

Colossians 4:7-9, Essentials, “Sharing Burdens”

3.29.20

Today we will conclude our wonderful journey through the book of Colossians. What a fantastic journey it's been. For those of you who have been with us, you will remember the entire reason we have this book is because of false teaching in the church. Throughout the letter, we've seen how the Apostle Paul has sought to identify that which is true, verse that which is false.



And church, I'll remind you...there will always be a fight for the truth in each and every generation. Satan will always look to pervert and manipulate the truth so that it loses its power to transform, because it's not the whole truth.

And so, we come to the end of this amazing letter and next week, we'll begin a new series we're calling:



“A Life Worth Living.” We'll be going through the first letter to the Corinthian church starting next Sunday, as we see the LIFE WORTH LIVING through the Corinthian believers. Church family, Lord knows with all that we're going through at this point in time in our country we need to understand what's really important in life... Make plans to join us!

This morning, we return to the Apostle Paul's group photo of all those who have helped him while he's been under house arrest in Rome. Remember from last week, it's like my group photo of the guys I worked with last summer in Mexico...



We were a great team as we worked side by side to laying block and building a stick-built roof for a home. It took every one of us to pull off that task!

Let me ask you a question. If you were to take a group photo of the 10 closest people in your life, just as Paul is describing here...who would be in your photo? Who are you spending most of your time with? Are you spending the majority of your time with people who can grow your faith or weaken it or tear it down? How about your children? I'm not saying we shouldn't have lost people in our photo...we should all be working diligently to bring people to Jesus...but, if there are lost people in your photo, what are you doing to help them come to Jesus? Anything?

Paul's photo included soldiers and workers for the kingdom. Who's in your photo? We saw 2 of Paul's folks last week and we'll see the final 8 today, as we finish up with **Part 2 of "Sharing Burdens."** Let's see them...

Colossians 4:10-18

¹⁰ 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), 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. ¹² 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. ¹³ For I bear him witness that he has worked hard for you and for those in Laodicea and in Hierapolis. ¹⁴ Luke the beloved physician greets you, as does Demas. ¹⁵ Give my greetings to the brothers^[c] at Laodicea, and to Nympha and the church in her house. ¹⁶ And when this letter has been read among you, have it also read in the church of the Laodiceans; and see that you also read the letter from Laodicea. ¹⁷ And say to Archippus, "See that you fulfill the ministry that you have received in the Lord." ¹⁸ I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. Remember my chains. Grace be with you.

As we look at this last section in Colossians 4 this morning, I want to show you an acrostic that we're going to be using as our roadmap to guide us through the message today. See the word: Fruitful...



Jesus was always concerned about His followers bearing fruit, and the truth is...we won't share someone else's burdens if we're not bearing fruit. Are we being FRUITFUL with our lives? Are we using our time wisely and are we exhibiting the fruit of the Spirit? Remember Galatians 5:22-23...as Christians this is the fruit that we're to bear...



Look now at the acrostic. We'll begin w/ Aristarchus...He's the "F" for Faithful...



Colossians 4:10a

¹⁰ Aristarchus my fellow prisoner greets you,

Now the question that pops up as we read that phrase is this: Was this man with Paul during his imprisonment in Rome? (My “fellow prisoner.”) Well, initially he wasn’t with Paul in Rome...but in Ephesus. I want you to see our map that we’ve showed you. See Rome and Ephesus...



They are 1,300 miles apart. Aristarchus was in Ephesus when Paul was there. Paul spent the longest time in Ephesus of any city he ever went to... THREE YEARS. Why? Because Ephesus was the mother church of all the churches in Asia Minor. As Ephesus went, they all went. Now this issue in Ephesus is something we talked about last week, you remember how many were coming to Christ and that was shutting down the IDOL SELLING BUSINESS in the city. Well, the business leaders bought off the police and created a riot to get Paul run out of town. Guess who was with Paul.

Acts 19:29

²⁹ So the city was filled with the confusion, and they rushed together into the theater, dragging with them Gaius and Aristarchus, Macedonians who were Paul's companions in travel.

Eventually, Paul ends up in Jerusalem and Aristarchus is with him. Paul would be taken as a prisoner in Jerusalem and moved to Caesarea by the Sea. Remember, I told you about that city last week. Remember the theater...



I'll be going back in July of 2021.



Well, according to Acts 27, Paul would be loaded up from Caesarea by the Sea, on a boat to Rome, where he would wait for 2 years in a rented house to go to trial. Look who's with him on the boat...

Acts 27:2

2 And embarking in a ship of Adramyttium, which was about to sail to the ports along the coast of Asia, we put to sea, accompanied by Aristarchus, a Macedonian from Thessalonica.

Folks, Aristarchus risked his life over and over again for Paul because he cared, because he loved, because he was FAITHFUL! And you know what? We don't even know what Aristarchus did. The Bible never says a word about anything he did or said, other than he was with Paul. What we DO know is that he gave up his freedom to be with him, (a fellow prisoner). And I'll tell you something else, church. The Lord's work would never be done if it weren't for people like Aristarchus, who selflessly give themselves up so that the Lord's work can be accomplished.

In 1948, A.W. Tozer says this about workers in the kingdom and the church.

"In the work of the church the amount one man must do to accomplish a given task is determined by how much or how little the rest of the company is willing to do. It is a rare church whose members all put their shoulder to the wheel. The typical church is composed of the few whose shoulders are bruised by their faithful labors and the many who are unwilling to raise a blister in the service of God and their fellow man. There may be a bit of wry humor in all this, but I'm quite certain that there will be no laughter when each of us gives an account to God of the deeds done in the body." A.W. Tozer, *The Christian Leader*, (c. 1948)

Thank God for men and women who stick it out when it's hard, because many won't. It can be said this way: When Paul asked: "Who will volunteer?" Aristarchus was the first one with his hand up. He was FAITHFUL! Next in the group photo...



Next, is the man who was Restored.

Colossians 4:10

¹⁰ 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).

I call Mark (a.k.a. John Mark), “the man with the second chance,” and I’ll explain why. We know Mark as the man who wrote the Gospel of Mark, the second Gospel, but who is he? Well, when he first appears in Scripture, Mark is a young man whom the Apostle Paul saw promise in when he met him in Jerusalem. You might not know this, but according to Acts 12, the first church met in his mother’s home. This lady isn’t named in Scripture...but, she opened up her home for the church to meet. Why? Because most Christians had to meet in secrecy. They had no political power...but, instead, were being hauled off to Rome. No there weren’t church buildings until the end of the second century.

Paul says to Mark, come with me and Barnabas on our trip...we’re going to start churches...and we just read that Barnabas was Mark’s cousin. So, off they go. See this map...



Follow the red line...they go from Antioch to the island of Cyprus and then they sail the Mediterranean and they get to a town called: Perga and it's there that Mark sees this...



That's the Taurus mountains, and it's there that Mark said, "See ya!" He left. I believe he went back to momma! Those mountains were huge and they were filled with bandits and thieves who would corner you and take everything you had at knifepoint. Mark said, "I'm out!" The rest of the team continued on and completed the first missionary journey and came back to Antioch of Syria.

And then, it came time to head out for the second missionary journey, and Barnabas says to Paul, "Let's take Mark." And Paul says, "You've got to be kidding. No way!" And this caused Paul and Barnabas to split and Paul would take a man named Silas instead.

So, it's over for Mark, right? No. Remember, Mark is RESTORED and he's the man with the SECOND CHANCE. So, you say, "What happened?" Well, this where the Apostle Peter steps in.

Remember, Peter is running things in Jerusalem and that's where Mark is from...the church is meeting in his mom's house, and Peter takes Mark under his wing and he discipled him. That's what he needed. He just wasn't ready for the road. Listen, Peter knew what it was like to fail, right? He had denied Jesus three times about a decade earlier...he remembered and he took Mark and trained him and it was during this time of training that Mark penned the words of Peter and wrote the 2nd Gospel that we call "Mark's Gospel," but it's really Peter's. Can I ask you a question?

Do you need a second chance? We all do... Maybe you needed to hear that today. Jesus offers you a second chance...and maybe you need to offer someone in your life a second chance.

Well, what happened with Mark? Well, Paul said, “receive him, welcome him.” They were restored. In fact, in the last letter Paul every wrote, which was to Timothy...Paul said this...

2 Timothy 4:11b

11 Get Mark and bring him with you, because he is helpful to me in my ministry.

He had been restored. How about that...Paul knows he's about to be executed and he wants to see Mark. That's forgiveness, that's mercy, that's a man who got a second chance!



The third person in the group photo...the one who was: Useful...

Colossians 4:11

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.

Now, we read verse 11 and all we get about this man... a man named “Jesus” called “Justus,” is his name. That's it! But think about it...how would you like to have that name? ☺ You see, Jesus was actually a common name in that day, much like the name Joshua in our day and that's why the qualifier, Justus, which means righteous and useful. You say, “What did he do?” We have no idea, other than he made the photo. Nothing special...nothing extraordinary...but, he made the list...he's in the group photo... And you know what folks, that's most of us... We're nothing special...other than we can be a COMFORT TO PEOPLE and that's what Jesus Justus did for Paul.



Next, the one who was Invested:

Colossians 4:12-13

¹² 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. ¹³ For I bear him witness that he has worked hard for you and for those in Laodicea and in Hierapolis.

We've talked about this man a lot, as we've gone through our series in Colossians, because he's the reason we have this letter. Remember, he had made the 1,300+ mile journey to Rome because he was so concerned about the false teachers who were coming into the church teaching lies. You see, Epaphras was scared to death that the people would not follow the truth.



And that's how I feel... I'm so afraid that the truth is being so watered down in our culture and people are so illiterate when it comes to the Bible, that they'll begin to fall for the lies and that's why he prayed so earnestly... "ALWAYS STRUGGLING ON YOUR BEHALF IN PRAYER." That word "struggle" is agonizomai and it means to be in agony...it's an athletic term...see this...



you're straining to cross the finish line...

You say, "Well, what was he praying for?" Watch it again...

Colossians 4:12b

¹²always struggling on your behalf in his prayers, that you may stand mature and fully assured in all the will of God.

It's simple: He wanted the people to be mature, and the Greek word for mature is "teleios." You've heard a derivative this word...The last thing Jesus said on the cross was: "Tetelestai." IT IS FINISHED! Church, Epaphras wanted the people to complete their faith and to be fully assured or confident in their faith, because these false teachers have been trying to bring doubt. And that's what Satan always wants to do...bring doubt. Don't buy it. Feed your faith, starve the doubt!

How do we feed our faith? Read the Bible...and as you do, you'll become mature...it's that simple! During these CRAZY TIMES, more than ever, we need to be reading the Bible...read it to your families...Let this picture sink in...do this!



Do this, folks!! It will change the lives of everyone in your family and we won't be tossed about by every wind of doctrine and by human cunning, and by craftiness and deceitful schemes.



Next, the fifth one in the photo. the one who is **T**alented:

Colossians 4:14

¹⁴Luke the beloved physician greets you, as does Demas.

What was Luke's talent? He was a doctor. He literally left his practice for a season of time and became Paul's personal physician, his BELOVED physician...because if anyone ever needed a doctor, it was Paul. He was constantly being beaten and hurt for preaching and teaching the Gospel and Luke was there to help him. Luke used his talent for the kingdom and that's what God wants us all to do! Are you using your talent, your gifts for the kingdom?

Listen, Luke didn't quit being a doctor to become a preacher...no...Paul had that covered... Paul needed a doctor and Luke said, "I'm in!" Oh, God used Luke, the only Gentile (non-Jew) to write a Gospel letter...the Gospel of Luke and Luke also wrote the book of Acts, chronicling the Acts of the Apostles and the early church. Think of that Luke wrote 52 chapters or 20% of the New Testament. **And get this...at the end of Paul's life...guess who was with him?**

2 Timothy 4:11a

¹¹ Luke alone is with me.

Only Luke was with him...that's commitment folks... That's a talented man seeing it through to the end! **That's Amazing!** And now, someone else who is amazing...but, in a terrible way...



The next man in the GROUP PHOTO is a **F**ailure: Demas

Colossians 4:14

¹⁴ Luke the beloved physician greets you, as does Demas.

You say, what's the problem? Well, we don't see it here, but if you go to the last letter Paul ever wrote, 2 Timothy, we see in vs 10 that Demas didn't finish. He left and never came back! He failed.

2 Timothy 4:10

¹⁰ For Demas, in love with this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica.

This is so sad, and it happens. People who look like they're the real deal...and yet, they walk away. The word "deserted" used in verse 10 means to abandon... Why did he abandon Paul? He loved the world more...Demas ended up choosing the world...and you know what...if he didn't repent before he died, he's in Hell today and if that's the case, he will likely be one of the ones at the Judgment who says to Jesus, "Lord, Lord, did I not prophesy in your name, cast out demons in your name, do mighty miracles in your name? I KNOW PAUL" And Jesus will say, "Depart from me." Demas failed.

Paul had his Demas, Jesus had His Judas. We all do. Don't focus on the one who walks away...pray for them...but, focus on the ones who stay! Who persevere to the end...and be that ONE who perseveres to the end...be Luke, not Demas.



Next is the one who is Unsung. A lady, named Nymphas...

Colossians 4:15

¹⁵ Give my greetings to the brothers^[a] at Laodicea, and to Nympha and the church in her house.

Nympha is an unsung hero...because like John Mark's mom...she opened up her home for a church to meet there. Would you do that? If called upon, would you be willing for Christians to come to your home and meet? Nympha showed great hospitality. Most of us don't. Most won't have anyone over to their homes simply because it's inconvenient. Right now we can't we have people over...but, would you be willing to use your home to have someone over who needs your care and love and hospitality...perhaps a lost family...a lost person? Nympha would and that's why she's in the photo...an unsung hero!



And this bring us to the last person in the photo...the one who is: Loyal.

Colossians 4:17

¹⁷ And say to Archippus, "See that you fulfill the ministry that you have received in the Lord."

Archippus was loyal...he had ministry in Colossae. He is listed in the letter to Philemon as the son of Philemon. He is loyal, but I think he may have been weary? Perhaps he may have needed encouragement and that's why Paul, said CONTINUE, FULFILL THE MINISTRY.

You see, I believe Archippus was loyal, but perhaps he needed a pat on the back and a “Keep on keeping on Archippus...you can do this!” Lord knows we all need that right now with this virus. It’s a tough row to hoe for everyone right now...but it’s as if Jesus is saying to us all today: **KEEP ON KEEPING ON...FULFILL THE MINISTRY YOU HAVE RECEIVED FROM ME.**

Listen and we’re done, we’ve all got a ministry! You have one...I have one. The encouragement for us today is that during these difficult times: “Keep on keeping on!” Don’t let down...don’t give in...

Look at the people in your photo...and like Paul...be grateful! That’s how he ended this letter...he was grateful for the wonderful people in his life and that’s how I want to end our time in our letter today. I want you to think about the wonderful people in your life. Would you do that? In the quietness of the next 30 seconds...I want you to think back in your life about the people in your life who have influenced you, who have encouraged you, who are with you in the photo...and be thankful.

Who will have you in their photo? Be that person! Be FRUITFUL!
