruction. The practice established precedent for circulating apostolic writings, eventually forming NT canon.

Historical Context

Before printing, documents circulated through copying and personal delivery. Paul's letters were considered authoritative apostolic teaching, worthy of preservation and circulation beyond original recipients (2 Peter 3:15-16). This organic canonization process—churches recognizing, collecting, and circulating

apostolic writings—eventually resulted in NT canon. Not all Paul's letters survived; some were lost (1 Corinthians 5:9 references another letter to Corinth).

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. How seriously do you treat Scripture's public reading—casual routine or encounter with God's authoritative word?
2. What modern equivalents of letter circulation spread sound teaching among churches today?
3. How can churches today promote theological unity while respecting legitimate diversity, as Paul did through shared letters?

Interlinear Text

καὶ	ὅταν	ἀναγνῶτε	παρ'	ὑμῖν	ἢ	ἐπιστολή	ποιήσατε
And	when	is read	among	you	G3588	this epistle	cause
G2532	G3752	G314	G3844	G5213		G1992	G4160
ἵνα	καὶ	ἐν	τῇ	Λαοδικέων	ἐκκλησίᾳ	ἀναγνῶτε	καὶ
that	And	in	G3588	of the Laodiceans	the church	is read	And
G2443	G2532	G1722		G2994	G1577	G314	G2532
τὴν	ἐκ	Λαοδικείας	ἵνα	καὶ	ὑμεῖς	ἀναγνῶτε	
G3588	the epistle from	G1537	G2993	that	And	ye	is read
				G2443	G2532	G5210	G314

Additional Cross-References

1 Thessalonians 5:27 (Parallel theme): I charge you by the Lord that this epistle be read unto all the holy brethren.

2 Thessalonians 3:14 (Parallel theme): And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed.

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