

THE PREEMINENCE
AND
SUFFICIENCY OF CHRIST



Sermon Series Notes



“Kingdom Servants: Their Faithfulness & Failure” (Colossians 4:7-18)

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I. THE TEXT

* Note v.11 b; We are part of a real kingdom; God has gifted us for kingdom work (Eph.2:10); Every worker is important in kingdom business (Eph.4:16; I Cor.12:17, 14-20).

* v.15a The Laodicean church was evidently doing well at the time Paul pens these words, but we know in time they would become Lukewarm, and Jesus would rebuke them sharply (Rev.3:14-22).

* v.16 Though written to the Colossians, this letter should be shared with other churches/believers. Why? Because it is the Word of God.

* II Peter 3:¹⁵ Bear in mind that our Lord’s patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him. ¹⁶ He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures...

* v.18 II Thess.3:17 tells us that this is Paul’s distinguishing mark. Though the majority of his letters were dictated, at the end of each one he would personally pick up the pen and give the final greeting. And there is a similar statement in every one of his greetings (see Rom.1:7; 16:20; I Cor.1:3; 16:23; II Cor.1:2; 13:14; Gal.1:3; 6:18; Eph.1:2; 6:24; Phil.1:2; 4:23; Col.1:2; 4:18; I Thess.1:1; 5:28; II Thess.1:2; 3:18; I Tim.1:2; 6:21; II Tim.1:2; 4:22; Titus 1:2; 3:15; Philemon 3, 25).

* It is by the grace of God that we are called, chosen, cleansed, and consecrated for kingdom purposes. See Acts 11:23; 13:43.

* In the book of Acts there are more than 100 different Christians associated with Paul. He named sixteen Christian friends and fellow workers in the closing chapter of Romans. And here in Colossians he names ten. Each one had their own kingdom fingerprint, each one their own particular calling and gifting, and each one their own personal path to walk in the will of God.

* vv.7-8 Tychicus (TIE-kih-kus) is mentioned in the NT five times (here, Acts 20:4; Ephesians 6:21; II Tim.4:12, & Titus 3:12). We see him appear on the pages of Scripture right after Paul's ministry in Ephesus, and we know from Acts 20:4 that he was from the province of Asia. He probably was saved during Paul's ministry in Ephesus. He gets quite a commendation here from the apostle Paul. Tychicus had been with Paul through thick and thin, traveling with him throughout his imprisonment, experiencing the miserable voyage and shipwreck on the island on Malta en route to Rome, staying with Paul during the two years Paul awaited trial in Rome. He was a dear brother, faithful minister, servant for the kingdom of God.

* v.9 Onesimus is the runaway slave from Colosse. He somehow ends up in the same cell as Paul, and Paul leads him to Christ. Now he is willingly going back to his owner, a man named Philemon. Yes, that name has a familiar ring, because Paul wrote a letter to Philemon, urging him to treat Onesimus as a brother in the Lord rather than a slave. It's that little letter just before the NT book of Hebrews.

* v.10 Aristarchus and Mark are fellow prisoners with Paul. Aristarchus accompanied Paul on his third missionary journey (Acts 19:29; 20:4; 27:2). He is from Thessalonica. In Philemon 24 Paul refers to him as a fellow worker. Mark of course is John Mark, cousin of Barnabas. He deserted Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey, but later repented and was reunited with Paul. In II Timothy 4:11 Paul tells Timothy to get Mark and bring him with him, because "he is helpful to me in my ministry." Though Mark had faltered, he got back in the game for the kingdom, not only reuniting with the apostle Paul, but years later having the amazing privilege of penning one of the four gospels, the gospel according to Mark.

* v.11 Jesus, called Justus, a fellow Jew, and one of only three working with Paul to reach the Gentile world for Christ. Why weren't there more? More than likely because of the deep division between Jews and Gentiles...

* vv.12-13 Epaphras from Colosse, a man who loved his home church. He knew the schemes of the enemy, and the reality that any of his fellow brothers and sisters could fall, could fail, so he wrestled in prayer for them. And as much as he loved his fellow believers from his home church, he also loved the saints in other churches, especially Laodicea and Hierapolis, churches he no doubt was more personally attached to in ministry.

* v.14 Luke was a very needed addition to Paul's ministry team. He was a doctor, and if anybody ever needed a doctor on their team, it was the apostle Paul! Luke is the one who wrote the book of Acts, and of course the gospel according to Luke. And Demas, what a sad story (see II Tim.4:10).

* v.15 God bless Nympha, and God bless all like her here at CCSP. Thanks to all of you who have opened up your home to host a life group, which is in essence a house church.

* v.17 In Philemon 2 Paul refers to Archippus as a "fellow soldier." We also know from this verse that a church met in his home. Paul was obviously concerned about Archippus.

Had he stopped the work that God had given him to do? Did Paul receive word that he was wavering, weary? Had Archippus given his two week notice?

* Represented among these ten names are four potential paths for each one of us.

II. LESSONS

A. The Faithful

* See II Tim.4:7-8

* The faithful are not perfect, they just have no major blemishes on their record. And Scripture names several faithful saints – Esther, Mordecai Daniel, Joshua, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Zechariah...

B. The One Who Faltered But Did Not Fail

* To falter is to stumble. John Mark stumbled, but he did not fail. Peter stumbled when he denied Christ, but he did not fail, because he later repented...Moses STUMBLED, and it cost him 40 years on the backside of the desert...David STUMBLED, and it cost both him and his family pain for the rest of his life...

* Prov.24:16

* He had less than three years of formal education, failed in business in '31. He was defeated for State Legislature in '32, failed again in business in '34. Finally elected to State Legislature in '35, ran for Speaker and lost by a landslide, He was defeated again for Elector in '40, and for Congress in '43. Elected in '46, he lasted only a two year term, being defeated in a re-election attempt in '48. Failing in business once again, he ran for Senate, but was defeated in '55. Ran for President in '56 and was crushed. Defeated for Senate again in '58. Then in '60 (1860), Abraham Lincoln won – going on to become perhaps the greatest political leader in American history.

C. The Failure

* Demas started out so well. And so have others: Uzziah (II Chron.26); King Saul (I Sam.15:17); Balaam;

* Have you ever quit something that you later regretted doing so?

- I quit little league after my first year, only to stand on the streets of Hartsville, S.C. the following year. Watching the annual parade, and as one particular float came by, I fought back tears. It was my team, who had gone from worst to first, and won the city little league championship. I quit football in 10th grade, only to watch the team go out onto the field that first game, and once again I held back tears because I was not with them. But quitting

little league or high school football is one thing, to quit working for the kingdom of God is quite another. Christianity involves rewards and consequences that are eternal.

- * I have wanted to quit as pastor of this church...
- * Was Demas really saved? If so did he simply lose heavenly reward?
- * Parable of seed and sower...
- * Examine yourselves...

D. The One Who's Future Was Yet To Be Written

- * Did Aristarchus finish the work?
- * Will you finish the work?

CONCLUSION

* A young man was getting ready to graduate from college. For months he had admired a beautiful sports car in a local dealer's showroom. His father was a wealthy man, and he told his dad that all he wanted for graduation was this car. As graduation day approached, the son looked for signs that his dad had purchased the car. Finally, on the morning of his graduation, his father called him into his private study. His father told him how proud he was to have such a fine son, and told him how much he loved him. Then he handed him a wrapped gift box. Curious, and already disappointed, the young man opened the box. Inside was a leather bound Bible with the young man's name embossed in gold. The son couldn't believe it, and hurt and angry, he left the house. For years this son was estranged from his father, never able to get over how he felt his father had wronged him. One day he got a call that his dad had died. At the funeral deep sadness and regret gripped this young man's soul. Not long after, the son was going through his father's important papers and saw the still new Bible his dad had given him years before. With tears streaming down his face, he opened the Bible and began to turn the pages. At Matthew chapter 7 he made an incredible discovery. Tucked between the pages was a car key. It had a tag with the dealer's name, the same dealer who had the sports car. He also noticed that his dad had carefully underlined Matthew 7:11 "And if you, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him."

* Don't miss out on what the Father has for you. For those standing strong, continue in the grace of God. Finish the race, and finish it well! For those who have faltered, repent NOW, before you become a failure. Today is the first day of the rest of your life...