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**Body**

1.

**Messengers: Tychichus and Onesimus: Greetings in person: News & encouragement. vv. 7-9**

1.

**Tychicus**

1.

Paul first mentions Tychichus, who carried the letter to the Colossians, accompanied by Onesimus.

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**Colossians 4:7-8** 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,

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Tychichus was from Asia (Acts 20:4), perhaps Ephesus, where Paul sent him after writing to the Colossians (2 Tim. 4:12). Tychichus had a ccompanied Paul on his 3rd missionary journey (Acts 20:4), and remained as one of Paul's support staff for 10 years. In Titus 3:12 Paul contemplated sending Tychichus on a mission to Crete. Through his years of service he had become a "
beloved brother and faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord.
" In these words Paul expresses his love for a brother, and commends his ministry and service. Have you done this in a letter yourself? Expressed love for a Christian brother, and commended his faithful ministry and service? As Pastor Miller has retired, as Pastor Erickson deserves the same, and as you have opportunity to speak of them and others to those in this congregation and beyond, take the opportunity to commend them as a "

beloved brother and faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord.
”

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**Onesimus**

1.

Paul next mentions Onesimus, saying

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9 and with him Onesimus, our faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you.

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You may have heard the rags-to-riches story of Paul Potts, a humble 36 year old car phone salesman who struggles with self-confidence from being bullied, who nevertheless entered Simon Cowell’s TV show titled *Britain’s Got Talent*, and so movingly performed Puccini’s *Nessun Dorma* that he won the competition hands down. The story of Onesimus is of even greater beauty, because it is a rags to riches story of a spiritual nature. Onesimus had been Philemon’s slave, but was a useless slave, likely stole Onesimus’ property, and ran away to Rome where he met Paul and became a Christian. Onesimus had been a poor servant and a bad man, but now Paul calls him a “faithful and beloved brother.

” Matthew Henry writes, “The man whom the Colossians had only known...as a worthless runaway slave, is thus commended to them as no more a slave but a brother, no more dishonest and faithless but trustworthy, no more an object of contempt but of love.”[1]

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Paul commends Onesimus wholeheartedly, without any air of hesitation, in order to encourage the Christian community to receive him with open arms as a brother in Christ. Paul’s words aim at personal reconciliation and public restoration. Do you aim for reconciliation and restoration with your words?

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I know a man who served as a minister in this presbytery, his wife divorced him, yet so far as I can see he now seeks to live a godly life. When I speak of him I aim for reconciliation, and restoration.

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I know another man who left this presbytery never to return to the OPC. I do not know who is guilty in his case but when I speak of him, I must aim for reconciliation and restoration.

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I know a woman who was excommunicated from the congregation I attended during seminary, but after truly repenting was publicly restored to membership in that congregation as a “ faithful and beloved” sister in the Lord, and has since married an OPC minister.

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There can be no grudges, no prejudice, no cliques and recrimination, when a man truly repents of his sin, and believes on Christ for salvation. “ The righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ
” is “
for all who believe. There is no distinction.
” (
**Romans 3:22**
) “
There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.
” (
**Galatians 3:28**
)

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When you speak to and about those in the body of Christ, aim for reconciliation and restoration.

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**Purpose**

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The purpose for which Paul sent Tychichus and Onesimus was to bring comfort, consolation, encouragement and an exhortation to persevere. Paul repeats the purpose of their mission three times:

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7 Tychicus will tell you all about my activities.

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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,

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9 ....They will tell you of everything that has taken place here.

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The KJV renders v. 8 differently, “that he might know your estate.” The difference is due to the KJV’s dependence on later and less original manuscripts of the NT. There was great reason for
both
Paul and the Colossians to ask how the other was doing. There were false teachers and much discouragement in Colosse. And Paul was in chains for the gospel in a Roman prison which did nothing to provide for his necessities. But his coworkers are providing him company and the necessary support, and the gospel is not chained, and what is more, through Paul’s ministry in prison the heart of Onesimus has been set free! Be
encouraged
, dear brothers in Colosse!

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Do you send encouragement with your greeting cards? With your phone calls to other believers? With your greetings when you go to Family Camp or the Women’s Retreat? Encourage your brothers. Encourage their hearts with news of God’s goodness to you, your concern for them, with the hope and the future God promises to all His own.

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**Greetings vv. 10-17.** Paul then encourages the Colossians by sending greetings in vv. 10-17. The first set of greetings is from three Jews in vv. 10-11, the second from three Greeks in vv. 12-14. Paul then follows with his own greetings and instructions in vv. 15-17.

1.

**From Jews**

1.

**Aristarchus: Fellow prisoner**

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Aristarchus sends his greetings to the Colossians. Paul describes him as his “fello w-prisoner
.”
Paul was imprisoned at Rome, probably in AD 62-63. Aristarchus was a Thessalonian (Acts 20:4), was dragged with Paul into the arena in Ephesus (Acts 19:29), and embarked with Paul on the trip that ended in a shipwreck on Malta, and finally arrival in Rome (Acts 27:2). Whether he accompanied Paul all the way to Rome, he now appears with Paul in Rome and likely voluntarily committed himself to serve as Paul’s companion in prison. At the end of Philemon, Aristarchus is mentioned, but not as a fellow-prisoner. Rather, there it is Epaphras who is called Paul’s “fellow-prisoner.” It appears Paul’s companions took turns accompanying him in prison.

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In addition to reassuring the Colossians that he is well-cared for, Paul expresses his thanks for the sacrifice Aristarchus and others made on his behalf. When you greet your brothers in Christ, give thanks where it is due.

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**Mark: Cousin of Barnabas, welcome him**

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As with Onesimus, so with Mark Paul seeks reconciliation and restoration. Mark sends his greetings, as Paul says,

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and Mark the cousin of Barnabas (concerning whom you have received instructions- if he comes to you, welcome him),

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Mark had traveled with Paul on his first missionary journey as far as the coastal town of Pamphylia, but did not go inland with Paul from there ( Acts 12:25). As a result Paul had a quarrel with Barnabas over Mark, and “
thought best not to take with them one who had withdrawn from them in Pamphylia and had not gone with them to the work.
” (
**Acts 15:38**
) But this division over Mark has been healed by the time Paul writes the Colossians, because n
ow Mark is with Paul again in Rome, and sends his greetings to Colosse, and may even visit them. If he does visit them, Paul says the Colossians should welcome him, because Mark has proven faithful where he may have been unfaithful before. Full fellowship and collaboration has been restored between Paul and Mark and Barnabas, and should be rejoiced in by all. Eventually Mark ministered in Asia, where he was when Paul sent for him in 2 Tim. 4:11 saying, “
he is very useful to me for ministry,
” further confirming that Mark’s offense had long since been forgiven, and his faithful service had proven him worthy of honor and a hearty welcome.

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**Jesus/Justus**

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Of “Jesus who is called Justus” we know nothing but his name. In this we may be reminded of Christ’s question, “ For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have?
” (
**Matthew 5:46**
) History has not loved this Justus enough to remember him, yet he loved the Colossians enough to send his greetings.
In greeting your brothers you should give without expecting anything in return, and “ you will be sons of the most High, for He is kind to the ungrateful and the evil.
” (
**Luke 6:35**
) And like this Justus, “
You will be repaid at the resurrection of the just.
” (
**Luke 14:12**
)

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**Comment: Only men of the circumcision with me, comfort to me**

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Paul continues,

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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.

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One is his fellow-servant, another his fellow-prisoner, and all are his fellow-workers. If you are engaged in service for the kingdom of God, you can encourage others by considering all who further God's kingdom your "fellow-workers." I must say it has been a great encouragement to me when Dr. Lane Tipton at Westminster and Rev. Joel Robbins from Monterey have called me their "brother." The more you love the work of the Lord, the more you will love and encourage those who engage together with you in that work.

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Let others know your joy in serving the Lord together with them.

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**From Greeks**

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**Epaphras: Praying and working for you**

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Paul sends greetings from Epaphras, the evangelist who had planted the church in Colosse, saying,

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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.

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Epaphras was engaged in earnest prayer for their sanctification. Do you tell people that you are praying for them? Or that we as a church are praying for them? Only tell them if it's really true!

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Do you tell people your concern for them to grow so that they will "stand mature and fully assured in all the will of God ?" Epaphras' greeting comes with this great concern; send your greetings with this concern as well.

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**Luke: Attending physician, so eventually author of Gospel & Acts**

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Luke, the writer of the gospel with his name, sends greetings as well.

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14 Luke the beloved physician greets you, as does Demas.

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Paul mentions that Luke is the “beloved physician,” which probably indicates Luke served Paul as his attending physician, but there is little doubt Luke was concerned for others’ health as well, because he was a physician. Luke accompanied Paul on his second and third missionary journeys, and on his trip to Rome, leading to his ability to write parts of Acts in the first person. Luke states at the beginning of his gospel that he set out a researched, orderly account, in order that we may know with certainty the things we have been taught about Jesus. Luke had a concern both for the Colossians’ bodily health, and for their accurate knowledge and assurance of faith.

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Just as Luke’s concern flowed from his mature Christian faith, greet one another with these concerns as well. And if Paul were to ask you, “How are you?” let your answer

be like his--“ We do not lose heart. Though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day. 17 For this slight momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, 18 as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal. ” (**2 Corinthians 4:16-18** )

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**Demas**

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Paul does not describe Demas, perhaps because there was nothing good to say about him other than that he sent his greetings, which in itself was commendable. About 4 years after writing Colossians, in **2 Tim. 4:10** Paul says “Demas, in love with this present world, has deserted me.
” He may be one of whom John speaks, that “
They went out from us, but they were not of us,

” (
**1 John 2:19**
) yet Paul does not say Demas was an unbeliever, only a deserter.

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**From Paul**

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**Neighboring church: Laodicea, Nympha, church in her house**

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However much the Colossians were tempted to depart from Christ by the errors of pagan philosophy and Jewish legalism, however distant they felt from Paul whom they had never met and the broader church from whom they differed culturally and economically, Paul reminds them that both Greeks and Jews greet them warmly, and even engages

their help in extending those greetings to the brothers in neighboring Laodicea. If you don't feel welcome in the body of Christ, one of the first things you need to do is welcome your brother in the church. "But," you say, " I'm not welcome here, so it makes no sense for me to be a greeter." But that's not what Paul says! Paul says,

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15 Give my greetings to the brothers at Laodicea, and to Nympha and the church in her house.

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You say, “I’ve never met you Paul, so why do you care about me?” But Paul says, “You give my greetings to the brothers at Laodicea.” Paul is saying, if you’re a Christian, then fundamentally your welcome in the church does not come from another man. It comes from God. When you look at your brother in the church, you should not be thinking to yourself, “Does he welcome me?” You should be saying to him, “I welcome you.” “I forgive you as the Lord forgave me.” “I love you because the Lord first loved me.” “ Her e there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all.
” (
**Colossians 3:11**
) Because Christ is in you, you are united to your brother in Christ.

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And so Paul exhorts you to express this fellowship by greeting your brothers. When you greet one another, aim at fellowship, and aim at showing hospitality. “If you’re ever traveling by my way, call me up; I’ll give you a place to stay.”

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Nympha opened her house not only to the occasional visitor, but she opened it every week so the church would have a place to worship. [2] There is no evidence that a Christian church owned a building until the 3
rd
C AD; until then house churches were the norm. You can see that if no one in the early church welcomed visitors into their houses, there might in fact no longer be any church. Let me make the implication of Paul’s greetings to Nympha very plain for you. The more you open your homes in hospitality, the more this church will grow. And the more you offer hospitality in your greetings, the more people will accept invitations to your homes, and to this church.

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**Exchange letters with Laodicea**

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Paul's greetings also come with exhortations for the readers' edification, and for their growth in devotion and service. For their edification, Paul directs them to read the letter to the Laodiceans, which has since been lost in the course of history. [3]

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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.

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Seek to build up the Christian faith and knowledge of the brothers you greet.

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**Exhortation to Archippus (probably leader in Colosse or Laodicea)**

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For Archippus' growth in devotion and service, Paul says,

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17 And say to Archippus, "See that you fulfill the ministry that you have received in the Lord."

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Likely Archippus was a church leader in Colosse or Laodicea. It may be that he was losing heart in the face of the false teachers in Colosse or some lack of zeal in himself, as in Revelation Christ warns the angel of the church in Laodicea against being lukewarm. Or it may be that the Colossians needed to submit themselves to Archippus' ministry, and their exhorting him to fulfill his ministry would accomplish that goal. Regardless, Paul's greetings serve to encourage us to say to those in Christian service, " See that you fulfill the ministry that you have received in the Lord." Encourage, and even exhort your pastor, not to do your will, but the Lord's.

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**Signature, postscript, & benediction v. 18**

1.

Paul concludes his epistle with a personal note. Normally he dictated his letters to a secretary and ended them with a line or two written in his own handwriting to verify their authenticity. He writes,

1.

18 I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. Remember my chains. Grace be with you.

2.

These final words are extremely brief, and like the whole book are more condensed than what can be found in Ephesians. He encourages the readers to pray for him as he suffers under the bondage of his chains, and closes with the benediction that not only wishes, but promises and conveys God's grace to them.

3.

When you greet your brothers in Christ, you too should be willing to ask them to pray for you, and to wish them God's grace in Christ. You are the aroma of life to those who are being saved, and you should seek to be a channel of that grace to your fellow believer.

4.

**Conclusion**

1.

While these final greetings in Colossians are in some ways mundane, they are truly Christian greetings, and as such, they are suffused throughout with the grace and glory of Jesus Christ. They exalt him from beginning to end as the Lord whom we all serve, from whom we receive our ministry and in whom our service derives its meaning, and from whom the Christian graces of faith, love, reconciliation, edification and service flow. We greet each other in the Lord. And so may our greetings likewise be as full of the Lord's grace as were the words of Paul's most common benediction, " The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.
" Amen!

1 Lightfoot, 235.

2 There is debate whether Nympha is a man or a woman; my translation, the ESV, takes her to be a woman.

3 Apparently it was not recognized as being of the same spiritually edifying nature as the other books in the canon. However, an interesting proposal is that the letter to Laodicea was the book of Ephesians, which may well have been a circular letter not addressed to any particular church, as in the earliest manuscripts Eph. 1:1 omits “ in Ephesus.”