

# Tychicus: An Example for Us

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I thought it might be useful and helpful for us today to just kind of take a one-time, one-off message to kind of refresh our hearts with a look at what an ordinary Christian, you might say, looks like, and when I say ordinary, I don't think that there's ever a true thing as an ordinary Christian because every Christian is truly extraordinary, every Christian is a supernatural creation by God, what I mean by ordinary is people that aren't necessarily prominent. If we were going to look at what the Christian life were to look like through a human example in the Scriptures, there would be benefit in looking at doing a character study of David or Peter or Paul or something like that, but when you do that, you realize that these were men who were particularly extraordinary, particularly used in a way of God that might seem just a little bit remote and distant from us. Most of us, it's quite unlikely that any of us like Peter would preach a sermon where 3,000 souls were saved on a particular day, and as I thought about that, I wanted to bring a biblical character to your mind that maybe is just a little bit easier for us to relate to because he's not prominent, but he was somebody that was faithful, and I think that what you see in this man is going to encourage you in your walk with Christ and even in your service here within the context of our local church. I'm speaking of a faithful companion of Paul named Tychicus. Many men associated and helped Paul, assisted him in his ministry, and Tychicus was one of them. He's mentioned in just five Bible passages and I want to take just a moment to go through each of those passages and see what we might be able to draw out from his life. It will be more than you might suspect. He's one of those characters that you just read about and it doesn't even register on your mind, but then you stop and look at what's going on and you say there's something meaningful here. There's spiritual food for me as I look at this and for us to appreciate and digest. So that's what we're going to do tonight, hopefully it will be a kind of a change of pace from some of the heavier lifting that we've been doing in recent weeks both on Sunday and on Tuesday. I love this material. I love the man Tychicus and I'm delighted to share this with you.

Let's start out in the book of Acts 20 and basically I've titled this message tonight "Tychicus: An Example for Us." And what you're going to find as we look at the life of this man, you're going to find things that you can relate to and there are eternal principles that are at stake that you're going to be able to think about your own life and say, "You know, this helps me. This sets a trajectory for me." And that's what we're going to look at. Acts 20:3 and like I say, we're going to come back to, I want to sweep through these passages and then draw the lessons from them.

In Acts 20:3 is when we first meet this man Tychicus and Luke writes that Paul spent three months there, speaking in Greece; he was in Greece for three months, "and when a plot was formed against him by the Jews as he was about to set sail for Syria, he decided to return through Macedonia. And he was accompanied by Sopater of Berea, the son of Pyrrhus, and by Aristarchus and Secundus of the Thessalonians, and Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy, and Tychicus and Trophimus of Asia." So Tychicus is one man among many and this was at a time where the churches had chosen these men that are listed here to accompany Paul as he took a love for gift from the Gentile churches to help the poverty-stricken Christians in Jerusalem, and so Tychicus was one of several men who was accompanying Paul and they were on a mission commissioned by their churches to do this deed of mercy on behalf of other Christians. Now, note this: this would have been approximately about the year A.D. 57. I'm not going to go into all the chronology of that; it's not important for our purposes tonight. Just let that number, 57, stick in your mind and we'll come back to it a little bit later.

Now, a few years later, that's the only mention of Tychicus in the book of Acts, a few years later Paul was in prison and he wrote the letters to Ephesus and to Colossae in about A.D. 61 and in those letters, he provides a little bit more background on this man Tychicus. Look at Ephesians 6, if you would. All we're doing right now is gathering information so that we can talk about this man's life in a meaningful way. Ephesians 6:21. We'll get to this passage in 3, 4 months maybe or so, maybe a little longer, but in Ephesians 6:21, Paul writes in this letter that would go and be circulated to many churches, he says, "So that you may know about my circumstances, how I am doing, Tychicus, the beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, will make everything known to you. I have sent him to you for this very purpose, so that you may know about us, and that he may comfort your hearts."

Look over at Colossians 4, a letter written at the same time, and Paul makes a similar reference to Tychicus that we'll look at real closely in just a little bit. Colossians 4:7, "As to all my affairs, Tychicus, our beloved brother and faithful servant and fellow bond-servant in the Lord, will bring you information. For I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know about our circumstances and that he may encourage your hearts; and with him Onesimus, our faithful and beloved brother, who is one of your number. They will inform you about the whole situation here." So notice this, we'll come back to it, in the book of Acts, Tychicus had been commissioned by his church to go on a mission with Paul. Here in Ephesians and Colossians, he's actually physically carrying these letters from Paul to these churches. Paul sent him to these churches and commissioned him to give a report about Paul's own condition. So Tychicus had to do that because Paul was in prison and so he wasn't able to carry the letters himself. He sent Tychicus as his delegate to do that work for him.

Now, think with me for just a moment, again, this is all still very introductory, we haven't gotten to our main points yet, but to carry the letter and to make a report on Paul's behalf at one level might seem to be a menial task to perform; something rather perfunctory. But if you think about it rightly, think about it this way: Tychicus had given to him, entrusted to him the original autograph of the letter to the Ephesians and the letter to the

Colossians; the very word of God was entrusted to him as he went on this mission to deliver these letters and report on Paul's condition to the churches, and you and I here 2,000 years later are a recipient of, we stand in the wake of, we benefit from the fact that Tychicus was faithful to that seemingly menial task. He took what was given to him; he went to where he was supposed to go; and the fruit of his labor is still with us today. We are studying something that Tychicus held originally in his hands. We are studying it still today, and so there was value even in that seemingly menial task of delivering and speaking, there was value to it.

Now, still just gathering passages together, for a briefer reference to Tychicus, turn to Titus 3. We're almost done with this brief preview. There's not that many passages to look at. In the book of Titus which we studied verse by verse a couple of years ago, Paul is writing to Titus and having Titus set things in order on the island of Crete, but he has other plans for Titus, and so in verse 12 of Titus 3:12, he says, "When I send Artemas or Tychicus to you, make every effort to come to me at Nicopolis, for I have decided to spend the winter there." So when Paul wrote this letter, he hadn't quite decided what he was going to do but he had in mind that he would send Tychicus to replace Titus in that leading role there on the island of Crete. And so Paul wrote to Titus around A.D. 65 and so we saw Tychicus in 57 in the book of Acts, 61 in the book of Ephesus, in Titus 65, and then there's one final reference to Tychicus in the chronological unfolding of Paul's ministry and if you'll turn back just a couple of pages to 2 Timothy 4, we'll note this one verse and then we will be able to dive into it in greater detail.

2 Timothy is Paul's final letter chronologically. He would soon be martyred at the sword of Nero and so this is his final letter. These are, in a sense, his dying words and he says in chapter 4, verse 11, he says, "Only Luke is with me. Pick up Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for service." Verse 12, "But Tychicus I have sent to Ephesus." So here's Paul facing execution. He knows that he is soon to die. If you look over at verse 6 of chapter 4, he says, "I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come." Now, beloved, stick with me. I know that I'm looking at some really obscure passages and some of you may be wondering where in the world I'm going with all of this. We're going someplace good. Notice that Paul is conscious of the fact that he is about to die. He is conscious of the fact that he has only a short time left to live and there is work in Ephesus that needs to be done and what did he do? He called upon Tychicus and he sent Tychicus there to do that work. That tells us something. If you are a dying man and you have dying wishes that you want fulfilled, you're going to turn to somebody that you know that you can depend upon to do exactly what you want. This gives us a window of insight into how faithful and how reliable the man Tychicus was, that when Paul was dying in A.D. 68, when I say he was dying, he was facing execution; at the end of his life he said, "I've got something in Ephesus that needs to be done. Who do I send? Ah, Tychicus. I send that man." An apostle of the stature of Paul entrusted what he wanted done to Tychicus; an apostle who had just written letters to Ephesus and Colossians by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit said, "Tychicus, take this priceless eternal truth and deliver it." So we get a window into what the Apostle Paul and the way that he esteemed him. What we see in Tychicus is he was a faithful man. He was a faithful man

as shown by the fact that his church sent him out and Paul sent him out even on his deathbed, as it were. He trusted Tychicus to do what needed to be done.

Now, what does it mean to be faithful? The term means to be trustworthy; to be reliable; or to be dependable. To be faithful is to be a man or a woman who inspires trust, and within the context of a local body like ours, in the context of a smaller church where relationships and everybody knows everybody else, there are few things that could be more crucial to the life of a healthy growing church like ours than that we would be marked by that kind of faithfulness and dependability and trustworthiness; that collectively together, individually, we would be living lives and interacting with one another in a way that we just grow in this sense that you can rely on each other, that you can rely on me, and that I can rely on you, and there's just this ever growing, deepening, expanding sense of faithfulness and trustworthiness that marks the life of the body of Christ. You see, when we're looking at this little window, these little vignettes of the way that Paul dealt with Tychicus, we're seeing the kind of fruit that can come when a man is faithful and proves himself to be worthy of trust. Tychicus was a man like that.

And what we're going to do now is that we're going to see four aspects of a faithful disciple that would serve us as an example to follow, and as we look a little more closely at these passages, I think you're going to be surprised at what opens up to us in terms of getting insight into what true Christian character is like. You know, maybe I think about this too much, I don't know, it's hard to evaluate independently your own thought processes, I'm very eager, let's say, as a pastor for us not to get sucked into the general culture of American evangelicalism that loves celebrity, that loves flashing lights, and loves big productions, and sends out press releases every time you're opening a new campus like one of the big churches in our area likes to do. They must have the Cincinnati Inquirer on speed dial to tell them everything that they are doing from time to time. We don't want to be like that, beloved. We're not trying to attract attention to ourselves that way. We realize that the Christian life is not lived on a stage that Hollywood would respect, but it's lived in the spirit of quiet faithfulness to the Lord and to each other in a way that stands the test of time. You know, eventually the lights go out and the stage productions are put away, and what's left after that is, you know, there's a lot to clean up and a lot of it's not real pretty in the reality of things. What we want to be as a people, what we want to be as a body of Christians going through life together, is that we want to be marked by these qualities of faithfulness that Scripture affirms and to let our lives be a reflection of what the Lord would have us to be, and if that leads us into prominence or into obscurity, we don't care about that. We're utterly indifferent to that. We just want to be faithful. That's all we care about. If we are faithful, then everything else will take care of itself and we can know that the Lord will be pleased with us. We want to please the Lord more than anything else; more than we want the attention of men on what we're doing in ministry for Christ. That doesn't even make any sense.

Now, so the question becomes: what does that faithful life look like? Well, we've got four principles that we're going to see from Tychicus here this evening. First of all, when we're looking at Tychicus, we see 1. That he is faithful with his love. A faithful disciple is someone who is faithful with his love. Here's what we mean by that: faithfulness,

loyalty, I like the word "fidelity" as well, faithfulness in the context of the Christian life, in the context of the body of Christ, involves more than simply being reliable in outward duties. You could have a plumber who shows up when he's supposed to and does his work, but that doesn't mean that you have a warm and trusting relationship with him. Here what we see in Tychicus is that he was reliable in his outward duties but beyond that, good disciples develop warm relationships with other Christians. There is not this sense of somebody being isolated and staying at home alone and living the Christian life. That is not Christianity, even though a lot of people try to call that as their mark of faithfulness. That's not true. Good disciples develop warm relationships with other Christians.

Look at the letter to Ephesians now. We'll go back to that passage in Ephesians 6:21 that we looked at just a moment ago, and I love these things. I can identify with Tychicus. If I were a man that was faithful like Tychicus, I would feel like my life had been well lived. The Apostle Paul says in Ephesians 6:21, he says, "that you also may know about my circumstances, how I am doing, Tychicus," look at what he says here, "the beloved brother." The beloved brother. That's a phrase, those two words together "beloved brother," it's a phrase that expresses a close relationship between two people that have a common love for Christ and for each other. Tychicus wasn't simply a messenger of Paul; it wasn't like he called him up and called DHL up to have him deliver a letter for him, this was somebody that Paul had a warm, close, personal relationship with, that had been cultivated over the years. So Paul, speaking of this man Tychicus, is showing an appreciation and a high regard for him. Tychicus viewed Paul that way. There was this mutual appreciation of the character of each other and they loved each other and they supported and encouraged each other and that is the mark of someone who is being faithful with his love.

Now, notice this, what I want you to do is to kind of step into the sandals of the Apostle Paul. You and I don't know much about Tychicus, you know, there's not a whole lot for us to glean from the Scriptures. There is enough for it to be profitable but we don't know him like we do other biblical characters, but notice this, beloved: the man that we do know well from all of his writings, the Apostle Paul, the man whose ministry was vindicated as the apostle to the Gentiles and who suffered and served Christ so very well, he viewed Tychicus as a beloved brother. This was someone that Paul trusted and so what we see here is that while we don't know Tychicus very well, Paul considered him to be an integral part of his ministry, so much so that he would send him out when things needed to be done: to Ephesus, to Colossae, to other places. Paul relied on Tychicus and when he thought of Tychicus, he said he's a beloved brother. So the only way that Tychicus earned that affirmation from a man of Paul's stature, was the fact that he had been faithful in his love for Paul and his support to him. That tells us something and, you know, Jesus said in John 13, "By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have," what? It's okay, you can tell me. "If you have love for one another." So Jesus said, Jesus laid out as a principal, "Here will be the mark of my disciples, they have love for one another." In Tychicus, we find here a man that was loving, gracious, supportive, loyal to Paul and Paul recognized it and said, "There's my beloved brother. I am sending a beloved brother to you to speak on my behalf."

So faithfulness is seen in love. It's seen in that warm Christian relationship that gives us an example to follow and let's just step back for a second and just think about the life in our own church, you know, especially with those of you that are gathered here in the room today. You know, I don't think I'm exaggerating, I don't think I'm boasting falsely of our church when I say there is a lot of this kind of love present in the room here. It's why I have to turn the lights out on you two hours after the service has ended so that everybody will go home. I'm joking as I say that, but you know what I mean. You know, there is this warmth to our fellowship and that's the mark of godliness. It's a mark of faithfulness and I just want to encourage you in that and help you also to just recognize that there's more than human warmth that's going on. This is something different than what you'd find at the Kiwanis club. This is the body of Christ coming together and loving each other in faithfulness. That is a mark of a healthy church. It's a mark of healthy disciples. So we see this and we acknowledge it and we thank God for it, a faithful disciple is someone who is faithful in his love.

Now, in that same passage about Tychicus, we see a second aspect of a faithful disciple and it's this: that he is faithful in his labor. He's faithful in his labor. I'm going to give you four "L" words to mark your notes with. Faithful in love, secondly, he's faithful in his labor. Look at verse 21 again in Ephesians with me. Paul says as he is describing Tychicus and making these appositional statements about him, "Tychicus, the beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, will make everything known to you." That word "minister" comes from a word that means "to serve," and to serve, you give assistance by performing certain duties. And whenever Tychicus is mentioned, if you go back to these passages that we looked at, there is something very interesting about what Scripture records about him. Whenever Tychicus is mentioned in the Scripture, he is going somewhere under the authority of someone else. In other words, when you read about Tychicus in the Scriptures, someone with authority over him has commissioned him to go and he's going to do something that someone else has told him to do. Just stating it very simply and plainly like that. Note this, beloved, note this particularly in our evangelical culture that is obsessed with celebrity and rock stars and major, major conferences that just seem to continually proliferate: Tychicus was humble enough to follow instructions so that other people could do their tasks. To go when someone else tells you to go shows a level of responsiveness to authority, a humility, a self-sacrifice in your life. He was humble enough to go do something someone else told him to do so that that they were free to continue doing the tasks that were given to them. Those are prominent features of his life. It's a prominent aspect of being a faithful Christian is to be found faithful in your labor.

And, beloved, again, I'm picking on celebrity culture tonight and I won't apologize for that. I'll apologize a lot for preaching too long, but I won't apologize for picking on celebrity culture because I think in the church it's contrary to what Scripture tells us that the church is supposed to be like. The local church in particular is built on people who are willing to simply fulfill what's asked of them, even if the outward labor seems to be unimpressive. A church cannot function if everybody wants to be a celebrity, if everybody wants to be a rock star, if everybody wants the spotlight shining on them. A

church can't function that way, and you end up in a culture like that if everybody is ambitious and self-seeking, you end up with a lot of strife and conflict because everybody's clamoring to get to the top. Well listen, listen, let's you and I, let's us as a church, step back and realize that in biblical Christianity, it's something different than what is portrayed, and that what is lightly esteemed in the world is highly esteemed in the presence of our Lord. As you contemplate your role in the church and what you might do today or in the future, let's remember what Jesus said. What Jesus said in the book of Luke 16:10 is, "He who is faithful in a very little thing, is faithful also in much." Christ is looking at a measure of faithfulness, not the outward task that is being performed. He said he just wants to know if somebody can be depended upon. He evaluates on whether we can be depended upon to do what we're asked to do even if it's a minor matter, seemingly minor matter.

So as you contemplate your role in the church, don't focus on the prominence of what it is, whether it's menial or not and I'm not aware of anyone that's ever complained about this. I am affirming what our church is like, not trying to correct anyone with what I'm saying here tonight. I love our church. I love our congregation, which means I love all of you, and I see the marks of what we find in the life of Tychicus being manifested in your lives. I do or I wouldn't say that, and this is just the mark of such a healthy spirit in our church at this young age of our church and I just want you to see that it's a big deal; that this matters. And so as we're seeing Tychicus being called a faithful minister, a faithful servant, here he is, this word "faithful" being applied to him, to a man who is not prominent really in Scripture, it just gives us a sense and it renews our desire to commit ourselves to be faithful and reliable in what we've been asked to do and we'll just trust the Lord for however that unfolds in the future. "Lord, just let us be found faithful and we'll be pleased with that." And Tychicus was faithful with his love and with his labor. He knew what Paul's needs were and he met them even when it meant he went off at the direction of someone else but, beloved, that trait of fidelity, loyalty, dependability, is important if a church is going to function the way that it should. And I won't mention some of you by name like I want to, like I'm so urged to do inwardly right now, but I see your faithfulness and I'm grateful for it. And as the elders are able to rely on people to do these tasks that are assigned and it frees the elders up to do other things and that's the way it's supposed to work. So I'm just very grateful for that.

Tychicus, a faithful disciple, faithful with his love, faithful with his labor. Now, there's a third aspect of it that's also found here in this passage in Ephesians, is that a faithful disciple is someone who is faithful with his lips. Faithful with his lips. There is so much in this one verse. You know, if you just try to kind of put yourself in the mind of the Apostle Paul, it all kind of opens up for you here. Look at what he said again in Ephesians 6:21, he says, "Tychicus, the beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, will make everything known to you." He said, "I have sent him to you for this very purpose, so that you may know about us, and that he may comfort your hearts." Wow! Do you realize what Paul is saying here? He has delegated Tychicus not only to carry the physical letter to the church, but Tychicus is also going to give them a verbal report on Paul's condition and what's happening in Paul's life and ministry. Tychicus was going to speak on Paul's behalf, on behalf of the great apostle to the Gentiles. Tychicus was going

to be his authorized representative to stand up, as it were, and speak to these churches and represent the Apostle Paul to them. That is a big deal. Paul trusted Tychicus so implicitly, so completely, that he could authorize Tychicus to say, "I'm here to speak on Paul's behalf to you."

Look, a leader doesn't delegate like that lightly. Tychicus in order to be able to speak like that on behalf of the Apostle Paul, was going to have to know the factual matters that surrounded Paul's circumstances but more than that, to stand up before the people of God in that first century context and to represent Paul to them, to these fledgling churches, who didn't even have complete Bibles in their hand to help guide them, and that had multiple issues that they were doing with. Here Tychicus is going to stand up and speak on behalf of Paul and if he's going to speak on behalf of Paul, he had to be identified in mind with Paul and somehow also be expressing a similar spirit to what the Apostle Paul himself would do. Paul would not send an abrasive, abusive man who was self-seeking to speak on his behalf because Paul was one who knew what it was to suffer, one who loved the church, one who loved unsaved Jews enough to say that he would forfeit his own salvation if he could in order for them to be saved. Well, somehow Tychicus would have identified with that spirit or Paul never would have sent him.

So Paul says, "This man that I am sending to you is going to speak on my behalf. He'll tell you about us," and look at the end of verse 22 there, "I'm sending him so that you would know about us and that he may comfort your hearts." Wow, you know, it makes me wish, if you could do this, I mean, we're talking contrary to fact and almost foolishness and silliness here, but if you couldn't get the Apostle Paul, to have somebody like Tychicus that could come and be able to comfort you as you hear and he's reporting on Paul and addressing things in the church and Paul says, "He will comfort you." I'd like to have a man like that come, wouldn't you? Wouldn't you like to have a man that the Apostle Paul said, "Here's a man who is reliable, trustworthy. He's faithful and he's going to comfort your hearts." Boy, you'd just settle down and relax and you'd let the guard down and say, "Yes, I'm willing to receive this man's ministry." Well, look, look, Paul would not have gambled with a man that maybe would do that, maybe wouldn't. He knew that Tychicus would be like that because Tychicus had established himself by being faithful with his lips in the time that Paul had known him.

Tychicus obviously manifested what we read about earlier in Ephesians. Look at chapter 4:29. It's very interesting the way all of these things fit together and you get a sense, by just reading Scriptures in context, of what kinds of things Paul would have in mind. "Here's Tychicus, he's going to speak on my behalf." Well, what did Paul say about speech earlier in the letter that would give us a sense of what he knew Tychicus would be like? Well, chapter 4, verse 25, Paul says, speaking to Christians generally, he says, "Therefore, laying aside falsehood, speak truth each one of you with his neighbor, for we are members of one another. Be angry, and yet do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger." Drop down to verse 29, "Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear." Verse 31, "Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be



kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you."

What kind of man was Tychicus? Well, Paul said he's going to come and he's going to speak on my behalf and he's going to comfort your hearts. What can we extrapolate that his spirit was? It was truthful. It was edifying. It gave grace to those who heard. There was no trace of bitterness or wrath in it. Tychicus stood up just as Paul had instructed them just a couple of chapters earlier, Tychicus was there and he was going to be a human example of the kind of speech that Paul was requiring from the church at large. So he was going to be there and he was going to manifest what it was like to have speech that was free from bitterness, that was kind and tenderhearted, and that manifested the love and forgiving spirit of Christ himself. Wow. Wow. So we see his love, his relational, private relational loyalty to Paul, inspired confidence in Paul. We see that his labor was obviously faithful because we see it reported in Scripture and Paul sent him on an important task. Then Paul authorizes him not merely to mutely hand over the documents so that someone else can read it, Paul says, "He's going to speak with my authority and he's going to comfort your hearts."

Now, beloved, you see how highly esteemed a man in the shadows can be? Do you see the possibilities that exist for Christians who don't have necessarily a public role in the church but that there is a place for Christians who are willing to serve and to serve with excellence, and they manifest the very kind of character that God calls for from Christians. We see in the life of Tychicus a man who could speak as well as act in faithfulness.

Well, let's get personal now. Let's take a moment to examine our hearts like we always should whenever God's word is in front of us and we look at this aspect of speaking in particular. Just go home and let this thought roll around in your mind for the next couple of days: are your words that you speak in Christian company and elsewhere, for that matter, are your words such that they can dependably be relied upon to encourage other Christians in their walks with Christ? For many of you, I know that that's true and I appreciate that about you, but let's see what the standard is here. Look at Ephesians 4 again and let the conviction that this no doubt brings as you think even of your private home life, maybe within your marriage or your parenting or as you interact with your parents, that what Paul says here applies privately as well as publicly. The standard of God revealed in his word for Christians is: let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth but only speak those words that are good for edification so that it will give grace to those who hear. That's a pretty lofty standard, isn't it? It's enough to make you wish that your tongue would slow down sometimes, speaking for myself. I wish there was a throttle on my tongue so that I could more closely regulate it so that it was always like this, always giving grace to those who hear. You see, beloved, here's what we want to see and this is what Tychicus is pointing us to, is that a faithful disciple is marked by that kind of faithful speech where the words that come out of his mouth can reliably be depended upon to be gracious and edifying for those who hear.

So we just have to think about sometimes our outbursts of anger or our cutting sarcasm or things like that and just say, "Let me take another look at this in light of this man who is affirmed by Scripture. Let me take another look at the way that I speak which is a reflection, Jesus said, of what's going on in my heart. Let me examine my words because if I want to be anything, if I want to be anything in this life, in the 70 or so years that the Lord gives to me in my life, if there's anything that I want to be, I want to be faithful. I just want to be as much a reflection of Christ as I possibly can be. I want to manifest the fruit of the Spirit. And what Scripture points me to is that that faithfulness is going to be manifested in what comes out of my mouth, and what rolls easily off my lips." That doesn't mean that there's any virtue in being quiet, versus being somebody who easily speaks. The question is, when you speak, is it like that: wholesome, gracious, edifying, as opposed to those who are quick with an off-color joke maybe, or whose mouth can produce cursing and things like that. No, no, that's not the mouth of a Christian. So we just see the standard of faithfulness, a faithful disciple being marked by faithful lips, and you see that this principle of fidelity, loyalty, trustworthiness, reliability, this becomes, you see that this is a fabric from which our entire Christian life is sown; that there is a single fabric of Christian character and that woven through every thread of that fabric is the principle of faithfulness. Faithfulness when my mouth opens. Faithfulness when my hands are put to a task. Faithfulness in the way that I relate to other people, and they have a sense that in me there is someone that can be trusted. That's lofty. That's the kind of man that Tychicus was. That's why we're taking just a short time this evening to look at his life to get a pattern that points us in the right direction.

Now, there's a final point here, point 4, and I love this one, and I'm going to, I'll state the principle and then I'll illustrate it positively and negatively. Point 4: he is faithful for life. He is faithful for life. Over time, this faithfulness is manifested and I'll give you a negative example to start with and then we'll look at Tychicus in a moment, and I debated on whether to say this or not. I didn't put it in my notes but I'm going to decide on the moment here to say it. At the risk of being misunderstood, the point here is to illustrate truth so that you can see it and appropriate it and have it wedded into your character, not to talk about the specific illustration.

When I first came here to Truth Community, and this applies to no one in this room and it couldn't apply to anyone in this room as you'll soon see, but when I first came here and I'm a new pastor and there's a new church that's getting started, there's always, you know, when that happens, there are people that get curious and come and want to check it out. Well, it was very interesting to me and I didn't put any weight in what I'm about to describe to you, but it was very interesting to me. There were about a half-dozen men who came to me in those early days and they went out of their way to promise me that they were going to be my new best friend and that they were going to be the man that I could turn to and cry on their shoulder, as if I was going to do that, you know. I mean, I didn't even cry when the Packers lost to Seattle. I'm not going to cry about things to you. They are going to be the man that could pray for me and if I needed something, "Boy, you could call on me, pastor." None of them are anywhere to be found today in my life. Not a one of them. Some of them peeled off because they didn't like Calvinism. Some of them peeled off for other reasons, who knows why. But here's the thing: I didn't write the

reference down in Proverbs, you can look it up, Google it, whatever you want to do, Proverbs says that many a man proclaims his own loyalty but who can find a faithful man? These men came and made grandiose promises about how they were going to be aside me in this new ministry of God, you know, and they were gone in a matter of months. Every one of them and, you know, you just come to, you just discount words like that and promises like that from people that you barely met. It can't be what it appears to be on the surface.

By contrast, you see, where we find faithfulness and, by the way, I see this point again, I see this point that I'm about to discuss here, I see this illustrated in your lives, every one of you, every one of you. I'm grateful to have people like you here in this church who illustrate this point and so we're going to see it by positive and negative illustration. A faithful disciple is faithful for life. He's not a meteor that streaks across the sky and then it's gone. It's not a flashbulb that goes off and blinds you and then, you know, you kind of rub your eyes and then things are back to normal and the light is nowhere to be found. Tychicus illustrates this principle in a way that is not at all immediately apparent but that is very true. There is a chronological progress in the passages about Tychicus. Remember I told you to pay attention a little bit to the dates? In Acts 20, that passage happened in about A.D. 56. Ephesians and Colossians where Tychicus is mentioned, A.D. 61. The book of Titus, A.D. 65, give or take. 2 Timothy, 67-68 A.D. Do you see the pattern? Do you see what's happening here as you look at this and you see Tychicus mentioned in these passages that occur in the unfolding of redemptive history? Tychicus didn't start and then stop and drop off the scene. Tychicus was there for Paul over a period of 15 years. The last 15 years of Paul's life, 12 to 15 years speaking in round numbers, Tychicus was there and he was someone that Paul could rely upon. He was there over time. He was there in thick and thin.

So what I want you to see is that the faithfulness of a true disciple of Christ is manifested in our labor, in our lips, in our love, but there is also an underlying pattern of consistency that expresses itself over time and that is a high thing to aspire after. That is a high thing to gear your character toward, that we would become a people that could be found faithful, that we're faithful, as it were, to be here tonight in 2015. The real joy of ministry is going to be when some of us are together 15 years from now carrying out the same faithfulness in ministry and to one another over time. A kind of faithfulness, a kind of fidelity, a kind of long-term commitment to relationships in a body of Christ that stands the test of time because a faithful disciple is faithful for life.

Now, I understand people have to move and move away and all of that, but that's not what we're talking about. When circumstances allow you to be present and you just cultivate that over time, there's something to be said for a church that is marked by people that have proven themselves over time and not simply those that come and go based on what the latest show is that's been advertised in the name of ministry. Tychicus was faithful for life. He proved to be a friend to Paul that he could rely upon all the way to the end. Even when the sword was about to fall on his neck, Paul could call out to him and say, "Tychicus, one more time, I've got one last task for you," and I have no doubt in my mind that Tychicus found joy and satisfaction stepping up to the great apostle, his great

friend, who was about to leave and say, "Paul, one last time. One last time." You can just picture him looking into the apostles eyes and saying, "Paul, you can count on me this time too."

You see, beloved, when you ask what kind of people is the ministry of Truth Community Church trying to produce? What's the fruit of ministry that we're trying to make as the mark of those that participate and come within the sphere of the ministry of Truth Community Church? It's people like that. We're trying to produce in our halting, imperfect ways, what we're ultimately trying to do, we're just trying to make faithful disciples out of one another and my heart is full to overflowing with gratitude that God has brought a group of people like you who obviously manifest in your life that you want to be just like that. What can a pastor do but say, thank you, Lord, for that.

Now, one last thing. We've talked about how Tychicus was kind of on the periphery of the scriptural record and the fact that he was acting under others' orders, going, serving other people, freeing others to do what they needed to do, and Paul calls him a faithful minister, a beloved brother. You could close with that but if we closed with that, we would miss something really important that would be a great encouragement in your own life, in your unfaithfulness, that each one of you are manifesting with the way that you live. Let's remember one final thing about Paul's writing as he goes about this letter, as he's writing about Tychicus, these were no ordinary human words that Paul was speaking. Paul was writing the book of Ephesians under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. He was writing the word of God. God, the Spirit of God was moving in his heart and was recording exactly what God wanted said so that the record of God's word would stand for all of time until heaven and earth pass away, and even then, God's word won't pass away. What Paul was writing was God's assessment of Tychicus. God was saying, "Here's a beloved brother. Here is a faithful minister of mine." This faithfulness that Tychicus manifested, that received very little human attention, was not missed by God and God recorded enough about Tychicus that the record of his fidelity and loyalty to Christ would be a testimony to us even today. Surely, no doubt, in light of what Scripture says, what God's word says about Tychicus, surely when he left this earth he heard these words, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things. Enter into the joy of your Master."

You know, honestly, honestly, together let's understand and realize something really, really important: it's that one moment in time when Christ speaks words like that to us, beloved, that's the moment we're living for. Everything else is secondary to that. Any other trial or tribulation that we would go through becomes worth it at that one moment. Any success on earth pales in comparison. We're living for one moment. One moment is going to make all of the 70 years, give or take, all of those 70 years worthwhile. It's going to make all of the obscurity worthwhile when Christ steps up and looks at us and says to us, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant." And with joy and with tears streaming down our eyes, we can just fall at his feet and say, "Oh Lord, thank you for giving me the opportunity to serve you." We will say to Christ, "Lord, we were unworthy servants. We only did that which was what we should have done in the first place." One moment that crystallizes the aspiration of an entire Christian life, to stand before the Lord and have

him say, "Yes, well done." That is glory. That will be enough. As I've said at other times, if I could hear those words from Christ when I see him face-to-face, I would be content to go off into a corner of heaven and be neglected for the rest of eternity because just that one word of affirmation from Christ is all that it would take to satisfy the aspirations of a godly heart because that's why we're doing it, right? That's why you do the things you do here within the context of the church and in our lives. We do them for Christ.

So if you are aiming your life after faithfulness and you're faithful even when no one is seeing and watching you, take heart. Your heavenly Father sees. Your heavenly Father rewards. And Scripture says he never forgets. Hebrews 6:10, you don't need to turn there, but Hebrews 6:10, what does God think of a man like Tychicus? What does God think of a faithful Christian like you? Hebrews 6:10, "God is not unjust so as to forget your work and the love which you have shown toward his name in having ministered and still ministering to the saints." God says, "I'm not unjust. I see your heart of fidelity toward me. I see you serving quietly, unobtrusively, without recognition. I'm never going to forget. I'm not unjust to do that." Stated differently, he is just to remember and he is just to honor our faithfulness that is rendered in devotion to Christ.

So, beloved, mark it: faithfulness has its reward. It is manifested in our love, in our lips, in our labor, over life. Let's be people like that and anticipate with eagerness the affirmation of our Master when we see him face-to-face.

Let's bow in prayer.

*Yes, Lord, may it ever be thus in our lives. May you find us faithful to you in labor, in lips, in love, for life. And Father, I thank you that here in our church in this room here tonight, you have gathered together people who manifest and exemplify this kind of faithfulness to me in my own life and inspire me, as it were, and call me even to greater faithfulness in my own life. Father, help us to be a people like that to one another and live out such faithfulness before you as a grateful response to the redemptive work of our Lord Jesus Christ when he loved us and gave himself up for us on the cross. We pray in his name. Amen.*

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