



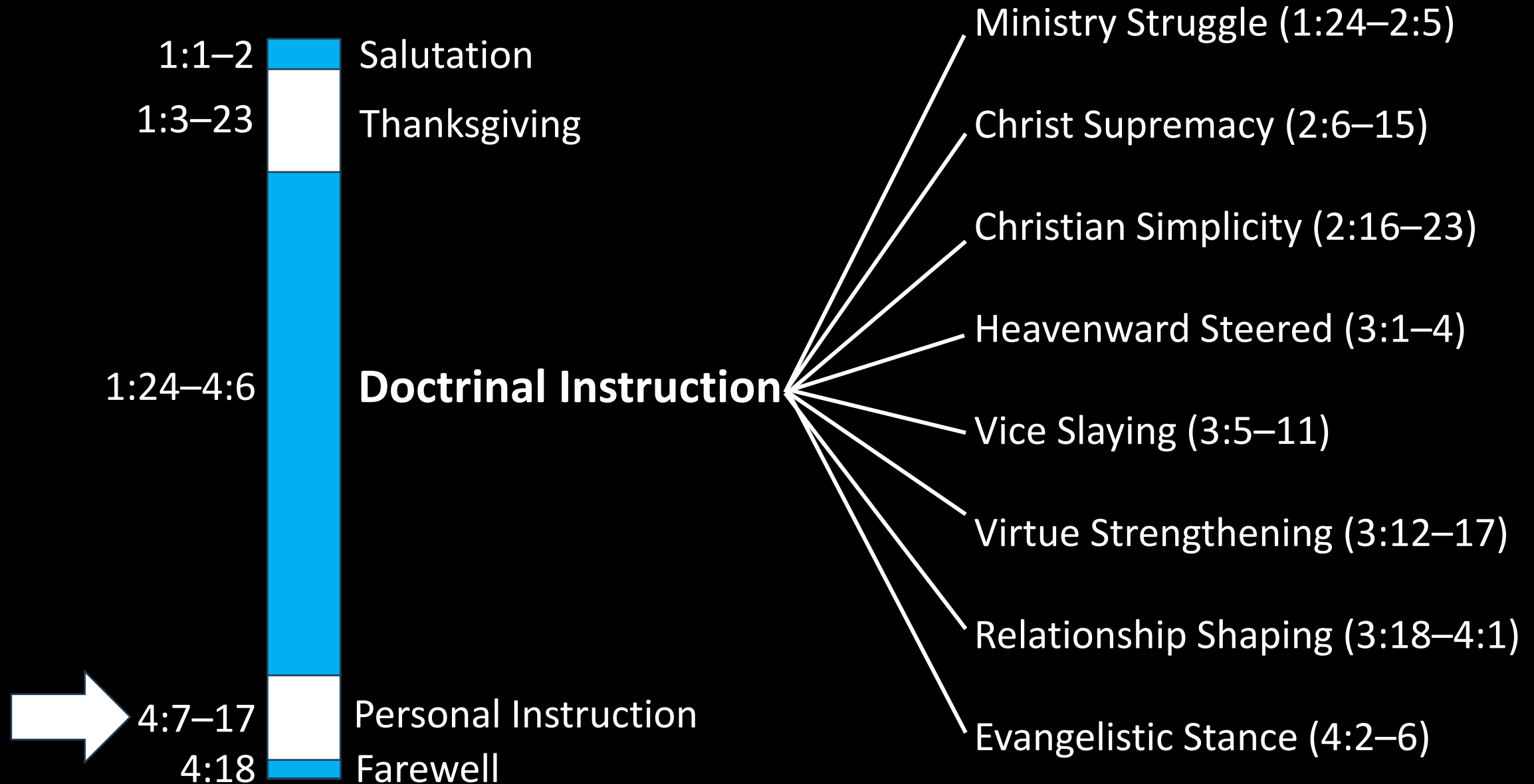
# “Paul and His Companions” Part 1

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Colossians 4:7–18

*Christ over All: Paul's Letter to the Colossians*

# THE OUTLINE OF COLOSSIANS



## COLOSSIANS 4:7–11

“As to all my affairs, Tychicus, *our* beloved brother and faithful servant and fellow bond-servant in the Lord, will bring you information. *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; and with him Onesimus, *our* faithful and beloved brother, who is one of your *number*. They will inform you about the whole situation here. 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); 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.”

## OVERVIEW

- The closing section of Colossians is made up of four brief components:
  - (1) a personal update (vv. 7–9);
  - (2) an expression of greetings (vv. 10–15);
  - (3) some closing instructions (vv. 16–17) ; and
  - (4) a personal note and benediction (v. 18).
- Only the letter to the Romans contains a longer section of greetings than the letter to the Colossians (see Romans 16).
- “When the various points are pondered, separately and together, they give us an exquisite picture of the Christian life as it must have been lived in such early Christian circles” (W. H. Griffith Thomas, *Colossians and Philemon*, 129).

- “One of the remarkable things about this short epistle is the space devoted to personal interests, whereas in the longer Epistle to the Ephesians very little attention is given to such matters. . . . With all his masterly grasp of theological problems, Paul felt the keenest interest in people and never got out of touch with his friends, and he had them everywhere” (A. T. Robertson, *Paul and the Intellectuals*, 126).



**UNION**

**with**

**CHRIST**

- It is only natural that, after emphasizing *union with Christ* and *Christ's headship over the church*, Paul should emphasize *union with others*.
- “Our union with Jesus is the basis for bond with our fellow Christians. Because that bond is so vital and real, we can live with each other in an intimacy impossible in every other setting” (Lawrence Richards, *Expository Dictionary of Bible Words*, 276).

- When Paul was first converted, he was feared or hated. His first Christian friend was reluctant (Ananias), and it took Barnabas, “the son of Encouragement,” to persuade the apostles to associate with him.
- By the end of his life, through references in Acts and in his own letters, some one hundred individuals were personally associated with Paul.



- Paul “believed and knew from personal experience that the saving work of Christ found its richest and fullest expression not in isolation but in the Christian community held together by mutual love, grounded in a common love for Christ Jesus as Savior and Lord” (D. Edmond Hiebert, *Personalities around Paul*, 17).

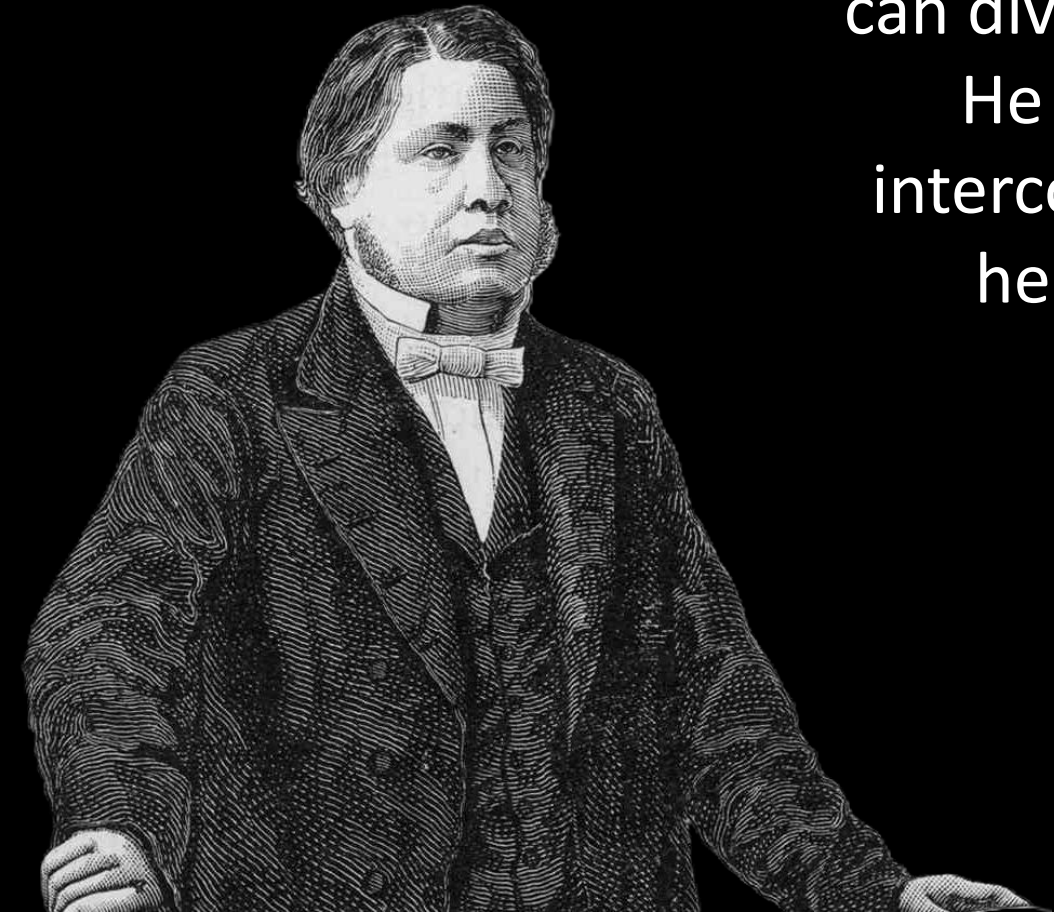
- As this closing section in the letter to the Colossians testifies, Paul was able to assemble around him a remarkable array of co-workers.
- And as this section in Colossians also testifies, these co-workers were fiercely devoted to him—a fact not only explained by the glory of the ministry, but by Paul’s own steadfast devotion to them.



- “Those who were nearest to Paul and knew him best were his staunchest friends. He was able to draw around himself a wide variety of loyal friends and co-workers and effectively lead them in the cause of worldwide Christianity to which his whole life was committed” (D. Edmond Hiebert, *Personalities around Paul*, 14).

“Satan always hates Christian fellowship; it is his policy to keep Christians apart. Anything which can divide saints from one another he delights in. He attaches far more importance to godly intercourse than we do. Since union is strength, he does his best to promote separation.”

—Charles Spurgeon



# I. Paul's Reliable Representatives (4:7–9)

## A. Tychicus (vv. 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. 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 was the letter carrier for both Colossians and Ephesians (see Eph 6:21–22).
- He was from the province of Asia, and from the city of Ephesus specifically (Acts 20:4; 2 Tim 4:12).



- It is likely that Tychicus was one of Paul's converts in Ephesus, when Paul ministered there on his 3rd missionary journey (Acts 19; AD 52–55).
- Tychicus was then appointed a member of the delegation responsible for the collection taken for the Jerusalem church, at the end of Paul's 3<sup>rd</sup> missionary journey (Acts 20:4; AD 55–57).
- He was obviously with Paul during Paul's first Roman imprisonment (Acts 28:30–31; AD 60–61), before being dispatched with these letters.
- Since Tychicus carried the letters to the Ephesians and the Colossians, it is likely that he also carried the letter to Philemon.
- He was skilled and mature enough that Paul could send him on ministry tours, notable enough to fill in for men like Titus (Titus 3:12).

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

- Paul describes Tychicus with three powerful phrases:

#### AFFECTION

1) “**Beloved brother**” – a reference to spiritual brotherhood; more than that, he is a *deeply loved* brother.

#### RESPECT

2) “**Faithful servant**” – one who serves as a mediator in a transaction; more than that, he is a *trustworthy* servant.

#### PARTNERSHIP

3) “**Fellow slave in the Lord**” – one who lives for his Master (the Lord); more than that, he does so together with Paul.

**“As to all my affairs, Tychicus, *our* beloved brother and faithful servant and fellow bond-servant in the Lord, will bring you information. 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 to all my affairs”** he **“will bring you information”** – Paul sent Tychicus to update the Colossians so that they would know his personal circumstances: his health, his labors, his legal situation, his needs, etc.



- **“And that he may encourage your hearts”** – Paul sent Tychicus to minister to the Colossians—which would practically involve *reading* the letter, but also *instilling courage, comfort, and joy*.

# I. Paul's Reliable Representatives (4:7–9) – cont'd

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## B. Onesimus (v. 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.”

- From Paul's letter to Philemon, we learn that Onesimus was a run-away slave from Colossae, who belonged to Philemon.
- While on the run, Onesimus somehow came into contact with Paul when he was in Rome under house arrest (Acts 28:30–31; AD 60–61).
- He was led to Christ by Paul (“my child Onesimus,” Philem 10) and was convinced by Paul to return to Philemon with Tychicus.

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

- Paul describes Onesimus with astonishing terms:

#### RESPECT

1) **“Faithful”** – “being worthy of trust, dependable”—used to describe Epaphras (1:7) and Tychicus (4:7).

#### AFFECTION

2) **“Beloved”** – “one who is dearly loved, valued”—used also to describe Epaphras (1:7) and Tychicus (4:7); see Philemon 12.

#### EQUALITY

3) **“Brother”** – one who is a spiritual sibling, of the same family; see Philemon 15–16 and Colossians 3:10–11.

- Paul trusted Onesimus as much as Tychicus in representing his interests.



“Think of him as he left Colossae, shrinking from his master, with stolen property in his bosom, madness and mutiny in his heart, an ignorant heathen, with vices and sensualities holding carnival in his soul. Think of him as he came back, Paul’s trusted representative, with desires after holiness in his deepest nature, the light of the knowledge of a loving and pure God in his soul, a great hope before him, ready for all service and even to put on again the abhorred yoke!”

—Alexander Maclaren

## II. Paul's Comforting Kinsmen (4:10–11)

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“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); 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.”

- “Fellow workers for the kingdom of God” – the true unifying factor.
- “From the circumcision” – the first three who send their greetings to the Colossians are *Jewish Christians*—like Paul (see Romans 9:1–3).
- “An encouragement to me” – the noun—used only here in the NT—was found outside the NT in medical texts: “assuage, alleviate.”

## A. Aristarchus (v. 10a)

**“Aristarchus, my fellow prisoner, sends you his greetings.”**

- Aristarchus was from the province of Macedonia, and from the city of Thessalonica specifically (Acts 19:29; 20:4).
- It is likely that he was one of Paul’s converts in Thessalonica, when Paul ministered there on his 2nd missionary journey (Acts 17:1–9; AD 50).
- Aristarchus then traveled to join Paul in Ephesus during Paul’s 3rd missionary journey (Acts 19:29; AD 52–55);
- He was appointed a member of the delegation responsible for the collection taken for the Jerusalem church, at the end of Paul’s 3<sup>rd</sup> missionary journey (Acts 20:4; AD 55–57).

**“Aristarchus, my fellow prisoner, sends you his greetings.”**

- After traveling with Paul to Jerusalem to deliver the offering, Aristarchus went with Paul on his infamous voyage to Rome (Acts 27:2; AD 59).
- He remained at Paul’s side during Paul’s first Roman imprisonment (Acts 28:30–31; AD 60–62).
- **“My fellow prisoner”** – a prisoner vicariously; he elected to remain with Paul during his imprisonment and minister to his needs.



ΚΟΙΝΩΝΙΑ

koinōnia / communion, fellowship

“There are many elements that go into the total concept of fellowship, as it is described in the New Testament, but the sharing together in suffering is one of the most profitable. It probably unites our hearts together in Christ more than any other aspect of fellowship.”

—Jerry Bridges, *Trusting God*, 189

## B. Mark (v. 10b)

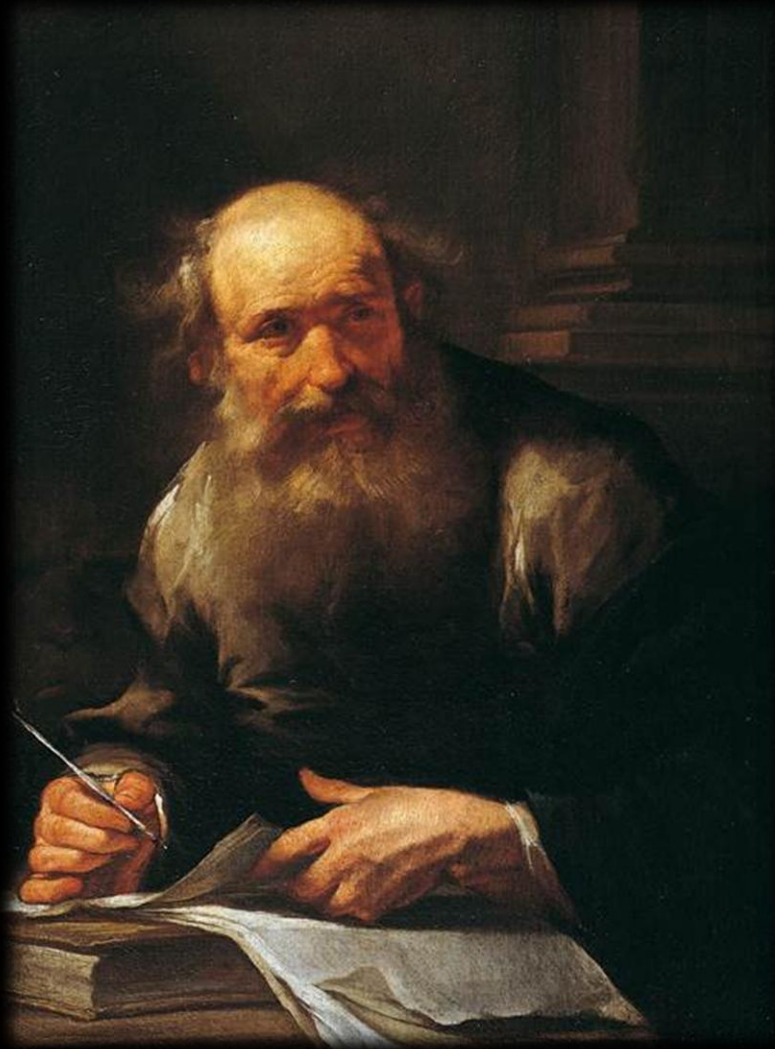
**“And *also* Barnabas’s cousin **Mark** (about whom you received instructions; if he comes to you, welcome him).”**

- His other name was John (Acts 12:12, 25; 15:37); he was from Jerusalem (Acts 12:12, 25).
- He served as a “helper” to Paul and Barnabas before and during their first missionary journey (Acts 12:25; 13:5; AD 46–47).
- But he abandoned the mission during that first journey, in the city of Perga (Acts 13:13; AD 47).
- Paul refused to accept Mark back onto the team for the second journey, citing his “apostasy” (Acts 15:37–38; AD 49).

- But Mark's service to Paul was not forever over.
- When Paul writes Colossians (Acts 28:30 – 31; AD 61), fourteen years after Mark's abandonment, Mark is *with Paul!* See also Philemon 24.
- In fact, Paul calls Mark one of his “fellow workers” (συνεργός, *sunergos*, Philemon 24), indicating that he was now more than a mere “helper.”
- Moreover, Paul was so confident in Mark that he sent him as his delegate on ministry travels: “**if he comes . . . welcome him**” (Colossians 4:10b).
- At the end of his life, as Paul awaited death during his 2nd Roman imprisonment (AD 66), Paul specially requests Timothy to bring Mark to him, “for he is useful to me in service” (2 Timothy 4:11).

“To get the full force of this comment on Mark we must remember that in 2 Timothy Paul is a condemned man whose friends have fled from him lest they share in his fate. But even in this situation Paul wants Mark brought to him because he knows now that Mark is completely trustworthy and that Mark is one man he can use at a time when all others are deserting him. And this is the man whom Paul had refused to take with him on the second missionary journey because of the fear that he would quit when the going got hard.”

—Rolston, *Personalities around Paul*, 46



“St. Mark the Evangelist” –  
a painting by Gioacchino Assereto  
(c. 1639)

“Mark’s biography offers hope for those who have failed. There is hope for the coward, the deserter, if only he will turn back to Christ. The possibility of recovery, of renewed and enlarged usefulness, is open to all. Mark challenges us to learn the secret of success by taking advantage of our blunders and failures in turning them into stepping-stones in the struggle for respect and usefulness. One who has failed need not remain a failure.”

—Hiebert, *Personalities around Paul*, 87

### C. Jesus called Justus (v. 11a)

“And *also* **Jesus** who is called Justus.”

- Unlike the others mentioned so far, nothing else is known about this Jewish Christian and companion of Paul than this brief reference.
- “**Jesus**” (Joshua, Yeshua) was a common Jewish name in the 1st cent. AD.
- “**Justus**” was a Latin name that helped Paul distinguish to the Colossians which “Jesus” he was referring to (there were two other NT men named “Justus”—Acts 1:23; 18:7—but these were not the same as this one).
- “**These,**” Paul says in a note of disappointment, “**are the only fellow workers for the kingdom of God who are from the circumcision**” (Col 4:11b).