

PAUL'S CONCLUSION OF COLOSSIANS

Colossians 4:7-18

Intro: It is very apparent from the nature of Paul's writing of this epistle, that he did not want to take up a lot of space talking about himself. Obviously the believers in Colosse would want to have known about his health, any special needs that he had, who was with him and how they had been able to help him, as well as what prospects there were that he might soon be released. But, as we have seen, Paul was more concerned about their understanding of the truth, their understanding of the Christian life and especially their knowledge of their union with Christ. He wanted them to know what God's plan was for their relationship to each other in their homes, and also how they were to do God's will in their relationship with masters, if they were servants, and with servants if they were masters. He exhorted them to be faithful in prayer, and there he did ask prayer for his own ministry. He gave them some very brief words of wisdom concerning their relationship with unbelievers in the world. And then we come to his conclusion in the verses that I want to cover with you this morning.

His customary introduction is in the first eight verses of chapter 1, and his conclusion is in the last eighteen verses of chapter 4.

He mentioned ten men in the last eighteen verses. In addition he referred to his former companion in the spread of the Gospel, Barnabas, but only to show who Marcus was.

Now if I gave you the opportunity to take a few minutes to recognize how these ten names are divided, I am sure that you all could do it. You would see that there are four groups into which these ten names are divided.

The first group is in verses 7 through 9, two names, Tychicus and Onesimus who brought this letter from Rome to Colosse.

The second group is in verses 10 through 14, six names: Aristarchus, Marcus (John Mark), Jesus who was called Justus, then Epaphras, Luke, and finally Demas. These were men who were Paul in Rome, sending their greeting to the church at Colosse.

The third group is in verses 15 through 17, involving several churches, but only one person is named: Archippus.

And finally in verse 18 the signature of Paul, with one request from Paul, and a final prayer.

Now again let me remind you, as we think of the great Apostle Paul (and I am not at all sure that Paul would allow us to call him “great,” – but let me remind you that people, the people of God, were very important in the ministry of the Paul. He loved them, and he needed them. And he did not hesitate to say so. He believed that the Lord had put certain people in his life to pray for him, to encourage him, and to be an extension of his own ministry. Every child of God is important in the work that the Lord is doing in every generation. Paul looked upon his fellow believers as very much a part of his own ministry.

Now let us take a look at each of these men who are mentioned in these last verses of Colossians, and learn what we can about them.

I. THE MEN WHO BROUGHT THE COLOSSIAN EPISTLE TO COLOSSE (Col. 4:7-9).

Here we come, as I have said, to the names of two men: Tychicus and Onesimus. I am going to mention other verses where the men in our text are mentioned, but I am not going to wait for you to turn to them. So if you want to, jot down the references and you can look at them later for yourself.

A. Tychicus (Col. 4:7-8).

He is mentioned four times in the NT epistles as one who was intimately joined with the Apostle Paul in his ministry.

He is mentioned in Acts 20:4:

4 And there accompanied him into Asia Sopater of Berea; and of the Thessalonians, Aristarchus and Secundus; and Gaius of Derbe, and Timotheus; and of Asia, Tychicus and Trophimus.

This was on Paul’s third missionary journey.

We read about him also in the companion epistle to Colossians. See him in Eph 6:21-22

21 But that ye also may know my affairs, and how I do, Tychicus, a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, shall make known to you all things:

22 Whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that ye might know our affairs, and that he might comfort your hearts.

This sounds a lot like his words in Colossians, doesn't it?

And then in Titus 3:12

12 When I shall send Artemas unto thee, or Tychicus, be diligent to come unto me to Nicopolis: for I have determined there to winter.

In 2 Timothy 4:12, Paul's final letter in the NT, Paul simply told Timothy, "Tychicus have I sent to Ephesus."

In our verse in Colossians Paul described Tychicus in these words: "A beloved brother, and a faithful minister, and fellowservant in the Lord." It is obvious that Tychicus had a large part in Paul's ministry to the end of his life. Paul depended greatly upon Tychicus.

B. Onesimus (Col. 4:9).

If this is a new name to you, the Lord willing, I intend to teach Paul's one chapter letter to Philemon, and there you will find out who Onesimus was. Let me say just briefly here that Onesimus was a slave who belonged to Philemon. Philemon was a Colossian. But in his flight he crossed paths with the Apostle Paul, and was gloriously saved. Here in the reference to Onesimus, Paul was using him to get this letter to the Colossians church, and along with it a letter to Philemon pleading with him to accept Onesimus, and forgive him. It is a delightful story of the ways of the Lord and how Onesimus became a trophy of God's grace.

II. THE SECOND GROUP (Col. 4:10-14).

These were men who were with Paul in Rome, and on their behalf Paul sent greetings to the church in Colosse.

A. Aristarchus.

He is first mentioned in connection with the uproar in Ephesus when the Ephesians thought that their goddess Diana was being threatened by the Apostle and his ministry. We read this in Acts 19:29

29 And the whole city was filled with confusion: and having caught Gaius and Aristarchus, men of Macedonia, Paul's

companions in travel, they rushed with one accord into the theatre.

Then in Acts 20:4 we read this:

4 And there accompanied him into Asia Sopater of Berea; and of the Thessalonians, Aristarchus and Secundus; and Gaius of Derbe, and Timotheus; and of Asia, Tychicus and Trophimus.

Here he is mentioned with Tychicus. He was one of Paul's companions who was not afraid to stand for the faith.

When Paul was on board ship on his way to Rome, Aristarchus was with him as we read in Acts 27:2:

2 And entering into a ship of Adramyttium, we launched, meaning to sail by the coasts of Asia; one Aristarchus, a Macedonian of Thessalonica, being with us.

Next week as we go to Paul's letter to Philemon, we find Aristarchus' name mentioned there in Philemon 23-25 we read,

23 There salute thee Epaphras, my fellowprisoner in Christ Jesus;
24 Marcus, Aristarchus, Demas, Lucas, my fellowlabourers.
25 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.

B. Marcus (Col. 4:10).

Marcus is John Mark, the writer of the second Gospel. He was related to Barnabas, a nephew, and he left Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary, and when Barnabas wanted to take Mark with them on the second missionary journey, Paul refused. And so when Barnabas wanted to take Mark with them, Paul objected. The result was that Paul chose Silas, and Barnabas took Mark, and they went in different directions.

But the wonderful part about that story is we find in 2 Timothy 4:11 where Paul wrote to Timothy, and said:

11 Only Luke is with me. Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry.

Somehow the breach between Paul and John Mark had been healed, and Paul considered him an asset to his ministry in his latter days. So this is a good part of Paul's ministry, coming as it did toward the end of Paul's work. John Mark, like Onesimus, had been unprofitable, but by the grace of God became profitable.

Who did Paul mention next?

C. Jesus, which is called Justus (Col. 4:11).

This is the only time that Paul mentioned this man. But he must have been an encouragement to Paul for at least two reasons. He and John Mark were both Jews, and this was an encouragement to Paul to have one of his own countrymen with him in the ministry of the Gospel. But the other reason is this, and we can only guess that this was the situation. At birth he had been given the name made sacred by our Lord, Jesus. And it would seem that after he was saved and knew the meaning of the name Jesus, and especially knowing the One and only One who had a right to that name, Jehovah is salvation, he quit using that name and took the name, Justus, instead.

D. Epaphras (Col. 4:12-13).

He was mentioned in chapter 1 and verse 7 of this epistle. See verses 7 and 8. He was responsible for bringing Paul the good information about what the Lord was doing in Colosse. He is remembered in Scripture for being a man of prayer. We learn that in verses 12 and 13 of this chapter. He not only prayed for the believers in Colosse, but he labored fervently for them in prayers, as he must have also done for the saints in Laodicea and Hierapolis. This means that his prayers were like the effort and discipline that an athlete would concentrate on winning the prize. What a blessing it would be to have a man like this praying for you, or your church.

Philemon, verse 23, also tells us that he was Paul's fellow prisoner in Rome.

E. Luke, the beloved physician (Col. 4:14).

This is the writer of the third Gospel. He also wrote the book of Acts. But he is only mentioned by name twice in all of the NT, here in Colossians, and also in 2 Timothy 4:11 where Paul wrote, "Only Luke is with me. Here is another beloved friend of the Apostle Paul who stayed with Paul to the very end of his life. The influence and blessing of God through Luke upon the Apostle Paul could not accurately be told in words, but it is in the records of heaven for all eternity.

F. Demas (Col. 4:14).

Demas is mentioned also in Philemon 24. But you will notice no words of commendation from Paul about him. Some commentators feel that Paul had already seen signs in Demas life that cause him to mention Demas very briefly. We have his sad story in 2 Timothy 4:10 where Paul recorded these ominous words: “For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica . . .”

We are not told how this happened, just that it did. How careful we need to be! It has happened again and again throughout the history of Israel and throughout the history of the Church, **which is not yet completed.** This is the place for us to read 1 John 2:15-17 where the aged Apostle John wrote:

15 Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

17 And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.

James tells that in James 4:4 that “friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.”

The Bible makes it very clear that there is no middle ground for us to stand on. If you and I “will be a friend of the world,” then we are “the enemy of God.” “If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”

Have you notice that in almost everything that we do a little bit of the world gets mixed in. I don't know if Demas ever came back. But whatever is the truth about him, the record is made and it cannot be changed. But you and I are still writing the record of our lives. When you and I look at our lives, is the message clear to all who know us, and even to all that see us, that we are on the Lord's side. Think of this: here was a man Demas, who was the personal companion of the Apostle Paul probably for a good many years, but finally Paul had to write, “Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world.” Paul meant Demas has forsaken our Lord Jesus Christ. To turn from the Lord is to turn from everything good and holy and righteous, to the world of sin which is nothing, less than nothing, in the light of eternity.

Now we come to:

III. THE THIRD GROUP (Col. 4:15-17).

There is only one man mentioned here, and his name as you can see from verse 17 is Archippus. Who was Archippus? He is only mentioned here and in one other place: in Paul's letter to Philemon, verse 2. Please turn over to Philemon, with me, and let us see what it says about Archippus. Let me read the first two verses of that letter to Philemon. This is what they say:

- 1 Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ, and Timothy our brother, unto Philemon our dearly beloved, and fellowlabourer,
- 2 And to our beloved Apphia, and Archippus our fellowsoldier, and to the church in thy house (Philemon 1-2).

Now I can't be absolutely positive about this, but I feel sure that I am right when I say that Philemon was the husband of Apphia, and that their son was Archippus, and that Archippus was the pastor of the church in Colosse which met in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Philemon. And I say that Archippus was the pastor because when Paul mentioned him in his letter to the church at Colosse, he said, "Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfill it."

The emphasis here at the end of Paul's epistle to the Colossians is on the ministry of the church. You have the church at Colosse, and the church at Laodicea, and it is very likely that the letter that had been received in Laodicea was Paul's letter to the church at Ephesus.

Paul really believed in the ministry of the local church, and he laid down his life going from town to town to preach the Gospel, and then establishing those who believed into churches. Let us ask ourselves, How important is the church of Jesus Christ to me? Can I be satisfied with my life as a Christian and can I be growing in the Lord if I come to church only once a week? If you are physically handicapped and can't get to church but once a week, that is understandable. But not to attend Sunday School and to stay away on Sunday night, and on Wednesday night, means that it won't affect your life or bother you if we shut down and have only one meeting a week. Do you think that there are people today who used to be faithful in meeting with the people of God, but gradually the love of the world has taken over in the hearts, and they today are like Demas. I am really concerned about the way our country is going, and I know that the one thing that we need in our beloved country is a return to God and to

the Word of God, and to meeting as often as we can with other believers to worship the Lord, to hear the Word of God, and to be encouraged and strengthened in our faith.

Well, I have one more group, and that also has to do with just one person. We are still repeating the benefits of his life and ministry. What is the fourth group in this chapter.

IV. THE FOURTH GROUP (Col. 4:18).

Paul put his name to this epistle indicating not only that he wrote it, but that he believed every word of it. And we ought to keep in mind that this ancient letter is just as true, and just as appropriate for Christians today as it was over 2,000 years ago when it was first written.

And Paul added two lines. “Remember my bonds.” He did not mention one word to the Colossian church about getting him out of his Roman confinement. Did he enjoy being a prisoner of Rome. I am sure that he did not. But he wanted the church at Colosse to remember that what it had cost him in the way of suffering for the Gospel and the Word of God, was well worth whatever confinement he might experience.

But then he added, “Grace be with you.” He was talking about the grace of God by which our hearts are stirred to love the Lord and to find the strength to put the Lord Jesus Christ first in our lives. His grace is sufficient. And His grace is inexhaustible. Let us remember what we need to remember, and trust God for the grace we need to glorify Him in lives devoted to doing His will.

Concl: There is a lot of spiritual food in a passage like this, isn't there?

Don't feel that we have finished Colossians, and we don't need it anymore. We need it all of the time. Go back over it this week, and make sure that the truth of this epistle has gotten into your heart.