

## Paul's Personal Concluding Remarks Colossians 4:7-18

As Paul concludes his letter to the Colossians, he *alludes to a number of men who helped him in his ministry* while he was imprisoned at Rome. He gives recognition to some of the *unsung heroes* of the New Testament. This section *adds a warm, personal touch to what has been largely a doctrinal letter*. Many of these men mentioned had stuck with Paul for years, which indicates the *tremendous loyalty he elicited*.

Paul only *ministered alone one time*...and that was when he was in Athens (Acts 17). Otherwise, he always had *companions*. These men were indispensable assets to his ministry. With their support, he was enabled by God to accomplish things that would have been much more difficult to do in human terms, if he had sought to do them alone.

*“Iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.”*  
~Proverbs 27:17

*“Two are better than one because they have a good return for their labor. For if either of them falls, the one will lift up his companion. But woe to the one who falls when there is not another to lift him up. Furthermore, if two lie down together they keep warm, but how can one be warm alone? And if one can overpower him who is alone, two can resist him. A cord of three strands is not quickly torn apart.”*  
~Ecclesiastes 4:9-12

Of the *eight men* he names in this passage only *two* or *three* could be considered prominent...the others *are not well-known*. Each was, however, a special person to Paul. And each was willing to *pay a price* for associating with him.

### I. THE FAITHFUL: (vs. 7-8, 11-13)

As to all my affairs, Tychicus, our beloved brother and faithful servant and fellow bond-servant in the Lord,

will bring you information. For I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know about our circumstances and that he may encourage your hearts (vs. 7-8)...

Tychicus...means *unexpected* or *fortunate*. He's mentioned only *five times* in the New Testament...the first time being in Acts 20:4. Paul wrote of him being a **beloved brother** and a *faithful minister of the Gospel*.

*“That you may know about my circumstances, how I am doing, Tychicus, the beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, will make everything known to you.”*  
~Ephesians 6:21

When Paul wrote this, he was in Ephesus near the end of his 3<sup>rd</sup> missionary journey. He had planned on returning to Jerusalem via Macedonia, where he intended to *collect an offering*. Along with *offerings* from Galatia and Achaia, he would present it to the *needy believers* in Jerusalem (I Corinthians 16:1-9). By doing so, he hoped to strengthen the bond between the *predominantly Gentile churches* outside of Palestine, and the *predominantly Jewish church* at Jerusalem. He also planned to take some *Gentile believers* from Greece and Asia Minor as representatives of their churches to the Jerusalem church. Among them was Tychicus. Tychicus' willingness to travel with Paul to Jerusalem shows his *faithfulness*.

As Paul wrote Colossians, it had been more than *two years* since his 1<sup>st</sup> arrest at Jerusalem. Since then he had...

- *Survived a plot* by the Jewish leaders *to murder him*...
- *Trials* by Felix, Festus, and Agrippa...
- And a *harrowing voyage* to Rome...

...and Tychicus was with Paul through that entire time.

After Paul's release, Tychicus remained with him. When Paul needed a *temporary replacement* for Titus as pastor of the church on Crete, Tychicus was one of the *two* men considered (**Titus 3:12**). Tychicus, who had *begun as a messenger*, was now *a candidate to fill in* for Titus as pastor.

Towards the end of Paul's life, during his *2<sup>nd</sup> Roman imprisonment*, Tychicus was still with him. Facing *imminent execution*, Paul desired to see Timothy one last time. Because Timothy couldn't leave the church at Ephesus without a replacement, Paul sent Tychicus (**II Timothy 4:12**).

Ultimately, Paul had Tychicus *deliver this letter* to the Colossians. But not only this letter, but Ephesians and Philemon. That he was entrusted with delivering *three inspired books of Scripture* indicates Paul's *trust* in him. Paul lists *three things* about Tychicus that qualified him to act as his *personal envoy*.

- **Beloved brother...brother...**showed that he was a *believer*. Beloved...showed his *personal character*.
- **Faithful servant...**he never achieved *prominence*, but he served in an important capacity as Paul's *liaison to the churches*. Faithful...is one of the *highest praises* Paul could give.
- **Fellow bond-servant in the Lord...**he was a *servant* in relationship to Paul. But he was a **fellow bond-servant with Paul** in relationship to the Lord.

And also Jesus who is called Justus; these are the only fellow workers for the kingdom of God who are from the circumcision, and they have proved to be an encouragement to me (**vs. 11**)...

*Nothing* is actually known of Jesus who is called Justus *apart from this verse*. Jesus is the Greek form of Joshua, which means *savior*. Justus means *righteous*. Jesus Justus, Mark, and Aristarchus were Paul's only fellow workers for the kingdom of God who are from the circumcision...meaning that they were *fellow Jews*. The *lack of response* from his fellow Jews must have *grieved Paul*. The *Jewish leaders* in Jerusalem *had rejected his message, plotted to kill him, and denounced him to the Roman authorities*. Much of the opposition Paul received on his *missionary journeys* was from his fellow countrymen (**II Corinthians 11:26**). At least these *three* proved to be an encouragement to him.

**Encouragement...**this form of the word **encouragement** only appears here in the New Testament...and it could be translated *comfort*. Jesus Justus was a *faithful* source of *comfort* and **encouragement** to Paul. He was willing to *stand alongside* of Paul for Jesus Christ...*no matter the cost*.

Epaphras, who is one of your number, a bond-slave of Jesus Christ, sends you his greetings, always laboring earnestly for you in his prayers, that you may stand perfect and fully assured in all the will of God. For I testify for him that he has a deep concern for you and for those who are in Laodicea and Hierapolis (**vs. 12-13**)...

We know that Epaphras was *the founder* of the Colossian church, and was its *current pastor*. Paul referred to him as **one of your number**. Paul also said that he *sends you his greetings*. He had journeyed to Rome to *bring a report* to Paul of the *dangerous heresy* threatening the churches of the Lycus Valley. Epaphras is also designated a **bond-slave of Jesus Christ**.

**Always laboring earnestly for you in his prayers...**even though he was separated from the church, **Epaphras** still ministered to the church. He did so by **always laboring earnestly for you in his prayers**.

**Laboring earnestly**...describes one in *agony*. It's used in **I Corinthians 9:25**, to speak of the *grueling determination endured by athletes in competition*. In **John 18:36**, it's translated *fight*. It's a picture of one *fighting in prayer*. It's used to describe Jesus' *agony* in Gethsemane. Also of **Jacob fighting** or *wrestling* with God in **Genesis 32**.

**Epaphras** was an example of **Colossians 4:2**, when we are commanded to **devote yourselves in prayer**. The desire of **Epaphras' prayer** was that the **Colossians may stand perfect and fully assured in all the will of God**.

**Perfect**...means *complete, mature, or fully developed*.

**Fully assured**...could be translated *convinced* or *content*.

Only those who are *mature* and *convinced* and *know* that they are **in the will of God** can grow to the *fullness* of being *in Christ* and *be content*...**fully assured**...*confident*.

**For I testify for him that he has a deep concern for you and for those who are in Laodicea and Hierapolis (vs. 13)**...

**Paul** could *bear witness* to **Epaphras' deep concern** for the **Colossians**...and for those at nearby **Laodicea and Hierapolis**. He *ferently agonized* in *prayer* for them...and he was *steadfast* in his *passion* for them to *mature spiritually*.

## II. THE CARING: (vs. 10a, 14a)

**Aristarchus, my fellow prisoner, sends you his greetings (vs. 10a)**...

**Aristarchus** was a *Jewish believer*, even though like many *Jews of the Diaspora (the dispersion of people from their original homeland...refugees)*, he had a **Greek** name. He was a native of **Thessalonica (Acts 20:4)**. He first appeared during **Paul's three-year ministry** at **Ephesus**. He was even *seized* by a *rioting mob* when they recognized him as one of **Paul's companions**. He also accompanied **Paul** on his return trip to **Jerusalem**, and on his journey to **Rome**.

**Fellow prisoner**...it refers to a *prisoner of war*. Because of the way it's used, **Aristarchus** probably wasn't actually a prisoner at this time. **Paul** refers to him as such because he had chosen to *give up his freedom* to *minister to Paul's needs* while he was in prison. It speaks of a *sympathetic, caring heart*. He *humbly bore hardships without fame or notoriety* to *serve* someone else.

**Luke, the beloved physician, sends you his greetings (vs. 14a)**...

**Luke** was **Paul's personal physician**...as well as a *close friend*. He was a *Gentile believer* who *traveled frequently* with **Paul** on his *missionary journeys*. It may have been **Paul's reoccurring illnesses** on his *1<sup>st</sup> missionary journey* that prompted him to take **Luke** along on the *second*. Like **Paul**, he was *highly educated* and *cultured*...as evidenced by the *literary quality* of his **Greek** in his *gospel* and in the book of **Acts**.

**Luke** is mentioned by name *only two other times* in the New Testament. All *three times* his name appears, it does so in **Paul's writings from prison**. After joining **Paul** on his *second missionary journey*, he was with him for most of the remainder of **Paul's** life.



**Luke** was the original *medical missionary*. God's work needs more than people with *seminary degrees*...He uses those with *special skills*. **Luke surrendered** his *special gift* and *talent* to God...giving up what could have been a very *lucrative private practice*. In return...God *gave him the privilege of writing* a prominent section of the New Testament (**Gospel of Luke** and **Acts**)...and of being the *beloved companion* of the apostle **Paul**.

### III. THE RESTORED: (vs. 9, 10b)

And with him **Onesimus**, our faithful and beloved brother, who is one of your number. They will inform you about the whole situation here (vs. 9)...

**Onesimus** was a man with a *sinful past*...he was a *runaway slave*...whose *return to his master* is the event that led to the writing of the book of **Philemon**.

**Philemon** was one of the leaders of the *Colossian church*. It's likely the church even *met in his home*. **Onesimus** had been a *slave* in **Philemon's household** until he *ran away* and made his way to **Rome**. There he met **Paul**, who *led him to Christ*. Now he was being *sent back* to **Colossae** where *his master* was a *key leader* in the church.

Our faithful and beloved brother...Paul wrote to urge **Philemon** to *forgive Onesimus* for *running away* and to *welcome* him as a *beloved brother in Christ* (**Philemon 16**). When a person comes to *faith in Christ*, his *past* is *no longer an issue*...when it comes to the *body of Christ*.

*“Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.”*

~II Corinthians 5:17

**Onesimus** is a *testimony* to the *power of God* to *transform a life*. **Paul** tells the **Colossians** that the man who

*left Colossae* as a *runaway slave* now *returns* as *one of your number*. He was to be *treated as a member* of the church...because *in Christ*, there was *neither slave nor free man* (**Galatians 3:28**).

And also **Barnabas's cousin Mark** (about whom you received instructions; if he comes to you, welcome him) (vs. 10b)...

**John Mark** had been a companion of **Paul** and **Barnabas** on their *1<sup>st</sup> missionary journey* (**Acts 12:25**; **Acts 13:5, 13**), but he *deserted them* when the going got tough. **Mark's desertion** later became a *source of contention* between **Paul** and **Barnabas**. **Barnabas** wanted to take his *cousin* along on their *2<sup>nd</sup> missionary journey*, but **Paul**, not trusting his loyalty, *refused*. That led to such a *sharp disagreement* between **Paul** and **Barnabas** that they *separated* from each other (**Acts 15:37-39**).

Fortunately, the story doesn't end there. By the time **Paul** wrote **Colossians**, **Mark** had become a *changed man*. He had been *restored to usefulness* through the ministry of **Peter**...who even called him *“my son”* (**I Peter 5:13**). In **Philemon 24**, **Paul** names him among his *fellow workers*. In **II Timothy 4:11**, **Paul** tells **Timothy** to...*“Pick up Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for service.”*

**Mark** (about whom you received instructions...)...**Paul** was sending **Mark** with *instructions* to the church. They were not to shun him because of his previous failures.

**Mark** and **Onesimus** are examples of people *repenting* and *being restored*, and *becoming useful* to *kingdom work*. Their lives are a testimony to God's ability to *use failures*. In fact, **Mark** later received the *privilege shared* by *only three other men in history*...*writing* one of the *gospels*.

#### IV. THE DESERTER: (vs. 14b)

And also Demas (vs. 14b)...

Initially, **Demas** had made a substantial *commitment* to the *Lord's work* and was called by **Paul** a *fellow worker*. He was also with **Paul** during both his *imprisonment*. Unfortunately, *it didn't last*.

*“Demas, having loved this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica...”*

~II Timothy 4:10a

*“Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”*

~I John 2:15

The pull of the *world's system* eventually *became irresistible* to **Demas**, and he abandoned both **Paul** and *the ministry*. He *didn't lose* his *salvation*...only his *ministry*.

**Jesus** had **Judas**...**Paul** had **Demas**. Anyone who has been in the ministry long enough has shared in that *heartbreaking experience*. It's comforting to note that even **Messiah**, and one of the *greatest leaders* the world has ever known, had those who *failed* and *abandoned them*.

#### V. FINAL REMARKS: (vs. 15-18)

Greet the brethren who are in Laodicea and also Nympha and the church that is in her house. When this letter is read among you, have it also read in the church of the Laodiceans; and you, for your part read my letter that is coming from Laodicea. Say to Archippus, “Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it.” I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. Remember my imprisonment. Grace be with you (vs. 15-18)...

**Paul** closes by asking the **Colossians** to greet the brethren who are in Laodicea and also Nympha and the church that is in her house...probably the church of Hierapolis.

When this letter is read among you, have it also read in the church of the Laodiceans; and you, for your part read my letter that is coming from Laodicea...the church in Laodicea and the church of Colossi were to read the letters sent to each of them and then *exchange* letters.

**Archippus**...probably the *son* of **Philemon**...is only mentioned here and in **Philemon 2**. Here he's *commanded* to take heed...to *look out for the dangers in the ministry* and *calling* that he received from the Lord and fulfill it.

**I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand**...**Paul typically** would use a *scribe* or *recording secretary* when writing his letters. He would then add a *personal greeting* and *concluding remarks* with his own hand (**I Corinthians 16:21; II Thessalonians 3:17; Philemon 19**).

**Remember my imprisonment**...He then asked them to remember his imprisonment when they *prayed for him*.

**Grace be with you**...And then he *closed* as he always did ...with grace (**Romans 16:24; I Corinthians 16:23; II Corinthians 13:14; I Thessalonians 5:28; II Thessalonians 3:18; I Timothy 6:21; II Timothy 4:22; Titus 3:15**).

#### LESSONS WE MUST LEARN:

- As a believer, we must PUT OFF the old flesh nature and PUT ON the new life in Christ.
- As we mature as a believer, the Word of God must DWELL in us and we must DEVOTE ourselves to prayer.

- The message of Colossians...salvation is by GRACE through FAITH in the ALL-SUFFICIENT Christ, not through HUMAN WORKS advocated by false teachers.