

INTRODUCING THE TEAM

As Paul closes the book of Colossians, he does so by introducing us to the men who were with him in Rome while he was imprisoned. Five years before Paul wrote Colossians he said in I Corinthians 12:18-22, *"But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him. And if they were all one member, where were the body? But now are they many members, yet but one body. And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary."* From this passage, we see God gives gifts to men and sets them in the Body of Christ according to His good pleasure. If we all had the same gift, the Body would be freakish. And Paul says that the ones that seem to be less important are, in fact, necessary. He even underlined this thought by these words, *"And those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness"* (I Corinthians 12:23). The apostle tells us we must protect these uncomely parts because they keep us alive, even as our uncomely parts of our physical body keep us alive such as the heart, the lungs, etc. and they are protected within our body because they are so vital.

Now let's meet the team:

1. The Happy Man, Tychicus

"All my state shall Tychicus declare unto you, who is a beloved brother, and a faithful minister and fellowservant in the Lord: Whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that he might know your estate, and comfort your hearts" (Colossians 4:7,8). Two words are used to describe Tychicus: "minister" (diakonos) and "fellowservant" (sundoulos). Diakonos is like a house-servant who is a valet, who personally attends to the needs of the master of the house. Sundoulos is a co-slave, one who partners with another slave in an assigned task. We see he personally attends to Paul's needs, but we need never to forget he was a slave to the Lord Jesus Christ.

His assignment was to deliver the letter to the Colossians and give them comfort and encouragement. A person who is serving his Lord and delivering God's Word to people is a happy person and he transfers that happiness to other people.

II. The Hurting Man, Onesimus

"With Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you. They shall make known unto you all things which are done here" (Colossians 4:9). Onesimus was a runaway slave who had stolen from his master and run away to Rome. In God's providence, he found Paul. We should say, God found him and brought him to Paul. God had great plans for Onesimus. Knowing his jeopardy in returning to Colossae, God protected him by having him return with Tychicus who could vouch for Paul in reaffirming Onesimus' worth.

Along with the Epistle to the Colossians, Onesimus returned with a letter that was also inspired of God and written to Philemon. Onesimus was hurting, but God through Paul said, *"If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account"* (Philemon, verse 18). Through Christ we can come from hurting to helping.

3. The Helping Man, Aristarchus

"Aristarchus my fellowprisoner saluteth you..." (Colossians 4:10a). Aristarchus seems to go everywhere with Paul. Although little has been said about him, he is one of the most faithful in the team effort. We see he is a partaker in voluntary confinement with Paul. He is with Paul in the hurricane rigors of the Euroclydon storm at sea that ended in shipwreck and now in the confinement in Rome (Acts 27:2). He is helper par-excellence! He fulfills Galatians 6:2.

4. The Honorable Man, Marcus

"...And Marcus, sister's son to Barnabas, (touching whom ye received commandments: if he come unto you, receive him;)" (Colossians 4:10b).

Barnabas, the older kinsman of John Mark (Marcus) didn't give up on him. Even though Paul was ready to give up on him a few years earlier, he now sees him as

profitable. Please compare Acts 15:38 and II Timothy 4:11. Now Paul wants the church in Colossae to receive John Mark with honor.

5. The Harnessed Man, Justus

“And Jesus, which is called Justus, who are of the circumcision. These only are my fellowworkers unto the kingdom of God, which have been a comfort unto me” (Colossians 4:11). Having the name “Jesus” would be a hard name to live up to! He along with Aristarchus and John Mark served to be a source of encouragement to Paul. Justus was harnessed with the name brought honor to his Lord. Galatians 5:13b says, *“...by love serve one another.”* Jesus said, *“If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you”* (John 13: 14, 15).

6. The Holy Man, Epaphras

“Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God. For I bear him record, that he hath a great zeal for you, and them that are in Laodicea, and them in Hierapolis” (Colossians 4:12,13). Epaphras was the founder of the church and he is a holy man given to great prayer. The pastor’s heart is seen in the prayer requesting the best for the people of God. He pleads to the Lord for all of the church members to be perfect and complete in all of God’s will.

7. The Healing Man, Luke

“Luke, the beloved physician...” (Colossians 4:14a). Luke is our first medical missionary. God, in His mercy, directs Luke to accompany Paul throughout the world. Only heaven will reveal the blessing this man was to the old apostle. History says he was also a gifted painter. Although we do not have documentation for this, we do have documentation for the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts, where God uses his beautiful words to paint a glorious picture of our Lord and His early disciples and, in turn, heal a hurting world.

8. The Heartbreaking Man, Demas

“...And Demas...” (Colossians 4:14b). Of the eight team players, Demas is the only one of whom Paul says nothing. Could he see what was coming? The final word of Paul concerning Demas is also one of the saddest phrases found in Scripture, *“For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world...”* (II Timothy 4:10).

In the work of the Lord our hearts will be broken, but we must continue. Don't compromise by condoning a brother's sin, but don't give up praying for the prodigals.

Conclusion:

In the closing verses of this epistle (Colossians 4: 15-18), the apostle tells the Colossian Christians, in essence, follow the admonition of James, *“But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only...”* (James 1:22). *“And say to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it.”* (Colossians 4:17). Paul makes the point stronger by adding his own unique signature to this great book.

I close with returning to the first chapter of Colossians: *“And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence”* (Colossians 1:18). If we have placed Christ where He ought to be in our lives, we will be where, and above all, what we ought to be.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Johnny Pope". The signature is written in black ink and features a large, decorative initial "J" and a long, horizontal flourish extending to the right.