

Colossians 4:7-18

Announcements: (pickle ball)

- Facility Contracts (hoping by Easter; in inspection/finance periods - still fundraising)
 - City Church Georgetown (Big Cafe/ Amazing Grace Building). Back up offer too...
- Speak on the rioting and unrest and Iran, Europe and Radical Islam (in the US)... (last days)
- Finishing Colossians - Will start the Book of Ruth soon if you want to start reading ahead...

Please open to **Colossians Chapter 4** (need a bible? Raise your hand... Backs of chairs...)

- Last time: Watchful & Winsome
 - Prayers - Persistent, Watchful, and Thankful) ...for Open Doors/Clear Words!
 - Witness - Walking Wisely, and Speaking Graciously (seasoned w/ Salt) = each one.
- This time: 20 point message. Nah! But it might feel like it. Gospels... Acts... Epistles...
 - Puzzle without the box. Getting pieces as you go... (over 100 named (10 here))

Message Title: **PUZZLE PIECES!**

- Faithful Messengers (verses 7-9)
- Jewish Co-Laborers (verses 10-11)
- Gentile Co-Laborers (verses 12-14)
- Closing Instructions (verses 15-18)

Easy to skim over. Kinda like the movie credits (most people don't even take notice...)

- Real people, real friendships, made real impacts (risked everything for the Gospel!)
- Not through superstars, but ordinary, faithful, beloved servants. (various backgrounds)
- Relevant for us: which are you on the list? **Ask God to speak to you** in this passage!

Reminder for context, Paul is writing as a prisoner from Rome (on house arrest this 1st time)

- To this Colossian church he's never met (though they know many of the same people)

Faithful Messengers (verses 7-9)

V. 7 - **Tychicus** - The Encouraging Courier

V. 9 - **Onesimus** - The Redeemed Runaway

V. 7 - **Tychicus** (Tie-kih-kus) - Apparently, the Colossian church had never met/heard of him.

- Acts 20 - Paul's traveling team from Ephesus (likely converted there - 3 yr ministry).
Witnessed the riot/other perils on the way to Rome; helped carry offerings to Jeruslaem.
- Eph 6 - same language, almost identical as Colossians 4 (also in 2 Tim 4, Titus 3)
 - The whole way through! **Dependable companion & messenger!**

Vv. 7-8 - He will tell you all the news about me... I am sending him to you for this very purpose

- Charged with giving an update to the Colossians about Paul and the others in Rome.
 - Likely with the intention of reporting back as well... 1,000+ miles of perils

V. 7 - A beloved brother - **Agapetos Adelphos** - Greatly loved | of the same womb. Love this guy!

V. 7 - A faithful minister - **Pistos Diakonos** - Trustworthy. Reliable. Demandable. Proven. Deacon.

V. 7 - A fellow servant in the Lord - Syndoulos - Serving the same master. Shared submission.

- Not about title or position, but character, faithfulness, and humility
- Important work entrusted to dependable people. The church is built on them...
- Reminds me of the Pony Express in the 1800's who carried mail across dangerous terrain. Not glamorous, but essential
- In the church - these are the faithful ones. Showing up early, staying late. Working... though you may never see them! They're not doing it for the applause of men! (setup, teardown, teach Sunday school/hold babies, council off to the side, prepare food, print bulletins, AV tech.)
- Churches are not built by one man on the stage (wrong), but by many Tychichus!

V. 8 - And comfort (encourage) your hearts

- Parakaleo = idea of coming alongside to strengthen hearts (ministry = not info only...)

V. 9 - [He is coming with] Onesimus (Onesie = Snuggie!)

- Context from Philmeon = a runaway slave from Colossae who appears to have done something bad (likely theft/debt). But now, is a faithful beloved, brother (v. 9)
- And there's a lot of ways Paul could have labeled this man, but instead... he is now one of you (v. 9). Not with a worldly label, but as a dear family member! (counter culture in Rome)
- God sets people free! Exodus! Jubilee! - The Gospel doesn't erase, but it does redeem!
- Play on words in Philemon - from Useless to Profitable. (now, living out his purpose!)
 - Behold the old is gone and the new has come! (not: who were you, but: who ARE?)

Gospel Identity Transformation. Your past does not define you...

- The church is a place of restoration. Jeremiah 18 - marred on the potter's wheel = new!
 - I've witnessed it over and over again. Some of you now! (any to name?)
- If you've been redeemed like Onesimus, tell your testimony to the world!

V. 9 - They [Tychicus & Onesimus] will make known to you all things which are happening here.

- These two guys were entrusted with carrying the letter (Holy Scriptures!)
 - Add it all up: Colossians, Ephesians, and Philemon...
- And possibly (likely) gave updates beyond what we have in the letter... (who knows!)

Now we will look at six individuals. Three Jews, Three Gentiles. (also, counter culture!)

- Jesus' ministers to the Gentile Decapolis and the Samaritan woman... (as well as Jews)

Jewish Co-Laborers (verses 10-11)

Remember, the church began in the Jewish land, by a group of Jewish disciples worshiping a Jewish Messiah... Here, we see a "remnant"

V. 10 - Aristarchus - The Suffering Companion

V. 10 - [John] Mark - The Restored Brother

V. 11 - Jesus (Justus) - The Mystery Man

- Aristarchus, Markus, and Justus sound like a law firm, ha!

V. 10 - Aristarchus ...greets you (likely knew Tychicus very well...)

- Acts 19 - Seized along with Paul in the Ephesian mob. Listed as a Macedonian.
- Acts 20 - Lists him to be a Thessalonian and then traveled with Paul to Jerusalem...
- Acts 27 - Even stuck with Paul all the way on the journey to Rome (shipwreck and all)
- V. 10 - My fellow prisoner - Literal or metaphor? Could be either way... (likely literal)
- With Paul through thick and thin. A "ride or die" friend! You got any of them? Are you one?
- Some friends will meet you for coffee, others will visit/join you in jail.
 - Show up at 1:00am, jump on a flight, drive to another state, 3rd world countries...

V. 10 - With Mark (we know from other passages he goes by John Mark)

- V. 10 - The cousin of Barnabas - worded as if they knew Barney! Back story needed...
- Acts 13 - Deserted/bailed/left Paul and Barnabas in Pamphylia. (sickness, persecution, homesick, Paul in spotlight, harsh realities of missionary journeys...? Don't know.)
- Acts 15 - Pauly and Barney had a little fighty. (sharp disagreement) - these things happen.
 - Right or wrong? Paul and Silas (2nd journey), Barnabas and Mark (off to Cyprus)

But here, the glories of reconciliation & restoration... though it may take years (12 ish)...

V. 10 - About whom you received instructions ...if he comes to you, welcome him

- Somehow instructed already on the matter. But give him a warm welcome! (receive kindly)
 - Almost as if to say, don't hold any of those past failures against him... (Mark watching :)
- Mark is with Paul in Rome at the moment of writing! (both in fellowship with God/each other!)
- 2 Timothy 4:11 - "Get Mark and bring him with you for he is useful to me in the ministry"
- According to church tradition, Mark wrote his Gospel (Peter's account) and was martyred in Alexandria. Mark, though bailed at one point, was later faithful unto death! Teshuvah!
- If you have failed in life/ministry, please take note from the life of Mark. Your story is not over!
- If you've been at odds with people in church, take note from the lives of Paul/Mark. Hope!
 - though it may take time (12 years ish)... (I thank God when these moments come!)
- The point: failure isn't final. Love hopes all things, believes all things, endures all things...
 - Consider Mark's Spiritual Mentor, Peter - denied Christ three times, yet Jesus restored him to become a pillar in the early church!

Speaking of Jesus...

V. 11 - And Jesus (hey-soos in Spanish :)

- Lesous in Greek | Yeshua (Joshua) in Hebrew = "The Lord saves" | "Yahweh is salvation,"
- Jesus was a very common name in the 1st century. Jesus of Nazareth!
- V. 11 - Who is called Justus (Latin) = "righteous" or "just"
- Only mentioned here in Scripture, no nothing but his name...
 - (that's how some serve / under the radar) - others won't see, but God knows...
- But he is listed among the other two as "fellow worker for the kingdom of God" (v. 11)
 - Is there any higher calling in this life to unify over?

Yet, there's also something sad in this statement...

V. 11 - These are my only fellow workers ...who are of the circumcision (Jews)

- Most Jewish believers had abandoned Paul or opposed him in his ministry (Judaizers)
- But here were three rolling bros! Jonathan and David / Jonathan and his Armor Bearer.
- Fellowworkers (sunergos) = fellow helper - refers to someone who is a team player!
 - Someone who does not seek to run or control things, nor serve personal agendas.

V. 11 - They have proved to be a comfort to me.

- **Um yeah!** In Paul's darkest hours, he had **three likeminded, selfless, loyal, helpful brethren!**
 - I have these people in my life. Some of the pastors and elders here among us...
- Lord, help us to be like those three men were to Paul, to others around us...
- Your presence and perseverance with people can make more of an impact than you realize...

Now Paul turns to **three Gentile workers**... *spread the love!*

Gentile Co-Laborers (verses 12-14)

V. 12 - Epaphras - The Zealous Intercessor

V. 14 - Luke - The Physician & Historian

V. 14 - Demas - The Tragic Warning

Vv. 12-13 - Epaphras (*invented the epi-pen - haha! - pappa pappy!*)

- Who is one of you (a member of your own fellowship). He was a Colossian.
 - Likely helped found and teach the Colossian church. Pastor/overseer
 - Initially brought the news of Colossae to Paul! (Colossians 1:7)
- A bondservant of Christ, always laboring fervently for you in prayers
- A prayer warrior - laboring fervently = agonizomai (same root as Jesus in the Garden)
 - Athletic straining language. Where we “agony” - strive, fight, wrestle in prayer...
 - Picture Jacob wrestling with God and not giving up until he receives a blessing
 - Not casual prayer, but intense, committed prayer (in the arena or warfare) - why?
- I bear witness (testify) that he has a great zeal (deep concern) for you
 - Epaphras prayed hard because he cared deeply. (I've seen! Prayer / Selah Nights)
 - Some of you, this is your ministry; Or, God is calling you to press into this ministry.
 - May not have finances/physical health to go outreach/on mission, but you can pray!
- *Some people build with a hammer; some build with their knees in the prayer closet!

Pappa Pappy Prays Three Main Things for the Colossian Church - (dangers re: false teaching)

V. 12 - That you may...

- Stand perfect - teleios = an end, a purpose, an aim, a goal... mature, fully developed
- Stand complete - fully assured/confident = perfect tense, lasting permanent assurance.
- In all the Will of God - Obedience and discernment to live out that mature assurance...

Epaphras prayed not just for Colossae, but the entire Lycus River Valley.

- V. 13 - And those who are in Laodicea & Hierapolis. Map!
- *Like Georgetown, Liberty Hill, Leander, and Round Rock = Williamson County

V. 14 - Luke

- Acts 16 - The “we” passages begin in Troas (Luke joined Paul's traveling team!)
- Philemon 24 - “fellow worker”
- 2 Timothy 4:11 - “Only Luke is with me” (Luke stayed to the very end with Paul)
- Author of Luke and Acts (about 27% of the New Testament).
 - Rome documents? God values accuracy, order, and truth (scientific/methodical)

- V. 14 - **The beloved physician**
 - **Physician** - Possibly treated Paul's "thorn in the flesh" - Galatian eye issues?
 - **Beloved** - Not a hated doctor - ha! **Good bedside manner!** (valued)
- For Luke, picture a **medical missionary**. Not a pastor with a seminary degree...
- Luke didn't stop being a doctor when he met the Lord. skills/experience redeemed!
- **Practical ways of service** are a huge blessing to the kingdom of God, and are **a calling**: Accounting, construction (team), designing, utilities, nurses, police/safety, technology...

V. 14 - **And Demas (San Dimas High School)** Rarely does someone name their kid Demas...

- Not much said here in Colossians, but **a sad warning** when putting the pieces together...
- **Philemon 24** - "fellow worker" (written right around same time as this) - **Now the sad part...**
- **2 Timothy 4:10** - "Demas, having loved this present world, **has deserted [forsaken] me**"
- A strong start does not always guarantee a strong finish. Abiding and perseverance is required.
- **Demas bailed out on Paul (likely the entire faith)** - "**having loved the present world**"
- **WARNING**: **gradual drifting**. Keep a check on your **heart affections** (riches... pleasure...)
 - **Lot's Wife in Genesis 19** - Looked back, longingly to the world (past life)... **Trap!**

At the time of Paul's writing...

V. 14 - **[they all] greet you.**

Good ministry has a diverse team:

- **Faithful servants, prayer warriors, redeemed vessels, practical experience, restored friendships.**

Closing Instructions (verses 15-18)

Final verses of the Book... includes **four remaining insights**:

V. 15 - **Nymphas**: House Church

V. 16 - **Laodicea**: Mutual Sharing

V. 17 - **Archippus**: Finish Strong

V. 18 - **Paul**: Salutations & Grace

V. 15 - **Greet... Nymphas** (debates on male or female? ...due to manuscript masculinity/femininity)

- **Doesn't really matter too much for us today...** **This person hosted! Hospitality!**
- ...and the **church that is in his/her house**. (**that's how this church started!**)
- **Tabernacle/temple / synagogues** as worship centers, but **Early churches met in homes**.
 - It wasn't until the **third century** that buildings came along for the Christian Church.
 - Mainly due to the **legalization fo Christianity by Constantine** and the **swelling numbers**. (**groups could not longer fit in homes**)
 - Prior to that, the **underground, persecuted church** met in homes (**still today in places**)
- **The point for us today**: someone **opened their home for fellow believers in smaller groups!**
 - You may not be gifted at teaching, medicine, or constructing, but you can **open your home, and make some cookies!** (**though not as often, I've witnessed many of you**)
 - **(do that, friends! Organically and Officially** (connect groups, etc))
- And a church is **less about the building** and **more about the people!** (**buildings aren't forever**)
 - Church **isn't just about Sunday mornings**, it's also the **fellowship throughout the week...**

Vv. 15-16 - Greet the brethren who are in Laodicea...

- Paul had a heart for the whole region as mentioned earlier on the map.
- Church of Laodicea - later rebuked for being Lukewarm by Jesus (Rev 3).
 - You know that churches can drift over time too (not just people: i.e. Demas)

V. 16 - Now when this epistle is read among you

- A simple note, but gives us 1st century context.
- Public reading of Scripture (similar to Synagogue worship) but in this case, Christian apostles.
- 2,000 years later, and here we are publicly reading among the ekklisia = A centerpiece!
 - Keeps people and churches from drifting...

V.16 - See that it is read also in the church of the Laodiceans ...and that you likewise read the epistle from Laodicea. (multiple letters throughout multiple areas...) - Likely immediate copying!

- Question: Does your Bible have the Book of Laodicea? Where is the epistle from Laodicea?
- A few thoughts: Lost letter (like Corinthians / not inspired), Referring to Ephesians (may have already been circulating), a letter from Laodicea to Paul (not likely) - fifth century Latin = false!
- Not every letter written in the 1st century was inspired by the Spirit for Canonization.
- Take away: mutual sharing among fellowships (cross-congregation cooperation)
 - Encouragements and warnings: Missions field vs deep compromises

V. 17 - And say to Archippus

- Philemon 2 calls him "our fellow soldier" - indicating a hard worker in the ministry.
 - Possibly Philemon's son and a local church leader in the Clossian area.
- A couple instructions. Called out publicly: Encouragement, Accountability, and Warning!
- Take heed to the ministry - "Watch out! Pay attention! Be alert!" present imperative...
- Which you have received in the Lord - looks back to a moment when called to the ministry.
 - And remember, it's all from the Lord (Eph 2:10 1 Cor 12:11, Eph 4:11, etc)
- That you may fulfill it. Pleroo = "fulfill, complete, fill up to the brim"
- Application: speak "hang in there / don't give up" words to people who struggle at times...
Finish well, man! - some of you need to hear that today... (Gal 6:9) (you by name?)
- Are you taking heed to fulfill your ministry? Procrastining, Neglecting, Forgotten, Ghosted?
- Jesus prays to His Father and declares in John 17:4-5, ESV - I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do. And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed."

Final salutations...

V. 18 - This salutation by my own hand—Paul

- As was common, someone else dictated the letter (with better handwriting) and Paul signed it.

V. 18 - Remember my chains

- Not for pity; for remembrance. Don't forget the cost.... And don't forget me... Pray for me...

V. 18 - Grace be with you. Amen.

- Charis = God's favor! Same word to open (1:2) and close. From grace to grace...
 - Beginning (justifying), sustaining (sanctifying), to the end (glorifying)

- The **final and most important puzzle piece** - *Grace from our Lord Jesus Christ!*

Closing:

Well, **that's Colossians**. *Did you enjoy it?*

- **Supremacy and Sufficiency of Christ** (image of the invisible. All things consisting)
- **Dangers Against False Teachings** (legalism, gnosticism, etc)
- **New Life in Christ!** (powers disarmed, canceled the record of debt - clothe yourself as such!)
- **Christian Conduct in Relationships** (social structures and community)

Every name is a puzzle piece. **Every piece matters**. *Are you numbered among God's people?*

- *Will you be known as faithful like Tychicus, or as one who loved the world like Demas?*

PRAY