

The Heart of a Servant # 14

Colossians 4:7-14

As Paul leaves final instructions for Colossae, he mentions several men who have faithfully served alongside him in ministry. His ministry had been blessed greatly of the Lord and the great apostle knew that many fellow servants had played a significant role in its success. Paul received much of the attention, and was better known, but these men had labored diligently behind the scenes to encourage and further the ministry. Paul knew his accomplishments had benefited greatly through his association with these faithful men.

There is a great lesson for each of us in the text. Some within the church are more “out front” than others, but that doesn’t minimize the contributions of the body as a whole. Men of God who are blessed with the ability to preach powerful messages are surrounded by others who are committed to praying for them and holding them up. Great music directors are seen more of the congregation than average choir members, but the success of the choir rests upon the individuals who lend their voices in song. We could name many offices or positions within the church and each of these are dependent on a supporting cast to be effective.

We all know of the ministry of D.L. Moody and the countless souls that were saved. It is said that Moody had a prayer team that preceded his coming to a particular venue by two or three weeks. They arrived prior to Moody and bathed the area in fervent prayer. I am convinced the faithfulness of his prayer warriors contributed mightily to the success of his ministry. Regardless of our gifts or abilities, we all have something to contribute to the ministry of the church. I want to examine the [attributes](#) possessed by godly servants as we consider: [The Heart of a Servant](#).

I. The Commitment of the Servants (11b) – [These only are my fellow-workers unto the kingdom of God, which have been a comfort unto me](#). This simple statement reveals much about the commitment of those who served alongside Paul. This commitment is much needed in our day as well. We find these were:

A. Men of Perseverance – Paul mentions eight men in these verses, five prior to this statement, and he reveals [these only are my fellow-workers](#). I realize the population was not as great then as it is today, but thousands had come to Christ in salvation. Paul had preached all over the civilized world and yet only a handful of men were committed to serving alongside Paul, seeking to share the gospel and see souls saved.

- What contributed to this small number? There are likely many factors, but probably the greatest was the opposition to Christianity and the persecution many faced for their faith in Christ. Few were willing to sacrifice and face adversity. Few persevered when the journey became

difficult. Paul knew these men were special because they persevered. The same is true in our day! We need those who will determine to follow Christ and serve Him regardless of the difficulties or opposition we face.

B. Men of Participation – *These only are my fellow-workers.* Not only had these remained faithful to the Lord, they were actually busy in the work. They were fellow-workers with Paul. They were not content to sit around, waiting on someone else to do something; they were actively engaged in serving the Lord. They weren't just looking to enjoy the perks of traveling with a well known preacher; they genuinely desired to serve the Lord and were active in ministry.

- This is one of the greatest hindrances to the modern church. Churches are filled with folks who come with high expectations. They expect a clean and welcoming facility. They demand the best singing. They want to hear a fresh message delivered with passion and power. They expect activities to be planned for their children. However, about 90% of the work and financial giving in the average church is provided by about 10% of the people. Few are willing to be an active participant in the work. "I want those things available, but don't ask me to help provide them." We need those who are willing to serve the Lord on any level, at any time!

C. Men of Principle – *These only are my fellow-workers unto the kingdom of God.* These servants were focused on the priority at hand. They were committed to the kingdom of God. They weren't self-centered, with an "all about me" mentality. They weren't there simply to receive and never give of themselves. They earnestly desired to further the kingdom. Sharing the gospel and winning souls was the priority. They were men of principle.

- We have discussed this much in recent studies, but it bears repeating. If we are to be effective in ministry, we must maintain a proper focus. The church has many opportunities to provide many resources and activities to the community. These are all fine as long as they don't become the priority. The ultimate goal of this church or any other must be exalting the Lord, sharing the gospel, and discipling believers. If that isn't our passion and focus, we have missed it.

D. Men of Persuasion – *These only are my fellow-workers unto the kingdom of God, which have been a comfort unto me.* These servants understood the stress and difficulty of such a public ministry. They knew Paul had suffered much physically and emotionally for preaching the gospel. They were concerned for his well being and comforted him in those seasons of difficulty. Their faithfulness to Paul likely encouraged him to press on many times. They maybe didn't enjoy the recognition Paul did, but they played a significant role in keeping him before the people. These men knew the importance of encouragement.

- It is said that the great preacher Charles H. Spurgeon suffered greatly from depression. He also endured many physical problems. On many occasions he was so ill and physically hindered that his deacons would literally carry him into the pulpit so he could deliver his message. The names of those faithful servants are not known today, but I can assure you God noticed and He will reward them. Never underestimate the power of encouragement and friendship. I am not seeking sympathy, but ministry is often a lonely place. One of the greatest things a church can do for their pastor is pray for him and be a friend unto him.

II. The Character of the Servants (7-14) – In our text Paul speaks specifically of eight individuals who contributed to his ministry. Let's consider the attributes of each. He mentioned:

- **Tychicus (7-9)** – Tychicus is mentioned five times in the New Testament: [Acts 20:4](#), [Eph.6:21](#), [Col.4:7](#), [2 Tim.4:12](#), and [Titus 3:12](#). Each time he is mentioned, he is associated with Paul. He enjoyed a close relationship with Paul. He is mentioned here as a [beloved brother](#). He was dear to Paul's heart. He was a [faithful minister and fellow-servant in the Lord](#). He was recognized as a man who was faithful to the Lord, the church, and the ministry as a whole. He served faithfully alongside Paul. Paul had sent Tychicus to check on the affairs of Colossae, [v.8](#), sending assurance that he would be a blessing and encouragement to them while serving faithfully there.
- **Onesimus (9)** – [With Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you](#). We learn much about Onesimus in the letter Paul wrote to Philemon. He was encountered by Paul as a runaway slave, who came to know Christ as his Lord and Savior. Paul encouraged Philemon to receive Onesimus as a brother in Christ, not as a disobedient slave. Paul reveals to the Colossians that he too was [faithful and a beloved brother](#). Paul had met him as a slave deserving of punishment, but his relationship with Christ changed his life. He could now be counted on in service and was dear to Paul. He reminds the church that [Onesimus is one of them](#). This speaks of his citizenship in Colossae, but more importantly of his citizenship in heaven. He was part of the body of Christ. He, along with Tychicus, faithfully delivered Paul's letters.
- **Aristarchus (10)** – [Aristarchus my fellowprisoner saluteth you](#). Little is known of him other than the fact he was a [fellow-prisoner](#) with Paul. This speaks volumes of his faith and his commitment. He could've denied the faith and been released, but he remained committed to the Lord. He chose to be imprisoned rather than deny his Lord. He saluted the church, sending words of greeting, love, and comfort unto them. This had to encourage the church, receiving encouragement from one imprisoned for his faith.

➤ **Marcus (10)** – *and Marcus, sister's son to Barnabas, (touching whom ye received commandments: if he come unto you, receive him;)* Here Paul refers to John Mark, the writer of the gospel of Mark. He was the nephew of Barnabas and involved in the dispute that separated Paul and Barnabas. Earlier in the ministry, Mark had abandoned Paul and this caused division with Barnabas. His departure must've become well known and Mark's reputation suffered because of it. Paul encouraged Colossae to receive him if he came unto them. He had returned to the ministry and proven himself faithful. Paul had embraced him and sought to encourage him in the faith. He wanted the church to know there was no division among them. (That serves as a challenge to us to seek reconciliation in our differences.)

➤ **Justus (11a)** – *And Jesus, which is called Justus, who are of the circumcision.* All we know of Justus is that he was a converted Jew, along with these we have discussed. He may not have been known to the Colossians, but he was profitable to Paul. The legalistic Jews had caused much damage and hurt among the early church, but Justus was genuine in the faith. He had comforted Paul and he urged the church to receive him rather than rejecting him because of his heritage.

➤ **Epaphras (12-13)** – As we discussed in the introduction, many believe Epaphras served as pastor at Colossae. At the present time he is with Paul and yet his love and devotion for the church remains. He is a *servant*, literally a bond slave, unto the Lord. He is known for *laboring fervently in prayer* for Colossae, *desiring they mature in the faith and be complete in the will of God*. Epaphras was like all good pastors, his love and devotion was not reserved for Colossae alone. He also desired to see the churches in Laodicea and Hierapolis prosper as well, *V.13*.

➤ **Luke (14)** – Paul speaks of *Luke, the beloved physician*. Luke traveled much with Paul and was a faithful companion. It is likely there was no need to mention much about Luke because he would've been recognized of them. He wrote the gospel of Luke and the book of Acts. He was known as a physician, offering his medical expertise to the apostle, seeking to comfort Paul as much as he could. He was dear to Paul. I am sure they developed a close bond through their travels together. We should never seek our own praise or glory, but it would be nice to be known as a friend of the saints and help to the church as Luke was.

➤ **Demas (14)** – Nothing is said of Demas other than he sent greetings. He was an associate of Paul, but Demas eventually abandoned the faith. He is mentioned in Philemon as a fellow-laborer with Paul. Here he is only mentioned by name. Later he forsakes Paul and the work. *2 Tim.4:10a – For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica*. No doubt Paul was appreciative of what Demas had done in the past, but it appears he has already

begun to slip and wander from the Lord. Apparently Paul sought to admonish him, but Demas eventually departed. Of all the men we've discussed, I pray I never bear likeness to Demas. We must not condemn, but seek a close relationship with the Lord. Each of us could find ourselves in the same situation if we fail to pray and remain in fellowship with the Lord and His church.

Conclusion: We are likely unfamiliar with most of these mentioned by Paul, but it is evident they each contributed to his ministry in a unique and beneficial way. We need to seek the attributes these possessed, using the gifts and talents we've received for the good of the church and the glory of God. We all have something to contribute to the kingdom work. Christ has a job for each of us to perform. May we be counted faithful when the Lord calls for us.

If there are needs in your life, I urge you to seek the Lord. Demas likely never intended to end up as he did, but it began as a slow drift that continued to spiral out of control. If you have never been saved, come to the Lord as He speaks to you!