

Colossians: Full Part 2: Fullness in Fellowship

Colossians 4:7-9

Preached by Rev. Craig T. Smith on October 1st, 2023

Touch of the Master's Hand

Poet Myra Brooks Welch told the story of a battered, scarred violin that was up for auction. The auctioneer did not think much of the item and questioned including it. Apparently, it did not look to be worth his time. According to the poem, others agreed with the auctioneer as he couldn't get a bid higher than three dollars. As the bid was about to close, an older man made his way to the violin, picked up the bow, wiped the dust from the old instrument, tightened its strings, and then played a beautiful melody. When he finished, the auctioneer changed his tune. It would sell for \$3000 in the poem.

*The people cheered, but some of them cried,
 "We do not quite understand – what changed its worth?"
 The man replied, "The touch of the Master's hand."
 And many a man with a life out of tune, and battered and torn with sin, is
 auctioned cheap to the thoughtless crowd.
 Much like the old violin.*

That is a lovely poetic parable, but it reveals a beautiful truth. Such transformational change is incomprehensible for those outside. Like the violin, nothing changes physically. But anyone who has experienced the touch of the Master's hand through the gospel of Jesus Christ perfectly understands how change like that is possible.

Some who have experienced the Master's touch are mentioned by name in Colossians 4, here in the closing paragraphs of Paul's letter. The study of these ancient lives can bring a transforming touch to our modern lives and fullness to everyday service. I invite you to turn to Colossians 4 this morning. (read text)

Tychicus: Full Service

The first name Paul mentioned was Tychicus. He is mentioned glancingly in Scripture a few times (Acts 20:4, Ephesians 6:21, 2 Timothy 4:12, Titus 3:12 and here in Colossians 4).

Tychicus popped up at the end of Paul's missionary work in Ephesus, and since he was a native of the province of Asia, of which Ephesus is a major city, we think he was probably a convert of Paul's long ministry there in Ephesus. Very likely, he was born in Ephesus and found Christ under Paul's ministry. This means it is likely that Tychicus witnessed the great Ephesian silversmiths' riot against Paul, which prompted the apostle to leave Ephesus for Macedonia (Acts 19:25-20:1).

If that was true, it meant that Tychicus experienced danger and trouble and shared in similar bravery as Paul did. Not much later, Paul would return to Jerusalem, where he was arrested. Tychicus was one of the seven who accompanied him as a traveling companion (Acts 20:4).

When Paul was arrested, Tychicus, along with Luke and some others, stayed with Paul through the thick and thin of the arrest, imprisonment in Caesarea, Paul's dramatic appearance before kings and governors, Paul's miserable voyage and shipwreck on the way to Rome, and also Paul's residence in Rome awaiting trial. Tychicus was clearly a man of intense devotion to God and loyalty to Paul. Paul said, *"I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea; on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers; in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. (2 Cor. 11:25-27)*

Tychicus could have written the exact same thing about himself as well, due to his loyalty to Paul. This loyalty meant that Paul chose Tychicus to travel as Paul's messenger back to the churches in provincial Asia. Tychicus was charged with two duties. First, deliver Paul's letters; one to the Colossians, another to a slave owner in Colossae named Philemon, another to the Ephesians (Ephesians 6:21) and quite probably a last letter to the Laodiceans (see Colossians 4:16). His second task was to update the churches about Paul's situation. Tychicus was Paul's gopher! Later references in Titus 3:12 and 2 Timothy 4:12 confirm that Tychicus performed this humble function throughout Paul's life and ministry.

Tychicus left behind no writings that survive. He did not perform any miraculous acts, nothing that Luke thought were worth recording in Acts.

Tychicus was a common violin. However, God used him as a part of his divine symphony, and the music was beautiful and harmonious.

These verses do reveal something of Tychicus's character. Paul called him a "beloved brother." He was greatly loved by Paul and the church in Rome, which is no small feat. He was also called "a faithful minister (or servant)." There was no mention of Tychicus being a great theologian, a powerful orator, only a servant, a title that was assumed by the Lord Jesus himself. Tychicus was clearly dependable and faithful.

Paul concludes his description of Tychicus by calling him a "fellow servant in the Lord." This term expressed an equality between Paul and Tychicus. It is almost as if Paul said, "Don't think because I wrote the letter and Tychicus is delivering it that I am better than he. We are both servants of the same Lord. I am not Tychicus's master. He is a servant and is serving me."

From this teamwork of Paul and Tychicus we can learn some great truths about the fullness in service.

There is greatness in the smallest thing done for Christ. Consider the following string of logic: What would be the use in Paul's writing a letter if it did not get delivered? What would be the use of Paul's towering thought in the opening chapters of Colossians and its compelling application if no one ever read it?

For the loss of a nail, lose a horseshoe; for the loss of a horseshoe, lose a horse; for the loss of a horse, lose a soldier; for the loss of a soldier, lose a battle; for the loss of a battle, lose a kingdom. What was the name of Charles Lindbergh's mechanic? What was the name of Eric Clapton's guitar tech? Who passed the ball to Wilt Chamberlin the night he scored 100 points in a single game? That is how it is with the seemingly small, unromantic, common things we do for Christ. Some of them are absolutely indispensable to God's work, and we will never know how much so until we get to Heaven.

When Tychicus was doing the smallest thing, he was serving Christ. Those of us who live in this post-modern, overly technological world run the danger of separating our lives into religious/non-religious, sacred/secular, great/small. But our Lord said and did otherwise:

“I always do the things that are pleasing to Him” (John 8:29). Living in a human body for over thirty years, Jesus never once performed a secular, nonsacred act. God is in all of our little acts, and we ought to consistently ask the Lord to remind us that is how it is. We need to pray for this in our regular prayer times as well as in a thousand brief sighs and breaths. Imagine how liberated your life would be if this was true.

The momentary things done for Christ last for eternity. The letters that Tychicus carried to Asia for Paul would outlast the Roman Empire itself. Tychicus’s name would be known until the end of time. The world may never ever see our part. But God sees it. God sees those little things done for Christ.

Today, the Colossian church seems a failure, Travel to the Lycus valley today, you will only find a couple of rocks and some poor farmers. But back then the church flourished there, and its life and message spread contagiously around the world with the powerful truths of the supremacy of Christ. The Church today is far richer because of Colossae and Paul and his fellow servant Tychicus.

The life of this common man who loyally served Christ and Paul graces all of our lives today. Tychicus represents those common yet unknown saints who will one day in glory see the scope and power of their impact.

Onesimus: Full Transformation

Paul described another of the Lord’s servants in verse 9 named Onesimus, “our faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you.”

We know from Paul’s letter to Philemon that Onesimus was Philemon’s errant slave. Reading Philemon, you get the sense that Onesimus was a difficult person. Philemon had become a believer, and he was not some overbearing, insensitive master that others were. His Christian theology taught that Philemon and Onesimus were equal before God and would each have to answer for their own decision concerning Jesus. Further, as an unbelieving slave, Onesimus was, to quote his own self-evaluation, “useless” (Philemon 11). Miserable, ungrateful Onesimus decided to steal from Philemon and fled to Ephesus and then on to Rome to become lost anonymously in the sea of people there. Instead of losing himself in Rome, Onesimus was found by the Lord Jesus Christ.

And then an amazing transformation took place in the life of Onesimus. The man who was once restless and insolent, Onesimus was not clear-eyed and straightforward. Once ungrateful and unloving, Onesimus now abounded with love. Once a dishonest thief, he was now willing to make restitution. Once morose, he now entered joyfully into the psalms and hymns and spiritual songs of the persecuted church in Rome. Onesimus had been revolutionized by the grace of God. Any time a man or a woman chooses restitution, you can be certain something radical has happened inside.

Not long ago, the East African Standard in Nairobi ran the following classified:

ALL DEBTS TO BE PAID

I ALLAN HARANGUI ALIAS WANIEK HARANGUL of p.o. box 40380, Nairobi, have dedicated services to the Lord Jesus Christ. I must put right all my wrongs. If I owe you any debt or damage personally or any of the companies I have been director or partner i.e. GUARANTEED SERVICES LTD, WATERPUMPS ELECTRICAL AND GENERAL CO. SALES AND SERVCIES LTD. Please contact me or my advocates J. K. Kibicho and Company. Advocates, P.O. Box 73137, Nairobi, for a settlement. No amount will be disputed. GOD AND HIS SON JESUS CHRIST BE GLORIFIED.

Here is a man with the spirit of Onesimus – transformed through conversion to the point that it impacted his bank account. Christ does that! God’s transforming grace does that in ancient Rome or modern Africa and He will do that for you too. God still changes lives today.

I have seen a foul-mouthed teenage immigrant become the mouthpiece for the gospel in the Andes of Peru. I have seen a young lady who despised school become a powerful Christian executive who lives for Christ, her husband and her family. I have seen an older man who was absorbed into the partying nightlife of the 70’s culture find Christ. Overnight he was transformed, elevated past his own ego, becoming a bright light for the power of the Gospel. I have seen God take people consumed with materialism and success become rich but empty inside. And then Christ filled their emptiness to overflowing and it transformed their priorities. This change happens when a person discovers that “in Him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, and you have been filled in him” (Col. 2:9-10).

The gospel makes our emptiness an opportunity for His fullness. The gospel makes our weakness an opportunity for His strength. The gospel makes our thirst the opportunity for His filling, our misery for His joy, our meaninglessness for His purpose.

Some of us may feel like our lives are empty, just endlessly rambling on and on. Others may even feel as if there is nothing for them in this life. What you need is the fullness of Christ to transform you from the inside out.

Edith Schaeffer tells the story of how the girl doing the cooking at L'Abri, a Christian organization in Switzerland, was supposed to be making cakes but made some errors in the recipe along the way until all she had was an amorphous mess of sticky goo. The logical thing to do would have been to throw it all out and start over. But the Schaeffers did not have extra money and had learned to be economical in the kitchen. So, Mrs. Schaeffer sat down with the girl and considered the gooey mess. After they figured out more or less what the goo was, they added one ingredient and were able to make what they determined to be the most marvelous noodles the staff had ever tasted. If we place ourselves in the Lord's hands, he can shape us into something that has both usefulness and beauty.

Full transformation awaits those who invite the Master's touch into their lives. Full, overflowing service is the characteristic of life in Christ.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Children's Ministry Trip to Orr's Farm. October 7th. Pumpkin patch and other fun things. 10AM to noon. See Pastor Jason for details.

Wednesday Morning Bible Study at 10:30AM. Our study continues in Mark.

Baby Shower for Loizos! TODAY, immediately following worship.

FBC Kids Wednesday Nights. 6-7:30PM See Pastor Jason for details!

LIGHT THE NIGHT: October 31. It is time to start preparing for Light the Night. If you are interested in hosting a Light the Night location at your home, please see Pastor Craig. Next Sunday, we will begin collecting candy donations. We also need 50-60 empty gallon sized milk jugs. Your help with this is greatly appreciated!

THIS PAST WEEK: SUNDAY 9/24/2023

OFFERING GIVEN: \$5382.54

IN WORSHIP: 150

WEEKLY BIBLICAL COMMUNITY: 198

WELCOME TO THE FIRST BAPTIST FAMILY!

- Cameron Rogers (statement)

- Ben and Shannon Earle (statement)

THIS COMING WEEK: Oct.2-6th

OFFICE HOURS THIS WEEK: M-TH: 8AM-2:30PM, Closed Friday.