

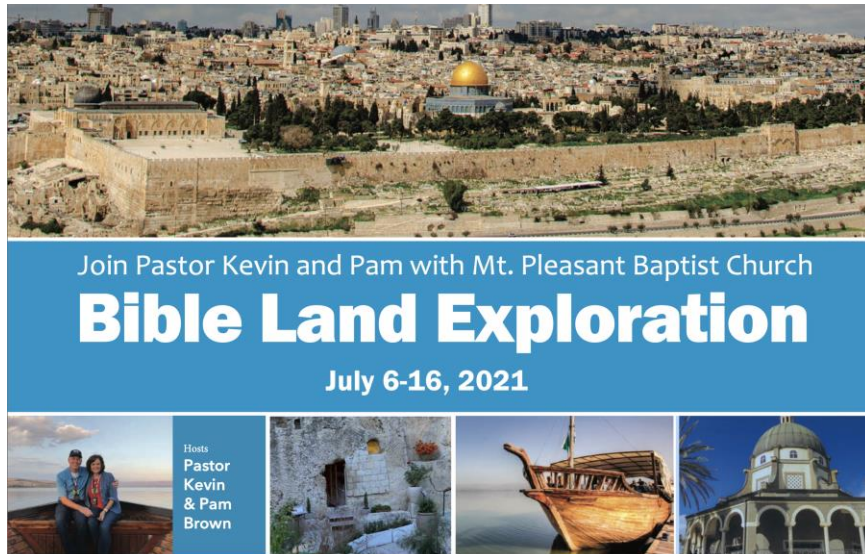
When I was in Israel in November of 2018 with a group from our church...we visited Caesarea by the Sea.



It's one of the most beautiful places I've ever been. It's there in Caesarea where the Governor's mansion was located...in the days of Jesus, that mansion was occupied by Pilate. Caesarea is also the place where the Apostle Paul spent 2 years before he was shipped off to Rome for his first imprisonment. (It's from that imprisonment, that we get this book.) I want you to see another picture that I took while we were there 2018.



It's the "Theater of Caesarea." Isn't it beautiful! That's Pam way down at the bottom with the black shirt on... Now, this theater in Caesarea is where scholars believe Paul most likely visited. Now think about that. I had the privilege of walking where the Apostle Paul walked. That's a surreal thing and that's what a trip to Israel does...it causes you to stand in awe over and over again.



I mentioned this last week...we're planning another trip there in July of 2021. It's truly a life-changing experience. Let me know if you'd like a brochure...

But the point is this...as I climbed up those theater steps in Caesarea, I looked down at the streets and the boulevards below...I thought, "This is where Paul walked. This is where he would be arrested and taken to Rome, where he would be placed under house arrest for 2 years, and from which, during those 2 years, we would get the letters in Bibles to the Philippians, the Ephesians, the letter to Philemon and this letter to the Colossians. WOW!" We are so indebted to Paul...and here at the end of this beautiful letter, and we get Paul's humble "thanks and gratitude" for those to whom he was indebted and so grateful!

As you are turning, I'll tell you that most of the time, the verses we are going to study today and next week are seldom read and taught even less, in most churches. Colossians chapter 4, verses 7 through 18, are seen as some sort of personal data from Paul that's thrown-in at the end of this letter to the Colossians. Well, it's also the Word of God and God designed it that these words appear for all eternity. It all matters because it's God's Word, so we should study it.

What we have here at the close of the letter to the Colossians is really like a group photograph. Kind of like this "group photo" of the guys I served with last summer doing construction work in Mexico.



That's a bunch of fellas who are covered in cinderblock dust and sweat! We were filthy! I truly love that group of guys!

You see, as we come to the end of this letter, Paul is showing us a “group photograph,” if you will. It's like he has grouped together in one picture, all of the people who have helped him in his ministry while he's a prisoner in Rome. Paul acknowledges that he has been able to accomplish his ministry because of the faithfulness of many dear friends who have stuck by him and helped share the burden... Just like our skit!

To Paul, these are indispensable folks. These are the folks who have been making his ministry possible. He couldn't do it by himself; nobody ever can, not even the apostle Paul. We need one another...we need each other. Particularly now with all that's going on with this virus...that's keeping us from one another. We still have to take care of each other. It's imperative we don't go this alone.

So, let's begin to meet the people in Paul's group picture...

Colossians 4:7-9

Tychicus will tell you all about my activities. He is a beloved brother and faithful minister and fellow servant^[b] in the Lord. ⁸ I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are and that he may encourage your hearts,⁹ and with him Onesimus, our faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you. They will tell you of everything that has taken place here.

Take a look at this picture. Can you guess what's going on here? Some may know the account?



This is an account of Moses, when he needed help. Listen to this from Exodus 17.

Exodus 17:8-13

⁸Then Amalek came and fought with Israel at Rephidim. ⁹ So Moses said to Joshua, “Choose for us men, and go out and fight with Amalek. Tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the staff of God in my hand.” ¹⁰ So Joshua did as Moses told him, and fought with Amalek, while Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill. ¹¹ Whenever Moses held up his hand, Israel prevailed, and whenever he lowered his hand, Amalek prevailed. ¹² But Moses' hands grew weary, so they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it, while Aaron and Hur held up his hands, one on one side, and the other on the other side. So his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. ¹³ And Joshua overwhelmed Amalek and his people with the sword.

Moses had to have help! That’s the point. Aaron and Hur shared the burden.

Again, we’re doing this right now as a people with all that we’re dealing with concerning the virus. Some are like Moses and are having to lead to fight this invisible war. Those leaders are our health care workers, police, fire fighters, public servants...our truck drivers and grocery store workers and clerks...our pharmacies...our people running drive throughs to keep the people fed. There are so many people who are helping...some leading...some holding up those leaders’ arms like Aaron and Hur.

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12

⁹Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. ¹⁰ For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow. But woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up! ¹¹ Again, if two lie together, they keep warm, but how can one keep warm alone? ¹² And though a man might prevail against one who is alone, two will withstand him—a threefold cord is not quickly broken.

Paul understood this and this is what he’s describing at the end of this letter in this group photo and I want you to see the first two who helped Paul share the burden of being under house arrest in Rome. The first one is Tychicus (pronounced Tick-i-cus).

Colossians 4:7-8

⁷Tychicus will tell you all about my activities. He is a beloved brother and faithful minister and fellow servant^[b] in the Lord. ⁸ I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are and that he may encourage your hearts,

Now let me state the obvious...if Tychicus is going to share about Paul's activities, then he's had to have been with him...and if he's been with him...then he's associated with an enemy to Rome...(in fact some scholars believe when it says "fellow servant," that actually means that he spent time with him in the confinement). But, even if that didn't happen, certainly the Romans could have seen him as potentially dangerous and he would have most likely been marked as "someone to watch." Tychicus was totally selfless. He was not afraid of the negativity that would have certainly surrounded him because of his association with the Apostle Paul. He was not afraid of the social stigmatism in being a Christian.

Are we? Would you have gone and hung out with the Apostle Paul knowing you could have been arrested and chained just like him? Let me ask you this...are you willing to associate with Christians who are in difficult spots? Will you support them when they are being hammered by the world? How committed are you? Paul called him a "beloved brother" and "faithful minister." Let me ask you something... If someone like the Apostle Paul said that about you... "Kevin is a beloved brother and faithful minister," how would you feel? That would be pretty amazing wouldn't it. That's tremendously high praise from one of the greatest Christians who ever lived.

It's been said that the greatest ability in the world is dependability. That was Tychicus...and you see, because Tychicus was everything that Paul needed him to be is why Paul could say such wonderful things about him. You see, Colossians is not the only place Paul notes that he's sending Tychicus to bring encouragement. He did this in Ephesus, his hometown, as well.

Ephesians 6:21-22

²¹ So that you also may know how I am and what I am doing, Tychicus the beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord will tell you everything. ²² I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are, and that he may encourage your hearts.

But let's stop just a minute... What kind of degree did Tychicus have? What kind of education? Did he come from a good family? What's his credentials? What seminary did he go to? Well, there weren't seminaries in the first century and the truth is: we have no idea about the background of Tychicus, except that he was from Ephesus. In fact, in Scripture we don't have recorded for us a single word that he ever said. How about that?

Hey folks, God uses nobodies! I'm one of them. I'm just a country boy from Wilkes County. I don't have a seminary degree. I went to West Wilkes High School and ASU and worked in the business world for 15 years. There's nothing special about me... How about you? Are you a pretty ordinary person? Hey, guess what...God uses ordinary people to do extraordinary things. I think of Aaron and Hur holding up Moses arms. I think of Tychicus!

Get this...Tychicus is responsible for helping to deliver potentially five letters or books of the Bible. Remember, the Apostle Paul wrote 14 of the 27 books of the New Testament (and I'm including in that number the letter to the Hebrews). That being the case that's 100 chapters of the New Testament, and scholars believe Tychicus carried either himself or helped deliver, the letters to the Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon, 2 Timothy and 2 Corinthians. That's almost 1/3 of the chapters Paul wrote, 12% of the NT. I told you Tychicus was dependable. Aren't you thankful for Tychicus!!

I want to show you the first time Tychicus appears in the Bible. He only appears five times. **Turn in your Bibles to the book of Acts, chapter 20.** What you're going to find when you get there is that Paul is completing his third missionary journey. Along his way, he's collecting money from the



See Ephesus, that's where Tychicus is from. He traveled 1,300 miles to Rome. Folks that's like going from here to South Dakota, on foot. Remember, there were no trains, planes and cars.

This is an arduous trip on foot and by boat across the Aegean Sea and the Adriatic Sea. At the Adriatic Sea it was a 353-mile boat ride to Italy. And you know that the ships that crossed the Adriatic was not a luxurious Caribbean cruise liners with open buffets and entertainment 24-7. You brought your own food with you; and you rolled out your mattress roll at night and slept wherever you could find a place. Bottom line: this trip could have taken a month. Can you see what a loyal and dedicated man Tychicus was!

What seems arduous in your life? Lord knows we're all dealing with "arduous" things right now. Many are stuck at home and that's not something, to be quite frank, that we're used to. You might be getting on each other's nerves about now. But, here's the thing. Remember, we're all in this together.

As families, **talk about what is happening**...age appropriate for the children. Bring a sense of calm and peace to their hearts. For families with small kids...they need plenty of structure. They like routine and that brings a sense of security and comfort. So, build that in... Also build in time outside...get some sun...walk...breathe in the air and continue to pray. It is arduous right now, but we're not going on foot to South Dakota. ☺

Another great thought about Tychicus. I want to show you a verse in 2 Timothy chapter 4. 2 Timothy is the last letter Paul ever wrote. In fact, this verse comes from the last chapter he ever wrote. Paul is asking Timothy to leave Ephesus, where he has been helping the church there and to come to Rome. And here's the thing...if Timothy comes to Rome, who takes his place? Here it is:

2 Timothy 4:12

¹²Tychicus I have sent to Ephesus.

The man with no credentials, no degrees, no pedigree, just a servant's heart... He's going to Ephesus to take Timothy's place while Timothy goes to Rome. Do you think Paul valued Tychicus? Oh, you better believe he did! You see, Ephesus was the mother church of all the churches in Asia Minor. As Ephesus went, so did the rest of the churches in the region.

Tychicus, what a man...what a servant of God. Because that's what he was. **One last thing about him.** See verse 7 again. Notice the two words, "faithful minister."

Colossians 4:7

⁷Tychicus will tell you all about my activities. He is a beloved brother and faithful minister and fellow servant^[b] in the Lord.

The word "minister" is "diakonos." We get our word: Deacon. It means "servant." It literally means: "through the dirt." Meaning...when you are a servant of God, you are willing to get your hands dirty and get dirt under your fingernails. That was Tychicus.

What about you? If people were to write down some things to describe you, what would they write down? Would they be able to write down: "faithful servant?" Do you have a servant's heart? Right now we're finding out who has servant's hearts. Something to ponder during these trying times...

Now our last verse... A man in Paul's group photo that we've actually just studied... We go from a man with a servant's heart to a man with a sinful past...

Colossians 4:9

⁹and with him Onesimus, our faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you. They will tell you of everything that has taken place here.

Paul describes this second man, Onesimus, as a faithful and beloved brother, just like Tychicus AND he's with Tychicus...meaning he was with Paul in Rome too. But, do you know who Onesimus was before he became a Christian? Those of you who were here on our Worship Wed. a couple of weeks ago will remember. He was a SLAVE! And he was a runaway slave, who was a thief, at that.

Remember, one of the letters that came from Paul's time of imprisonment in Rome was a letter to a man named: Philemon. **Turn there in your Bibles. The NT book of Philemon-right after the T's.** He was a slaveowner. And remember, the letter in the NT to Philemon was used by the great abolitionists of the world to lead to the abolition of slavery. But, here's the thing...Onesimus has run away from Colossae and gone to the big city of Rome to get lost in the crowd. But, who does he just "happen" to run into? Paul! Coincidence? No way! There are no coincidences with God...only DIVINE APPOINTMENTS. **And there's no coincidence with you watching this today!** This is a divine appointment and Onesimus had one with the Apostle Paul in Rome.

Most likely Onesimus was hired by Paul who was under house arrest, awaiting trial, attached to a Roman soldier, by a six-foot chain, to run errands. But, it was during those interactions that Onesimus became a brother in Christ...saved...born again! And here's the thing...the entire letter to Philemon was a plea on Paul's behalf that Philemon would receive Onesimus back as a brother and forgive him. Paul even told Philemon that he would pay for anything he took.

Philemon 1:10-16

¹⁰I appeal to you for my child, Onesimus,^[b]whose father I became in my imprisonment. ¹¹(Formerly he was useless to you, but now he is indeed useful to you and to me.) ¹²I am sending him back to you, sending my very heart. ¹³I would have been glad to keep him with me, in order that he might

serve me on your behalf during my imprisonment for the gospel,¹⁴ but I preferred to do nothing without your consent in order that your goodness might not be by compulsion but of your own accord.¹⁵ For this perhaps is why he was parted from you for a while, that you might have him back forever,¹⁶ no longer as a bondservant^[c] but more than a bondservant, as a beloved brother—especially to me, but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord.

I'm convinced Philemon did receive him back and did indeed treat him as a brother and no longer a slave.

You know, it's been said: "When we come to Jesus, Jesus makes sure a person with a past has a past that's passed!" Amen to that! Onesimus had a bad past. And maybe you're watching today and you do too. It's not too late! **Look at all that's going on in the world with the Coronavirus and see this as a divine appointment.** Oh, I'm so thankful that when we come to Jesus and call on His name, confessing and repenting of our sins, we can TURN AROUND...our past is passed. We can become new! You see, in Jesus...

Galatians 3:28

²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave^[c] nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

1 Corinthians 6:9-11

⁹ Or do you not know that the unrighteous^[b] will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality,^[c] ¹⁰ nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. ¹¹ And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

Onesimus was changed...and born again!

I close with this: There was a man named Ignatius...he lived during the first century during the time of Paul and Onesimus and Tychicus. He was one of the early church fathers and was one of the leaders of the church in Antioch of Syria. Unfortunately for Ignatius, he was arrested and taken to Rome, where he was brought before the Emperor and asked to deny Jesus. He refused and instead, he declared his allegiance to Jesus. Ultimately, he was executed.

However, before that occurred, while on his journey from Antioch to Rome, he was allowed to stop and visit some Christians, and thus, on his way, he wrote seven letters, which have survived to this day. In one of those letters, he wrote to the believers in Colossae (remember, that's the same folks we're reading about in Colossians today). In that letter, he greeted the church and said these words, "In the name of God, I received your entire congregation in the person of Onesimus, a man of inexpressible love and one of your bishops [Elders], I beseech you in Christ Jesus to love like him."

Now could it be? This man named Onesimus in Colossae is the same Onesimus as the slave? I'm convinced it was. I know we can't know that for sure or be 100% positive...because there could have been another man in Colossae named Onesimus...but, if it were THIS MAN Onesimus, how amazing would that be? A man who went from being a slave to an Elder in the town where he had grown up. Only Jesus can do that. Sound impossible? Nothing is impossible with Jesus. It's true, "When someone comes to Jesus, Jesus makes sure a person with a past has a past that's passed!"

And those are the first two men in the group photo of the Apostle Paul. Aren't you glad we didn't skip these two men?
