

Coming in First Place – the preeminence of Jesus Christ

“... so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything”(Colossians 1:18).

Coming in First Place – The Book of Colossians

The Christian's Experience – Putting On: Sanctified Life (4:7-18)

Sanctified Fellowship (4:7-18)

7 As to all my affairs, Tychicus, our beloved brother and faithful servant and fellow bond-servant in the Lord, will bring you information. 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; 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. 10 Aristarchus, my fellow prisoner, sends you his greetings; and also Barnabas's cousin Mark (about whom you received instructions; if he comes to you, welcome him); 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.

12 Epaphras, who is one of your number, a bondservant 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. 13 For I testify for him that he has a deep concern for you and for those who are in Laodicea and Hierapolis. 14 Luke, the beloved physician, sends you his greetings, and also Demas. 15 Greet the brethren who are in Laodicea and also Nympha and the church that is in her house. 16 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. 17 Say to Archippus, “Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it.” 18 I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. Remember my imprisonment. Grace be with you.

As we come to the close of the book of Colossians, we are presented with a roll call of sorts; a list of names of those people who were associated with and meaningful to the apostle Paul. My first inclination upon reading through this text was to give you a brief summary of who these people were and then close out our study. But, for those of you that know me, brief summaries are not always my thing. For as I began to more closely look into the lives of the people mentioned in this letter, it dawned on me that this is why it was written; to encourage and motivate real people; people like us; people who lived and loved; who suffered and sorrowed, who laughed and cried. These are people, who like us had their moments of triumph and their mountains of trials; people of ambition, aspirations, hopes and fears.

The people we find in our text are genuine characters who interacted with and were affected by the ministry of Paul. Through the lives of people like these, others were also impacted for the gospel of Jesus Christ. As Paul commends and challenges these people; we have glimpses into their lives and we see glimpses of ourselves. Some things we will like to see; and others we will not. And so, while we are coming to the conclusion of the study of Colossians proper; I would like to take a few weeks to do some valuable character studies; looking into the lives of these persons; some of whom we will meet again in our upcoming study of the book of Acts. As you will see from the chart I have put together, in order to make it a bit easier for me to remember the general characteristic of these persons, I have given a one word description. These then are what we will expound upon as we examine their lives.

Coming in First Place – the preeminence of Jesus Christ

“... so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything”(Colossians 1:18).

1. **Tychicus** (7-8)
The **faithful** man

2. Onesimus (9)
The **fugitive** man

3. **Aristarchus** (10a)
The **fearless** man

4. **Mark** (10b)
The **forgiven** man

5. **Justus** (4:11)
The **friendly** man

6. **Epaphras** (4:12-13))
The **fervent** man

7. **Luke** (4:14a)
The **famous** man

8. **Demas** (4:14b)
The **floundering** or **faithless** man

9. **Nymphas** (4:15-16)
The **fruitful** man

10. **Archippus** (4:17)
The **faltering** man

11. **Paul** (4:18)
The **fettered** man

From some and most of these characters, we will only be able to draw a few applications from their lives, and so we will take many of them together. But this morning, as we are presented with the first character, there is much for us to glean and so we begin by looking again at Colossians 4:7-8 and noting the life of whom we will see as the “faithful” man; a man demonstrating to us a faithfulness we are to have toward both those who minister to us as well as to those to whom we minister or serve.

I. **Tychicus – the faithful man (4:7-8)**

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

As we begin our look at the man Tychicus, let me challenge you again with what his life reveals. He reveals a life of faithfulness or utter commitment regardless of circumstance or feelings. This faithfulness is first directed toward God; then to men like Paul and Timothy and then to the church, the body of Christ.

The first time we meet Tychicus, whose name means “fortunate”, is in the book of Acts, Acts 20 and what would be the middle of Paul’s third missionary journey. The year is about 55 AD and Paul had just survived a riot against him in Ephesus and was determined to leave Asia Minor and head over toward Macedonia and Achaia, to visit congregations that had started in places like Philippi, Thessalonica and Corinth. We pick up the story in Acts 20:1-4,

1 After the uproar had ceased, Paul sent for the disciples, and when he had exhorted them and taken his leave of them, he left to go to Macedonia. 2 When he had gone through those districts and had given them much exhortation, he came to Greece. 3 And there he

Coming in First Place – the preeminence of Jesus Christ

“... so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything”(Colossians 1:18).

spent three months, and when a plot was formed against him by the Jews as he was about to set sail for Syria, he decided to return through Macedonia. 4 And he was accompanied by Sopater of Berea, the son of Pyrrhus, and by Aristarchus and Secundus of the Thessalonians, and Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy, and Tychicus and Trophimus of Asia.

So Tychicus is one of seven men, delegates from various Gentile churches that Paul had started. And these men were soliciting and carrying financial aid to the impoverished church and congregation in Jerusalem.

I cannot help but think that on the long journey to Jerusalem that Paul would have had ample time to get to know the heart and character of Tychicus. And one of the lessons we learn right away from this man's life and that Paul experienced is that Tychicus was faithful even when the ministry was difficult. Paul endured a riot in Ephesus and was plotted against by the Jews and yet here is Tychicus at his side. How easy it is for us to look at the hardship of a ministry or person and think it best or easier to stay away or even to leave all together. Not Tychicus. He was with Paul all the way, even in his arrest at Jerusalem, during his long detention in Caesarea, before his testimony before governors and kings, on his long voyage to Rome and even at his house arrest while in Rome. We don't know if Tychicus was with Paul uninterrupted, but he was with Paul enough to earn his respect and this glowing commendation of being a **“beloved brother, faithful servant and fellow bond-servant in the Lord.”** And now, at some point before writing this letter, Paul sends Tychicus back to Colossae, saying in effect, “You are from those parts, you take word to them.” And from our text we find three keys to understanding who Tychicus is and then lessons we can learn from his life.

A. Tychicus – Faithful in companionship

As to all my affairs, Tychicus, our beloved brother...

Of all the titles or descriptions of Paul for others, no other is more endearing and carries more affection than this phrase “beloved brother.” It is a term of deep, intimate friendship. It speaks of a kindred spirit that runs deeper than any other early relationship. For the apostle Paul, Tychicus was then embodiment of Proverbs 18:24, **“A man of too many friends comes to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.”** Paul commendation, “Tychicus, the faithful companion, the beloved brother, who has been with me through thick and thin.” Have you spiritual friends like this? Who are those people who have constantly been there for you as spiritual piers standing against the onslaught of the corrupting seas of this world? It might be a parent, a spouse, a dear friend. I pray someone comes to mind. But even more to the point, are you a faithful companion to others? To whom are you seeking to be that strong spiritual shoulder that others can lean on? Tychicus was such a man to Paul.

And consider that Tychicus was not simply earning Paul commendation by being a faithful companion, but in addition he earns the commendation of our Lord Jesus Himself. Do you remember what Jesus said in Matthew 25:34-40, summarized well at the end of verse 36 where we read, **“I was in prison and you came to Me.”** What did Jesus say was true of faithful companions such as these? In Matthew 25:34 He says, “Come you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” Beloved, the blessing and inheritance is not for those who receive comfort from their personal Tychicus, but rather it is for those who become a Tychicus, a faithful companion to others. Are you such a

Coming in First Place – the preeminence of Jesus Christ

“... so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything”(Colossians 1:18).

person? Tychicus did the very thing that the Lord blesses; he visited Paul in prison and stood by him even when doing so could mean death. To stand beside a political prisoner like Paul was no easy thing. The emperor Nero and all his henchmen would be watching him closely, ready to condemn him for the slightest thing. Tychicus was a faithful brother, a faithful companion to Paul. To whom are you such a person?

B. Tychicus – Faithful in communion

As to all my affairs, Tychicus, our beloved brother and faithful servant and fellow bond-servant in the Lord

Not only was Tychicus faithful in companionship, but also, as we see by the next two descriptions, he was faithful in communion. Tychicus longed to have something in common with Paul; to fellowship with him; be a true partner with him in ministry. To this end, Paul calls him a **“faithful servant, or minister”** as well as a **“fellow bond-servant”**

As Tychicus saw Paul minister to others in what were often very difficult circumstances, Tychicus did not shrink away from serving, but continued to faithfully serve. Nothing would shake his resolve. As others departed from Paul and his ministry, Tychicus remained all the more committed. And even when there were multitudes of people, Tychicus did not see it as an opportunity to slow down, but rather to press on all the more. He was a faithful minister.

But even more to the point, Paul calls him a “fellow bond-servant” or literally “a fellow slave” one who is sold out to the Master. Paul had learned that he could trust Tychicus to follow the plow diligently to the end of the row once he put his hand to it. There was no wondering in Paul’s mind if Tychicus would see a task through and do it with all fervency. Tychicus was faithful in communion with Paul; he wanted to fellowship with Paul’s ministry, even if it meant enduring hardship.

And like the question I posed to you before, let me ask you this; not, who has been your Tychicus; for the truth of the matter is, every believer will have some type of such a person around him; but rather the question is what? “To whom are you a Tychicus – a faithful servant and fellow bond-slave?”

- Who are you encouraging day after day after day so that none of whom you know will become hardened by the deceitfulness of sin (Hebrews 3:13)?
- Who are you stimulating on to love and good deeds (Hebrews 10:24)?
- Who are you teaching to engage in good deeds to meet pressing needs so that none of our people will become unfruitful (Titus 3:14)?

C. Tychicus – Faithful in commission

Tychicus...will bring you information. 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...

Not only was Tychicus faithful in companionship and in communion, but we see in verse 8 that he was also faithful in or to his commission. It is Paul’s first Roman imprisonment. The year is about 60-61 AD. After experiencing the faithfulness of Tychicus, Paul feels comfortable with giving him a great task; one that we don’t think about very often. Paul sends this faithful man to

Coming in First Place – the preeminence of Jesus Christ

“... so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything”(Colossians 1:18).

the great city of Ephesus, the town from which Tychicus probably came from, not far from the city of Colossae and then on to Colossae to deliver what we could come to know as the letter to the Ephesians and the letter to the Colossians. According to Colossians 4:9, Onesimus was with him, Onesimus, the run-away slave, who was being sent back to Colossae, to his master, Philemon, with a letter from Paul bearing that name.

Think about what Paul had asked Tychicus to do. In taking the two letters, he was being charge with not only delivering them, but also then circulating them to the other nearby churches of Asia Minor. It is not hard to imagine Tychicus moving from church to church reading these words of Paul to some familiar congregations; first to Ephesus, who would be in danger of losing its first love; then on to the church at Smyrna, to those who were about to face a fiery persecution; then on to Pergamum where the congregation would falter and give in to damning doctrine of Balaam; then to Thyatira, where that “woman Jezebel” would make her presence known; then to Sardis, a congregation that boasted in its own reputation; then to Philadelphia, where it seemed that the fires of revival continued to burn with a passion for the Lord; and finally on to the close neighbor of Colossae, the congregation of Laodicea, where the love of money was becoming the root of all evil. It would be because of faithful Tychicus, if not by Tychicus himself in many instances, that all of these churches would hear the word of the Lord as penned by Paul.

And think about how many of these congregations would have responded. No doubt they would have wanted to know about Paul, “Is he well? Will he be released from prison? Does he have any needs?” Paul was sending Tychicus to “bring [them] information.” But ultimately, and by way of application for us, I see that Tychicus’ commission was two-fold. First, Paul sent him to gather *information* about the Colossians. Remember that all Paul knew about the Colossians was gleaned from a run-away slave, Onesimus and from what Epaphras had brought to him. Remember Paul was addressing the influence of a cult that was impacting the church. He wanted to know how many people may have defected from the faith; perhaps wanting to know their names. How were the little congregations surviving? Hundreds of questions must have cluttered Paul’s mind. He would want to know the response to his letter so that he might know how he might better pray and better help them.

And all this reminds me that if we are to have any impact upon one another; if we are ever going to truly and biblically grow, we must desire to know about one another, even if it means sending someone to find out. And we cannot get to know one another through the few moments we gather on a Sunday morning. That is why I encourage you to participate in anything and everything you can related to the church. Use them to get to know one another. And why is this important? Beyond the obvious reasons, I tell you that the second reason then why Paul sent Tychicus was to give inspiration to the Colossians.

Paul knew that the teachings outside the church there at Colossae would have a profound impact inside the church. Tychicus was sent to comfort them. The heresy would leave ugly scars as families and friends would be divided. Some would see their own loved ones become traitors to the cause of Christ. Paul so trusted this man Tychicus, that he knew his very presence, as he delivered and read the letter to them, would bless them and inspire them to press on. As one preacher noted, “... **Tychicus was an old campaigner; he would stiffen the resistance of the church to the cult.**”

Again, I must ask you, who do you inspire to resist the impact and influence of the world, the flesh and the devil? Has your character been so tested and tried that your Pastor, your

† Coming in First Place – the preeminence of Jesus Christ

“... so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything”(Colossians 1:18).

spiritual leader, your spouse, your parent, or your dear friend could, without reservation, send you to others to inspire their faith? Beloved, sometimes we are so concerned with ourselves, wanting, wailing and longing for our own Tychicus that we forget we are to be a Tychicus to others.

Beloved, this is the man Tychicus, the faithful man; faithful in his companionship; faithful in his communion; faithful in his commission. From the time of Acts 20 until we see him last in 2 Timothy 4, we have a ten year window into this man’s faithful ministry, a ministry that found himself in detention with Paul in Rome, a ministry that was mostly spent in dangerous journeys for the sake and well-being of the church. And what is Paul’s commendation? Tychicus is the “beloved brother, faithful servant and fellow bond-servant.”

I can’t begin to imagine what it must have been like for Tychicus on that morning he boarded that ship with Onesimus, bound for Colossae via Ephesus, carrying some pieces of parchment that would outlast the Roman Empire itself; that would be translated into thousands of languages, that would be read, studied and proclaimed for some 2000 years. And while Paul gets the “credit” and God the glory, let us never forget that because of faithful ones like “Tychicus”, what we often see as just routine tasks, or secondary efforts are the very things God uses to proclaim the gospel and expand His kingdom. Would you dare to be like Tychicus? Would you commit to it today by praying and asking the Lord for the first one to whom you might be a faithful companion, to be faithful in communion and fellowship; and to faithfully carry out God’s commission to you to minister to such a person that they may be inspired to press on in the things of the Lord?

Soli Deo Gloria

Copyright © 2010 Edward K. Godfrey. *This message is the sole property of the copyright holder and may be copied only in its entirety for circulation freely without charge. All copies of this message must contain the above copyright notice. This message may not be copied in part (except for small quotations used with citation of source), edited, revised, copied for resale or incorporated in any commercial publications, recordings, broadcasts, performances, displays or other products offered for sale, without the written permission of the copyright holder. Requests for permission should be made in writing and addressed to Edward K. Godfrey, Pastor, Hope Community Bible Church, and 2300 South 13th Street, Rogers, AR 72758.*