

Colossians 4:7-18
The Role Models Found in Jesus Christ

Introduction

1. Paul's closing remarks in this letter pose a bit of a challenge:
 - a. The final 12 verses of this letter are a list of 10 names with a series of related comments and greetings
 - b. There's not much here in regard to theology, commands, or practical application
 - c. However, since all Scripture is God-breathed and profitable for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness, we have to ask, "Is there something we can learn from these verses?"
 - d. And the right answer is: absolutely
2. In Hebrews 11 we have what is referred to by many as the Hebrew Hall of Fame:
 - a. It recounts the faith of individuals like Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham and Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph, Moses, the Israelites who crossed the Red Sea and marched around Jericho, and others like Gideon, Samson, David, Samuel and the prophets
 - b. Each of these individuals exemplified what it means to live by faith in God
3. I'm going to propose that what we have here in Paul's closing remarks of Colossians, is Paul's Hall of Fame:
 - a. All but one were models of what it means to faithfully serve Jesus Christ
 - b. All but one can serve as role models for us
 - c. So, I've titled this teaching session, "The Role Models Found in Jesus Christ"

A. Tychicus and Onesimus (READ 4:7-9)

1. Tychicus (7-8):
 - a. Tychicus was from Asia and is mentioned five times in the NT
 - b. Paul referred to him as "**our beloved brother and faithful servant and fellow slave in the Lord**" and with good reason(7a):
 - 1) He was a long-time traveling companion Paul's:
 - a) He was one of the eight people that accompanied Paul to Jerusalem at the close of his 3rd missionary to deliver the money collected from the churches to the saints who were suffering there
 - b) According to this verse, Ephesians 6:21, and 2 Timothy 4:12 he was with Paul during both of his Roman imprisonments (the first in AD 60 and the second six years later before Paul sent him to Ephesus)
 - 2) He was also worked as Paul's assistant, much like Timothy did:
 - a) When Paul was heading back to Jerusalem to deliver the gifts he had collected from the churches, he made a stop over in Philippi but sent Tychicus, Timothy and the others (except Luke) ahead to Troas, likely to make preparations and arrangements for Paul's seven day stay there (Acts 20:6)
 - b) Tychicus also visited churches on behalf of Paul:
 - He carried Paul's letters to the Colossians, Ephesians, and Philemon

- Part of his responsibility when delivering these letters was to inform them of Paul's affairs (READ Colossians 4:7b-8; Ephesians 6:21)
 - According to Titus 3:12, at one point Paul intended to send Tychicus or Artemas to Crete to relieve Titus so he could visit Paul
 - Shortly before his death during his second Roman imprisonment, Paul sent Tychicus to Ephesus, probably to relieve Timothy so he could come to Paul in prison (2 Timothy 4:12)
2. Onesimus (7:9):
- a. Onesimus is only mentioned in two places in the NT, here and the letter to Philemon, but we actually know quite a bit about him
 - b. One of the things we learn about him here in Colossians 7:9 is that he was from Colossae: **"who is one of your number"**
 - c. The second thing we learn here is Paul considered him a **"faithful and beloved brother"** and we get more details about this in his letter to Philemon:
 - 1) Philemon lived in Colossae and according to Phi 1:2 hosted a church in his house along with two other individuals, Apphia and Archippus (possibly his wife and son)
 - 2) He was master to at least one slave, Onesimus, but at some point Onesimus ran away and fled to Rome where he was led to Christ by Paul (READ Philemon 1:10-22)
 - 3) We learn a few more things about Onesimus from these verses:
 - a) Onesimus was unsaved when he ran away, but was led to Christ by Paul while Paul was in prison (it's possible Onesimus was in prison as well):
 - **"of whom I became a father [to Onesimus] in my chains"** (10)
 - **"my child"** (10a)
 - **"my very heart"** (12)
 - b) Onesimus had become useful to Paul, and ministered to him while he was in prison
 - c) Onesimus was willing to return to Philemon at Paul's request, even though he may have wronged Philemon in some way (financial??)—this is remarkable because runaway slaves in Rome often faced brutal consequences including flogging, whipping and even being branded

B. Aristarchus, Mark, and Jesus called Justus (READ 4:10-11)

1. All three of these men were Jewish co-workers with Paul:
 - a. They were the **"only fellow workers for the kingdom of God who are from the circumcision"**
 - b. Paul wrote that they **"proved to be a comfort to me"** and this may have been not just because they were fellow believers and co-workers with him, but because they shared his Jewish heritage
2. Aristarchus:
 - a. He is first mentioned in Acts 19:29 as one of Paul's traveling companions from Macedonia (Thessalonica) who were seized by the angry mob during the riot at Ephesus (as a result of Paul preaching the Gospel)

- b. He continued with Paul on a number of journeys and ultimately ended up with him in prison in Rome during his first imprisonment which is why Paul refers to him here as **“my fellow prisoner”**
 - c. Church traditions holds that he was martyred under Emperor Nero
- 3. Mark:
 - a. He was Barnabas’ cousin and is also referred to as John Mark in the NT
 - b. He was the author of the Gospel of Mark
 - c. He traveled with Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey and if you remember, it didn’t go so well:
 - 1) Mark abandoned them part way through the journey
 - 2) This led to a pretty serious disagreement between Paul and Barnabas over whether Mark should accompany them on another journey
 - 3) Paul apparently felt Mark was unreliable while Barnabas wanted to give him another chance
 - 4) Ultimately, it led to Paul and Barnabas parting way, with Paul taking Silas and Barnabas taking Mark
 - 5) However, years later, according to Philemon 1:24 he apparently earned Paul’s trust again because Paul refers to him as a “fellow worker”
 - 6) In fact, when Paul was in prison for the second time shortly before his death, he wrote to Timothy and said, **“Get Mark and bring him with you, because he is helpful to me in my ministry”** (2 Timothy 4:11)
- 4. Jesus called Justus: we know almost nothing about him except that he was Jewish and was given the Latin title **“Justus”** which means **“upright”** or **“just”** and speaks to his character

C. Epaphras (READ 4:12-13)

- 1. We’ve already learned about Epaphras in week 1 in our introduction to this letter
- 2. We are reminded here that he was a Colossian and had **“a deep concern for [the Colossians] and those who are in Laodicea and Hierapolis”** (two other cities in close proximity to Colossae)
- 3. Paul also said that Epaphras was **“always striving for [them] in his prayers, that [they] may stand complete and fully assured in all the will of God”**
- 4. This isn’t surprising because according to 1:7, the Colossians (and likely those and the two other cities) originally heard the Gospel from Epaphras
- 5. It is generally believed that the reason Epaphras was in Rome with Paul at this time was because he traveled there to seek Paul’s counsel for what was happening in Colossae

D. Luke and Demas (READ 4:14)

- 1. Luke:
 - a. Luke was a gentile and the author of the Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts (the only gentile author in the NT)
 - b. He was apparently quite educated:
 - 1) Paul refers to him here as **“the beloved physician”** and in Philemon 1:24 as a **“fellow worker”** which means he ministered alongside Paul

- 2) He had an outstanding command of the Greek language, with an extensive vocabulary, and a writing style that resembled classical Greek
 - 3) Based on what we see in Acts, he also had a knack for researching and recording history
- c. He also spent a lot of time traveling with Paul:
- 1) At this point, he had known Paul about 10 years, having first met him in Troas around AD 51 when he joined Paul on his second missionary journey (Acts 16:10—change from “they” to “we”)
 - 2) He also traveled with Paul on his second and third missionary journeys and was with Paul during both of his Roman imprisonments; in fact, in a gut-wrenching statement in 2 Timothy shortly before he was martyred Paul wrote, “**Only Luke is with me...**” (2 Timothy 4:11)
2. Demas:
- a. Unfortunately, Demas serves as a negative role model
 - b. Paul doesn’t say much about him here, but calls him a “**fellow worker**” in Philemon 1:24
 - c. However, later Demas abandoned Paul at a critical point in his life:
 - 1) Paul was in prison shortly before he was martyred and knew his death was imminent
 - 2) It was at this difficult and critical time in Paul’s life that Demas abandoned him (READ 2 Timothy 4:10)
 - 3) The word that Paul uses here is “**forsaken**” (Demas had forsaken him) and it’s the same word Jesus used when He cried out to God from the cross and said, “**My God, My God, why have you forsaken me.**” (Matthew 27:46)
 - 4) As if that wasn’t enough, the reason Paul gave for Demas forsaking him was that Demas “**loved this present world**”
 - 5) It’s not clear exactly what Paul meant by this but in his letter to the Philippians in the middle of the 2nd century Church Father Polycarp hinted that Demas abandoned Paul because he was afraid of being martyred like Paul was facing
 - 6) Whatever the reason was for forsaking Paul, John’s description of those who love the world probably applied to Demas (1 John 2:15): “**Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.**”

E. Nympha and Archippus (4:15-18)

1. We know very little about these last two individuals
2. Nympha:
 - a. Nympha is only mentioned this one time in the NT
 - b. Due to a variant in the Greek, it’s not clear whether Nymph was a man or a woman, but most scholars believe it was a woman (as reflected in all English translations)
 - c. It appears she lived in Laodicea since Paul mentioned her immediately after sending greetings to the brothers who lived there
 - d. She also hosted a church in her house which suggests she was relatively well-off since the average home was too small to host even a small church
3. Archippus:
 - a. Archippus is only mentioned twice in the NT, here and in Philemon
 - b. Based on the introduction to Philemon, most believe Apphia was Philemon’s wife and Archippus their son (READ Philemon 1:1-2)

- c. Some claim Paul's words here to Archippus were a rebuke, suggesting that he wasn't taking the ministry to which he had been called seriously
- d. However, the language by itself doesn't indicate that, and it was more likely Paul's attempt at encouraging Archippus; in fact, it closely resembles the encouragement Paul wrote to Timothy (2 Timothy 4:5): **"But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry"**

F. Takeaway: God has immortalized these individuals in Scripture for our benefit, that we might learn something from them

1. Tychicus was a seasoned traveling companion of Paul's who served him faithfully through multiple missionary journeys and both of his Roman imprisonments; Paul trusted him to deliver his letters, encourage the churches, report on his condition, and fill in for Titus and Timothy when they needed to travel to see Paul
2. Onesimus was a fugitive slave who after coming to faith in Jesus not only served Paul faithfully in prison, but was willing to do the right thing and return to Philemon; he had apparently wronged Philemon not just by running away but Paul's words suggest he may have wronged Philemon financially as well, yet he was willing to return
3. Like Tychicus, Aristarchus was also a faithful traveling companion of Paul's, in spite of the fact that he nearly paid with his life when he was seized by the angry mob at Ephesus, and ended up spending time with Paul in prison
4. Mark is great example of second chances and redemption; after abandoning Paul on his first missionary journey, somehow he earned Paul's trust again, became one of his fellow workers, and had proven himself so useful to Paul that he asked that he asked Timothy to bring him to him in prison at the end of his life
5. We don't know much about Jesus called Justus except that he earned the title of being upright and just which isn't a bad thing to be remembered for
6. Had it not been for Epaphras, Paul may not have been writing letters to the Colossians and Laodiceans; his commitment to evangelism and preaching the Gospel led to the salvation of who knows how many citizens of Colossae, Laodicea, and Hierapolis; he not only led them to Christ, but taught them faithfully, prayed for them diligently, and cared for them deeply
7. If it weren't for Luke, we wouldn't have the history of the early church, and would certainly know far less about Paul's travels and missionary work; he too was a trusted traveling companion and co-worker of Paul's, and was one of the few who was still by his side shortly before he was martyred
8. We can even learn something from Nympha and Archippus; Nympha is an example of hospitality, opening her home to provide a place for the church to worship, fellowship, and learn; Archippus reminds us of the need to take heed to the ministry the Lord has given us and complete it
9. As for Demas, he serves as a good example of the dangers of loving this world and forsaking not just other believers, but possibly Christ
10. The moral of the story?
 - a) Be like Tychicus, Onesimus, Aristarchus, Mark, Jesus called Justus, Epaphras, Luke, Nympha, and Archippus
 - b) Don't be a Damas