

“SERVING ON THE FRONT LINES”

COLOSSIANS 4:7-9

INTRODUCTION

Paul has now concluded the body of his letter to the Colossians and need only attend to some personal matters. Paul has masterfully dealt with the doctrinal errors and wrong-headed philosophy of the false teachers, and has in the process shown the sovereign lordship and complete sufficiency of Jesus Christ (1:15-2:23); he has laid out clearly the nature of the Christian life showing its intended focus, source of power, and its important qualities (3:1-17); he has shown how gospel principles affect practical household matters of husband/wife relationships, parent/child relationships, and master/servant relationships (3:18-4:1); and he has concluded with the urgency of prayer (4:2-4) and of proper conduct in the pagan environment in which they lived (4:5-6).

In these brief comments about personal relationships, like those attached at the end of most of Paul’s letters, we have many instructive comments; indeed, the word-pictures of his friends are among the most helpful parts of his Epistles.

This final section of Colossians has four divisions:

- 1) **Those who are the bearers of the epistle (7-9)**
- 2) Those who from Rome send their greetings (10-14)
- 3) Special friends who are greeted on the other end of this letter (15-17)
- 4) Paul’s autographic closing (18)

Tychicus and Onesimus: What an important ministry these two men had—to carry Paul’s letters to the churches of Colossae, Ephesus, and Laodicea and to Philemon. Whether they knew it yet or not, these letters were to become part of sacred scripture. Surely they knew that Paul as an apostle spoke with authority and guarantee of divine guidance. At any rate, the travel was arduous and difficult; many hazards would be faced along the way. They must not allow anything to hinder their efforts or to prevent these letters from reaching their destination—not shipwreck, attack of bandits, health concerns, etc. The following commendations given by Paul concerning Tychicus and Onesimus are intended in order that they may receive an appropriate welcome by the Colossian church. There was no post office upon which Paul could rely for letter delivery; he must needs rely upon faithful friends and ministers of the gospel such as these two men. Such persons would do more than deliver the letter; they would help supply additional details and fill in the blanks.

So, although the ministry of these two men does not seem very glorious, how important it was in reality! Every child of God finds himself involved in ministry responsibilities that at times seem mundane, time consuming, even downright boring! Why can’t God give us something to do that seems more important? Why can’t we do something memorable, something more glorious? Well, what if Tychicus and Onesimus had decided not to carry out this responsibility?

God and men like Paul need every-day faithful and beloved brothers, ministers, and fellow-bondslaves to do the work of the ministry!

YOU MUST BE A FAITHFUL SERVANT, A FELLOW BONDSLAVE FOR CHRIST.

- I. WHO ARE THESE MEN?
 - A. Tychicus (likely from Ephesus and saved during Paul’s 3 year ministry there)
 1. His ministry in Acts 20:4 concerning the offering for poor saints in Jerusalem
 2. His ministry here to the churches in Asia Minor
 3. His later ministry to Ephesus and to Crete (II Tim. 4:12; Tit. 3:12)
 - B. Onesimus
 1. From Colossae—“out of you”
 2. See *Philemon* for more details

- Runaway slave of Philemon who may have stolen from his master and was unprofitable, despite his name (“profitable”)
 - Met Paul in Rome and was converted
 - Became a helper of Paul there and a faithful brother.
 - Now being sent back to his master—and to his home town
 - How amazing that Paul would put Onesimus with a man like Tychicus in this letter!
 - This would encourage the church to give him a good reception; and would also put “friendly” pressure on Philemon to do the right thing by Onesimus.
- II. WHAT WAS THEIR RESPONSIBILITY? (“I have sent [or “am sending”] for this very purpose”—v. 8)
- A. Make known to the Colossians all that is happening in Paul’s life
 1. “Make known to you all the thing concerning me” (7)
 2. “That you might know the things concerning us” [more likely than “he might know your estate”] (8)
 3. “Make known to you all the things here” (9)
 - B. Encourage the hearts of the Colossians (8)
 1. Tychicus might read the letter to them, and help explain it to them.
 2. He could give them more understanding of Paul’s heart and concerns for the Colossians
 3. The Colossians were very concerned about what was happening in Paul’s life.
- III. WHAT WERE THEIR QUALITIES?
- A. Beloved brother—true of both of them (v. 7, v. 9)—saved and related together in the Lord. [**Affection**]
 - B. Faithful—true of both of them; they do their duties reliably (v. 7, v. 9) [**Approbation**]
 - C. Minister—one who serves as a deacon or another faithful servant of the Lord; waiting on the needs of others. [spoken of Tychicus]
 - D. Fellow bond-servant; working with other laborers as the apostle to get God’s work done. [of Tychicus]
 1. Willing to do the “drudgery work” [**Association**]
 2. Pitching in and helping even with the tough jobs, the inglorious jobs.
 - E. All of these qualities are “in the Lord”—in union with Christ.
 1. Though the focus is toward another human worker like Paul, in order to help him—
 2. Yet the real direction of the work is toward God

CONCLUSION

Who will clean the toilets? Who will trim the bushes and pull the weeds? Who will watch the babies? Who will run the sound booth? Who will teach the children? Who will sing in the choir? Who will provide “tender-loving-care” and who will help the widows? Not everyone can preach the sermon and teach the lesson!

Who will do it? God is looking for available and willing volunteers just like you!

Will you be the next Tychicus, and the next Onesimus? Will you carry the apostle’s letter around the Roman Empire, across the plains, up the mountains, down the valleys, and yes across the seas? Someone must do it!

Why would God even put such information in the Bible if it did not matter, if it were not important?

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