

Ministry: The Great Friendship Maker

Colossians 4:7-18 – August 29, 2010

➤ The Friend With the Heart of a Servant

Colossians 4:7-8

Paul never ministered _____.

➤ The Friend Who Once Was A Failure

Colossians 4:9

When a person comes to faith in Christ, the _____ is no longer an _____.

II Corinthians 5:17

➤ The Friend Who Shared Paul's Imprisonment

Colossians 4:10a

Acts 19:29

➤ The Friend Who Once Damaged A Friendship

Colossians 4:10b

Acts 13:13

Acts 15:36-40

Galatians 6:1-2

And in case you don't remember ...

Mark, the man who failed and abandoned his friends became the _____ of a _____.

➤ The Friend For Whom We Know Little

Colossians 4:11

➤ The Friend With A Wonderful Prayer Life

Colossians 4:12-13

➤ The Friend Who Gave Up Prosperity Yet Came To Fame

Colossians 4:14a

➤ The Friend Who Became An Enemy

Colossians 4:14b

II Timothy 4:10

Matthew 10:37-38

Luke 9:24

➤ A Final Greeting To Those in a Home Church

Colossians 4:15-18

Wrap Up

Paul was not only a _____ - _____ ;
he was a _____ - _____ .

"GRACE BE WITH YOU"

My NEXT STEP for this Week:

Write your own Next Step as a prayer request (below), taken from one of these four examples in today's text.

- Tychicus – a reliable servant.
- Aristarchus – shared in the suffering of others.
- Archippus – needed to complete an assignment.
- Epaphras – a man of prayer.

Ministry: The Great Friendship Maker

Colossians 4:7-18 – August 29, 2010

Intro: We come to the last section of our exposition of the Book of Colossians. Paul has taken us into the riches of doctrine concerning the Person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ ... warned us about Gnosticism – an elitist group posing as more spiritual, mature and knowledgeable of Jesus Christ. An unacceptable theology for ALL who are in Christ have the same Savior and the same resources for spiritual growth.

In chapter 3 Paul shifts to the practical and experiential side of our relationship with Christ. He makes it perfectly clear that every believer has been raised up with Christ ... with a new heart and new power for victory over sin. Because we have a new relationship with Christ and new power ... we have responsibilities. We are to:

- *Put on the new self* ... (3:10)
- *Put on a heart of compassion* (3:12)
- *Put on kindness* (3:12)
- *Put on gentleness* (3:12)
- *Put on patience* (3:12)
- Forgive others (3:13)...
- *Put on love*

All of these qualities were lived about by the Apostle Paul with those who were cruel to him ... and people who were friends to him. In Colossians 4:7 ... Paul's friends come into focus ... into the limelight.

We call the believers in the first century "*the early-day saints.*" Across the street from us here is a church building called "*THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS.*" The belief of Mormons is interesting. They believe that the translation of the Bible has become so muddled through the centuries ... so distorted ... that its authenticity has been lost. God had to start over and give a new revelation. Mormons call this the Book of Mormon. And they then call themselves *LATTER-DAY SAINTS.*

But the glorious thing about the Bible is that we have a continuous and trustworthy record of the early day saints. And these saints are of the same kind that we are today. We along with the early day saints share a love for the same Lord. We believe in the same truths. We share a love for the same Scripture! We are just like the early saints.

As we wrap up our study ... we are going to see a list of Paul's friends who were early day saints ... fellow servants and friends.

There is something that comes to light when Paul lists the names of several people. Paul could not do ministry alone. He needed help. Paul honors his friends by leaving their names in a record that God would include in Holy Scripture. Let's look at this list beginning with ...

➤ The Friend With the Heart of a Servant

Colossians 4:7-8

As to all my affairs, Tychicus, our beloved brother and faithful servant and fellow bond-servant in the Lord, will bring you information.

4:8 For I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know about our circumstances and that he may encourage your hearts;

TYCHICUS means fortunate. Indeed he was fortunate to have ministered with Paul. He's mentioned 5 times in the New Testament.

It is worth noting ...

Paul never ministered **ALONE**

There was a band of young men that tagged along with Paul

There was no such thing as seminary back then. If you wanted to be trained ... you traveled with your teacher. There was no better teacher and professor than the Apostle Paul.

Paul always had help and needed help

Paul had a problem with sight and needed a secretary to write his letters.

- I'm reminded in my deafness that I need help. And I have plenty of it. Pastor Dave and I have worked together for 21 years. Pastor George Hansen and I have worked together for 19 years. Several others have worked with me over 10 years.

Wonderful character traits about Tychicus

1st – He was a beloved brother

Paul did not consider his co-workers as inferiors. They considered them spiritually equal.

They were his brothers not his servants.

Though many served him ... he never considered them anything but brothers in Christ

2nd – He was a faithful servant

Well said

The greatest ability in the world is dependability

Faithfulness is the greatest virtue in the ministry of a believer

God will always use the faithful person more than the talented and gifted person

3rd – He was a fellow bond-servant

Paul did not call his friends – *his subordinates*.

He called them *fellow bond-servants* ...

Paul never refers to himself as the pope. He never refers to himself as a bishop. He always speaks of himself as a fellow worker, a fellow servant.

Here's something to think about ...

When you associated with Paul ... you automatically inherited all of Paul's enemies.

- ✓ It wasn't easy to travel with Paul.
- ✓ His life was always in danger ...
- ✓ And because of this ... your life would be in danger, too.

So anyone who chose to serve with Paul had to be of the highest caliber of saint

Application

From this devotion we should be reminded that spreading the gospel was worth sacrificing all for! Getting the good news about Christ to a lost world is unmatched in importance!

My friendship with Jim Galbraith

Many of you knew my dear friend, Jim Galbraith. He preached here in May of last year. He died of cancer on August 20th.

He was one of my closest friends ... and what made our friendship so close was ... we both were in service for our Lord Jesus Christ. Our education and church background brought us together. But ministry together made our friendship doubly precious.

The Apostle Paul had numerous friendships like this. Tychicus was the first on his list but many more will follow

Transition: The next person honored by Paul was ...

➤ **The Friend Who Once Was A Failure**

Colossians 4:9

and with him **Onesimus**, our faithful and beloved brother, who is one of your number. They will inform you about the whole situation here.

The story of Onesimus is wonderful. He is a wonderful illustration of the grace of God ... and an illustration of reconciliation.

- ✓ He had only been a believer for a short time ... probably led to Christ by Paul
- ✓ He was an escaped slave.

Some background

Onesimus apparently stole from his Master, Philemon, and fled and made his way to Rome.

He could very well have met Paul when he was a slave ... for Paul knew Philemon. It appears to me that Onesimus was impressed enough with Paul to find him in Rome. There he heard the gospel and came to Christ.

He was a new creature in Christ. Not only was he a new creature in Christ ... but his salvation made him a brother with the Apostle Paul ... and a brother to his master. But Onesimus needed to get things right with Philemon ... which you can read in Philemon

The Book of Philemon is a letter to Onesimus' master. You can read this book and get the rest of the story. But in our time today ... understand ... Paul sent Onesimus back to his Master.

Observe

Paul did not harbor any ill-will toward a repentant sinner.

Onesimus was a new creature in Christ. Onesimus had become a friend though a runaway slave.

We should all remember

*When a person comes to faith in Christ, the **PAST** is no longer an **ISSUE***

II Corinthians 5:17

“... if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.

The man who ran away as a thief and runaway slave was returning as a brother in Christ God’s power transformed a sinner and made him a saint!

The great privilege for Tychicus and Onesimus

To inform the churches about Paul’s circumstances

But more than that! Tychicus and Onesimus would be hand-delivering the Books of Colossians, Ephesians and probably Philemon. Little did they know what precious treasures were in their hands.

Transition: Next we look at Aristarchus ...

➤ The Friend Who Shared Paul’s Imprisonment

Colossians 4:10a

Aristarchus, my fellow prisoner, sends you his greetings ...

- **Aristarchus** was the man who was seized by the mobs in Ephesus.

Acts 19:29

And the city was filled with the confusion, and they rushed with one accord into the theater, dragging along Gaius and **Aristarchus**, Paul's traveling companions ...

- He sailed with Paul to Rome and experienced the same storm and ship-wreck.
- He may have been arrested in Rome when he arrived with Paul ... merely because of his association with Paul.
- Maybe he was a voluntary prisoner ... volunteered as a prisoner so he could be there for Paul

What’s obvious ... he stuck with Paul through thick and thin

Apparently at the time of this writing he’s in the same prison with Paul and in chains ... maybe in the next cell to Paul.

Rather than any hint of bitterness for his plight ... Aristarchus sends a greeting with Paul’s greeting to the church at Colossae.

Transition: Next we come on someone who is known best by his failure ... John Mark.

➤ The Friend Who Once Damaged A Friendship

Colossians 4:10b

“... and also Barnabas’s cousin Mark (about whom you received instructions; if he comes to you, welcome him);

What we know about John Mark

- Mark’s mother was Mary who kept her home open for believers
- She must have been a wealthy believer ...

- When Peter was miraculously released from prison ... there was a prayer meeting in Mary's home ... where Peter went

How John-Mark damaged a friendship

Acts 13:13

Now Paul and his companions put out to sea from Paphos and came to Perga in Pamphylia; and John left them and returned to Jerusalem.

John Mark was probably accustomed to an easy life ... so when things got tough ... he couldn't handle it.

Ray Stedman said, *when things got tough on the journey with Paul and Barnabas – Mark wanted to home to mama.*

John Mark felt guilty about this and wanted another opportunity to do mission work.

Acts 15:36-40

And after some days Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us return and visit the brethren in every city in which we proclaimed the word of the Lord, and see how they are."
 15:37 And Barnabas was desirous of taking John, called Mark, along with them also.
 15:38 But Paul kept insisting that they should not take him along who had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not gone with them to the work.
 15:39 And there arose such a sharp disagreement that they separated from one another, and Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus.
 15:40 But Paul chose Silas and departed, being committed by the brethren to the grace of the Lord.

The Bible doesn't tell us what we WANT to hear ... it tells it the way it is!

Mark was at the center of a controversy that divided Paul and Barnabas

Paul refused to give John Mark a second chance!

He refused to allow a quitter to go along.

Was Paul wrong? I don't know

On the one hand ... we cannot blame Paul.

As Warren Wiersbe said,

"PAUL WAS NOT RUNNING A POPULAR TOUR; HE WAS SEEKING TO WIN LOST SOULS TO CHRIST"

On the other hand ... he would miss an opportunity to restore a saint.

But the good news is ... when John Mark was restored and was found faithful – Paul wouldn't let his damaged friendship remain damaged. Reconciliation followed ... and a great commendation was given John Mark.

For those who have failed ...

John Mark is an encouragement to you. Don't sit around and pout. Get back into ministry and prove yourself faithful

One other thing ...

Blessed are the Barnabas's ... those who will encourage someone who has failed.

Galatians 6:1-2

Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted.

6:2 Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ.

And in case you don't remember ...

Mark, the man who failed and abandoned his friends became the **AUTHOR** of a **GOSPEL**

It's refreshing to remember

God is still in the business of **RESTORING** failures

Our God is the God of second-chances ... and third chances ... and fourth and so on!

Time and time again our dear Lord has restored people who have failed in some area of life. All too often in the world there is no such thing as a second chance. But with God ... things are different! God is still in the business of restoring miserable failures ... for His glory!

John-Mark gives testimony to God's ability to *USE* failures.

And ... John-Mark was granted a privilege shared by only three other men in history. He had the privilege with Matthew, Luke and John of writing one of the gospels!

Transition: A friend with a name hard to live up to ... is mentioned next.

➤ **The Friend For Whom We Know Little**

Colossians 4:11

and also Jesus who is called Justus; these are the only fellow workers for the kingdom of God who are from the circumcision, and they have proved to be an encouragement to me.

A lot of people serve and never earn notoriety...but they do with the Lord!

Having the name Jesus may be the reason why he was called Justus. Trying to match the character of Jesus would be overwhelming.

Justus means righteous.

Perhaps this is a godly designation of his life. He wasn't perfect ... but he exhibited the righteousness of Christ

Justus was a Jew. Paul didn't have many Jews who would stick with him. And as a fellow-Jew ... Justus was an encouragement to Paul.

Justus may have been a constant reminder to Paul ... God is still saving his kins-folk. This small group of Jews with Paul constituted the first *JEWS FOR JESUS* group.

Transition: The friend Paul had the most to say about is introduced next ...

➤ The Friend With A Wonderful Prayer Life

Colossians 4:12-13

Epaphras, who is one of your number, a bondslave of Jesus Christ, sends you his greetings, always laboring earnestly for you in his prayers, that you may stand perfect and fully assured in all the will of God.

4:13 For I testify for him that he has a deep concern for you and for those who are in Laodicea and Hierapolis.

Epaphras was from the church that was receiving this letter ... but was now with Paul. He was the one who started the Colossian church ... and must have been their pastor. In the introduction of our study I pointed out that he traveled to find Paul so he could get Paul's input on the growing heresies in his region – Gnosticism.

We catch his pastor's heart. Even when Epaphras was absent from his people ... he was not inactive.

“... always laboring earnestly for you in his prayers, that you may stand perfect and fully assured in all the will of God”

“... he has a deep concern for you and for those who are in Laodicea and Hierapolis”

We discover

Epaphras was a man of prayer.

- He prayed CONSTANTLY (“always”)
- He prayed FERVENTLY (“laboring fervently”)
- He prayed for INDIVIDUALS (“for you”)
- He prayed for SPECIFIC spiritual growth
 - ✓ He wanted them to not merely be saved ... he wanted them to be mature and fully developed.
 - ✓ He wanted them to KNOW the will of God in every area of their life and he wanted them to LIVE OUT the will of God in every area of their life

Question: Is this what you want?

Transition: Now we come to someone especially dear to Paul ... the most famous of all.

➤ The Friend Who Gave Up Prosperity Yet Came To Fame

Colossians 4:14

Luke, the beloved physician, sends you his greetings ...

Dr. Luke was the most faithful of all friends and co-workers.

- ✓ He laid aside his opportunity to make a lot of money as a doctor ... to serve the Lord by assisting Paul.
- ✓ Luke was an educated man.
- ✓ He could have had all that this world had to offer ... but didn't seek it.

- ✓ He was cultured ... evidenced by the way he wrote. His handle of the Greek language was superb!
- ✓ Luke surrendered his special talent to God
- ✓ He was the first missionary doctor

He could have been working a 35 hour week ... with a summer home at the coast ... Instead he gave up the possibility of lucrative rewards ... but God gave him fame.

Paul needed Luke!

At times Paul had the power to heal the sick and the lame ... but needed a doctor for his own ailments.

While God can and does bring strength and healing in miraculous ways ... He also uses the means provided through doctors, such as medication.

Luke's fame ...

God made Luke the author of the **Gospel of Luke** and the **Book of Acts!**

Transition: But we come to a very disappointing friend ... Demas ...

➤ **The Friend Who Became An Enemy**

Colossians 4:14

"... and also Demas.

Notice:

Demas is mentioned without comment.

- One writer said that nothing mentioned about him was an *ELOQUENT SILENT*
- Nothing bad or nothing good is said here.

But some time in the future ... Demas became an adversary

II Timothy 4:10

for Demas, having loved this present world, has deserted me ...

Demas' desertion

Came after years of ministry and probably sacrifice.

He served for a while and became a friend to Paul.

Observe

- ✓ Paul did not have omniscience ... the ability to know the future.
- ✓ As a friend Paul was vulnerable.

I Corinthians 13:7

[Love] bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

- ✓ Paul did not expect this of Demas ...

My friends, we will not be the first to experience betrayal by someone we love. Paul loved Demas. That love made Demas' betrayal very painful.

But this we know ...

Matthew 10:37-38

“He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.

10:38 "And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me.”

Luke 9:24

“For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it.”

Think about it

Three great people in the Bible were betrayed by close friends ... King David, Paul and the Lord Jesus Christ.

➤ A Final Greeting To Those in a Home Church

Colossians 4:15

Greet the brethren who are in Laodicea and also Nympha and the church that is in her house.

Not until the persecution of Christians ended in the 3rd century were Christians able to build buildings and have public services. There were no church buildings in the first 3 centuries. Christianity was pretty much despised for 200 plus years ...

Colossians 4:16-17

When this letter is read among you, have it also read in the church of the Laodiceans; and you, for your part read my letter that is coming from Laodicea.

4:17 Say to Archippus, “Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it.”

Then Paul takes the pen in his own hand and writes ...

Colossians 4:18

I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. Remember my imprisonment. Grace be with you.

REMEMBER MY IMPRISONMENT ...

- Paul is not asking them to feel sorry for him ...
- I believe Paul is saying ... remember my imprisonment and 1) pray for me, 2) *let this confirm your faith in the gospel of Christ!*

Wrap Up

There are more than 100 different Christians (named and unnamed) associated with Paul in the Book of Acts and in his epistles. He named 26 different friends in Romans 16 alone!

Paul was not only a **SOUL-WINNER**; he was a **FRIEND-MAKER**

Paul ended his letter with the words ...

“GRACE BE WITH YOU”

To declare ... salvation is by grace through faith in a Savior who provided everything needed for salvation. A salvation that does not come through human works promoted by false teachers!