

BULLEEN BAPTIST CHURCH

CNR THOMPSON & MARCUS RDS., LWR TEMPLESTOWE VIC 3107

"The Supremacy of Christ - Studies in Colossians"

Sunday, November 21, 2004 : Study 15 - Colossians 4 : 7 - 18

"FINAL INSTRUCTIONS : THE FELLOWSHIP OF SERVICE"

Notes by Rev. Gary Lockyer

CONTEXT : Where are we in the Series?

We are in the fourth and closing section of Paul's Colossian letter : Col 4:2 - 18 Its sub-structure is :

1. "Final instructions: Effective Communication" (4 : 2 - 6)
 - ... Part 1 : "With God about People" - (4 : 2 - 4)
 - ... Part 2 : "With People about God" - (4 : 5 - 6)
2. "Final Greetings : The Fellowship of Service" - (4 : 7 - 18)

Today's Study

CONTEXT .. of this Section in Colossians : This concluding section of the letter has the theme of "service" running through it. Paul's "Final Instructions" are that the Church at Colossae should pray - for him in his ministry and for themselves in theirs. Then in his "Final Greetings" Paul sends a series of short personal messages to individuals in Colossae. What binds them together is each one's love for Christ and their commitment in serving him and his people.

A. CHARACTER SKETCHES FROM THE PAST

Paul's names a number of people in the personal greetings at the close of his letter. This Study is a pen sketch of four of Paul's friends - constructed from what we know of them here and elsewhere in the New Testament. These cameos from the past illustrate the nature of Christian fellowship and service together in ministry.

1. Tychicus (TICK-ih-kus) - "Odd-job man"

We first meet Tychicus in Acts 20:4 as one of Paul's companions the journey to Jerusalem carrying the gifts of the Gentile Christians to the impoverished Church in that city. (see 1Cor16:1-4; 2Cor8:1ff)

Next, we find him as Paul's letter bearer and personal messenger to the Churches in Ephesus and Colossae on a mission of encouragement. (Eph6:2; Col4:7)

Later he is acting as a relieving Pastor; Timothy's replacement in Ephesus (1Tm1:3 cf 2Tm4:12) and Titus's replacement on Crete (Titus 3:12) when they were temporarily absent visiting Paul.

A PROGRESSION in responsibility (Mat25:19-21) ... because Tychicus had proven to be ...

FAITHFUL in each responsibility asked of him. (Note Paul's description of Tychicus in Col4:7; see also 1Cor4:2; 1Tm1:12, 18-19 & 1Ptr4:10)

2 : Aristarchus (air-ih-STAR-kus) : "Faithful Friend"

This is a name given to one of "high birth." Remarkably, then, he is mentioned in the Scriptures with Paul when the going was tough; seized and beaten in Ephesus during the riot that followed Paul's preaching (Acts 19:29), with Paul on the journey to Syria following threats on his life in Greece (Acts20:2-4) and sailing with Paul, now a prisoner, to Rome (Acts 27:2).

Paul's comment here about him being a "*fellow prisoner*" may be literally true!

Unwavering COMMITMENT through difficult times. (Luke 9:62)

3 : Mark : "Restored Companion"

John Mark's home included the "upper room" where Jesus ate the Passover with his disciples and where the disciples gathered after his crucifixion. The house remained a meeting place for the Jerusalem Church (Acts 12:12). Mark joined Paul and Barnabas after they had been commissioned by the Church in Antioch to go out and spread the good news about Jesus (Acts 13:4-5).

Mark deserted them in Perga (Acts 13:13) and Paul refused to take him along again on their next journey, breaking with Barnabas over the issue (Acts 15:37-39) Mark becomes Peter's "son" (1Pt5:13) and wrote a gospel of Jesus from Peter's and his own recollections of the Master.

Now, the relationship is restored. Mark is back with Paul in Rome and is among those whose friendship with Paul is "a comfort" to him. (Col4:10-11) Later Paul commends Mark as being "helpful to me in my ministry" (2Tim4:11)

FORGIVENESS & RECONCILIATION modelled. (Col3:13-14)

4 : Epaphras (EP-uh-fruss) : "Large-hearted Pray-er"

Epaphras was the leader of the Churches in Colosse, Laodicea and Hierapolis. (4:13) He was responsible for first telling the Colossian Christians about Jesus. (1:7)

Worried about the pressures on the infant Church, he travelled to Rome, sought out Paul and poured out his concerns (1:7-8). Paul took on board those concerns and his letter to "the Colossians" was the result (1:9ff)

Now Paul commends Epaphras to the Colossae Christians as one who "is always wrestling in prayer for them" - for their growth and maturity in Christ (4:12)

Christian Fellowship means taking on the PAIN of others (The word Paul uses for Epaphras's praying is the Greek word from which the English "agonise" comes.) See Col2:1-5; 2Cor11:28-29 & Gal4:19)

But prayer must always lead to ACTION Eg. Think of the incredible cost and risk of Epaphras's journey to Rome to see Paul.

B. THE MODEL : JESUS

*"Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus :
Who, being in very nature God,
did not consider equality with God something to be grasped,
but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant"
(Php2:4-7a)*

Christians bore the title "a slave of Jesus" gladly! - wearing it as a badge of honour. But this "badge" had content - the WORDS and ACTIONS of Jesus

Echoing constantly in their minds : **"Whoever wants to be first must be a slave to all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and give his life a ransom for many."** (Mk10:44-45)

Playing constantly before their eyes : **"Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example, that you should do as I have done for you."** (Jn13:14-15)

The Cross has become the paramount symbol of the Christian Faith because it reminds us all of Jesus' death for us. Perhaps we should also adopt a TOWEL and a BASIN as symbols of the nature of Christian discipleship - the symbols of fellowship, service and ministry.

C. THE LAST WORD : GRACE

"Grace be with you" (Col4:18b)

GRACE : Free (UNEARNED) & unmerited (UNDESERVED) favour.

The basis of our relationship with God

and of our fellowship and service to each other!