

## ***Ministry Friendships***

*<sup>10</sup> Aristarchus my fellow prisoner greets you, and Mark the cousin of Barnabas (concerning whom you have received instructions—if he comes to you, welcome him), <sup>11</sup> and Jesus who is called Justus. These are the only men of the circumcision among my fellow workers for the kingdom of God, and they have been a comfort to me. <sup>12</sup> Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ Jesus, greets you, always struggling on your behalf in his prayers, that you may stand mature and fully assured in all the will of God. <sup>13</sup> For I bear him witness that he has worked hard for you and for those in Laodicea and in Hierapolis. <sup>14</sup> Luke the beloved physician greets you, as does Demas. (ESV)*

When Paul made a comment about each of these men, it wasn't just Paul's opinion. These comments are actually God's opinion. These are God's comments. And it makes me wonder: Why did God want to mention these 6 men? I think God chose to mention these very men because they all have something to teach us about God.

**WHEN THE BIBLE MENTIONS PEOPLE BY NAME, THERE'S OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN ABOUT GOD.**

What can Paul's friends teach us about God? I believe we find 6 lessons about God.

**Lesson #1** - From Aristarchus: God appreciates burden bearers. **4:10**

*Aristarchus my fellow prisoner greets you,*

This man was from the Thessalonian church, but he left home to join Paul as a missionary. He became one of the guys that did a lot of traveling with Paul (Acts 19:29; 20:4; 27:2; Colossians 4:10; Philemon 24). Aristarchus may have truly been locked up with Paul, but he also may have been a free man who volunteered to sit with Paul in prison.

Aristarchus bore the burdens of others. If Paul was struggling, Aristarchus was struggling. Galatians 6:2 - *bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ.*

Bearing the burdens of others is a powerful ministry in the eyes of Almighty God. Paul was a very blessed man, not because he had all the luxuries of life. He was a blessed man because he had a Christian friend who sat with him and stuck with him during his lowest moments in life.

**Lesson #2** - From Mark: God gives second chances. **4:10**

*and Mark the cousin of Barnabas (concerning whom you have received instructions—if he comes to you, welcome him)*

Mark grew up in Jerusalem (Acts 12:12). His mom opened up her home to let many of the Christians spend time there during the early days of persecution of Christians. When Peter was freed from prison, he went straight to Mark's mom's house where many believers were praying together. Mark was also related to Barnabas. Barnabas was a very prominent figure in the early Church. Barnabas saw the potential of the apostle Paul (Acts 11:25). When God called the very first missionaries to the Gentile world during the Church age, it was Paul and Barnabas together.

When they left, they brought along Mark (Acts 13:5), but for reasons we don't know, Mark didn't last long. John-Mark left them. He went home to Jerusalem. When Mark went back home, it appears that Peter found him and took him under his wing (1 Peter 5:13).

Eventually, God called Mark to write one of only 66 books of the Book. God did great things with Mark.

God is a God of second chances. No matter what you have been through in life, no matter how deep a hole you think you've dug, no matter what people's opinions are of you, no matter what they may say, it's never too late. If you turn your life over to God, He can turn your life around. He can change your reputation. God is a God of second chances.

**Lesson #3** - From Jesus/Justus: God sees what others don't.  
**4:11**

*and Jesus who is called Justus. These are the only men of the circumcision among my fellow workers for the kingdom of God, and they have been a comfort to me.*

We can assume that if his nickname was Justus, that he was a just man. He did what was right. He was a man of integrity. He was a man you could trust, but beyond that, we don't know this man.

God sees you even when the world doesn't. God recognized him. God acknowledged him. God honored him. Even if the world around you never notices you, God sees you. Hebrews 11:36-38.

**Lesson #4** - From Epaphras: God knows the effort of prayer warriors. **4:12-13**

*Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ Jesus, greets you, always struggling on your behalf in his prayers, that you may stand mature and fully assured in all the will of God. <sup>13</sup> For I bear him witness that he has worked hard for you and for those in Laodicea and in Hierapolis*

Epaphras, as best as we can tell, was the one who planted the church in Colossae. He most likely studied under Paul in Ephesus, then went back home and planted a church. It was Epaphras who reached out to Paul with the concerns that he had for the church in Colossae. He was the one who saw the danger of the false teachings in the area. He was the one who

traveled to Rome to talk to Paul about it. He was the one who wanted desperately to protect the Christians in the area from false teachings. In fact, he worked very very hard at that - through prayer.

Paul said he is constantly struggling on their behalf in his prayers. He was absolutely a prayer warrior. To struggle means to enter a contest and fight hard to win. That's how Epephras viewed his prayer ministry. It was hard work. He was entering into a spiritual battle. It took time. It took mental energy. It took patience. It took sacrifice.

God knows the effort of a prayer warrior. God sees you when you go to bat for someone else in prayer.

**Lesson #5** - From Luke: God uses those who make sacrifices for Him. **4:14**

*Luke the beloved physician greets you,*

Luke was a successful medical doctor, but Jesus gripped his heart. When he got a taste of what Jesus can do in healing the souls of people for all eternity, he said, "I want to be in that business." He made a big sacrifice for the Lord. He walked away from what the world had to offer him because he had found something greater than this world. He had found Jesus.

By the second missionary journey (Acts 16), Luke had linked up with Paul. Luke left his profession to become a key player

in the impact the apostle Paul would have on the world in sharing the gospel to lost people. God also used him greatly to write the book of Luke and Acts.

Luke was willing to make a sacrifice and God used him greatly.

**Lesson #6** - From Demas - God warns about the distractions of this world. **4:14**

*as does Demas.*

Maybe at this point, Paul was starting to see that Demas was losing focus. His enthusiasm for serving God was growing weaker. His zeal was fading. With all the things they had seen in their travels, Demas's eyes started to wander off of Christ.

Sometime after Paul wrote this letter of Colossians he wrote another letter to Timothy. This would be Paul's final letter. This is what he had to say about Demas. *For Demas, in love with this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica* (2 Timothy 4:10).

God has warned us about the distractions of this world. God is warning us through Demas: the world is enticing, but if you want God to have something honorable to comment about you, don't go after the world. Keep your zeal for Christ. Keep your enthusiasm for the Lord. This will have to

be a personal decision, from day to day. Demas was surrounded by the godliest men in the world, and that did not stop him from walking away from serving God. We have to make the choice to privately and personally fix our eyes on Jesus.

### **Of this list, who are you? Who do you relate to?**

- Are you like Aristarchus the burden bearer? God appreciates you.
- Are you Mark, the one who needs a second chance? God gives second chances.
- Are you Jesus/Justus the one only God notices? God sees you.
- Are you Epaphras the one who prays? God knows the effort you put in.
- Are you Luke - one who's willing to make sacrifices for the Lord's work? God can use you.
- Are you Demas? Are your eyes elsewhere? God has warned you.

When the Bible mentions people by name, there's opportunity to learn about God.

