

“Commendations and Conclusion”
Colossians 4:10-15
(Preached at Trinity, February 17, 2019)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. With **Verse 6**, Paul ends his words of instruction and begins moving towards the close of his letter. In **Verse 7** Paul reveals the two men he has entrusted with the delivery of this letter: Tychicus and Onesimus. Paul described them as beloved, faithful brothers, wonderful Christian characteristics.
2. Now, with **Verse 10** Paul continues with commendations that are familiar to the endings of his letters.
3. These were actual individuals who labored alongside Paul. Paul considered them a blessing, he considered them co-laborers, but especially he considered them fellow believers. He had a unique fellowship with them. They shared the bond of Christ. Christians share together this *κοινωνία*, the unique sharing of a common unity among believers.
It was an inseparable characteristic of the early church:
Acts 2:42 NAU - "They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer."
John described it:
1 John 1:3 NAU - "what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ."
4. We must never forget the wonderful oneness and unity we share.
One of the seven distinctives that characterize our church is "Loving Community." Both words are important: loving and community. A community unified in our love for Christ and for one another. Paul describes this unique oneness in his letter to the Ephesians.
Ephesians 4:3-6 NAU - "being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. ⁴ *There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; ⁵ one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶ one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all."*
5. The fellowship Christians enjoy transcends all of the differences that divide human beings. Paul gives the names of six individuals—three are Jews, three are Gentiles. They were different, but they were the same. They shared the same Master and Lord and were laboring for the same purpose. Although separated by many miles, they sent their Christian greetings to their brethren in Colossae. Most of them had never been to Colossae, but they were united, nonetheless.

6. There is another important point we need to see as we read of these six individuals. They were just people, no different from you and me. And yet, their lives were important. Each life is significant. What we do with it is important. We can be consumed with the affairs of this world, or we can have our minds fixed upon a higher goal. One of the names we see in this list should strike fear within our hearts. Demas is listed among the faithful brethren sending their greetings to Colossae. But the life of Demas was not over. The last we read of Demas is in 2 Timothy as Paul writes from prison:
2 Timothy 4:10 NAU - "Demas, having loved this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica"

I. Let's look at these six individuals.

A. Aristarchus

1. Aristarchus was a Jew from Thessalonica. He is described as a "fellow-prisoner" with Paul. We aren't told of his arrest, but it is implied that, like Paul, he had been arrested for the Gospel. He had sacrificed all for the sake of the Gospel and had suffered much.
2. He had traveled with Paul. He was with Paul when the riot broke out in Ephesus.
Acts 19:29 NAU - "The city was filled with the confusion, and they rushed with one accord into the theater, dragging along Gaius and Aristarchus, Paul's traveling companions from Macedonia."
3. Luke records that he was on the ship with Paul when they sailed for Rome.
Acts 27:1-2 NAU - "When it was decided that we would sail for Italy, they proceeded to deliver Paul and some other prisoners to a centurion of the Augustan cohort named Julius. ² And embarking in an Adramyttian ship, which was about to sail to the regions along the coast of Asia, we put out to sea accompanied by Aristarchus, a Macedonian of Thessalonica."
4. What are you willing to suffer for the sake of the Gospel?

B. Mark

1. With Demas we'll see a man who began well and finished poorly. With Mark we see a man who began poorly, but finished well. What a wonderful testimony to God's grace. God is the God of second chances. Repentance is available to all who will humble themselves in confession and sorrow over their sin with a desire to follow Christ with their whole heart.
2. Mark is the writer of the Gospel of Mark. He was the cousin of Barnabas. Paul and Barnabas were partners during the early days of Paul's missionary enterprises. At some point they took Mark along with them.
Acts 12:25 NAU - "And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem when they had fulfilled their mission, taking along with *them* John, who was also called Mark."
3. The Bible doesn't give us the reasons, but at some point Mark left Paul and Barnabas and returned home. The mission work was hard. It was dangerous and physically demanding. There were few creature comforts. Apparently, it became too much for Mark.

- a. This was totally unacceptable for Paul. He wasn't interested in bringing along a tourist. He needed co-laborers. Paul saw him as unfaithful and unstable and of little use in the hardships of the mission field.
Paul refused to allow Mark to accompany them on future trips.
 - b. This created such conflict between Paul and Barnabas that they had to go their separate ways. This resulted in Paul traveling with Silas.
Acts 15:36-40 NAU - "After some days Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us return and visit the brethren in every city in which we proclaimed the word of the Lord, *and* see how they are." ³⁷ Barnabas wanted to take John, called Mark, along with them also. ³⁸ But Paul kept insisting that they should not take him along who had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not gone with them to the work. ³⁹ And there occurred such a sharp disagreement that they separated from one another, and Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus. ⁴⁰ But Paul chose Silas and left, being committed by the brethren to the grace of the Lord."
4. Paul wasn't being unreasonable. He refused to allow anything or anyone to interfere with the work of the Gospel.
Paul was not void of graciousness. Mark would later repent and commit himself to the work. Paul received him with grace and forgiveness and saw Mark as a valuable co-laborer.
 5. After telling Timothy of the abandonment of Demas he speaks of the great value of Mark in his ministry.
2 Timothy 4:10-11 NAU - "Demas, having loved this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica; Crescens *has gone* to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia. ¹¹ Only Luke is with me. Pick up Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for service."
 6. Paul tells the Colossian church, "If he comes to you, welcome him."
 7. Mark's life had taken a remarkable turn. We shouldn't dismiss the influence of two men in his life.
 - a. One was Barnabas, his cousin. We are told in **Acts 4** his real name was Joseph. He was given the name Barnabas by the Apostles. It means, "Son of encouragement." He would have encouraged Mark with gentleness and helped him in his youthful immaturity.
 - b. Paul, on the other hand, gave him a stern, sharp rebuke.
 - c. Do you see the contrast. Mark needed both gentle encouragement as well as the firm dealing of Paul. This is true with all of us. It is the nature of Christian teaching and preaching.
2 Timothy 4:2 NAU - "preach the word; be ready in season *and* out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction."
 - d. Sadly, some become angry when faced with firm correction. It is to their great loss and harm.

C. Jesus Justus

1. The name Justus was common. This is the third individual with this name in the New Testament. All that we know about him is in this brief mention. He is significant in that Paul states that he was one of only three Jews who labored along-side him and that he was a great encouragement to Paul.
2. We must not diminish the impact of our lives upon the lives of others and upon the work of the Kingdom.

D. Epaphras

1. After calling attention to three Jews Paul now mentions three Gentiles: Epaphras, Luke, and Demas
2. Epaphras was from Colossae and had come to saving faith under Paul's ministry while at Ephesus. He returned to Colossae and it was under his powerful testimony that the Church of Colossae came into existence. He may have also been involved in the planting of the churches in Laodicea and Hierapolis as well.
Paul wrote in Chapter 1 that it was from Epaphras that they had heard the Gospel.
Colossians 1:7 NAU - "just as you learned *it* from Epaphras, our beloved fellow bond-servant, who is a faithful servant of Christ on our behalf,"
3. Epaphras had arrived in Rome and shared the conditions of the Church of Colossae, their strengths and their weaknesses. It was largely because of the report of Epaphras that Paul wrote this letter.
4. Epaphras was a man full of the Holy Spirit. He prayed continually and fervently for the prosperity of his brothers and sisters in Christ.
Colossians 4:12 NAU - "always laboring earnestly for you in his prayers, that you may stand perfect and fully assured in all the will of God."
The word for "laboring" is ἀγωνίζομαι
5. How many people have this genuine concern for the spiritual wellbeing of their fellow believers as to agonize in prayer for them? He was a wonderful source of encouragement for Paul.

E. Luke

1. Luke was a physician. He was also a historian. He's been described as one of the finest historians of the ancient world.
Luke is the author of the Gospel that bears his name as well as the Book of Acts.
2. Luke was a frequent companion of Paul. He was loyal and faithful and often shared in the hardships Paul faced in his missionary travels. In the end, when so many others had forsaken Paul, Luke remained faithfully beside him.
2 Timothy 4:10-11 NAU - "Demas, having loved this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica; Crescens *has gone* to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia. ¹¹ Only Luke is with me. Pick up Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for service."

F. Demas

1. Demas is mentioned three times in the letters of Paul. It is interesting that with the others mentioned by Paul there is some statement describing the individual.
 - Aristarchus my fellow prisoner
 - Mark, welcome him
 - Jesus Justus, a fellow worker and encouragement
 - Epaphras, bondsman and faithful in prayer
 - Luke the beloved physician
 2. But with Demas Paul simply writes, “and also Demas.” Could it be that Demas was already showing signs of being worldly and earthbound? Could this explain Paul’s lack of commendation. Paul writes to the Church of Philippi
Philippians 3:18-19 NAU - "For many walk, of whom I often told you, and now tell you even weeping, *that they are* enemies of the cross of Christ, ¹⁹ whose end is destruction, whose god is *their* appetite, and *whose* glory is in their shame, who set their minds on earthly things."
 3. Demas had begun well. He had traveled with Paul. He was with Paul in Rome. But he couldn’t get his eyes off of this world.
1 John 2:15-17 NAU - "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. ¹⁶ For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. ¹⁷ The world is passing away, and *also* its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever."
Luke 9:62 NAU - "No one, after putting his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."
 4. There is a huge difference between Mark and Demas. Mark turned back and repented and demonstrated his repentance genuine by a life of faithful service. Demas began well, but turned away. We have no indication that he ever repented and returned. There is no further mention of Demas, either in Scripture or in Christian tradition.
- G. To these Paul adds Nympha – a dear lady in Laodicea who opened her home so that a church could form in their midst. This is all we know of her, but her faithfulness is not forgotten by God.
- H. Finally, Paul addresses Archippus.
1. Paul often encouraged ministers of the Gospel. It is a hard life and it is easy to lose focus. Paul exhorts him to “take heed.” The word is βλέπω which is often used to stress careful attention. It can carry the force of “look out!” The KJV sometimes translates it “beware.”
Colossians 2:8 KJV - "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit"

2. Paul told Timothy
1 Timothy 4:12-15 NAU - "Let no one look down on your youthfulness, but *rather* in speech, conduct, love, faith *and* purity, show yourself an example of those who believe. ¹³ Until I come, give attention to the *public* reading of *Scripture*, to exhortation and teaching. ¹⁴ Do not neglect the spiritual gift within you, which was bestowed on you through prophetic utterance with the laying on of hands by the presbytery. ¹⁵ Take pains with these things; be *absorbed* in them, so that your progress will be evident to all."

Conclusion:

1. Such passages should cause us to take note, to consider well. The lives of these men and lady were intimately known of God. He formed them in their mother's wombs and determined when and where they lived their lives.
 - a. Each of them have lived and they died, and for most, have been long forgotten—but not in the knowledge of God.
 - b. The point is this. Although most of our lives are forgotten of men, God has carefully recorded every detail. And we all will be called to give account.
2. Our lives are continuing. Our biographies are still being written. Are we pressing on? Are we keeping our eyes on eternity. Paul's words at the beginning of **Chapter 3** will serve as an apt ending of this letter.
Colossians 3:1-2 NAU - "Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ² Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth."