

A STUDY OF COLOSSIANS

Part Nine

Introduction

“Tychicus, a beloved brother, faithful minister, and fellow servant in the Lord, will tell you all the news about me. I am sending him to you for this very purpose, that he may know your circumstances and comfort your hearts, with Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you. They will make known to you all things which are happening here. Aristarchus my fellow prisoner greets you, with Mark the cousin of Barnabas (about whom you received instructions: if he comes to you, welcome him), and Jesus who is called Justus. These are my only fellow workers for the kingdom of God who are of the circumcision; they have proved to be a comfort to me. Epaphras, who is one of you, a bondservant of Christ, greets you, always laboring fervently for you in prayers, that you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God. For I bear him witness that he has a great zeal for you, and those who are in Laodicea, and those in Hierapolis. Luke the beloved physician and Demas greet you. Greet the brethren who are in Laodicea, and Nymphas and the church that is in his house. Now when this epistle is read among you, see that it is read also in the church of the Laodiceans, and that you likewise read the epistle from Laodicea. And say to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it. This salutation by my own hand - Paul. Remember my chains. Grace be with you. Amen” (Colossians 4:7-18).

1. Paul has set forth his theology and its practical applications, and now he brings his epistle to a close with some final greetings.
2. There is the temptation to think, “It’s just greetings and there’s nothing we can learn here”. Yet I believe Paul when he says that all scripture is profitable (2 Timothy 3:16).

Final Greetings And Salutations – 4:7-18

XV. GREETINGS

“Tychicus, a beloved brother, faithful minister, and fellow servant in the Lord, will tell you all the news about me. I am sending him to you for this very purpose, that you may know our circumstances and comfort your hearts, with Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you. They will make known to you all things which are happening here. Aristarchus my fellow prisoner greets you, with Mark the cousin of Barnabas (about whom you received instructions: if he comes to you, welcome him), and Jesus who is called Justus. These are my only fellow workers for the kingdom of God who are of the circumcision; they have proved to be a comfort to me. Epaphras, who is one of you, a bondservant of Christ, greets you, always laboring fervently for you in prayers, that you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God. For I bear him witness that he has a great zeal for you, and those who are in Laodicea, and those in Hierapolis. Luke the beloved physician and Demas greet you” (Colossians 4:7-14).



It warms the heart when brethren send greetings.

A. Tychicus and Onesimus.

1. Both these men are described as “beloved” and “faithful”, and coming from the apostle Paul, that’s a high commendation indeed. Bear in mind, too, that this epistle would be read by all the churches!
2. The mission of these men was to make known Paul’s circumstances, and so comfort their hearts. Paul was in prison and so, naturally, they would be concerned about his welfare. The report of these men would assure them of his physical welfare and that being in prison has actually “turned out for the furtherance of the gospel” (Philippians 1:12). This good report would encourage and comfort their hearts.

B. Those with Paul send greetings:

1. Here in Colossians Aristarchus is called “my fellow prisoner”, but when he is named again in Philemon he is called a “fellow laborer” (1:24). Epaphras is here called a “fellow servant (Colossians 1:7) and a “fellow prisoner” in Philemon (1:23). How did such changes come about? Walton Weaver suggests these imprisonments were voluntary! The idea being that each man would take turns in staying with Paul for a season in his confinement that the apostle might enjoy their service and sympathy. Such men as these were willing to sacrifice personal comforts to cheer their brother in Christ.
2. Paul not only sends Epaphras’ greetings, he makes known to them his labor in prayer for them: “that you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God”. Here is a man that is genuinely concerned for the spiritual welfare of his brethren, and the fact that he is away from them and laboring with Paul does not take away that concern.

XVI. SALUTATIONS AND EXHORTATIONS

“Greet the brethren who are in Laodicea, and Nymphas and the church that is in his house. Now when this epistle is read among you, see that it is read also in the church of the Laodiceans, and that you likewise read the epistle from Laodicea. And say to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it. This salutation by my own hand - Paul. Remember my chains. Grace be with you. Amen” (Colossians 4:15-18).

- A. Paul now sends his own salutations to the brethren in Laodicea and to Nymphas and the church that is in his house. There are two difficulties with the text here:
1. There are variant readings in different Greek texts that make it unclear whether Nymphas is male or female; not that it is of any great significance.
 2. The reading, “the church that is in his house” is also disputed. One possibility is that Paul is greeting members of his/her household that are Christians, rather than a church that meets in his/her house.
- B. Paul instructs the Colossians to make sure this epistle is read to the church at Laodicea and that they secure a copy of the letter he sent them to be read among the church at Colossae. We know nothing of this epistle or its contents. It shows, though, that Paul wrote other epistles that have not made their way into the canon of scripture. This does mean the epistle to the Laodiceans was not inspired.
- C. Paul instructs the church to say to Archippus “Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it”. All we know of Archippus is what is said here and in Philemon 1:2, which isn’t much!
1. The word “ministry” means “service” and is a broad term that covers a range of service. In what way he served is not stated.
 2. In whatever way he served, he needed to be reminded that his ministry was “received” (i.e., it had God as its source), and the Lord Himself was the sphere in which his ministry had been received. All that receive a ministry in the Lord need prompting now and again lest they forget the true source of the work in which they are engaged, and lest they become indifferent regarding its true sphere of operation (Walton Weaver).
- D. Paul ends with his own salutation written by his own hand. This seems to have been his general practice (1 Corinthians 16:21; Galatians 6:11; 2 Thessalonians 3:17); perhaps as a sign of the letter’s authenticity.

Applications

1. Paul regarded Tychicus and Onesimus as “beloved” and “faithful” brethren and published it abroad through this epistle. If we regard brethren as beloved and faithful, we do no wrong in making this known abroad. Brethren need to know who may be regarded as faithful in the body of Christ.

2. Paul sent Tychicus and Onesimus to make known his circumstances and comfort their hearts. “While most people can and should at times encourage themselves in the Lord as David did (1 Samuel 30:6), most of us have times when we need to be encouraged by others as well. It is also good to be an encourager to others” (Walton Weaver).
3. Despite the fact that Paul was in prison, he was concerned about the welfare of his brethren and sought to comfort their hearts. We, too, must develop this same trait despite our circumstances.
4. Epaphras labored in prayer for the spiritual welfare of his brethren while working alongside Paul. Do we labor in prayer for the spiritual welfare of our brethren? If yes, then we do well. But if we don't, what does it reveal about us?
5. Concerning Mark, Paul instructs the church to “welcome him”. We often have visitors from various parts of the world and it is, surely, our duty to make them feel welcomed. Welcoming brethren is not the duty of one or a few, but of each one of us.

Copyright©DavidCambridge2017