

Take Your Bibles, Please...

Tychicus will tell you all about my activities. He is a beloved brother and faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord. I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are and that he may encourage your hearts, 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. 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), 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. 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. For I bear him witness that he has worked hard for you and for those in Laodicea and in Hierapolis. Luke the beloved physician greets you, as does Demas. Give my greetings to the brothers at Laodicea, and to Nympha and the church in her house. 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. And say to Archippus, "See that you fulfill the ministry that you have received in the Lord." I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. Remember my chains. Grace be with you. (Colossians 4:7-18 ESV).

We come to the end of Paul's letter to this early church. The body of the letter, in which Paul has met head-on the false teachers threatening the church at Colossae, is completed. The apostle Paul has, by a masterful exposition of the sovereign lordship and complete sufficiency of Jesus Christ, refuted their so called "philosophy" with all its attendant errors; he has set forth the nature of the Christian life, calling attention to its springs of power, its heavenly aspirations, and its distinguishing characteristics; he has shown how the lofty principles of the Gospel are to affect relations in the Christian household; and he has left his readers with an earnest appeal for prayer and practical advice for relating their lives properly to the pagan world.

What else could remain? It is only the brief mention of matters of a personal nature. He will mention commendations, greetings, final instructions, and of course a benediction. It is in this passage where Paul mentions ten of his friends. It is here more than any other place that we can see the true spirit of this great apostle. George Herbert, one of the great English preachers of the 15th century, said it well: "The best mirror is an old friend."

It should be remembered that the Colossian letter was written by a real man to real people. There was a Jewish Christian named Paul who was imprisoned in Rome. There was a city named Colossae in which there was a company of Christians. The people mentioned in this closing part of this letter were real people. They were as real as the Smith's and the Jones' of our age. You catch something of the spirit of Paul's life when you consider his friends. In themselves they become very revealing concerning the interests and commitments of Paul. The variety of their background is also important. I want us to come to these closing words of this letter with a conviction that there is something we can learn from every name in this list. Since their names are here in this section, we can be sure they are friends worth remembering. To know them will help you to become a better friend and disciple.

## First, We See Tychicus (tik'-e-kes).

Let me introduce to you Tychicus. This native of the province of Asia always appears as a "servant" when we find him mentioned in the Scripture. In fact, Weymouth translates the word as "trusted assistant."

- ✚ He is the one who helps carry the offering to the poor saints at Jerusalem (Acts 20:9).
- ✚ He is the trusted companion who carries the letter written to the Ephesians (Ephesians 6:21). Now he will be the one to carry the letter to the Colossians.
- ✚ Paul identifies him as a "beloved brother." This speaks of the deep affection of Paul toward him.
- ✚ He is also a "faithful minister" that is he has attended to the needs of Paul.
- ✚ Notice he is also the "fellow servant in the Lord." Though he served the needs of Paul, Paul did not think of himself to be above him rather he considered them to be bound together in the service of Jesus Christ.

Tychicus is sent by Paul with a threefold mission: He is to share with the Colossians detailed information about Paul's present condition; he is to convey the letter to the church; he is to report the church's condition back to Paul after he has comforted their hearts.

How do you see Tychicus? I see him as a trusted friend, a humble man. He is one of those willing souls - always willing to perform even the lowliest task in the name of the Lord. **Indeed his name is worthy of remembrance. Tychicus reminds us that any task, regardless of how small, if done for the Lord and the name of the Lord, is eternally significant.**

## Second, Let's Meet Onesimus (O-ne-s-e-mus).

His name is a little more familiar to the student of the New Testament. He was a native of Colossae. He was actually the runaway slave of Philemon, a leading member of the church in Colossae. He had the good fortune to be thrown into prison with Paul when captured in the city of Rome. Through the witness of the apostle, he committed his life to Jesus Christ. This made a difference. The difference is reflected in the manner in which Paul refers to him in this letter. The slave is now "a faithful and beloved brother". This is the way Paul will present him to his owner. Being in Christ has lifted him.

Though his past has been shameful, his present is changed. As far as Paul is concerned, the past is buried in the mercy of God. Onesimus is worthy to be remembered as a brother in Christ. Coming to know Christ has transformed him into a trustworthy man, When Christ accepts a man, and forgives him, we should do the same. He is the companion of Tychicus in reporting on the condition of Paul and carrying the letter to the church. **All of us know someone like Onesimus, someone who needs our friendship as much as we need theirs. How all of us need to practice the "forgetfulness of God's forgiveness."**

## Third, Let's Meet Aristarchus (Ar'-is-tar-kes).

Do you know Aristarchus? He is a friend worth knowing. He is one of the Hebrew friends of Paul. There were three of these circumcised Christians with Paul in Rome. This good brother was from Thessalonica. He is a man who always seemed to be there just when he was needed. When the mob got after Paul at Ephesus, it was Aristarchus who was captured (Acts

19:29). He was with Paul when he set out for Rome as a prisoner (Acts 27:2). It may well be that he enrolled as Paul's slave in order to accompany him on the journey. **Here Aristarchus is identified as "my fellow prisoner". In all likelihood he was with Paul as a prisoner by an act of his own free will. He was there as a "fellow-prisoner" that he might better minister to his companion Paul.**

Could any action be more selfless or sacrificial? And yet this is precisely what our lives ought to exemplify in our service to Christ. Indeed any more whose life is so totally committed to Christ and His people is worth knowing. There are not very many who are members of this tribe!

#### **Fourth, Meet Marcus (John Mark).**

This fourth friend is almost a surprise. He is one of the few Hebrews Paul had in his company in Rome. He is introduced here as the "sister's son to Barnabus." A better translation would be a "cousin" to Barnabus. This is the very John Mark who deserted Paul and Barnabas when the going got tough on their first missionary journey. The question of whether or not he would go with them on the next journey led to a parting of the ways for the two great missionaries. This helps explain why Barnabas was so interested in taking John Mark with them. Many years have passed and Mark is now the companion of Paul again.

His admonition to the church at Colossae is to receive him when he comes to them. This is the same Mark who wrote the second Gospel. It is of special interest that two of the Gospel writers were companions of Paul when he wrote this letter. **Failure does not have to be final. This is the lesson from the life of John Mark. The grace and mercy of God is abundant. When a man avails himself of this mercy in spiritual recovery, we should also be ready to give him another chance. There is no mention of his past failure. Neither should we.**

#### **Fifth, We See Jesus (Je'-zus).**

Never did a man have a better name. This man would remind us that the name Jesus was a common name in the day of our Lord. All we know about this Jesus is that he was a Hebrew Christian who shared with Paul in Rome. He also bore the Latin name Justus which means the just or righteous one. This is probably an indication of the conduct and character of the man. He along with the other two Hebrew Christians were a special help and comfort to Paul in Rome.

#### **Sixth, Epaphras Is Also Name Worth Remembering (Eh-pa-fras).**

It was this disciple of Christ who was used of God to establish the church in Colossae. It was this man who bore the news of the dangers to the church to Paul. The zeal of this man for the work of the Lord is famous. He is truly a servant of Jesus Christ. *Paul says, 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.* **All of us need this type of friend. He agonized before God for the Christians of Colossae that they might be complete in their knowledge of and commitment to the will of God. This is the type of labor that is so often overlooked and just as often neglected.** There is no glamour attached to being a prayer laborer, but it is effective before God in blessing the lives of others. Whatever good

thing may happen in the fellowship at Colossae, this man will have a vital part through his unceasing prayers. May God smile on you by giving you at least one such friend!

### **Seventh, We Meet the Doctor Luke, the Beloved Physician.**

This Gentile medical doctor was often the companion of Paul. His commitment to Christ was a blessing to his world and to ours. He made two great contributions.

- ✚ The first is the two books that he wrote, the Gospel according to Luke and the Acts of the Apostles.
- ✚ The other great contribution was what he helped Paul do by attending to his constant physical problems. As the dark clouds gather around the life of Paul, Luke is still by his side ministering to him. He is a guiding light to so many.

Whatever gifts you have when you come to Christ, in all likelihood there is a way that they can be used to serve Christ.

### **Eighth, We See Demas (De'-mas).**

Just his name appears. There is not one syllable of commendation, just his greeting. The next time we read his name, it will be in shame: *For Demas, in love with this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica* (2 Timothy 4:10 ESV). Did Paul suspect that already the heart of Demas was in conflict between two worlds? Did he suspect that his heart was drifting away from Christ? What a warning? If a man could drift away from Christ while in the company of such a godly group, who is safe? I have had some friends like him. They are worth remembering. They need to be remembered like Lot's wife, as a warning about the danger of playing around with this world. It will end in your destruction!

### **Ninth, We See the Mention of the First Woman in the List, Nymphas (Nim-fas).**

She lived in Laodicea. The manuscripts disagree over whether or not this is actually a lady or a man. The Authorized Version makes it a man. Most newer translations see it as the name of a woman. Whichever it is, it is the name of a great Christian. **It was in her home that the Christians gathered to worship in the city of Laodicea.** It would be two hundred years before the Christians would ever build houses just for worship. Homes and other available buildings were utilized. Times have changed, but it was never an easy thing to open your home for such a weekly meeting in your house. Such a person must be blessed with a hospitable heart. Such a brand of commitment to Christ is worth remembering. **When she came to Christ, everything she had, including her home, came with her.**

### **Tenth, Paul Lists the Name of Archippas (ark-i-pas).**

He gets a word of admonition from his friend. This young brother was the son of the famous Philemon of Colossae. He has been called of the Lord for a special ministry. He is admonished to watch out for his ministry, and to fill it full. Paul may be the world's greatest apostle, he may be in a Roman prison with his life endangered, yet he can encourage a young, budding servant of the Lord. Can we do any less?

## **A Final Word.**

Perhaps you have had friends like these, perhaps you have been a friend to someone like these people were to Paul. They are worth remembering for they have done the Lord's bidding. How about your life? Have you done what God desires with your life? If not, it is not too late. Come to the One who can put you back on the right path - Jesus.

Let us pray ...