

Crossroads Fellowship

“The Heart Of A Disciple Maker”

Colossians 4:7-18

Introduction

Funny story:

You may have heard the story about the two guys who were fishing in a boat under a bridge. One looks up and sees a funeral procession starting across the bridge. He stands up, takes off his cap, and bows his head. The procession crosses the bridge and the man puts on his cap, picks up his rod and reel, and continues fishing.

The other guy is impressed and says, "That was touching. I didn't know you had it in you."

The first guy responds, "Well, it's the least I could do -- after all, I was married to her for 40 years."

As much as we hate to admit it, sometimes we're like that as Christians. Once a week we stop and tip our hat to God, and then immediately return to our busy lives. But as we consider Paul's closing thoughts to the believers in Colosse, it's my prayer that the Holy Spirit will challenge us to a more vigorous lifestyle of faith like Paul's who had "The Heart Of A Disciple Maker."

I Paul's Update To The Church

A. He sent Tychicus to tell them all the news about himself [Verse 7]

Tychicus was part of a group of young men and women who accompanied Paul during his ministry.

- He was a native of Thessalonica
- He was a fellow worker (Eph 6:21-22; Col 4:7-8)
- He was Paul's advance man, preparing the way for Paul's ministry to various cities during Paul's 3rd missionary journey (Acts 20:4)
- He was part of the delegation chosen by the churches of Macedonia to accompany Paul when they took an offering to the church in Jerusalem for the poor and needy saints there (2 Cor 8:16-24)
- He was sent by Paul to deliver the letter to the Ephesian church (Eph 6:21)
- He did the same with the Epistle to the Colossians (Col 4:7)
- Paul also sent him as a messenger to Titus in Crete (Titus 3:12)
- And during Paul's 2nd imprisonment, he was sent to Ephesus (2 Tim 4:12)
- Later he was imprisoned with Paul (Col 4:7-8; Eph 6:21-22)

Paul mentions three characteristics about Tychicus that are noteworthy:

1. He was a dear brother

Dear = Agapetos = "Beloved"

Eph 6:21 "Tychicus, the dear brother and faithful servant in the Lord ..."

This phrase gives us insight into the deep love that Paul had for his disciples.

Application:

Some leaders bind their followers to themselves through fear, some through salary, and some through promise of future glory.

But Paul's associates were bound to him through agape love.

This is a sign of a godly leader – they live a life of agape love!

2. He was a faithful minister

Faithful minister= Pistos diakonos= “Trustworthy and dependable servant”
Faithfulness in serving is fundamental to the Christian life.

Illustration: Parable of the Talents

Matt 25:21 “His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant!

You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!’”

Application:

Notice, God doesn't require us to be popular, or brilliant, or widely accepted. What does scripture say?

1 Cor 4:2 “Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful.”

- Faithful to Him and His Word
- Faithful to our spouse and our marriage covenant
- Faithful to raising our children to know the Lord
- Faithful in our place of employment
- Faithful in whatever ministry God has appointed us to

Tychicus was one of those rare individuals who demonstrated faithfulness.

3. He was a fellow **servant** in the Lord

Fellow servant = Sun-doulos = “Co-bondslave”; “Two or more persons performing similar tasks under the supervision of the same employer”

This phrase teaches us two things:

1. There was no hierarchy in the early church

Paul never refers to himself as a pope, or even as a bishop. He always speaks of himself as a fellow worker or fellow servant.

2 Cor 4:5 “For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake.”

2. Godly leaders never demand respect or honor – they earn it

Paul's influence and effectiveness as a disciple maker wasn't achieved by force, but by loving his disciples and by treating them with courtesy and respect. As a result he gained their respect and their voluntary participation in the mission of preaching the gospel.

Matt 20:25-28 “Jesus called them together and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave -- just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

B. He sent Tychicus for the express purpose: [Verse 8]

1. That they might know about Paul's circumstances
Eph 6:21-22 “Tychicus ... will tell you everything, so that you also may know how I am and what I am doing.”
2. That he might encourage their hearts
Encourage = Parakaleo = “To comfort or console”

In virtually every letter that Paul wrote he expresses his desire to encourage and comfort the believers.

1 Thess 2:11-12 “For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory.”

Application:

One of the marks of an effective disciplinarian is that they work hard at encouraging and comforting the saints.

Heb 10:25 “... encourage one another -- and all the more as you see the Day approaching.”

C. He sent Onesimus: [Verse 9]

1. Paul's faithful and dear brother
Faithful = Pistos = “Trustworthy and dependable”
Dear = Agapetos = “Beloved”
2. A fellow Colossian
3. To tell them what was happening in Rome

Onesimus' Story:

Onesimus was a runaway slave. His name meant “profitable”. But he was anything but profitable to his master, Philemon. One day Onesimus stole some of master's money and fled to Rome. Little did he know he was running straight into a divine appointment with the Apostle Paul who subsequently witnessed to him and led him to Christ.

Paul convinced Onesimus to return to Philemon with a letter from Paul (the Epistle to Philemon) appealing to Philemon to not only forgive his runaway slave, but to restore him and welcome him back as a new brother in Christ.

Consequently, Onesimus was freed by Philemon and became a ministry partner with Paul who then sent this former slave, along with Tychicus, to Colosse to minister among the slaves who made up half the congregations in the early church.

And if scholars are correct, Onesimus went on to become one of the principle leaders of the second-century church.

Application:

1. No matter how unprofitable you might think you are, you can be made profitable in your service to God – but, like Onesimus, you might have to go back before you can move ahead!
2. God often appoints us to minister to people who are just like we once were.

II Paul's Companions Greet The Church

In Paul's list of friends there are:

- Three Jews: Aristarchus, Mark and Justus
- Three Gentiles: Epaphras, Luke, Demas

A. Aristarchus, Paul's fellow prisoner [Verse 10a]

Aristarchus = “To be first”

He was from Thessalonica, became a believer under Paul’s teaching and traveled with the apostle Paul on his third missionary journey through Asia Minor (Acts 19:29; 20:4; 27:2).

He was with Paul during the riot at Ephesus where he was seized and nearly killed by the silversmiths under Demetrius (Acts 19:28-29).

He later went ahead of Paul to Troas to prepare the way for Paul (Acts 20:4-6).

He accompanied Paul to Rome as a prisoner (Acts 27:2) where he and Paul were imprisoned together for sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ (Philem 23-24).

He was eventually martyred during the reign of Nero.

B. Mark, the cousin of Barnabas [Verse 10b]

Mark accompanied Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey to Cyprus and Asia Minor. But he evidently became homesick and abandoned Paul and Barnabas in Perga (Acts 13).

Some time later, a sharp disagreement developed between Paul and Barnabas when Barnabas wanted to give Mark a second chance by taking him on their second missionary journey. Paul adamantly refused. The result was that Paul and Barnabas parted company. Barnabas took John Mark with him on a second mission to Cyprus. Paul and Silas traveled through Syria and Cilicia (Acts 15:36-41).

Ten years later we find that Mark was not only reunited with Paul in Rome, but became a vital team member among this band of men (Philem 24). So much so that Paul specifically requests Timothy to bring Mark to Rome because “he is helpful to me in ministry.” (2 Tim 4:11)

1. If he comes to you, welcome him

Illustration:

Jackie Robinson was the first black to play major league baseball. Breaking baseball's color barrier, he faced jeering crowds in every stadium. While playing one day in his home stadium in Brooklyn, he committed an error. The fans began to ridicule him. He stood at second base, humiliated, while the fans jeered. Then, shortstop Pee Wee Reese came over and stood next to him. He put his arm around Jackie Robinson and faced the crowd. The fans grew quiet. Robinson later said that arm around his shoulder saved his career.

What was the fruit of Paul's reconciliation with Mark?

- Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he wrote the gospel bearing his name.
- He became the founding pastor of the church of Alexandria, Egypt and went on to win so many converts to Christ that the great Jewish philosopher, Philo, was amazed.
- In the end, like Aristarchus, Mark paid for his devotion to Christ with his life during the reign of Nero.

C. Jesus, who is called Justus [Verse 11]

Justus was a passionate evangelist to the Jews – one of the original founding members of “Jews For Jesus!”

1. These are the only Jews among my fellow workers for the kingdom of God
Paul mentions that despite the many years of sacrifice and labor, Aristarchus, Mark and Justus were the only Jews who were unafraid and unashamed to be associated with him.

Application:

You never really know who your friends are until your friendships are tested by either conflict or adversity.
Prov 20:6 “Many a man claims to have unfailing love, but a faithful man who can find?”
“A friend is the one who comes in when the whole world has gone out.”

2. They have proved a **comfort** to me
Comfort = Paregoria = “To console”
2 Cor 1:3-4 “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God.”

D. Epaphras [Verse 12a]

1. Who is one of you and a servant of Christ Jesus

Servant = Doulos = “A voluntary slave”

Col 1:7-8 “You learned [the gospel] from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on our behalf, and who also told us of your love in the Spirit.”

He was a native of Colosse who was converted under Paul’s preaching.

He was the founding pastor of the church in Colosse and was responsible for the spreading of the gospel in Laodicea and Hierapolis.

He visited Paul in prison, bringing a good report about the Colossian church.

He was a fellow prisoner with Paul in Rome (Philemon 23).

He was martyred for his faith in the city of Colosse.

2. He is always **wrestling** in prayer for you [Verse 12b]

Wrestling = Agonizomai = “Struggling or laboring fervently”

Present active indicative (continually agonizing)

It’s the same word used to describe Jesus’ agony in the garden when His sweat was like drops of blood - Luke 22:44.

- a. That you may stand firm in all the will of God

Stand firm = Pleroo = “To level up (a hollow), to fill full to running over”

How can you fill up a deficiency in your knowledge of the will of God?

Rom 12:2 “Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is-his good, pleasing and perfect will.”

- b. That you may be **mature** and fully assured

Mature = Teleios = “Complete or perfect”

Col 1:28-29 “ We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect [teleios] in Christ. To this end I labor, struggling [agonizomai] with all his energy, which so powerfully works in me.”

Application:

Have you ever felt that miserable sense of helplessness when someone you care deeply about is in trouble? We all have!

But Epaphras didn’t wring his hands and wonder what to do as he sat in prison – he prayed – he agonized in prayer for the believers in Colosse. And God answered! And if you’re willing to pray, God will answer you, too!

3. I vouch for him that: [Verse 13]

Vouch = Martureo = “Testify or bear witness”

- a. He is **working** hard for you

- b. He is working hard for those at Laodicea and Hierapolis

Working hard = Ponos = “Great anguish”

Col 3:23-24 “Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.”

E. Luke, our dear friend the **doctor** [Verse 14a]

Dear = Agapetos = “Beloved”

He was a Gentile (Col 4:11; cf. v. 14).

He was a physician by trade (Col 4:14).

He was a "fellow laborer" of the apostle Paul and likely Paul's most faithful companion (Philem 24).

He accompanied Paul on his various missionary journeys, including his final trip to Rome (Acts 16:10-17:1; 27:1-28:31).

During Paul's imprisonment in Rome, Luke's faithfulness was recorded by Paul when he declared, "Only Luke is with me" (2 Tim 4:11). All the others had abandoned Paul, but Luke remained faithful to the end.

He was the author of the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts.

F. Demas [Verse 14b]

He was from Thessalonica

He was a part of the original Asian interns who traveled with Paul.

He evidently served well for a while with Paul (Philem 24).

But, when Paul is in prison and all his associates were in danger of being arrested themselves, Demas' excitement for ministry began to fade.

Later, in Paul's letter to Timothy, Paul wrote, “Demas, because he loved this world, has deserted me and has gone to Thessalonica.” (2 Tim 4:10)

Unfortunately, unlike John Mark, we have no record that Demas ever recovered. Prov 24:16 “... though a righteous man falls seven times, he rises again, but the wicked are brought down by calamity.”

III Paul's Final Words To The Church

A. He sent greetings: [Verse 15a]

1. To the brothers at Laodicea

Located about 40 miles east of Ephesus and about 10 miles west of Colosse.

2. To Nympha and the **church** in her house [Verse 15b]

Probably a prominent Christian woman in Laodicea who opened her home as a gathering place for corporate worship.

Interestingly, it wasn't until the third century that we have record of actual church buildings. Up until that time, Christians simply met in homes where they ate together, studied the Word together, prayed together, and worshipped the Lord together.

B. He gave instructions: [Verse 16]

1. That his letter be **read** in the church of Laodicea

2. That they read the letter from Laodicea

We don't know what happened to the Laodicean letter. Some scholars believe that this letter may have been the letter to the Ephesians. In any case, we again see the centrality of the Word in corporate worship.

C. He exhorted Archippus: [Verse 17]

He is believed to have been the son of Philemon (Philemon). Tradition tells us that he was one of Jesus' seventy disciples. He held a position of leadership in the church at Colosse. He was described as a "fellow soldier" with Paul (Philem 2). Like the other disciples, Archippus suffered martyrdom for Christ.

1. "**Complete** the work you have received in the Lord"
Complete = Pleroo = "To level up (a hollow), or to fill up a deficiency."
 No one knows what Archippus' unfinished work was, but the important thing was that he had a ministry that he had failed to complete.
 2 Tim 4:5 "But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry."

Application:

What has God called you to do? Whatever it is, be sure to complete it!

D. He authenticated his letter: [Verse 18]

1. "I, Paul, write this greeting in my own hand"
 2 Thess 3:17 "I, Paul, write this greeting in my own hand, which is the distinguishing mark in all my letters. This is how I write."
2. "**Remember** my chains"
 Heb 13:3 "Remember those in prison as if you were their fellow prisoners, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering."
3. "Grace be with you"
 2 Cor 13:14 "May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all."

Conclusion

So, as we conclude our study in the Book of Colossians, let me ask two questions:

1. Are you a disciple of Jesus Christ?
 Luke 9:23 "Then he said to them all: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me."
2. Are you a disciple maker of Jesus Christ?
 Matt 4:19 "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men."