

The Supremacy of Christ
06/11/2023 (Week 18) Colossians 4:7-14
Examples of New Life in Christ

This is my message written prior to being preached. Please excuse the bullet point format and any grammatical mistakes. This is meant to be spoken.

Introduction & Review

- **Good Morning**
- We are winding down our **study** through **Colossians**.
- We've completed **the two main sections** of Paul's letter to the church.

- **In the first section** (the first two chapters)
- The Apostle seeks to combat **the false teachings** that were infiltrating the church by declaring several great theological truths.

- These truths included both the Supremacy of Christ over all things,
- and the believer's identity in Christ.
- Paul makes it clear, in contrast to what the false teachers are promoting,
- Those who trust in the Supreme Christ are new creatures in HIM.
- They **have died to their old sinful selves** and have been raised to **new life in Christ**.

- And it's the experience of this new life that Paul focuses on in the second section of the letter.
- From chapter 3 to the beginning of Chapter 4,
- He lays out series of instruction for living our new life in Christ.

- These instructions cover **our personal life, our relationship with God,**
- **our relationship with one another** in the body of Christ,
- **our family relationships** and **our working relationships**.

- **Then**, last week (in verses 2-6 of Colossians 4) we looked at **Paul's Final Instructions**,
- He declares the need to pray steadfastly, alertly, thankfully.
- And he calls the Colossians (and Us) to pray that the Gospel be preached clearly.
- And finally the give instruction for walking (living) in such a way that the gospel goes forth to outsiders, those who are outside the church, non-Christians.

- So, we've seen both **the theology behind our new life in Christ**,
- and we have been given instructions for living that life.

- Now as we come to **Chapter 4, verses 7-14**.
- Here we are given one **final ingredient** to help us live our new life in Christ.
- As Paul concludes this letter, he focuses on **several people**.
- Two of which will be coming to **Colossae** and others who desire to send greetings to the church.

- And by examining both what Paul says about these men,
- and what we know about them from other places in Scripture,
- we'll see **Examples of New Life in Christ that we can learn from and follow.**
- And our first example shows us...

1. A New Life of Service

- In **verses 7 and 8** we read...

⁷ Tychicus will tell you all about my activities. He is a beloved brother and faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord. ⁸ I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are and that he may encourage your hearts, (Colossians 4:7-8)

- Now before we look at what Paul tells us about **Tychicus here in Colossians**,
- Let's first see what we can learn about him from other NT Scripture.
- Most **scholars** believe **Tychicus** was converted during **Paul's 2+** year ministry in **Ephesus**,
- because in **Acts Chapter 20** we learn that he was in **Ephesus** at the end of Paul's missionary work.
- So, he probably witnessed the great Ephesian silversmiths' riot against Paul recorded in **Acts 19**,
- This riot caused Paul to leave **Ephesus** and head for **Macedonia** and then on to **Greece**.
- And **Acts 20** tells us that **Tychicus** went with him.
- Paul didn't stay in **Greece** long before he decided to return to Jerusalem, where he would ultimately be arrested,
- And again, **Tychicus** was one of his **traveling companions**.
- So, we can surmise that **Tychicus** experienced much of the **same danger and persecution** that Paul did on his journeys.
- Of himself, Paul wrote to the **Corinthians**,

²⁵ ...Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea; ²⁶ on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers; ²⁷ in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. (2 Corinthians 11:25-27)

- So as a traveling companion of Paul, **Tychicus** could have written this about himself as well,
- Clearly, he had a remarkable loyalty to the apostle.

And that takes us to Colossians 4:7-8

- Where we read that Paul chose Tychicus to travel as his messenger back to the churches of Asia.
- He was charged with two duties.
- **First**, he was to encourage the hearts of the believers by telling them of Paul's activities.

- We see this also in the **parallel passage of Ephesians 6:21-22** which says...

²¹ So that you also may know how I am and what I am doing, Tychicus the beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord will tell you everything. ²² I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are, and that he may encourage your hearts. (Ephesians 6:21-22)

- **So first, Tychicus** was charged with encouraging the hearts of the believers in Colossae, Ephesus, and probably other churches in the **province of Asia**.
- **And second, we can surmise that Tychicus was the one who delivered Paul's letters:**
 - one to the **Colossians**,
 - another to a slave owner in **Colosse** named **Philemon**, - more on him shortly.
 - another to the **Ephesians**,
 - and probably a last letter to the **Laodiceans (which we do not have)** but is mentioned in verse **16 of Colossians 4**.
- **So**, from all this it seems clear that **Tychicus** was basically **Paul's errand boy!**
- And if you look at later references in **Titus 3 and 2 Timothy 4 (which we will not at this time)**
- But there you find confirmation that **Tychicus** performed these humble functions throughout Paul's life and ministry.
- **He** left no writings which we are aware of.
- He did nothing extraordinary which were thought worth preserving by **Luke** (another traveling companion of Paul and the author of the book of Acts).
- Apparently **Tychicus** was an ordinary man.
- However, God used him as a part of his extraordinary plans and purposes for his church.
- Notice what Colossians reveal about his character.
- **In verse 7 Paul called him "a beloved brother."**
- He was greatly loved by Paul and the church in Rome (where Paul is writing from),
- This speaks to his loyalty and his compassion and care for others.
- **Tychicus** was one of those people that you knew you could count on.
- **For, He was also called "a faithful minister".**
- **That word minister is the Greek *dia-ko-nos* where we get the English word **deacon**.**
- **Which not only means a minister but servant.**
- **Tychicus** was a **faithful servant** to Paul and the **early church**.
- There's no hint of him being a great thinker or speaker, but only a servant,
- which in the Kingdom of God is something we must all strive for.
- Of himself, Jesus said,

²⁸ even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." (Matthew 20:28)

- To follow our Lord's example of service is the greatest aspiration of any believer.
- And **Tychicus** certainly did that.
- **Paul rounded off his description with "fellow servant in the Lord."**
- That phrase **fellow servant** is **one word** in the Greek, and it means **co-slave**.
- Paul makes it clear that both he (**the Apostle**) and **Tychicus** his **faithful minister** are both slaves to God.
- They are both under the authority of the **same Master**.
- And by saying this Paul expressed **equality** between **himself and Tychicus**.
- It's almost as if Paul said,
- *Don't think because I wrote the letter and Tychicus is delivering it that I am better than him.*
- We are **both servants** of the same Lord, who in his Sovereignty has given us **different tasks**.
- From the beautiful **teamwork** of **Paul and Tychicus** we learn some great truths about **service**.
- There is **greatness** in the **smallest things** done for Christ.
- What would be the use of Paul writing a letter if it didn't get delivered?
- What would be the use of the **deep theological truths of Christ's Supremacy over all things,**
- **and the believer's new life in Christ if no one ever read about them.**
- And how would the church in **Colossae and the church in Riverside**, experience that new life if the congregations never received the instructions that Paul laid out for them.
- As the **14th century proverb which became a nursery rhyme** teaches us...

*For want of a nail, the shoe was lost;
 For want of the shoe, the horse was lost;
 For want of the horse, the rider was lost;
 For want of the rider, the battle was lost;
 For want of the battle, the kingdom was lost;
 And all from the want of a horseshoe nail.*

- **The smallest thing can make all the difference.**
- So, it is with the seemingly small, behind the scenes things we do for Christ.
- Some of them are absolutely indispensable to God's work,
- and we will never know how much so until we get to Heaven.
- **It is clear that when Tychicus (the beloved brother, faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord) was doing the smallest thing, he was serving Christ.**
- But we can run the risk of thinking that the upfront, things,
- the things the pastors, worship leaders, missionaries do are what truly matters,
- **but that is not the case.**

- We must realize that as we seek to serve Christ in many different ways,
- **Tech team, woman's or men's ministry, ushers, greeters, coffee and donut providers, teaching kids**, ministering to our neighbors, sharing the gospel with our family and friends and so much more...
- As we do these things for Christ,
- they are just as important,
- just as eternal as what the up-front leader does.
- We are **fellow servants**, co-slaves of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- And together we form the Church of God, the Body of Christ.
- **So be encouraged**, even though others many not see what you are doing **for Christ**,
- never forget, **God does**, He sees and says to **Tychicus and servants like him**.

***23 ... 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.'** (Matthew 25:23)*

- So, in **Tychicus** we have one who was dedicated to faithful service to Paul and the church.
- And I pray that we are inspired by what we have seen,
- that we will seek to **serve the Lord faithfully** in whatever capacity He calls us too.
- That we will follow **Tychicus'** example of **A New Life of Service**.
- And then second, we are given an example of...

2. A New Life of Transformation

- **Verse 9**

***9 and with him** (Tychicus) **Onesimus our faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you. They will tell you of everything that has taken place here.** (Colossians 4:9)*

- **Onesimus** was also a faithful beloved brother, and as such he would accompany **Tychicus** to **Colossae**.
- He would share the duty of **encouraging the hearts** of the believers in Asia.
- Now what do we know of **Onesimus**?
- Well, from Paul's letter to **Philemon (A Christian Leader in the church of Colossae)**.
- We know that **before Onesimus** was a **believer**,
- He was a **not so good doulos** (probably not a slave, but a bondservant).
- It seems he owed a debt to **Philemon** and was supposed to work it off.
- However, he ran away instead.
- **He** ran from **Colossae** to **Ephesus** and on to **Rome**.
- But in Rome he stopped running because there was **found by the Lord Jesus Christ**.

- And in Paul's letter to **Philemon**, he writes on behalf of a **transformed Onesimus**.
- Beginning in **verse 10** we read...

¹⁰ I appeal to you for my child, Onesimus, whose father I became in my imprisonment.

- **Onesimus**, while in Rome came to Christ through the ministry of the Apostle Paul...
- And he was forever changed...

¹¹ (Formerly he was useless to you, but now he is indeed useful to you and to me.) ¹² I am sending him back to you, sending my very heart. ¹³ I would have been glad to keep him with me, in order that he might serve me on your behalf during my imprisonment for the gospel, (Philemon 1:10-13)

- An amazing **transformation** had taken place in **Onesimus**.
- He went from being **an untrustworthy, useless, bondservant**.
- Running away to avoid **paying his debt**.
- To being a useful, **faithful, beloved servant** and brother in Christ.
- One who Paul trusted and would have been glad to serve with.
- **Onesimus'** heart and life had been transformed by Jesus Christ.
- He had been **revolutionized by God's grace!**
- Have you experienced this kind of **transformation in your life?**
- Now for some, like **Onesimus**, the transformation is radical.
- It would have been **clearly seen** by those who knew him, B.C. before Christ.
- This was certainly the case for **my Parents**.
- Without going into a lot of detail, which is not my **prerogative**,
- I do like to say, before Christ our refrigerator was filled **with Beer**,
- But after Christ I could always find **the Milk**.
- **And maybe you relate to this**, to the dramatic changes Christ has made in your life.
- Or maybe you are more like me,
- I came to Christ at age 13 before my parents would let me get too deep into external sins.
- But regardless of how much **external transformation** takes place when one comes to Christ,
- a definite radical internal transformation occurs.
- Because even if the people around us don't see our **wickedness**, it's there in our hearts.
- As Paul wrote to the Romans...

¹⁰...“None is righteous, no, not one; ¹¹ no one understands; no one seeks for God. ¹² All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one.” (Romans 3:10-12)

- Regardless of our actions,
- Prior to God's transforming work, our hearts are filled with selfishness, pride, anger, lust, and I could go on.
- But Christ transforms our hearts which results in **Christ-Like** actions.
- Now how does this happen?
- Well to quote **Colossians 2:9-10**,

⁹ For in [Christ] the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, ¹⁰ and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority. (Colossians 2:9-10)

- When we come to Christ, our emptiness is filled in him, with him.
- We are now **new creatures in Christ**, and as such we can, if we trust and obey him,
- live lives filled with his purposes, his ways.
- His fruit, the fruit of His spirit will grow in our lives.
- Ask yourself, am I being filled with the character of Christ, the fruit of the Spirit,
- Is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self control growing in my life.
- If yes then you have been, are being transformed by the Spirit of God?
- And if not, you can today turn to Him, trust in him to fill and transform you.
- Now some may feel like it's too late for them,
- Maybe you're a Christian, but too often you've ran away from your Master,
- You've ignored his instructions for your life and therefore it's in a complete mess.
- Or maybe you've never trusted in Christ,
- You've never experienced being filled in him, and your life too is a mess.
- **Well, I would say this**, fixing messes in God's specialty.
- But we must, like **Onesimus**, give ourselves to him,
- We must **trust and obey Him**.
- And if we do, he will transform our messes to beautiful new lives in Christ.
- **Edith Schaeffer** tells the story of how the girl doing the cooking for **their Christian community** was supposed to be making cake,
- but she made some errors and produced instead a **mess of goo**.
- Now the logical thing to do was to throw it out.
- But the Schaeffers did not have extra money,
- and had learned to be very economical in the kitchen.

- So, **Edith** sat down with the girl, figured out what was in the gooey mess,
- and by adding **an extra ingredient** was able to make what her husband described as
- ***"the most marvelous noodles you have tasted in your life."***
- And it's the same way for our messy lives.
- If we place ourselves in the Lord's hands, if we trust and obey him.
- He can and will not only add a new ingredient or two, but he has the power to remove the bad stuff.
- He can shape us (transform us) into something new and even unexpected (like noodles instead of cake).
- So, in Tychicus we have an example of **a new life of service**.
- and in Onesimus we have an example of **a new life of Transformation**.
- Now with the rest of those listed by Paul, I want us to **see various aspects of...**

3. A New Life of Fellowship

- One of the things that takes place when we come to Christ is **an amazing new connection** with other believers,
- **We become part of the same family, we are brothers and sisters in Christ.**
- I've been **privileged** to experience this not only with fellow believers here in the US.
- But in many parts of the world, in Japan, Singapore, Thailand, Malawi, and most recently in Cambodia.
- As I meet believers from very different backgrounds, very different cultures, there is still a mutual love for and understanding of one another.
- **And why is this the case?**
- Because no matter the culture we come from, as Christians our ultimate focus is Christ.
- We are interconnected to one another as we all members of the Body of Christ.
- **And this experience of unity among believers is what we call fellowship,**
- **Or in the Greek Koinonia.**
- This shared experience and unity is a result **of knowing Christ**.
- In his **first letter**, the Apostle John makes this clear when he writes...

³ that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. (1 John 1:3)

- A **primary motivation** behind John's proclaiming the gospel was that his hearers be brought into fellowship with the Father and Son, and thus into fellowship **with John and the Church**.
- Fellowship with the **God results in fellowship with other believers.**
- And the key to the quality of our **fellowship with one another**,
- is the quality of our fellowship with God.

- Those with the deepest fellowship with God have the deepest fellowship with each other.
- They share the same biblical God-Centric views of reality.
- of self, of sin, of morals and ethics.
- They share the same love for Christ, his Church, and his Word.
- They share the same hopes and the same mission,
- All of which can make for joyful, satisfying unity in the body of Christ.
- And Paul, a Jewish Christian and God's Apostle to the Gentiles,
- experienced this kind of fellowship throughout his life and ministry.
- In the **book of Acts** there are more **than 100 different Christians** associated with Paul.
- He named **sixteen different friends** in **Romans 16 alone!**
- Here in Colossians, he names **ten** people in closing.
- Eight are listed in our passage today, these are with him in Rome.
- And two more in the final verses, who are in Asia where his letters are heading.
- Now, we've looked at the first two people mentioned (Tychicus and Onesimus) in depth and we will look at two more of the six in depth shortly...
- But let's first look at the **remaining 6 together**,
- Because these six men (Along with Paul) show that...

A. Fellowship Breaks Barriers

- In this passage **six individuals sent greetings** (through Paul) from **Rome to Colosse**.
- Three were **Jews and three were Gentiles**.
- The three Jews are listed in **verses 10 and 11**...

¹⁰ **Aristarchus** (AIR-RI-STAR-CUS) *my fellow prisoner greets you, and Mark the cousin of Barnabas (concerning whom you have received instructions—if he comes to you, welcome him), ¹¹ and Jesus who is called Justus.... (Colossians 4:10-11)*

- The Jews were, **Aristarchus, Mark, and Jesus called Justus**.
- And then in **verses 12-14** we are introduced to the Gentiles.

¹² **Epaphras**, *who is one of you, a servant of Christ Jesus, greets you...* ¹⁴ **Luke** *the beloved physician greets you, as does Demas. (Colossians 4:12-14)*

- The Gentiles were **Epaphras, Luke, and Demas**.
- So, under the leadership of the **Apostle Paul**, these three Jews and three Gentiles were serving the Lord together.
- And what I want us to understand is this was totally unique and radical in Paul's day.
- The **Jew Gentile division was huge on both sides**.

- And even within those groups, there certainly many differences,
- and many things that could and even should have kept them apart.
- Culture had divided the world of that day into hostile camps which could only be held together by the Roman sword.
- There were **language barriers**.
- There were **national and provincial animosities**.
- There were **differences in religious and cultural background**.
- But in Christ, all these men, along with Paul as their leader, were meeting together and working together **willingly and lovingly!**
- Despite the barriers that existed, they were experiencing **Biblical fellowship**.
- Why, because they had been transformed by Jesus Christ, who demonstrated the barrier breaking power of the gospel.
- In **John Chapter 4** we read of how our Lord broke the **forbidden barriers** by reaching out to the **Samaritan woman**.
- Hatred between **Judea and Samaria** had lasted over **400 years**.
- While the Jews had kept their **racial purity during the Babylonian captivity**,
- **the Samaritans** had lost theirs by intermarrying with the **Assyrian invaders**.
- To **Jewish eyes** this was **unforgivable**.
- Also, the Samaritans had built **a rival temple on Mt. Gerizim** — only to have it destroyed by the Jews **in Maccabean times**.
- In Christ's time bitter hatred reigned supreme.
- A Jewish prayer even included, **"... and, Lord, do not remember the Samaritans in the Resurrection."**
- Added to this was the fact that the **Samaritan was a "woman."**
- (Strict rabbis forbade other rabbis to greet women in public.)
- Some Pharisees were called **"the bruised and bleeding Pharisees"** because they shut their eyes whenever they saw a woman and so stumbled into the street, incurring pious bruises.)
- But Jesus not only spoke to the woman,
- He used the woman's drinking utensil, thereby becoming ceremonially defiled, a scandalous act.
- Jesus leapt far beyond the conventional barriers of his day!
- **And in doing so**, he modeled one of the great aspects of the gospel and His Church.
- Jesus came to seek and to save every kind of people.
- Not just people like me and you, but people from every walk of life.
- Every tribe, tongue, language, skin color, religious background, socio economic status.
- Jesus came to reach and **bring together in His Church, every kind of people**.

- This is what had happened in Rome (and elsewhere), but the NT shows it was been easy.
- The **Gentiles in Rome** were ready to mix,
- but not many or even most of the **Jewish believers were**.
- They legalistically demanded that the Gentiles be **circumcised** and follow Jewish ceremonial law.
- And when Paul came to Rome, these **legalistic Jewish believers** were not excited to see him.
- They did not fellowship with him.
- And they even rejected his authority as God's apostle to the Gentile.
- Only three Jews helped him... **Aristarchus, Mark, and Jesus called Justus**.
- About them, Paul writes...

11 ...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. (Colossians 4:11)

- It seems that these three, were the only Jewish Christians that were willing to work with/fellowship with Paul and his Gentiles companions.
- These three were receptive and loving.
- they understood the grace of God.
- They clearly had the fullness of new life in Christ and therefore understood what Christ had demonstrated.
- And as I read the New Testament, and see the life of Jesus, Paul and others...
- It seems to me that it's impossible to hold **racial or other prejudices** in the heart and be walking with the Lord.
- Because believing one group of people is in some way superior to others goes against everything Christ and His apostle taught.
- When a Christian refuses fellowship with other healthy, Spirit-filled believers, there can only be one conclusion:
- something is wrong with his or her relationship to God.
- When we are having fellowship with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ,
- we will have fellowship with one another regardless of background.
- Three Jewish believers as well as three Gentile believers were experiencing a new life of fellowship.
- And they should be a model for us here at Bridges.
- When it comes to different backgrounds, cultures, races we must be a loving, accepting, caring united, people.
- For in Christ, we are all one!
- **And in Christ Fellowship Breaks Barriers!**
- Now in that list of **Jewish believers** there was **probably one name that stood out**.
- One name you might be familiar with, WHICH ONE! **Mark**.
- And so, we turn to **Mark and his relationship with Paul**.

- Where we see that...

B. Fellowship Forgives Faults

- Believers **at their worst** can hold onto grudges and grievances.
- Unable to forgive the faults of their fellow Christians.
- They ignore the scriptures many commands to forgive.
- But others, like Paul and Mark, are able to extend the grace of forgiveness.
- Earlier young Mark (John Mark) had accompanied Paul and Barnabas on Paul's first missionary journey when they set out from Antioch.
- But after ministering in Cypress, Mark abandoned Paul when they reached the shores of Pamphylia, returning to Jerusalem.
- **We are not told why he did this.**
- We can guess from Paul's writings that the hardships were incredible,
- they were experiencing stress very much like that of a combat soldier.
- So later, when Paul was planning another journey,
- **Barnabas** insisted that Mark come along, **but Paul refused.**
- Paul knew it would be rough and he didn't want anyone on his team who had given up before.
- The result was their famous separation.
- Barnabas took Mark with him and Paul recruited **Silas**.
- But now, twelve years later, Mark was with Paul in Rome, ministering to him in his imprisonment.
- As Paul sent Mark's greeting to Colosse, he even commended him saying,

¹⁰ ... Mark the cousin of Barnabas (concerning whom you have received instructions—if he comes to you, welcome him), (Colossians 4:10)

- Welcome Mark.
- And in the accompanying letter to **Philemon**, Paul called Mark his **fellow worker**.
- And later, as Paul's ministry (and life) were near their end, he said to **Timothy**,

¹¹ Luke alone is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is very useful to me for ministry. (2 Timothy 4:11)

- There was no way, even with past faults, that two men who both loved God and were walking in fellowship with him would not have fellowship with one another.
- **This is what true fellowship brings!**
- So, what we learn is that even in the church there are faults, sins, grievances.
- But if two believers cannot be reconciled, then either both or one is not in fellowship with God.

- Is there someone that you will not forgive?
- Someone that you have no desire to forgive though they have humbly sought your forgiveness?
- If so, you need to come to Christ in repentance, seeking his forgiveness,
- asking for his power to forgive that you might experience the New Life Fellowship he offers.
- So, we've seen that fellowship Breaks Barriers and Forgives Faults.
- Now we come to **the final aspect** of New Life Fellowship...

C. Fellowship Creates Concern

- We see this in Paul's description of **Epaphras**.
- **Verse 12**,

¹² 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. (Colossians 4:12)

- Way back in the first Colossians sermons we talked about **Epaphras**,
- we even referred to these verses.
- **Epaphras** was from **Colossae**.
- And if you remember, he had come all the way to Rome because he was concerned about the false teachers that threatened to divert the Colossian Christians from their new life in Christ.
- **Epaphras** had a profound love and concern for his **fellow-believers**.
- Paul says that he is...

"always struggling on your behalf in his prayers."

- That word struggling in the Greek is **agōnizomai** where we get the English word agonize.
- Paul had watched **Epaphras** pray for **his brothers and sisters in Colossae**, and this was the one word which best described **his prayer**.
- The same **root word** was used to describe Jesus' **ferveat blood sweating prayer** in Gethsemane.
- Epaphras **truly cared** for his fellow Christians!
- He prayed that they would...

stand mature and fully assured in all the will of God.

- His prayer was specifically directed against the false teachers who offered perfection and fullness through their system.
- But Epaphras knew that **the Colossians** already had fullness and divine perfection in Christ.
- **So he prayer, "God, help them to stay there!" Help them to recognize what Christ has done in and through them and to live based on that truth.**

- **Clearly Epaphras** was greatly concerned for his fellow believers in Colossae,
- and that concern drove him to prayer.
- **And here is a great lesson for us,**
- When our fellow believers experience temptation to fall away,
- when they are being wooed by false doctrine.
- Our concern may eventually cause us to confront them and correct them.
- **But first and foremost, we are to engage in earnest prayer for them.**
- Paul then concluded his brief description of Epaphras by saying,

13 For I bear him witness that he has worked hard for you and for those in Laodicea and in Hierapolis. (Colossians 4:13)

Or as the NASB translates it...

13 I bear him witness that he has a deep concern for you and for those who are in Laodicea and Hierapolis (Colossians 4:13 NASB)

- The word **worked or concern** literally means **pain or distress**.
- Epaphras' concern for the wellbeing of his Christian friends in **Colossae** was so deep it caused him pain, effort, concern, and it resulted in **hard work on their behalf**.
- **He worked hard** in prayer, and he worked hard by going to Rome to seek out Paul that he too might share his concern and help the believer in Colossae.
- **Epaphras'** example teaches us that when you are in fellowship with Christ,
- you naturally take on something of his heart for others,
- and this **overflows** into hard work and deep concern on their behalf.
- **True fellowship impacts your emotions toward others.**
- Pastor Phillips Brooks, who wrote the hymn "O Little Town of Bethlehem", put it this way:

To be a true minister to men is always to accept new happiness and new distress. The man who gives himself to other men can never be a wholly sad man; but no more can he be a man of unclouded gladness. To him shall come with every deeper consecration a before untasted joy, but in the same cup shall be mixed a sorrow that it was beyond his power to feel before. (Phillips Brooks)

- Involving yourself in the lives of others brings both great joy and great sorrow.
- That is the nature of true Fellowship.
- And that is the way it was with **Epaphras**.

- **And that is the way it should be for us.**
- We need to ask ourselves, who are we concerned about?
- Who do we pray for, who do we work hard for?
- And if the answer is no one, then that's a problem.
- For Christ has called us not to Isolated ourselves from one another but to devote ourselves to one another.
- To first devote ourselves to fellowship (relationship) with God,
- and flowing from our relationship with God, we are to devote ourselves to fellowship/relationships with one another.
- We are to devote ourselves to
- Fellowship that Breaks Barriers
- Fellowship that forgives faults
- And Fellowship that Creates Concern
- **So today we've seen Examples of New Life in Christ.**
- Tychicus showed us a New Life of Service
- Onesimus showed us a new life of Transformation.
- And the rest showed us a new life of Fellowship.
- Now it remains with us to learn from and walk in what we have seen today.
- To walk in the new life that we have received from the LORD.
- To follow his instructions and the examples he gives.
- **Would you pray with me to that end!**