

Colossians 4:7-18

Intro: Here we have Paul giving his final instructions and greetings. As we see him surrounded by various personalities, we can learn something of the work of God in those around us.

Verses 7-9:

1) *Tychicus*:

--(7) **a beloved brother**. . . Tychicus was probably saved at Ephesus (**Acts 20:4**), joined Paul's third missionary journey, and was part of a delegation carrying money to the Jerusalem church.

It is good to love true brothers and sisters in the Lord!

--**faithful minister, and fellow servant in the Lord**. . . Here Paul uses two different words for servant.

*King (Colossians): "In the New Testament original, there are no less than eight different words for the idea of service. 1) *Diakonos*, the ministering servant. 2) The household servant, *oiketes*. 3) The supervising servant, *huperetes*. 4) The confidential servant, *therapon*. 5) The public servant, *leitourgos*. 6) The temple servant, *latris*. 7) The responsible servant, *oikonomos*. 8) The bondservant, *doulos*. It is the first and last of these words that are used here of Tychicus. He is not the slave of Paul, he is the *diakonos*, the ministering servant; but he is the *sundoulos*, the fellow slave, with Paul 'in the Lord'."*

--Tychicus was a fellow servant beside Paul as slaves under the Master.

--That was why Paul trusted him with these epistles (**Eph 6:21-22 + Philemon**) and as being one of his main traveling ambassadors (**2 Tim. 4:12; Titus 3:12**).

--**will tell you all the news about me**. Paper was costly, and it was easier to have some things related without writing. Paul trusted Tychicus to fill them in on the pertinent work of the Lord.

--(8) Paul knows Tychicus will be a true minister when he arrives.

--Notice, in the Bible, when Paul speaks about ministry "credentials" there is nothing like religious titles, positions, lineage, colleges, authorship, church planting networks, degrees, etc.

*Govett (On Colossians): "*The Apostle, in commending Tychicus to the Colossian Christians, does not speak of his ecclesiastical rank, of his letters of orders, or who ordained him. He speaks of his faith, his heart, and the doctrine which he bore, as being his recommendation to his Christian brethren. Let us keep to apostolic practice and doctrine!*"*

--Christian character and doctrine are the only things that actually matter in a minister!

2) *Onesimus*:

--(9) Onesimus was the Colossian slave of a Christian man named Philemon who ran away and ended up in Rome with Paul. Paul led him to the Lord. He was traveling back with Tychicus carrying the letter to Philemon where Paul is advocating on his behalf.

--His life would be a powerful plea and example as this letter was read aloud.

--Just imagine the two of these men traveling into Asia with three letters of the inspired Holy Scripture (Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon)! There had to be some crazy warfare!

Verses 10-11:

3) Aristarchus:

--(10) Was with Paul in Ephesus and caught up in a mob riot (**Acts 19:29**) and yet, he still accompanied Paul on his third missionary journey with Tychicus (**Acts 20:4**). He even ends up shipwrecked with Paul and eventually joins him in Rome (**Acts 27:2**).

--**my fellow prisoner greets you.** . . . Some think he willingly remained in prison with Paul as his servant and wasn't actually imprisoned—mainly because he is mentioned in (**Philemon 1:24**) without the title of a prisoner. We don't know either way. Tradition tells us that he was eventually imprisoned and killed by Nero. *It is a blessing when we don't have to carry burdens alone!*

4) Mark:

--**the cousin of Barnabas (About whom you received instructions: if he comes to you, welcome him).** . . . This is John Mark, the writer of the Gospel of Mark. This is also where we find out that he was Barnabas' cousin.

--The remark about welcoming him is all the more powerful when seen through the background of what happened some 12-14 years earlier in **Acts 15:36-41**; where Mark had left Paul and Barnabas in Perga under some type of negative circumstance.

--Mark was a man with a past and a future. He is a reminder to us of believers who make mistakes and then repent and come back to serve the Lord. There was another man just like that who ministered to Mark:

1 Peter 5:13: She who is in Babylon, elect together with you, greets you; and so does Mark my son.

--Paul and Barnabas had quarreled over what to do about Mark. No longer, though. Paul names Mark as a **fellow laborer** in **Philemon 24** and specifically asks for Mark to come to him in **2 Timothy 4:11** saying, **for he is useful to me for ministry**. Here in this passage, we see Paul is calling on this church to **receive** and **welcome** Mark if he comes to them.

5) Jesus called Justus:

--(11) **These are my only fellow workers for the kingdom of God who are of the circumcision; they have proved to be a comfort to me.** Justus was the Latin name because of how common the name of Jesus was. We don't know anything about this man other than the fact that he was a Jew (as were Aristarchus and Mark) who served with Paul to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ!

--On one level, Paul is clearly disappointed there were not more of his people serving with him in the gospel. *We may not have our family, culture, or close people group serving with us but we will always have the family of God.*

--On another level, these men were **a comfort** to Paul. The Greek word (*paregoria*) is a medical term used only here in the NT and commonly referred to a soothing relief or an alleviation from pain. *Are you a comfort to anyone?*

--From these various comments, we also get the impression Paul seems very concerned the Colossians know which servants of God are sincere and trustworthy.

Verses 12-13:

6) *Epaphras*:

--(12) **who is one of you**. . . Epaphras, as we saw earlier in the letter, was the man the Lord used to plant and pastor the churches in Colosse, Laodicea, and Hierapolis (**as you also learned from Epaphras**. . . 1:7).

--We do know that he becomes a fellow-prisoner with Paul (*Philemon 1:23*)—whether figurative or literal.

--**a bondservant of Christ**. . . He calls him **a bondservant**, the Greek being a *doulos*—or slave—which is a term Paul only applies directly to himself and Timothy. Even in prison, Paul is impressed by the character of this man.

--**always laboring fervently for you in prayers**. . . Here is how this man's slavery and zeal are playing out, in intercessory prayer. Epaphras is also the only one of Paul's friends he directly commends for an intercessory prayer ministry.

--What does it mean to labor in prayer?

1) It means praying as a means of doing spiritual work. Spiritual work requires spiritual means.

Some of my favorite books on prayer are dedicated to physically weak or infirm individuals who were mighty laborers in prayer!

2) It means praying with effort (quality). Accomplishing any "work" like redoing your kitchen, replacing your brakes, or maintaining a garden will take effort.

-So many refuse to labor in prayer because the visible results are often less noticeable. *People are offended if we don't ask them to be part of the worship team, teach a Bible study, or lead a ministry, but don't care if they are overlooked for a prayer ministry!*

3) It means allotting time (quantity). To accomplish any physical labor, we organize our time to make sure we can put in work. The same applies to laboring in prayer. We should reasonably expect larger spiritual tasks to require larger quantities of prayer. *Of course, God can intervene and do the miraculous when He sees fit!*

4) It means we have the means to labor in a way that can touch the physical and spiritual, present and future, our home or the entire world, heaven and hell. What a gift! And yet, so few are willing to labor in prayer! *May God send us laborers in fields of prayer!*

--What were the contents of Epaphras' prayers?

--**that you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God**. What a wonderful prayer!

Epaphras wants his children in the Lord to **stand**. . . there was false doctrine trying to trip them up!

--**perfect and complete in all the will of God . . .** has the idea of maturity and fullness (**1:25: to fulfill the word of God. . .**) in all of God's will. *We should make faithful use of this concise prayer that the Holy Spirit holds up before us—it is an effective tool for accomplishing spiritual work!*

--Allow me to add one thing before we continue. To labor in prayer is *a* type of praying, but not every type of praying. Do we work faithful hours before the Lord?

--**(13) For I bear him witness that he has a great zeal for you. . .** It was something to have Paul recognize the zeal in another. Zeal can be misplaced. The real question is: *What are we zealous for?* God's house? Jesus' Bride? The Spirit's work in the world? *Jesus was eaten up by zeal for His Father's house, but He was always calm and under control.*

Verse 14:

7) **Luke**

--**Luke the beloved physician. . .** This is the Luke who wrote the Gospel of Luke. He was Paul's faithful friend from early in his ministry in Acts (**16:10-17; 20:6-16, 21, 27-28, 27:2**) to the very end when Paul was martyred (**2 Timothy 4:11**).

--This is also where we learn he was a doctor. I guess he was the first medical missionary! *It is easy to love a good doctor.*

--It is amazing that we find Mark, Luke, and Paul all together here. These three men were used by God to write 2/3 of the New Testament! *Who do you choose to surround yourself with?*

8) **Demas**

--**and Demas greet you. . .** Demas was one of Paul's companions and is called a fellow-laborer in **Philemon 24**—though there is nothing said about him here. Was Paul beginning to have doubts?

--We are eventually told that Demas abandons Paul and leaves for Thessalonica **having loved this present world (2 Tim. 4:10)**.

--We are not told that he went to hell—we don't know. At best, he famously represents those who have saved souls and wasted lives. We will all have friends who leave our circle if we continue following Christ!

--Demas stopped seeking heaven and started living for earth. It is always a question of this world or that world. You cannot have both! No man can serve two masters.

Verse 15:

9) **Nymphas**

--**and Nymphas and the church that is in his house. . .** or your Bible might say *Nympha* and *her house*. The problem is that in the language the name can go either way (Like Pat or Casey in our day), so translators have to decide based on context or other manuscripts.

--Either way, the Colossians knew who Nymphas was, and the letter got to the right person.

Some will just apologize to Nympha/s in heaven.

--Since Colosse and Laodicea were already mentioned, contextually, this is most likely a house church in Hierapolis. *How many churches have started in homes even today?!*

Verse 16:

--***Now when this epistle is read among you, see that it is read also in the church of the Laodiceans.*** . . . Sadly, in too many places of worship, the Word of God is not even read, and if it is read, it is not read as it truly is, the Word of God.

--***and that you likewise read the epistle from Laodicea.*** . . . What was this second letter? There are two reasonable options:

1) A letter Paul wrote that was not inspired by the Holy Spirit. We know that Paul wrote other letters that were not considered Scripture (**2 Cor. 5:9**).

2) It could possibly be a reference to Ephesians; if it was meant to be a circular letter as it seems to be (No personal greetings, etc.). In that case, it would likely be in Laodicea first, then brought and read along with Colossians.

Verse 17:

10) Archippus

--Archippus is the last person we meet here. We don't know a lot about him. Some think he was Philemon's son since he is mentioned with Philemon and Apphia in **Philemon 2**; others think he was left as the pastor by Epaphras—maybe both!

--In **Philemon 2**, Paul calls Archippus a ***fellow soldier***. Whatever his place of ministry was, he was a brother in the trenches of spiritual warfare! *It is good to find another veteran who is battling in God's good fight of faith!*

--***Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord.*** . . . Paul both encourages and exhorts him to faithfully execute the ministry the Lord gave.

--***you have received.*** . . . Men don't choose ministry, God does. God is overseeing the whole program of salvation and passes out jobs as He sees fit. ***For we are God's fellow workers (1 Cor. 3:9).***

--Our calling is faithfully serving right where the Lord has us. The question is not: *What ministry do you want?* The question is: *What ministry do you have?*

****John 3:27: John answered and said, "A man can receive nothing unless it has been given to him from heaven."****

--Do you feel like God is calling you to ministry? When does that start? Right now! How will you be prepared? By faithfully doing what is in front of you!

--***that you may fulfill it.*** The Greek word for ***fulfill*** is the same Paul uses for his own ministry of preaching the Word (**1:25**) and the goal of Epaphras' prayers (**4:12**).

--We should all **take heed** to finish the thing the Lord has given each of us to do. God's commendation is not: Well *intended* my good and faithful *saved son/daughter*. God's commendation is: Well *done* my good and faithful *servant*.

--Don't get distracted by what anyone else is doing. My Master does what He pleases, but I do what I am told. ***John 21:20-22: What is that to you? You follow Me.***

Verse 18:

--***This salutation by my own hand—Paul.*** . . . Paul would often have another writing the letter as he dictated and then signed off on the original copy (**1 Cor. 16:21; 2 Thess. 3:17**).

--***Remember my chains.*** This likely had two applications:

--First, Paul wanted other Christians to take courage despite the threat of imprisonment or persecution.

--Second, Paul was never above asking for prayer for himself.

--***Grace be with you. Amen.*** Grace was what forever changed and sustained him. There was nothing greater Paul could wish any group of believers to know or experience.

1 Peter 4:10: As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

--What group do you want to be a part of? This list of faithful servants in the kingdom of God stretches all the way to our time today! It is never a huge group. It might even be one house in the middle of a large city, but it is the most important thing happening in the world today.