

Life Together in Christ: Vital Relationships

Col 4:7-10

Pastor/Elder Phil Layton, GCBC, May 2, 2021

COMMUNION COMMENTS AT END

No Matter Who's President, Jesus is King. That's how a business card reads that Sean gave me copies of and some of our outreach people here use, Sean has extras he can share. I want to start where Pastor Corey left off last week talking about open doors for the gospel. I spoke at a friend's church last week but I heard Corey's message and appreciated the emphasis on praying and taking open doors to share. This is one: **a gospel tract on a business card.**

Front side: **No Matter Who's President, Jesus is King (by Tony Miano)**

Back side: '...While presidents come and go, there is one Eternal King. His name is Jesus. He is not elected by popular vote. No one makes Jesus "Lord." No mere man enthrones the Eternal King. He is the only Sovereign who is the Lord of every person. You will one-day bow your knee and acknowledge Him as your King. It is this Jesus, the God-Man who, with God the Father, will judge you according to the Law He has written on your heart. You know it is wrong to lie, steal, take God's name in vain, engage in sexual immorality, or hate another human being because you were created in the image of God, and God is not a liar, thief, blasphemer, fornicator, adulterer, or murderer. Because God is good, He must punish sin. The punishment He has determined for sin is eternity in hell. Yet God has also provided a way for you to be declared innocent and receive His forgiveness. Your only hope is for Jesus, the King of kings and the Lord of lords, to save you from the wrath of God. God the Father sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to earth. He was and is fully God and fully man, yet without sin. He voluntarily shed His innocent blood and died on the cross, taking upon Himself the punishment you rightly deserve for your sins against God. Three days later, He forever defeated sin and death when He rose from the grave. Repent and believe the gospel while God has given you time.'¹

They also have a tract that says **Police Lives Matters.** Reverse: 'Your life matters. I'm giving you this card because I appreciate your service to your community. I'm aware that a member of the law enforcement family, your family, gives his or her life in the line of duty, making the ultimate sacrifice every 60 hours (in the United States). "Thank you" seems woefully inadequate for not only what can be rightly described as your heroic efforts, but also your daily commitment to protect and serve. There are many people like me who greatly appreciate your sacrificial service. It is with appreciation and respect for you—not only as a public servant, but as a human being (my neighbor)—that I share the following with you...'²

Those are just a couple ways to apply what we heard last week where **Col 4** talks about evangelism, knowing '*how you ought to answer each person.*' We need to keep that passage before us, Paul says '*pray...God may open to us a door for the word...that I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak. Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time.*'

That's **Col 4:3-6** that we heard read last week. For this last chapter of this book, I asked Pastor Corey if he would preach on v. 3-6, and then I'd take v. 7 and following this week.

Last week he gave a great message, but didn't get to all he had to say on v. 5-6. He's up in WA this week so I'll stay with v. 7 and following and I asked him to conclude part 2 of his text next week. I'm thankful for him and men and women who stir us on to share the gospel.

[After Mother's Day I'll do one last message on Col 4:10-18](#)

Paul is writing as a prisoner of Rome, where he shared the gospel with the Roman law enforcement officers. Paul knew Jesus is King no matter who is emperor. Paul knew who's in charge - not Caesar – the sovereign Lord. But under the kingship of Christ, Paul still needed human friendship in Christ. That's what he highlights in the last part of this book, gospel relationships.

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, ⁹ and with him Onesimus, our faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you. They will tell you of everything that has taken place here. ¹⁰ Aristarchus my fellow prisoner greets you, and Mark the cousin of Barnabas (concerning whom you have received instructions—if he comes to you, welcome him). We'll stop there today.

PRAY – to be faithful minister and servant to brethren and encourage hearts
Pray also for TBC in Ontario, GL trial tomorrow in Alberta

The phrase 'band of brothers' comes from Shakespeare's play Henry the 8th

- When his countrymen were tempted to think they were defeated, King Henry stands up to urge the English men to courage and to keep going against the French who outnumbered England in battle. He reminded them of past victories together and a bond they shared:

We few, we happy few, we **band of brothers**;
 For he today that sheds his blood with me Shall be my brother; be he ne'er so vile, This day shall gentle his condition; And gentlemen in England now a-bed Shall think themselves accurs'd they were not here, And hold their manhoods cheap whiles any speaks That fought with us upon Saint Crispin's day.

Col 4 ends with Paul's band of brothers, the few, the happy few. Not the few the proud, God's spiritual Marines are the few the humble. These are faithful fellow soldiers. Paul's writing to some in the Lord's army who maybe were tempted to think there had been a defeat with Paul captive by the enemy that greatly outnumbered Christians. Paul gives these words for them to keep going courageously by remembering past victories of the gospel that bound them together. Paul mentions some who had been vile sinners in the past but they had been saved by the shed blood of Jesus that made them brothers. Some in this band had been literally bound together with him in prison or served with him in the trenches, now friends for life.

READ TITLE. 2 parts: Paul's friends & Pursuing relationships like these/
Application for our life together, life groups, life-on-life friendship

Paul's friends:

- 1) one had **steadiness** and encouragement
- 2) one had **sin needing help** to make it right
- 3) one had **stayed with him** in person
- 4) one had **second chances** after a falling out

Colossians is about Christ's preeminence in all things, including friendship.

This isn't just a list of names to skip over or to struggle to try to pronounce. Paul gives more names at the end of Romans where he says all scripture is written for our instruction, hope and encouragement, including this (Rom 16, 15:4). He highlights vital relationships of those he did life together with.

Most of these names aren't very familiar or famous, but they were faithful friends, that's the key point. The kind of friends we need and need to be, too

1st one had steadiness and encouragement – v. 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...*

There was no UPS or FedEx, much less email or text. To get a letter from a prison in Rome to Colossae needed a trusted courier. That was Tychicus.

Tychicus wasn't an impersonal delivery service, Paul says he'd personally deliver a report to the churches about how Paul was doing and encourage their hearts. The end of **Ephesians** says the same thing about Tychicus so it seems likely he delivered that letter on the way and both were shared with the church in Laodicea (**Col 4:16**). There was also a letter to Philemon Paul wrote at this same time we'll come back to when we talk about Onesimus.

Who is Tychicus? He's introduced in Acts 20:5 as a traveling companion of Paul. He was a steady support through the years who Paul could count on to go to Titus in Crete and Timothy in Ephesus to support and encourage them (**Titus 3:12, 2 Tim 4:12**). Notice how he describes him in middle of **Col 4:7**:

He is a beloved brother and faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord.

We see his steadiness as: 1) family, 2) faithful in ministry, 3) fellow servant

FAMILY – *beloved brother ...* who's a beloved brother or sister to you? Do you think of people at church as your *dear* family? Do you act like family to them? Would you go to a family member's funeral, even if you weren't that close, at least to support other family members there? Do we believe what the NT says, we're family in Christ? In 2 weeks we have a memorial for our beloved brother Delton, an opportunity to support Freeman/Dixon family as our family in Christ, our dear sister Louise, his son Mark, kids, grandkids...

FAITHFUL IN MINISTRY – how do you minister/serve? Are you faithful? Are you steady, dependable to be here? Some of you aren't and don't serve much, as far as I know, Sunday to Sunday (or even show up more than 1 or 2 Sundays a month). If you're at a stage of life where you can't serve week in and week out, let me urge you to be faithful by coming and

considering if you can help us at least one time with summer VBS (setup, pre-work, etc.). Or minister by calling homebound, or opening your home in hospitality, etc.

FELLOW SERVANT – literally this is a word for **servicing as a ‘slave with.’** It’s the root word in v. 1 translated ‘*bondservants*’ in the ESV or ‘*slaves*’ in others—here it’s one bound to serve together as slaves of a heavenly Master.

Do you see yourself that way? Do you serve with others? That’s important. If you want to grow in relationship, you grow as you’re serving with others.

Tychicus was known for his steadiness, stability, and reliability. Are you? Can your family in Christ count on you to follow through? I’m convicted as I read of this brother, may God help us be more this kind of friend to others.

A friend of steadiness and **encouragement**—end of v. 8 says he’ll encourage. That’s the Grk word **parakaleo**, literally called to come alongside to help. We get the word *parallel* from it, *paralegal* or *parallel* lines side-by-side.

A sister in Christ needs her heart encouraged so you’re with her by her side as a fellow sister. Or a brother is hurt, think of the word *paramedic* called to help (the **kaleo** in *parakaleo* means **call**). The paramedic gets down with you and stays by your side, makes sure your heart and vitals are ok, stays.

I’ve talked before about sports injuries, you come alongside him to help, you call him to hold onto your arm as he hobbles off the court or field. You support his weight, you exhort him, ‘keep walking, I got you, nice and slow, here put your arm around me, let me help you.’ You’re not urging him from the sidelines or yelling from the stands, you’re with him. It’s just you and him talking, you’re trying to give comfort and strength, alongside spiritually

Heb 10:24-25 commands we all be this type of friend as we gather: ‘*let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another...*’

We all need care, connection and community, and encouraging relationships is the biblical path to that. Don’t wait for others to do that for you, it says you consider one another. Don’t consider your own needs - consider theirs. We’re commanded to set our mind on or strategize how we might stimulate or stir up others to love and good deeds that will stagnate if not stirred up by others. That’s what Hebrews 10 is saying, that a main point of our corporate assembly or meeting together as a church body is encouraging relationships.

And you don’t have to spend a ton of time with someone for a relationship like that, it can start as we assemble together on Sunday, as you encourage someone with your smile, with your greeting, with your words, as you talk to people who look like they could use someone to talk to. Think about who you might invite over or get together with to encourage. Or as you get to know Christians casually, ask how you can pray for them. Consider them.

Let’s be like Tychicus, a friend known for steadiness and encouragement. That’s #1.

In #2 we see a friend who had sin needing help to make right

Some of us and some of our friends have a sinful past and will need help to make it right. Not just people like Tychicus, v. 9: *and with him Onesimus...*

Keep your finger here and go to **Philemon**, a few books forward after Titus, before Hebrews. **Philemon** was the master of **Onesimus**, a runaway slave.

He was an unsaved slave who fled Colossae to Rome. In God's providence he somehow started talking to Paul who knew his master Philemon and the church where his master served. The Colossian church knew Onesimus by name and had maybe been praying for the runaway slave wherever he was?

Philemon v. 10: *I appeal to you for my child, Onesimus, whose father I became in my imprisonment. So Paul had become a spiritual father to him – he became saved and a part of his spiritual family, his dear child in the faith. ¹¹ (Formerly he was useless to you, but now he is indeed useful to you and to me.) ¹² I am sending him back to you, sending my very heart.*

Paul had helped Onesimus understand he needed to make things right with Philemon now that they're family in Christ. Paul convinced him to go back, **v. 16** says to Philemon: *no longer as a bondservant but more than a bondservant, as a beloved brother—especially to me, but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord. ¹⁷ So if you consider me your partner, receive him as you would receive me. ¹⁸ If he has wronged you at all, or owes you anything, charge that to my account. ¹⁹ I, Paul, write this with my own hand: I will repay...* Paul's willing to pay the costs of loss, to make any restitution or right any wrong. Friends and family want to see restoration and are willing to sacrifice resources and time to bring brethren together.

It took humility to go back, Paul helped him in that, you can go back to **Col 4**

We'll sing in a bit 'how good it is, When the family of God
Dwells together in spirit, In faith and unity.
Where the bonds of peace, Of acceptance and love
Are the fruit of His presence Here among us...
Oh how good it is, To embrace His command
To prefer one another, forgive as He forgives'³

Onesimus was forgiven and was family. A sinful past didn't disqualify him from fellowship or even faithful service. Col 4:9 says Onesimus is now '*our **faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you.** They will tell you of everything that has taken place here.*' Paul apparently wanted him to speak before the church, too, some think Onesimus became a leader of the church.

He could have made excuses justifying not returning to Philemon. It would have been easier to stay far away than to reconcile, but Paul was too good a friend to let him get away with staying away. Do you have relationships with people who will help you with your sin and help you make things right with others, where needed? Will you seek help? Are there wrongs you need to make right with one another? Will you be a friend who's a peacemaker?

3rd kind of friend in God's Word here: **one that stayed with him in person**

¹⁰ *Aristarchus my fellow prisoner greets you...*

The **book of Acts** tells us Aristarchus stayed with Paul through the ups and downs of his missionary journey. His name first appears in **Acts 19**, when there was a riot in Ephesus, and it says with Paul they dragged Aristarchus, his Macedonian travel companion, into the theater, their life was in danger.

Paul wanted to speak to the raging crowd, but this friend wisely didn't let him, along with the other disciples. It says these '*friends of his, sent to him and were urging him not to venture into the theater... for about two hours [the mob] all cried out with one voice, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!"*

In **Acts 20**, Aristarchus was with Paul in Troas where poor Eutychus fell out the 3rd story window asleep and died. That was a low point of the friendship but it turned into a high point when Paul raised him from the dead and kept preaching. Then in **Acts 21-26** is Paul's arrest and trials, and **Acts 27** says Aristarchus was with Paul during the shipwreck where they all almost died.

Through many dangers, toils, and snares they had both come and he stayed with Paul all the while. Aristarchus was a friend in person, even in prison.

This is the kind of friend Paul wanted to be in person with others. Look at **Col 2:1**: *For I want you to know how great a struggle I have for you and for those at Laodicea and for all who have not seen me face to face,* ² *that their hearts may be encouraged [phrase in **Col 4**], being **knit together in love...***

- The Bible says '**face to face...a man speaks to his friend**' (**Ex 33:11**)
- Without that, hearts are discouraged, and not knit together in love.
- Many haven't seen each other face to face or only see half of a face.
- God designed us for unhindered speech and smiles we see on faces.
- God made communication to be interpersonal, non-verbal, and facial.
- It's not good to hinder close fellowship, face-to-face, this is essential.

Friends say things together, they stay together and pray together. **Question #6** on your handout: 'How is Aristarchus staying with Paul through it all an example to us about being with friends?' Think: are you a friend who stays?

Friend #4: There's one last friend in **Col 4:10**, he actually originally didn't stay with Paul:

*'...and **Mark** the cousin of Barnabas (concerning whom you have received instructions...'*

This was one friend that had a falling out with Paul earlier.

Acts 12 says Mark and Barnabas both came with Paul from Jerusalem, but Mark went back in the next chapter. **Acts 15** says '*Barnabas wanted to take with them John called Mark.* ³⁸ *But Paul thought best not to take with them one who had withdrawn from them in Pamphylia and had not gone with them to the work.* ³⁹ *And there arose a sharp disagreement, so that they separated from each other. Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus,* ⁴⁰ *but*

Paul chose Silas and departed ... KJV says ‘the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other’.

But by **Col 4** Paul had evidently reconciled with Mark and says at the end of **v. 10**: ‘*if he comes to you, welcome him.*’ Whatever Mark’s failing in the past and falling out with Paul, he wasn’t second-class, friends give second chances.

Paul’s last letter goes further, here’s part of Paul’s dying wish in **2 Tim 4:11**: ‘**Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is very useful to me for ministry.**’ Friendships restored can be very useful. Don’t write people off, God writes people into His Word who He makes useful and we’re to welcome. We may sharply disagree but shouldn’t divide in Christ. PTL Peter wasn’t written off for his failings or fear. PTL his name is written in here and also the 2nd book of the NT: this is the Mark who’s written The Gospel According to **Mark!**

Let’s be encouraged to be friends like these and pursue friendships like these. As we come to communion, it’s good to think if there’s someone you disagree with or have a falling out with you’ve been avoiding. Welcome them and if there’s things you need to make right, commit to do that. If you have sin you need help to make right, do it, if you need prayer, WM sister and elder upfront.

Who is your band of brothers or sister? Here’s how one says it: ‘what do you think of or how do you think of [your church family]? As we read this passage – ask yourself the question “Do I ever think or talk about my fellow Christian brothers and sisters like this [“beloved”]? As we look at each of these [friends] and what they did with and for Paul we should examine our own affections for one another – as well as how far we are willing to go for one another.’ God help us to be friends like this, starting with being friendly with those we don’t know. Do it for Jesus who calls us His friends, **Jn 15:13**.

If human ‘friends despise, forsake thee? Take it to the Lord in prayer...
 What a Friend we have in Jesus, All our sins and griefs to bear!...
 Can we find a friend so faithful, Who will all our sorrows share?
 Jesus knows our ev’ry weakness: Take it to the Lord in prayer.

¹ <https://crosscountersmin.com/featured-article/no-matter-whos-president/>

² <https://crosscountersmin.com/featured-article/police-lives-matter/>

³ Getty Music, “Oh How Good It Is!”