

Ministry of The Holy Spirit
Prison Letters
Colossians 4:7-18

Last time...in wrapping up the Epistle to the Colossians, finishing well our priestly course, Part 1

This time...in conclusion, finishing well our priestly course, Part 2

v7-8 Tychicus

Accompanied Paul on the final leg of his 3rd Missionary Journey...Acts 20:3b-5

One of Paul's letter carriers to the church at Colosse, and the letter carrier to the church at Ephesus (Eph 6:21)

Declared by Paul to both churches to be

- a beloved brother
- a faithful (trustworthy – how valuable is “trustworthy”!) minister in the Lord
- a fellow servant (serving the same Master) in the Lord

Sent to both churches to

- give a report of Paul's circumstances (in Rome, in prison)
- learn of their circumstances/walks with the Lord
- comfort their hearts

Will continue to be faithful/trustworthy, a “qualified” minister

2 Tim 4:12

Titus 3:12

An example of finishing well in perilous times

v9 Onesimus

The other of Paul's letter carriers to the church at Colosse

(If the letter carriers traveled logically – Rome to Ephesus then Colosse – he would have also gone with Tychicus to Ephesus)

Described by Paul to be

- a faithful and beloved brother
- his name means “useful” or “profitable”
- a Colossian

A runaway slave...the “person of interest” in Paul’s next epistle, Philemon

From the writings of the disciples of the Apostles in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*
writings of the early Church fathers before the First Council of Nicaea in
325 AD, which was convened by Constantine to gather all the
bishops/overseers to affirm the divinity of Jesus Christ
from which we learn that the eyewitnesses of the Apostles continued to
teach the truth of the “apostles’ doctrine” inspired, recorded, and
preserved in our Bible

Ignatius

- one of the two primary disciples of the Apostle John
(Polycarp being the other)
 - studied under several of the Apostles
- in letters to the church at Ephesus that
- post-date Paul’s life (beheaded in 67 AD)
 - pre-date John’s Revelation (mid-90s)
- wrote of Onesimus as
- their pastor, the bishop/overseer of the church at Ephesus
 - “a man of inexpressible love” (“unspeakably beloved”)
 - “I pray you love him (Onesimus, their pastor) in Jesus Christ
our Lord and that you imitate his example, for blessed is He
(the Lord) who has given you such a bishop.”

An example of finishing well, transformed/re-commissioned from the slave of a
man to a slave of Christ

Yet, considering the subsequent epistle to the church at Ephesus from the Lord
Jesus Christ Himself (Rev 2:1-7), did the church at Ephesus not heed
Ignatius’ advice to imitate their pastor?

v10-11 Aristarchus

Also accompanied Paul on the final leg of his 3rd Missionary Journey
(Acts 20:3b-5)

Described by Paul to be

- His fellow prisoner
- His fellow laborer (Philemon 24)

An example of faithfulness, even in the face of persecution

2 Tim 3:12 Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer
persecution.

Marcus, Barnabas' nephew

Start in the ministry

Acts 12:11-12, 25

Acts 13:2, 13

Acts 15:36-41

A disciple and companion of the Apostle Peter

“Recorder” of the Gospel of Mark

A fellow laborer of Paul's (Philemon 24)

End in the ministry

2 Tim 4:11

Took the Gospel to Egypt (Alexandria), where Christianity

- flourished until the Islamic conquest in the 7th century
- remains to this day
 - mostly not finishing well
 - religious, self-righteousness, traditions
 - Thyatira, Sardis
 - a remnant finishing well
 - all under the thumb of Islam

An example of finishing well, even if one starts a bit shaky

Fear over faith became Faith over fear

made useful

was faithful unto the end

Jesus/Joshua

Jewish name

aka Justus...Latin name

Aristarchus and Mark and Justus

Described by Paul to be

- Jewish followers of Jesus Christ
- fellow workers with him in the kingdom of God (Philemon 24)
- a comfort to him

Examples of faithfulness and finishing well

v12-13 Epaphras

Described by Paul to be

- a Colossian
- a servant of Christ (no higher title can be aspired to!)
- always laboring in prayer/spiritual warfare for the Colossians (v2)
- having a great zeal for the “Tri City churches” – Colosse, Laodicea, and Hierapolis
- his fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus ([Philemon 23](#))

An example of faithfulness, even in the face of persecution
as was Aristarchus

v14 Luke

Described by Paul to be

- a beloved physician (assigned to him by Theophilus, Acts 1:1)
- fellow worker with him in the kingdom of God ([Philemon 24](#))

A disciple and companion of the Apostle Paul
“Recorder” of Gospel of Luke and Acts of the Apostles

End in the ministry

- Per the writings of the disciples of the Apostle’s, he planted and pastored a church in Byzantium in Thrace (modern day Greece and Turkey)
- later known as Constantinople
 - now known as Istanbul
 - after the conquest by Islam in 1453
 - the capital of the Ottoman Empire that fell after WW I
 - the largest city in Turkey

An example of faithfulness and finishing well

Demas

Not described here but described by Paul to be

- fellow worker with him in the kingdom of God ([Philemon 24](#))

Start in the ministry

Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol 8, [page 487](#)

[Acts 13:50-51](#)

importunate:

- urgent or persistent in solicitation
- troublesome, annoying

Onesiphorus

2 Tim 1:16

2 Tim 4:19

Paul, per Titus' description

- small/short
- bald-headed
- bandy-legged: bowlegged
- well-built, healthy
- “uni-brow”
- long nose
- full of grace i.e. he “shined”!

Then in Iconium, Demas stirred up trouble for/against Paul with a leader of the city

Issue: a beautiful young woman espoused to that leader who chose instead to be a virgin for Christ and follow the teachings of Paul

Yet Paul was gracious with Demas and continued to minister to him and use him

End in the ministry

2 Tim 4:10a

Matt 13:18-22

Matt 7:15-27

An example of unfaithfulness and NOT finishing well (IF he ever really started)

Q: Was Demas ever saved, did he ever receive and be changed by the gospel of grace preached and lived before him by Paul?

v15-16 Nymphas

The church at Laodicea is Whose?

Whose house is it, for that matter?

The church met in his house

The church is not a building, it is a congregation of followers of Jesus Christ

The building does not make the church, the Head of the Body makes the church

Church of the Laodiceans

Also to be read this Epistle, which is much like the Epistle to the Ephesians, with a notable difference

Ephesians:

- The riches we (the Church) have in Christ and the responsibilities we have in Christ (Christian living)
- How we (the Church) sit, walk, and stand with Jesus
- Mostly about the Body of Christ

Colossians:

- Christian living
- Primarily about the Head of the Body, Jesus Christ
 - the Preeminence of Jesus Christ
 - the Supremacy of Jesus Christ
 - the Centrality of Jesus Christ
 - the Sufficiency of Jesus Christ

The recipient of an Epistle to be also read in Colosse;
Not preserved, there is no evidence of a Greek text

Yet, having ignored or forgotten the Epistle to the Colossians and not doing

Ch 1:23, they did receive an epistle...from Jesus Christ Himself!
Rev 3:14-22

vs

Matt 25:21 *Well done, **thou** good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.*

v17 Archippus

A follower of Jesus Christ in the church at Colosse

Also mentioned as Paul's fellow soldier (in the Lord's army) in his next letter
Philemon 1-2

Pointed message to him:

Take heed...see to it, keep your eyes on the prize
To the ministry received from Jesus Christ...be faithful to your calling,
doing what you have been called, equipped, and empowered to do

An exhortation and encouragement to finish well!

v18 Paul

Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles, will be released from prison in Rome and continue to preach the Gospel to the Jew first and then the Gentile. He will subsequently be arrested again, during which time he will record “his” last inspired words, to his son in the faith, Timothy
2 Tim 4:6-8

Paul would then be martyred, beheaded by Nero

Last word regarding finishing well: grace

2 Peter 3:18, Peter’s last inspired word before being martyred

In concluding the Epistle to the Colossians,

- a. the Spirit-inspired descriptors of those who finished well their priestly course with joy and the ministry given them by the Lord Jesus Christ:
 - beloved brother (in the family of God)
 - faithful and beloved brother
 - faithful minister
 - fellow servant in the Lord
 - fellow prisoner
 - fellow workers unto the kingdom of God
 - a servant of Christ
- b. the exhortation to finish well
 - Take heed to the ministry which you have received of the Lord, that you fulfill it

Finishing well our course

I want to offer some perspective and encouragement in these days in which we live because I do not know how many more Sundays I have to share what the Lord gives me

We can understand the times in which we live thru the lens of our worldview, the eternal, unchanging Word of God (“Come let us reason together...”)

- a. The rot that is on college campuses (confusion, violence, Islam, the spirit of antichrist) is irrational

From Behold Israel

NYT Columnist and Duke Professor Frank Bruni says that college students viewing the world through an oppressor vs. oppressed paradigm has led them to advocating for Hamas and not even stopping to learn about what happened in Israel on October 7.

"A lot of college students in this generation, there's a sort of paradigm they use, or lens they use to kind of evaluate the world. And it's one in which people who have

less money, people who have less power, sometimes people who have darker skin must inherently be being wronged and are therefore most likely to be in the right.

I think you saw that play out after October 7. ... If you looked at what happened right after October 7, you saw a lot of young people not even take a moment to really acknowledge what had happened in Israel, and how horrific that was. They just kind of immediately applied this paradigm and began advocating not just for Palestinians, but in a perverse way, at times for Hamas."

Said another way, these "brightest of minds" do not know the difference between right and wrong...and do not even bother to search it out.

They have "Is 5:20" minds, wasted minds, wrong minds vs right minds

They are making outrageous demands of the universities...and the university presidents are caving to them, so the presidents of the universities do not know the difference between right and wrong either!

- b. Islam is rising in Europe and USA, Western Civilization is being successfully invaded
- c. The world is rallying **against** Israel, at an accelerated pace.

The fashion/condition of the world so grieves me!

"When, Lord, will You stand up?

What held back God's righteous judgment of the world before the Flood?

The presence of righteous Noah and his family

- Gen 15:6
- doing what God said to do (people do what they believe)

They had to be removed before judgment fell

What held back God's righteous judgment of S&G?

The presence of righteous Lot

He had to be removed before judgment fell

What is holding back God's righteous judgment on the earth now?

The presence of the righteous Church (1 Cor 1:30-31), the Bride/Body of Christ
She must be removed before judgment will fall...the Pre-Trib Rapture

With that, some perspective for us followers of Jesus Christ

Which is more true (for both are true):

We are Americans, citizens of a sinful nation awash with innocent blood shed for the convenience of the unrighteous and being overrun with violence, perverse morality, and Jew hatred?

We are citizens of the kingdom of God, a holy nation and a purchased people, strangers and pilgrims on the earth preserved blameless and faultless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ?

We are temporarily ruled in America by a self-serving and untrustworthy Gov't?
We are eternally ruled by the others-serving, trustworthy, righteous, and just
King of kings and Lord of lords?

We are to submit to Gov't leaders?
We are to submit to the Lord Jesus Christ?

In America we are free?
In Jesus Christ we are free?

Based on that which is more true, how are we to, **first and foremost**, think, speak, and act?

Like our King, the Lord Jesus Christ

We are followers of Jesus Christ before we are Americans.

If our loyalty priority gets tested, we are first and foremost loyal to the Lord Jesus Christ

Finishing well our course

Each of us are all still writing our testimony, the entirety of which will be known when we stand before the judgment seat of Christ

Will “faithful” and “trustworthy” be our testimony, or will “unfaithful” and “untrustworthy”?

Do you want to hear from Jesus when you see Him face-to-face, “**Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord,**” (Matt 25:21, 23) **Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.** (Rev 3:10)

Do you want this to be spoken of you?

1 John 2:18-19 Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would *no doubt* have continued with us: but *they went out*, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.

Followed by Matt 7:21-27?

We must not let the very loud and maddening noise of this world confuse or distract us from reaching forth to those things which are before us as we press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus (Phil 3:13-14)

We must not forget that

- narrow is the path that leads to eternal life, and few find it
 - temporary suffering comes before glory eternal (Rom 8:18)
- broad is the way that leads to eternal destruction, and many find it
 - temporary suffering comes before eternal suffering

We must never forget who we are and Whose we are

- children of the Living God (John 1:12-13)
- not our own, we have been purchased with the very highest of prices (1 Cor 6:19-20)
- called out of the world to be separate from the world (2 Cor 6:14-18)
- lights living in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, holding forth the Word of Life (Phil 2:15-16a)
- strangers and pilgrims upon the earth looking for a better country (Heb 11:13-16)
- citizens of the kingdom of God waiting for our “passport” (Phil 3:20-21)
- friends of the King of kings and Lord of lords, fully persuaded that He is able to keep (preserve) that which we have committed to Him (our eternal souls)

We must not forget to “lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh,” and “Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.” (Luke 21:28, 36)

We must not lose focus of our 1st love, we must not get lukewarm/nauseating in our walk with Jesus Christ by compromising with the world on the unchanging Word of God

Rather, we must (Jer 6:16, written to a dying nation)

- stand in the Way (John 14:6)
- see (with eyes of faith)
- ask for the old paths (the wisdom of God, the Word of God), the good way where we will find rest for our souls (Matt 11:28-30).

Just as the Jews must not think

- America
- Germany
- UK
- or any of the nations

is their home (Israel is their home!),

we must not think

- America
- Ireland
- Mexico
- Egypt

is our home (Heaven is our home!)

Finishing well: Until our Lord takes us home, be encouraged!

But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us. *We are* troubled on every side, yet not distressed; *we are* perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed (2 Cor 4:7-9)...Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. (Rev 19:6)

Fear not: for they that *be* with us *are* more than they that *be* with them. (2 Kings 6:16)

Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world. (1 John 4:4)

For those of you that have not even gotten started yet on a surrendered journey with Jesus Christ, who are writing a testimony of rebellion, unbelief, unfaithfulness and untrustworthiness:

Repent!

Turn from your sins and turn to Jesus Christ

You cannot defeat death, the wages of your sin!

Jesus has defeated death for you...if you surrender to Him

Call on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and ask Him to touch you to remove your sin
and the justifiable wages of your sin – the 2nd death

Accept the gift of God's forgiveness of your sin

Accept the gift of eternal life purchased by the Son of God with His own blood,
shed for you!

Surrender to Jesus...He is the only Way to peace and victory

Humble yourself before God and bow down to Jesus...He is the only way up, the only
way to be lifted up