# Colossians 4:7-18

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Date: 23 October 2016

Preacher: Paul Levy

[0:00] If I either pick one section of Colossians to read or to preach, I very much doubt it would be verses 7-13.

! And consequently the closing sections of Paul's letters, they're often in our Bible readings, they're just skimmed over. And we give it very little attention, just think, oh it's Paul saying, say hi to such and such, say hi to this.
But that being said, like so many other parts of the Bible, if only we were to listen carefully and thoughtfully, and we put our assumptions aside, I think what we'll find is very interesting and important.
There's always goals to be found, actually, at the end of Paul's letters. I think there's probably a book to be written on the end of Paul's letters, if you want to write it. So let's look at some of the gems.
And then what I'd like to do is I'd like to make some general observations on why the letter ends in the way that it does. So on the 4th verse 7 to the end, there are four main parts.
[1:07] In verses 7-9, Paul says something about the postman, the man carrying this letter all the way from Colossae, from him to Colossae. And then in verses 10-14, he passes on the greetings from others, those who are with him in Rome, the house group in Rome.

And then in verses 15-7, he gives specific instructions and requests the people of Colossae. And then in verse 18, he takes the pen or the quill and he writes with his own hands.
So let's look at the postman first of all. The letter arrived by the hand of Tychicus. And Tychicus was accompanied by verse 9, Onesimus.
The letter has told us, and likewise the Colossian believers, very little about Paul's own circumstances. We don't know very much about the circumstances.
That wasn't the purpose of the letter. And this wasn't a news letter, a Christmas letter, which said all that had been going on in the last year. This wasn't a letter about how Paul was going on.
[2:13] That is why we can't be absolutely thinking about where Paul was when he wrote this letter, or when it was he precisely wrote it. The Colossian believers, however, knew where Paul was, and they knew when it was that the letter arrived.

Even if they were to roll on it just together. And they were no doubt, they were very keen to hear the details of his circumstances. And Paul leaves that, doesn't he, verse 7, to the bearer of the letter.
And so in Colossians chapter 4, verse 7, he says, Tychicus will tell you all about my activities.
Literally, Tychicus will tell you everything about me. About my circumstances, about my situation.
So who was he? Well, Tychicus was in fact a man who accompanied Paul on his missionary journey adventures for some time. You can read about him in the book of Acts. He'd been with Paul on the Greek campaign.
He'd travelled with him to Troas. And at the end of the so-called third missionary journey, he was there. He was probably included in the we. The we of whom Luke speaks of in Acts, who was travelling with Paul at that point.
[3:22] And so he may have been before when he goes to Jerusalem. With the collection from the churches to the needy believers in Jerusalem. He's mentioned in four of Paul's letters. And clearly Tychicus is entrusted.

Clearly he's a loved and trusted colleague. And he's entrusted with a number of important tasks.
He's from Asia Minor. And so from the general region of Ephesus and Colossae.
But he's apparently not known in Colossae. And so Paul introduces the man carrying the letter to the Colossian believers. Let's just see what he says. He says he's a beloved brother.

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A faithful minister. And a fellow servant of the Lord. Can you sense the affection? Can you see that? The high regard Paul has for the man. A beloved brother. And we should remember what a remarkable thing this is.
Because it is Paul the Jew speaking like that of a Gentile. Tychicus probably was a Gentile. But that is described to Christians in Colossae.
[4:27] Didn't he? Mainly Gentiles. Whom he'd never met. Do you remember at the start of the letter he described them as faithful brothers. And that is the historic wonder of the gospel of Christ Jesus.

It produces. It brings into being these relationships. That simply could not otherwise be. Tychicus. A Gentile. Was a beloved brother. Loved here by Paul. And there's every reason that Colossians should regard him as a dear brother also.
He's described as a faithful minister. And we should remember, shouldn't we? Or better, a faithful servant. We should remember what Paul had said about his own role as a servant.
Earlier on in the letter. He said he was a servant of the gospel. Chapter 1 and 23. And so. As a servant of the gospel. Chapter 1 and 23. He's a servant of the church. Chapter 1 verse 25.
[5:27] And through his hard work and suffering. And his labour. Christ was proclaimed. Chapter 1 and 28. Tychicus. Was also a faithful servant.

What a commendation, isn't it? That word faithful carries. He's a servant you can trust. And this stronger language still is used. The third thing is. He is literally. A fellow slave.
A fellow servant in the Lord. We know, don't we? We've read this letter. That there were literal slaves. And literal masters. In the Colossae congregation.
And we know that in Christ Jesus. The distinction between slave and free. Has been broken down. Chapter 3 verse 11. But Paul was so far from elevating himself above others.
That he served within the gospel. That he saw Tychicus and himself as fellow slaves in the Lord Jesus. It wasn't Paul was the boss.
[6:29] Tychicus was number 2 and number 3. No, they were both fellow slaves. And that was a pretty impressive letter of recommendation. The loved brother. Faithful servant.

Fellow slave. You go to a church with that letter in your pocket. From the Apostle Paul. And it will give you some confidence. And I trust it will affect how they treat you. And Tychicus had been sent to Colossae on a mission.
And his mission was not only to carry the letter. But verse 8. I sent him to you for this very purpose. Literally. That you may know the things about us.
That you may know how we are. And that he may encourage your hearts. Again, we know from the previous letter.
Encouraging hearts. Is what Paul's gospel had aimed to do. Back in chapter 2 and verse 2. That's what it was about. And so as Tychicus brought news of Paul and his colleagues.
[7:32] How could he not bring news of the gospel. And therefore encourage the hearts of the Colossians. No doubt Tychicus, the letter bearer. Paul's fellow slave in the Lord.

And was expected. Not only to read the letter. But explain whatever needed explaining. In that way too he would encourage their hearts. Tychicus you see was the first therefore.
In the long line of expositors of this great letter. All of whom have got the same mission. To encourage your hearts with the riches of Christ.
Tychicus had arrived in Colossae. Not alone but with another man. Can you see in verse 9 in Anasimus. Who was known. To the Colossians verse 9. And with him Anasimus. Our faithful and beloved brother.
Who's one of you. Paul says. Now here is one of the most truly remarkable characters. In all of the New Testament. And one of the most truly remarkable stories.
[8:31] In the New Testament. Because from the available evidence. It seems that Anasimus was a slave. Whose master. Whose master. Was Philemon. And Anasimus had apparently run away from his master.

And somehow Anasimus. When he was on the run. Came in contact with Paul. And through that contact. Had come to faith in Jesus Christ. And as a result. Now. The runaway slave.
Anasimus. Was now returning to Colossae. And to his master. Who was in the congregation. With a letter from Paul to Philemon. And what is wonderfully striking.

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Is the description that he gives of Anasimus. Can you see it? He's a faithful and beloved brother. The Colossian believers. Including Philemon.
In whose house they met. Were to receive this runaway slave. As a brother. As much as Tychicus. As much as they all themselves.
[9:34] Were the faithful brothers. Anasimus. He was a brother loved by Paul. And he was to be loved by them too. Anasimus was. Middle of verse 9.

One of you. It's a double sense. It's a double sense in that word. He's obviously from Colossae isn't he? He's one of you. But now he was one of you. Because Anasimus.
Was a brother in Christ. I can't imagine that Anasimus. Could have come back to Colossae. Other than with. Shaking and knocking knees.
Can you? He must have been very. Very nervous. And it was a brave thing for him to do. To return to Rome. It would have been far safer. Wouldn't it?
For him to return to Rome. But Paul's words testify. To the power of Christ. To the power of Christ. To make that situation very different.
[10:29] To make the relationships very different. From what might have been expected. And along with Tychicus. Anasimus. Anasimus was. A trusted messenger.

Of Paul. There he will tell you. Of everything that has taken place here. At the end of verse 9. Well having clarified the affection. With which Paul held these two men in.
Who brought the letter from him to Colossae. Secondly. Paul turns to pass on greetings. To Colossians. From the others. With Paul and Timothy. From chapter 4. Verses 10 to 14.
And he passes on greetings. From six of them. Who were with him at the time. That he was writing. Three Jewish people. Three Gentile people.
The first mention is verse 10. Isn't it? Aristarchus. And then Mark. And Jesus just. Aristarchus. Aristarchus. In verse 10. Is my fellow prisoner.
[11:26] And he greets you. Aristarchus. Is another person. We know a little bit about. From the book of Acts. And he was another one. Of Paul's companions. In his travels. He accompanied Paul.

To Jerusalem. And then on the long journey. To Rome. And we know. Here. That he is imprisoned. With Paul. There in Rome. The second of Paul's companions.
Is mentioned in verse 10. Can you see what it is? Is Mark. The cousin of Barnabas. Concerning whom you've received instructions. If he comes to you. Welcome him. This was John Mark. From Jerusalem.
And he travelled. Didn't he? With Paul. And Barnabas. John Mark's cousin. John Mark's cousin. To Cyprus. On the first. So called. First missionary journey. Mark however. You remember.
Don't you? In Acts 13. He pulled out. And Mark. Had gone back to Jerusalem. He left them. And that leads. To a sharp. Disagreement.
[12:24] Between Paul and Barnabas. Sometime later. Paul is not willing. To have John Mark. On a return visit. To the churches. He said. He bailed the first time. I don't want him. But Barnabas disagreed.

And Paul and Barnabas. They split. They go different ways. They went their different ways. Barnabas went with Mark. And Paul with Silas. The story is there. In Acts chapter 15. And that happened.
Probably about 12 years. Before the writing of this letter. And so how good it is. Isn't it? To be reminded here. Of Paul's confidence. In John Mark. John Mark.
Who was now there. With him. In Rome. And the Colossians. Had received instructions. From somebody. About John Mark. Maybe. They did rumours. On the church. A great night. About that earlier. Falling out.
With Paul. And John Mark. Had some living down. To do. About that. Well Paul adds his instructions. Doesn't he? He says. If he comes to you. Welcome him. That is Mark. That is Mark.
[13:22] Who had spent some time. With Peter. And traditionally thought. To be the author. Of the second gospel. The third companion. To the same greetings to. Is this guy. Who is 11. Jesus. Who is called Justice.

And this companion. We know. No more than. What we learned here. He had two names. That is the limit. Of our knowledge. Jesus. Justice.
Paul says. That these three men. Aristarchus. John Mark. And Jesus. Justice. Again in verse 11. These are the only men. Of the circumcision. Among my fellow workers. Of the kingdom of God.

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That is an astonishing phrase.
These are the only Jewish Christians. Who have remained faithful companions. Of Paul. Throughout. All his trials. Isn't that astonishing? At this late stage.
Of Paul's life. And ministry. There's just three. Just three. Jewish fellow workers. For him. Working for God's kingdom. The struggle.
[14:24] For the gospel of grace. Has. Been tough. It had cost. Paul. Dearly. Just three. Of his fellow countrymen. Still with him. But just notice. At the end of.

Verse 11. He's not complaining. Is he? They have been a comfort to me. They no doubt. Encouraged him. With the grace of God. They all loved and taught.
Well. And the second group. You see Epaphras. And there may have probably been. Three Jewish companions. Working with Paul. But there were other companions. And he sees three of them. As the most important of theirs. So verse 12. Epaphras.
Who is one of you. A servant. Or a slave. Of Christ Jesus. He greets you. And of course. They all knew Epaphras. No. We learn right at the start. That Epaphras. Was a Colossian himself.
Chapter 1. Verse 7. Like Onesimus. And Epaphras. Had apparently been converted. During Paul's ministry. In Ephesus. And had brought. The gospel of Christ. To Colossae.
[15:21] And the nearby towns. Of Laodicea. And Herodiceus. He was a great church planter. As we would call him. And the believers. Listening to this lesson. They heard the gospel. And they then listened.

The grace of God. In truth. From Epaphras. For some reason. That's not entirely clear. Epaphras had travelled. From Colossae to Rome. With news. Of their firm faith.
In Christ. Their ordered lives. And the spirit. Given love. For Colossians. Epaphras is still with Paul. But. Verse 12.
Can you see. He is always struggling. On your behalf. In his prayers. I tend to imagine. Paul and the Paphras. And the others.
Whose names appear. In this passage. They meet together. Regularly. To pray for the Colossian believers. There's seven in number. Paul and these six. And remarkably.
[16:15] Paul. Saw Epaphras. Go into agonising efforts. In prayer. For the Colossians. And that is alongside. And in the same terms.

As Paul's own. Agonising efforts. In serving the gospel. Just look at the end. Of verse. Of chapter one. It's striking.
It's the same language. That's used. In the end of chapter one. And the start of chapter two. So Paul says. For this. I toil. Him we proclaim.
Verse 26. My word of preaching. My word of proclaiming. For this. I toil. Struggling with all his energy. That he powerfully works in me. For I want you to know. How great a struggle. I have for you.
And that exactly. The same term. Is used. In chapter four. Verse 12. So I wanted you to see tonight. That Epaphras is praying.
[17:16] Was the same. As the purpose. Of Paul's gospel. Labors. Which of course. Is included. In his prayer. So chapter four. Verse 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. Paul proclaimed Christ. Warding everyone.
Teaching everyone. In all wisdom. That we might present. Everyone. Mature. Or perfect. In Christ. Chapter 128. Epaphras prayed. Earnestly. Struggling. Struggling in his prayers.
To the same end. Fully assured. In the will of God. And it seems to refer to that same confidence. That comes when God's will. God's purpose.
In Christ. The totality of all things. Is clearly. And certainly known. In mind. And heart. In life. It is as if.
[18:11] Paul. Himself. Constantly. Prayed. That you would be filled. With a knowledge. Of his will. And so did Epaphras.

What a wonderful servant of Christ. Epaphras turned out to be. And Paul wanted the Colossians. To appreciate this. As he did. Verse 13. For I bear witness. That he has worked hard for you.
And for those in Laodicea. And in Hierapolis. Those are the two towns. Where Epaphras. Had apparently. Planted the gospel. For whom now he. Earnestly prays.

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And it's been a concern of this letter. As we saw near the end of chapter 1. To draw careful attention. To God's ways. Of working. Through servants of the gospel. Servants of the gospel. Who are not always impressive. Who are not always brilliant communicators. But who suffer. Servants who work. Very very hard. In prayer. To the Lord.
[19:08] For people. And in speaking to people. Of the Lord. In a day of celebrity preachers. Preachers. We do well to remember that. Don't we? And to appreciate.

The less glamorous sermons. That the Lord is using. To build his kingdom. There are two more companions. For Paul's. Who want to. We want to get a word of. Luke and Demas. Verse 14. Luke and Demas. Verse 14. Luke and Demas. Luke. The beloved physician. Greets you. As his demons. Well Luke you know.
Don't you? He wrote the gospel of Luke. But also the book of Acts. But he was also a companion. To the apostle Paul. Right to the end. Right to the end. Of Paul's ministry. 2 Timothy chapter 4. And it's only here. That we find evidence. That he was a doctor. And here we find evidence. That isn't totally conclusive. But evidence. That he was a Gentile. Luke sent his greetings.
[20:05] To the Colossians. As did Demas. Now. Again. We don't know a great deal. About Demas. Just that sometime later. In his life. He deserted Paul.

In rather sad circumstances. And in Paul's last letter. He mentions that Demas. Is in love with this present world. And so he's deserted me.
But here. He joins Paul. In sending greetings. From Rome. To the believers in Colossae. So it's quite another prayer group. In Rome. Isn't it? A little house group.
That's interested. And concerned. And thrilled. About the gathering. Of the believers in Colossae. Giving thanks. For the wonder. That the gospel. Have accomplished. In their lives. Praying for their growth.
And maturity. I've seen somebody this week. And Paul writes something. About the 1960s. In London. At one point. You had. Dick Lucas.
[21:03] Just as a young man. Beginning his ministry. In. St. Hanson Bishop's Gate. Which was incredibly significant. And John Scott. Was in his pomp. At all souls. Lying in place. And Dr. Lloyd-Jones.

Is coming to the end. Of his ministry. So for a period. Of five years. You had. Three. Great. Preachers. In London. And I said. That there's probably. Never been a city.
Like that. Of course. I come back. And read Colossae. Chapter 4. And you'll see. That there are. Three of the writers. Of the New Testament. In the same city. Actually. In the same home group. Mark. Luke.
And Paul. Who are even better. Than Dick Lucas. John Scott. And Martin Lloyd-Jones. And they sent their greetings. To the brothers and sisters. In far off Colossae. And I mentioned.
Those who are with him. Send in requests. Paul then thirdly. Has specific prayer requests. From Paul. Doesn't he? Specific requests. He says. In verse 15. Number one. Greet the brothers. That lay the seer.
[21:59] As the believers. In Colossae. Met in Philemon's house. We learn. That in the letter. We learn that. In the letter. To Philemon. It seems. That the ladies. In Laodicea.

Gathered in the home. Of a woman. Called Nympha. And the children. In their house. We learn. In the next verse. Don't we? We learn. In the next verse. That Paul had written.
A letter. To Laodicea. It's not clear. Why he asked. The Colossians. To pass on his greetings. To them. Therefore. Unless it was. To encourage. Their hearts. Encourage.
Their relationship. With one another. Paul is very concerned. That you are not a little. Independent church. That's completely. Oxy moral. You are linked. With other churches. In any case.
He wanted them. To be in touch. With the church. In Laodicea. They are bound together. And secondly. To exchange letters. With Laodicea. So that in. Verse 16.
[22:54] And when this letter. Is being read. Among you. Have it also read. In the church. Of the Laodiceans. And see. Also. That you read. The letter. From Laodicea. It's an important. Important little insight.

Isn't it? How did it work? How Paul's letters. Began to be copied. And distributed. Among Christian fellowships. That were linked together. We certainly don't have.
The letter to the Laodiceans. Something that. It's a letter. The Ephesians. I don't think that. We don't have. The lost letter. That was to the Corinthians. But notice. From this verse. From the very

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beginning.
Paul's letters. Were designed to be read. And read aloud. In the gathering of believers. The third instruction. Is lovely. Isn't it? Verse 17. Tell Archippus.
Tell Archippus. The Colossians. Knew Archippus. And they knew. What his ministry was. But we don't. Had Paul heard.
[23:50] That Archippus. Was discouraged. Under some pressure. That Archippus. Was growing weary. But we don't know. We simply. Paul. Here Paul. Say this. See that you.

Fulfill the ministry. You've received. In the Lord. It's. Surely. A very short. But powerful. Message. To one member. Of the Colossian fellowship. To complete. His God given ministry. Don't give up. And the last word. Is from Paul. And the letter. Is done. Is there. Paul takes the letter.
From the pen. And the quill. From the hand of the scribe. And he writes this last line. And he says. I Paul. Write this greeting. With my own hand. Remember my chains. Grace be with you. And may the grace.
Which he speaks of. Be with us. Who've read this letter. As it was known. Amongst this wonderful. Assortment. Of ordinary people. Ordinary Joes.
[24:47] People like us. Who we've glimpsed. Through this letter. Through the window. Of this letter's conclusion. But I want to conclude. Just with three really brief.

Observations. About the way. That this letter finishes. It's here. That we glimpse. Don't we. The specific. Historic. Situation.
Of Paul. As he wrote. And the real situation. To which this letter. Was addressed. Here are a number. Of actual people. They are mentioned.
By name. And they are either. With Paul. When he wrote it. Or they are gathered. In Philemon's house. That day. And as Titicus. Pulled out the letter. And he read it. This letter.
He had just wrote. All the way from Rome. To Colossians. The people who are mentioned. Are ordinary people. People just like you. And like me. And secondly.
[25:44] We have this window. Into the situation. Because of Paul's. Evident heart. For people. The point I want you. To really see. From the way. This letter concludes.

Is how. This rich. Theological. Understanding. Which Colossians 1. Chapter 8. Just look at it again. With me. Look at chapter 1.
In verse 15. He is the urge. And the invisible. God. The Lord Jesus Christ. The firstborn of all creation. For by him. All things were created. In heaven. And the earth. Bisible and invisible. Where the dominion. Strong. Rulers.
All things were created. Through. It is. It is rich. Rich. Theological. Theological. Understanding. And this.
Rich. Theological. Understanding. Was not. An escape. From people. His. Theological. Depth. And strength. Did not.
[26:37] Cause him. To withdraw. From people. All. And it is so evident. Isn't it. That he cares. Deeply. For so many. Of those. He names. In this.

And other letters. So sometimes. In a church. In a church. In a church. In a church. He's. Always a great. Theologian.
The great. Minds. Always great. With people. But it's a completely. False. Dichotomy. It is a travesty. When the study. Of theology.
Causes a person. To love less. Mind you. It's a travesty. No smaller. When great. Love. For people. Is thought.
To prohibit. Serious study. Of God. Do you understand that? It is a travesty. When the study. Of theology. Causes a person. To love less. But it is a travesty.
[27:33] That is no smaller. When great love. For people. Is thought. To prohibit. Serious love. For God. These things. In our day. Are often set. Against each other. For Paul.

For all his. Great. Theological. Theological knowledge. He served. The purpose. Of working. Ever so hard. To see. Hearts. Encouraged. To gather. In love.
Full of rich. Students. That comes. From knowing. Christ. And thirdly. Lastly. Paul displays. His warm support. For the ministry. Of others. It is perfectly clear.
Isn't it. That in the way. That Paul ran. Church. It was no one man. Bound. Paul was not full. Of his own importance. Or indeed. Taken up. With his own. Difficulties.

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So he neglected. The labors of others. He appreciated them. When he said so. And he cared for them. And he rejoiced. Over the blessings. Of others. How good it is.
[28:29] Isn't it. To see him. Reconciled. With John Mark. And if Demas. Will one day. Desert him. It will not be. Because. Paul didn't. Support him. And encourage him. And we find ourselves here.

You see. Among those. For whom Paul's letter. Was written. This is our letter to. May the grace. Which he has told us.
Of. Fill our lives. And continue to do so. Grace be with you. Amen. Amen.

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