A Little Help from Our Friends

Colossians 4:7-18

7 Tychicus will tell you all about my activities. He is a beloved brother and faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord. 8 I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are and that he may encourage your hearts, 9 and with him Onesimus, our faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you. They will tell you of everything that has taken place here. 10 Aristarchus my fellow prisoner greets you, and Mark the cousin of Barnabas (concerning whom you have received instructions—if he comes to you, welcome him), 11 and Jesus who is called Justus. These are the only men of the circumcision among my fellow workers for the kingdom of God, and they have been a comfort to me. 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. 13 For I bear him witness that he has worked hard for you and for those in Laodicea and in Hierapolis. 14 Luke the beloved physician greets you, as does Demas. 15 Give my greetings to the brothers at Laodicea, and to Nympha and the church in her house. 16 And when this letter has been read among you, have it also read in the church of the Laodiceans; and see that you also read the letter from Laodicea. 17 And say to Archippus, “See that you fulfill the ministry that you have received in the Lord.” 18 I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. Remember my chains. Grace be with you.

Paul’s letter to the Colossians is intended to:

1 – Define salvation by grace through faith and not by works
2 – Illustrate the sufficiency of Christ’s death, burial and resurrection
2 – Deny Jewish legalism and Greek Gnosticism a foothold in the church
3 – Demonstrate how grace creates new people with new principles
4 – Dismiss Jewish/Greek divisions in the church

One of the ways Paul dismisses Jewish and Greek divisions in the church is by highlighting the harmony of the people who are working on behalf of the Colossian church.

Like stagehands in a theatre production, the conclusion to Colossians is a behind-the-scenes snapshot of the people who have made Colossae and Paul’s ministry a success.

First: Picture the people surrounding Paul

The first half of the list - through Justus, are Jews. The rest are Greeks. Paul is proving that Jews and Greeks can work together harmoniously for Christ's kingdom. These men and women are body-life personified.

a) Tychicus
b) Onesimus
c) Aristarchus
d) Mark
e) Justus
f) Epaphras
Your CG leader has a bit of background on each of these people.

The point I want to make is one you often hear me make.

_No man is an island entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main; if a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less, as well as if a promontory were, as well as any manner of thy friends or of thine own were; any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind. And therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee._

- John Donne

Paul was no loner. The only time we find him alone in his ministry is once at Athens.

_1 Thessalonians 3:1 - Therefore when we could bear it no longer, we were willing to be left behind at Athens alone, and we sent Timothy, our brother and God's coworker in the gospel of Christ, to establish and exhort you in your faith._

_alone = orphaned_ – That’s a dramatic word that emphasizes a negative experience of living without family

**Second: Remember the history of the world**

a) Adam

_Genesis 2:18 – It is not good that the man should be alone_

_Genesis 2:19-20 - Now out of the ground the LORD God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him._

b) Jesus

_Matthew 3:13-17 - Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him. John would have prevented him, saying, “I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?” But Jesus answered him, “Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all_
Then he consented. Then when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; and behold, a voice from heaven said, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.”

Matthew 4:1 – Then was Jesus led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.

Jesus’ baptism prepared him for his temptation. He didn’t go into the wilderness alone. Immediately after,

Matthew 4:19 – “Follow me…”

Jesus begins to assemble the people who will surround him and follow him.

Matthew 26:36-38 - Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to his disciples, “Sit here, while I go over there and pray.” And taking with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, he began to be sorrowful and troubled. Then he said to them, “My soul is very sorrowful, even to death; remain here, and watch with me.”

Third: Think of the theology behind it all

The Trinity, who is the foundation of all reality, has forever existed in perfect community.

John 8:28-29 - So Jesus said to them, “When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he, and that I do nothing on my own authority, but speak just as the Father taught me. And he who sent me is with me. He has not left me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to him.”

If this is how God lives, this is how it is best to live

IMP: Children, young people, college students – if you haven’t already, you should begin to surround yourself with people who are traveling in the same direction.

Parents: Ask your children, “Who are your most important influences?” “Who are you influencing?” Look for differences and balance.

Fourth: Look at Paul’s Group

a) Tychicus – Faithfulness
b) Onesimus - Forgiveness
c) Aristarchus - Endurance
d) Mark – Second Chances
e) Justus - ?
f) Epaphras – Intercessor
g) Luke – personal physician
h) Nympha – host – No one hosts without sacrifice
i) Demas – failure teaches us trust in God and not ourselves or people
j) Archippus - disciple

Each of these people ministered to Paul and for Paul with different strengths and weaknesses.

**Conclusion:**

Paul isn't simply concluding the letter haphazardly. He's presenting a picture of a unified front assaulting the kingdom of darkness.

In a world and church that is pulling itself apart, Paul is encouraging them to pull together.

Paul’s portrait is woven with different people, gifts, passions, etc. but unified to create a beautiful tapestry.

The world is pulling itself apart. You need people to pull together toward Christ.

a) Who are they?
b) Are you one?

**Community Groups:**

1 – What is one reason Paul ends his letter with this group snapshot?

2 – Why does Paul list Jews and Greeks?

3 – What does John Donne mean “And therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee.”

4 – Why is the word ‘orphan’ in 1 Thess 3:1 such a powerful word?

5 – How would you demonstrate the history of community using the Bible?

6 – How does God live (in community) and why is His model so important?

7 – Discuss the various gifts, talents, etc of the people who surrounded Paul?

8 – What kind of people do you need on your board of directors?

9 – On whose board to you serve?