



The Sermon

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Colossians 4:7-11

"Tough Times, Faithful Supporters"

August 20, 2023

TRANSCRIPT

The title of this message is "Tough Times, Faithful Supporters. Tough Times, Faithful Supporters." Beginning in verse 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.

"Aristarchus, my fellow prisoner, sends you his greetings; and also Barnabas' cousin Mark (about whom you received instructions; if he comes to you, welcome him); and also Jesus who is called Justus; these are the only fellow workers for the kingdom of God who are from the circumcision, and they have proved to be an encouragement to me." Let us go to the Lord in prayer.

[Prayer] Father, these verses are a part of Your living and active word, inspired. You have breathed out these words from Your mouth; and they are inerrant and infallible; and we know that they are relevant and practical. So help all this come together for us today as we look at this passage, and I pray great encouragement would come from it. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. [End]

In these verses we see many faithful supporters of the apostle Paul gathered around him as he is in prison, and the reason for this is quite simple, that a strong man attracts strong men. A strong man who is strong in the word of God is like a magnet, and he draws other men as the word of God is being ministered. Strong men want to stand with a strong man. They don't want to stand with a weak man who compromises the word of God and who equivocates sound doctrine. No, men want to stand with a strong man who preaches the word of God, a man who's strong in convictions, a man who's strong in the truth, a man who is strong in sound doctrine; and this was precisely what we see in these verses.

The apostle Paul is in his first Roman imprisonment, but he is not here alone. He's under house arrest. He's not in a prison cell, per se, he is in a house that is to be rented, and it is large enough to accommodate other people. There are Praetorian Guard, Roman guards from Caesar's household, that are being rotated through the house, and they are in the house. But as we look at these verses, and beyond these verses, we see the names of eight men who are all standing with Paul in this house, as he is chained to Roman soldiers, as he is in prison for two long years. Yet nevertheless, these men must stand with Paul. They want to encourage him, because he's been such an encouragement to them. They want to serve Paul, because Paul has served them the best of truth. They want to attach themselves to him, because he has attached them to the Lord, to the Lord Jesus Christ.

I know something of this. When I travel overseas, when I go to London, the first place I go is to Smithfield and I want to go to that plaque on the back of Saint Bartholomew's Hospital where it says that John Rogers was burned at the stake here by Bloody Mary. It was 500 years ago; but I just want to stand where the man of God stood for the truth, where he was marched to the stake, and I want to stand in a sense of loyalty to the truth that this man stood for.

I then go to Bunhill Fields, which is where the Puritans, many of the Puritans are buried. And there is John Bunyan, and there is John Owen, and Isaac Watts,, and Thomas Goodwin and luminaries, so many Puritans that

they're stacked up in graves, some of them containing 12, 15, 20 corpses stacked up. And the reason they're there is because they were not allowed to enter the city of London. They were not allowed to even be buried in the city of London. And so I want to go there and I just want to stand there, though again, separated them by 400 years. I'm just drawn to strong men, and I want to stand with them. That's why I teach at Master's Seminary where John McArthur is the pastor. And that's why I've worked with the Ligonier Ministries with R. C. Sproul. I want to stand with strong men.

And that is what we see taking place here. These are men who are drawn to the apostle Paul, "And if he's going to prison, then we're going to prison. If he is in the midst of tough times, then we're going to be in the midst of tough times, because he brings the truth to us."

We come to the last section of the book of Colossians in verse 7, it extends to the end of the chapter, and we'll take today and next Lord's Day to finish out the book of Colossians. And as we look at these verses, in verses 7-18, or to 16 - my eyes are getting a little older, okay; and then there's verse 17 and 18. I forgot to turn the page. Yeah. So why would you stand with a man who doesn't turn the page?

We see these men who gathered around and rallied around the apostle Paul. And this is very important. I think each one of us needs to know what it is to stand with a strong man. Especially in these days of effeminate men, a strong man should be the magnet that draws us.

So, I want us to look at the first five men today, verses 7-11, and we'll just work our way through this. And I think the practicality of this for your life is that you will be able to relate to these men, some more than others; but there is a very practical application for us to be like these men in different ways.

So, the first man that we see is in verses 7 and 8, his name is Tychicus. That's not a disease, by the way. There is a cure. Tychicus - and I want to

call him "a faithful servant, a faithful servant." And so we read here at the beginning, "As to all of my affairs," - and he's referring to what has taken place inside his imprisonment; he just begins with the name - "Tychicus." I want to stop right there: Tychicus. And I want to tell you a little bit about this man, because you're not as familiar with him as you are, say, Peter or John or James.

Tychicus. Who is Tychicus? Well, he's been shoulder to shoulder with Paul. He's been at his side for the last several years. We first pick up on Tychicus in Ephesus on Paul's third missionary journey; and Paul was in Ephesus for three years; and that is where we first see the name Tychicus. And as Paul was there for three years, we have every reason to believe that Tychicus was converted under the preaching of the apostle Paul here in Ephesus. And that just binds your heart to someone.

I think of different people who have been converted to Christ under my preaching, and I will never forget them, and I am welded to them, and I think in a special way they are somewhat welded to me. It forms a unique relationship, that God used me in some small way to help bring you to faith in Jesus Christ. And that's part of the bond here between Tychicus and the apostle Paul, such that whenever Paul is in trouble, Tychicus is going to be in trouble with him. And there was a riot that broke out in Ephesus. It was not an easy time to be a supporter of the apostle Paul. I mean, you would be putting yourself in the line of fire to identify with Paul; and yet Tychicus did even when Paul is creating a riot.

Then when Paul travels from Ephesus to Jerusalem, Paul has taken up a collection from the churches in Galatia, from the Gentile churches, and he's going to bring this financial collection to the Jewish believers in Jerusalem, as they're going through a difficult time. And so as Paul makes this long journey, Tychicus says, "If you're leaving town, I'm leaving town. I'm going with you." And there is a loyalty, and there's an allegiance, because "Paul is the man who brought the truth to me, and I am going to be connected to him."

And so once Paul comes to Jerusalem, Paul is arrested. But Tychicus stays with him, he doesn't jump ship. And Paul is taken to Caesarea to stand trial. And there's a plot to assassinate the apostle Paul. Tychicus hangs in there. There could not be a more dangerous place to be than near the apostle Paul, and he's there. And so Paul appeals to Caesar in Rome, and he will have to travel, he'll have to sail the Mediterranean Sea to Rome, land at the coast and then walk to Rome. Tychicus is a part of the journey.

And Paul underwent a shipwreck on the way to Rome. Tychicus was in the boat with him. And when Paul goes down into the sea, so does Tychicus go down. And once he arrives in Rome, Paul's immediately put into chains. He's put into this house; Paul will even have to pay the rent for this house. Well, Tychicus decides, "I'm going to stay with you for this two years in this house; and if you're in prison, then I'm going to sit here with you, and I'm going to try to encourage you, and I'm going to try to support you." Tychicus doesn't have to be here, but he is "so committed to the man who brought me the truth of the word of God that I have to stay with you."

So, while Paul is there in this first imprisonment, he writes four letters, they're known as Paul's prison letters. He writes - you'll recognize them - Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon. Well, after Paul writes Colossians, how does he get the letter to the church at Colossae? Well, you guessed it. He hands it to Tychicus and he says, "I want you now to take this letter; and not only this letter, I'm going to give you the book of Ephesians, and most probably, I'm going to give you the book of Philemon. I'm going to give you these three divinely inspired books to take to the church in Colossae.

Well, that wasn't an easy trip, it was very dangerous. So what Tychicus had to do as he would pull out of Rome and head east. He has to cross much of Italy on foot. He has to sail across the Adriatic Sea. He has to then cross Greece on foot. He then has to sail across another sea, the Aegean Sea. Once it lands, he then has to get back on foot and travel almost a hundred miles to the city of Colossae. I mean, this was an enormous sacrifice, and it was a huge commitment; but Tychicus is all in. He is a turbo force for God.

He is devoted to Christ, he is devoted to the word of God, he is devoted to the gospel; so therefore, he is devoted to Paul, who brought him the gospel.

Tychicus is making a heroic commitment to serve God by serving the apostle Paul. And then really, serving the church at Colossae, and the church at Ephesus, and serving Philemon as well. This is a man that you and I need to emulate in our service for the Lord Jesus Christ. I mean, just when we think we're committed, and just when we think we've made a sacrifice, we read about someone like this, and we realize, "You know, I'm not there yet in being fully devoted to do whatever it takes to serve the Lord."

Now please note how Paul describes Tychicus in verse 7. He gives a threefold description, and each of these is important. He says, "our beloved brother." "Brother" means that he's a true believer in Jesus Christ, he's in the family of God. And "he's beloved," meaning he's greatly loved, deeply loved. And though Paul was a towering intellect, he also had a flaming heart for people as well.

And then he was referred to as "faithful servant." Nothing greater could be said about someone else than that they are a faithful servant. And the word "faithful" means trustworthy, reliable, sure. It's the word "servant" though that most captures my attention here. You know what a servant is. A servant is someone who has lowered themselves to give themselves to meet needs in the lives of other people. And nothing greater could be said about any man or woman than that they are a servant.

Jesus said in Matthew 20:26, hear this: "Whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant," just the opposite of the world. Greatness in the world is going up the ladder; in the kingdom of God, it's going down, it's to humble yourself. Jesus said in Matthew 23:11, "The greatest among you shall be your servant." So as we look around here today, and if we can only see as God sees and know what God knows, and we were to ask ourselves, "Who is the greatest here today? Who is the most like Christ here today?" It's a simple answer. It is whoever is the servant of all that is the

greatest. And then Jesus said in Mark 9:35, "If anyone wants to be first, he shall be last and servant of all."

So these statements by Christ, really, accurately describe Tychicus. He was a faithful servant. Tychicus lived not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life to others. Tychicus was not a taker, he was a giver. Tychicus took the path of greatest resistance in his service for God, not the path of least resistance. So he stands as an example for each and every one of us here today, which really begs the question, "How sacrificial are you in your service for the Lord? Do you only serve when it's easy, or do you serve when it's an inconvenience and it requires a great sacrifice on your part?"

In addition to be a servant, I can't pass over this other word: "faithful." Do you see the word "faithful"? When you marry these two words together it causes Tychicus to just stand out like a bright star on a dark night, because being faithful is another mark of true greatness. And when we stand before the Lord on the last day, and if we have run the race as He has laid it before us, what will he say to us? "Well done, good and faithful servant, or slave."

So what does faithfulness mean? It means that you do what you're assigned by Him to do. It means that you do what you say you're going to do. It means that you do it consistently, and wholeheartedly, and constantly, and punctually. And this was Tychicus; he was a faithful servant.

And then he adds, "fellow bond-servant." You see that in verse 7? Paul is just stacking up, really, expressions that profile that this man in an extraordinary way. I mean, would you not like for this to be on your tombstone? I mean, would you not like for this to be on your spiritual resume? Would you not like for the apostle Paul of all people to say this about you?

Now, "fellow bond-servant" is one word in the original language and it just means slave with another. It doesn't even mean servant here, it means slave. And there's a prefix in the front that means with another; and so you are a

slave with another, and that other is Paul. And so what is happening here is Tychicus, of his own choice, becomes a slave so that he can sit next to Paul, who has become a slave. This is amazing. And he's a fellow slave in the Lord - Do you see that? - meaning in the Lord's work, in the Lord's kingdom, in gospel work. And he says, "will bring you information." So clearly, Paul is sending Tychicus from Rome to the church in Colossae with this letter, "and he will bring you more information than what is even found here in this letter." So he explains that in verse 8 a little bit further.

He says, "For I" - Paul - "have sent him" - Tychicus - "to you for this very purpose, that you may know about our circumstances," - the word "circumstances" is an interesting word, it just means around, and "what's going on around me" is what he is saying - "and he" - Tychicus - "may encourage your hearts." Of course, he's going to encourage their hearts. That's who he is, that's what he does. He's a team player. He's always encouraging Paul, and he's encouraging the others who are in this house with Paul; and when he shows up in Colossae, he's going to encourage them. He's not a part of the problem, he's a part of the solution, and he's always putting into the lives of other people.

I don't know if you've ever noticed this before, but all people in the world, they either drain it out of you, or other kind of people put something into you. And Tychicus is one of these; he's not sucking the life out of people, he's actually putting life by encouraging them as he is with them. So what an example he sets for us.

I'll put it this way: he was a servant of the servant. And if the greatest among you is the servant of all, then how much greater must be the servant of the servant. What a great man was Tychicus; and I hope that he challenges you and encourages you to serve others in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Don't be just a taker, be a giver, and serve others. That's this man, and he went to extraordinary lengths to be this.

This leads us now to the second man, he's in verse 9. His name is Onesimus, and I want to call him "a forgiven slave." We go on to read in verse 9, "and



with him Onesimus." With Tychicus he's going to be sending Onesimus. So they're going to go together from Rome to Colossae. They will be a travel team together as they carry the book of Colossians.

Now I need to give you some background information about Onesimus. He originally was from Colossae, and he was a slave in Colossae; and he was unconverted, he wasn't a believer. And we don't know what all took place, but he became fed up; and we don't know what the circumstances were, but we can imagine in the middle of the night, he bolts and he escapes from his master whose name was Philemon. There's a whole book in the Bible in the New Testament called Philemon. That was his master. And he runs away, and all roads lead to Rome.

And Onesimus goes to Rome. Why would you go to Rome? Because there's so many people. There's probably a million people in Rome at this time. It's easy to lose yourself in a crowd of a million people, right? So you're not going to go to a small city, you're going to go to a large city. And he goes to Rome, and in the providence of God, the strange providence of God, somehow, someway, he ends up in Paul's house. No doubt, someone took him by the hand and said, "You've got to come see the apostle Paul," and he shows up, and Paul shares the gospel with him, and Paul leads him to faith in Jesus Christ.

Now we know there's no such thing as an accident. This was all a part of God's sovereign plan. Onesimus was one of the elect of God from before the foundation of the world, and God is going to move heaven and earth to set the circumstances to get the gospel to him at the appointed time, and God will regenerate his heart; and that's what happened to Onesimus, and he was dramatically changed. Of course, he was. Whenever anyone is saved, the old things have passed away; behold, new things have come. He's become a new creature in Christ Jesus.

So he's under the discipleship of Paul in this house, and he's wanting to know, "So, what's God's will for my life? What's next?" and what Paul says to Onesimus is, "You're going to have to go back. You're going to have to

go back to Colossae, and you're going to have to go back to your master, and you're going to have to present yourself to Philemon, and that's what you're going to have to do." And so Onesimus is very humble, and he is a changed man; and if this is the will of God – and it is – then he agrees to go on this journey back to Philemon, go back to Colossae, "Go back into Philemon's house and represent yourself as a slave, but now as a brother in Christ."

So that's why Paul says what he does now in verse 9. As he writes this in the book of Colossians – and just a footnote. Can you imagine, once this letter is there, and the pastor stands up and reads this to the whole congregation, and then exposit it; and Philemon's in the congregation and he hears Onesimus' name and that he now is here? Wow, the gospel changes everything, doesn't it?

And so he calls him in verse 9, "our faithful and beloved brother." What a sweet thing to say, because that's exactly what he said about Tychicus. Tychicus has been with him for years; Onesimus, who knows how long – weeks, months? And yet, he has the same status in the kingdom of God, and he has the same love from Paul for him as he does for Tychicus. So he says, "our faithful" – you remember what that means: trustworthy, reliable – "and beloved" – meaning greatly loved – "brother."

Paul vouches for the validity of his conversion. He doesn't want people in Colossae to doubt the genuineness of his confession of faith in Jesus Christ. So the apostle Paul, so that they will not keep him at arm's length when he comes back and hang this around his neck, Paul now tells them, "he's our brother in Christ, and you are to receive him as a brother in Christ. You're not the exercise church discipline on him. He has repented, and he has believed in the gospel, and he has a clean slate now. He's a new creature in Christ." And then he adds, "he's one of your number, he's one of your members now in the church." And Paul has done a great service for Onesimus to help weave him now back into the fabric of his former life.

And then he adds, "They will inform you about the whole situation here." That's Tychicus and Onesimus. They've got a lot to inform the church at Colossae about. They need to tell them, bring them up to speed on the conversion of the Praetorian Guard that are coming through the house. They need to bring them up to speed on all these people who are around Paul. They need to bring them up to speed on the financial gift that the church at Philippi has sent to them. And most of all, they need to bring them up to speed on Onesimus' conversion. And it was very wise of Paul to have Tychicus be there so that Onesimus isn't just making up this testimony to cover his backside. No, Tychicus, "We know Tychicus is loyal to Paul and is at his side," and Tychicus also validates the reality and genuineness of the conversion of Onesimus.

Now here's why this may be encouraging to you. Onesimus is a law-breaker. Onesimus is a criminal. Onesimus is not in right standing under the law; and yet, he's now a Christian, and now he has a new life, and he has a new direction, and he is to be received in the body of Christ as a full believer. Maybe you have a soiled past. Maybe you have broken the law. Maybe you need to be reminded that God is the God of a second chance. If God can take someone like Moses who was a murderer and use him, then maybe God can use you. If God can take a harlot like Rahab and use her, then he can surely use you. Onesimus is a great encouragement to all of us that God takes us where we are and He takes us to where we need to be. And God does not take perfect people, He takes imperfect, flawed vessels and reshapes them into the image of Jesus Christ. It's called grace.

Well, the third person is Aristarchus - he's at the first part of verse 10 - and we'll call him "a fellow prisoner." In verse 10 he begins by saying, "Aristarchus, my fellow prisoner sends, you his greetings." Now he sends his greetings because he's not a part of these two men who are going back to Colossae, he's staying with Paul in Rome, so the best he can do at this point is send his greetings.

Now, who is Aristarchus? Well, Aristarchus was a Jewish convert, a Jewish believer with a Greek name. He came from Thessalonica where Paul had been in Acts 17, and he met Paul during his three-year ministry in Ephesus -

that's in Acts 19 and the very beginning of 20 as they leave Ephesus. And so Aristarchus is like Tychicus in that he was in Ephesus when there was a mob scene that surrounded the apostle Paul, and all kinds of turmoil and chaos. And it was not an easy time to be standing near Paul, because things would be thrown at Paul; they may end up hitting you. And as Paul will be treated so roughly, it could very easily be they're going to grab the person standing next to Paul and do the same to him.

But Aristarchus is committed to the man who has preached the word of God, and no trouble is going to drive a wedge between him and Paul. And so Paul in Acts 20:4, he leaves Ephesus and he goes to Jerusalem with this collection of money. Well Aristarchus goes with him: "You leave town, I'm leaving town." And there in Jerusalem he's arrested, he's sent to Caesarea, stands trials, and from Caesarea he sails across the Mediterranean Sea to near Rome in Europe where he will be imprisoned. Well, Aristarchus is a part of that. And it was not an easy journey, nor an easy trip. It involved a shipwreck. But Aristarchus stuck it out, and he's there for the entire two years of Paul's imprisonment.

I mean, what kind of commitment is this? What kind of loyalty is this, I mean especially in a day like today, where people just jump churches like they're playing checkers, and move from one spiritual leader to another like you're scrolling through the Internet? I mean, these men held tight and stuck with Paul through thick and thin. And so Paul calls him, "my fellow prisoner." Again, he was never arrested - Aristarchus - and he was never thrown into prison, he chose to be there, because Paul had been arrested, and Paul had been thrown into prison, "and so I'm going to stand with the man of God who preaches the word of God." Well, he says, "he too sends his greetings."

Well, what do we learn from Aristarchus? Well, I think we learn that there can always be a price to pay for supporting a strong man, because he's usually pretty controversial, and he usually lives in the line of fire; and for those who support him, it may cost you your circle of friends, it may cost you your reputation, it may cost you a life of ease, it may cost you personal resources, it may cost you your downtime or free time. But if called upon,

whatever the circumstance might be, you need to have an allegiance to strong spiritual leaders.

This leads us now to Mark at the end of verse 10. He's our fourth name that we see here. And we'll call Mark "a former failure," because that's exactly what he was. In fact, we're surprised to even see his name show up in this letter, and the reason for that is he has failed Paul in the past, he's failed him miserably. So let me just give a little background.

We read here in the middle of verse 10, "also Barnabas' cousin Mark." Just to remind you, in Acts 13 when God called the apostle Paul to the mission field, he called Barnabas with him; so those two set out. And after they had pulled out of Antioch, Barnabas says, "Let me get my cousin, his name is Mark. He'll be a help to us. He's a young man, and this will be a great experience for him, and he'll learn a lot about ministry, this will be a learning experience for him, so we'll bring him along."

Well, it's not but a few verses later that Mark goes AWOL, he bails out. When the going got tough, he got out of town and left the apostle Paul stranded to carry on his ministry with just Barnabas. And so when they finished this first missionary journey - it's at the end of Acts 14 - they come back to Antioch. There is then the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15, and Barnabas says to Paul, "As we head out on the second missionary journey, we need to take Mark with us." Paul goes, "Mark? You're talking about the one who just bailed out, who failed us miserably, who fell flat on his face, who was so unfaithful and untrustworthy; that Mark?" Well, yeah. We want to bring him." Paul says, "No way, he's not on my ministry team. What God has called me to is far too important for this to be amateur hour. He's not coming with us." And so there was a great friction that took place between Barnabas and Paul, and Barnabas pulls out.

Well, that's barely a speed bump for the apostle Paul. And Paul grabbed some other men, and he heads on for the second missionary journey. But here is Mark now. Earlier, he went back to mama, he was such a weak man.

Well, we don't know the circumstances, but somehow, some way, he comes under the tutelage of Peter, the apostle Peter, Mark does.

Well, they have a lot in common, because Peter's been a failure too. Peter was the one who denied the Lord three times. Remember that? Peter knows what it is to fall flat on your face and disappoint the Lord in real life, real-time ministry. And so Peter takes Mark under his arm and nurtures him and restores him to a place now where Mark has grown up and he's matured.

And so now all of a sudden we're reading Mark's name. We don't know how he got here, but we know that Paul has now received him back into his fellowship, and has received him back into what we might call his inner circle; and it's an amazing story, because Mark continues to be faithful even after Paul's death, and he goes on to write the second gospel in the New Testament, the gospel of Mark. That's pretty good.

And so at the end of verse 10, Paul writes, "(about whom" - referring to Mark - "you received instructions; if he" - Mark - "comes to you, welcome him)." Why would he say that? Well, he knows the church at Colossae is so loyal to Paul that "if you have abandoned Paul in ministry, then we don't want you here, we want you to go grow up." And Paul has to say this at the end of verse 10, so that "if and when Mark does come to Colossae, take him into your arms and into your heart and receive him."

So, what do we learn from this? Well, we learn that we can fail the Lord; and depending upon what that failure is, God is a God of a second chance. And God uses men who have proved to be immature in earlier years. After giving them time to grow up and be more anchored in their faith, there's a back door to come back into God's work. I don't know how this would connect with anyone here today, but John Mark should be an encouragement to you, that if you have blown it, if you have proven to be unfaithful to the Lord, it doesn't mean that everything has to be over. Failure is never final as long as there is the grace of God, and John Mark is a stellar example of this.

Well, there's one more name that we need to look at and then we'll be finished, and that is in verse 11, this man who was such a positive encourager to the apostle Paul. And so, we begin verse 11, "and also Jesus" – and just so we're not mixed up on this – "who is called Justus." Not Jesus of Nazareth. I mean, Jesus was a very common name, that's why he's referred to as Jesus of Nazareth in the gospel accounts. This is a different Jesus obviously. It's a very common name, Jesus, which means savior. It comes from the Hebrew word for "Joshua," which means savior, "who is called Justus."

Now the interesting thing about Justus is we don't know anything about him. There's nothing else known about him. If it wasn't for this verse, we wouldn't even have known he existed. And from this, we can conclude that he was a behind-the-scenes supporter, that he was out of the spotlight. He was filling in as there were needs. I mean, someone like this never stands on a platform like this and preaches to large numbers of people. Someone like this never sings a solo. Someone like this never writes a book that others read. But someone like this is vitally important to the work of the kingdom of God, because ministry is a team sport, and we all have a position to play on the team, and we all have to play our position. And Justus played his position, whatever that was; but this is just like just dropping his name in and like this little hint and pull back the veil, let us just see him ever so briefly, and then close it back up, and not tell us anything more about him. We don't need to know anything more about him, just that God knows he's there, and God has used him in a positive way. And you say, "How did God use him?" We know by the end of the verse how God used him; and you can't even put a price tag on this usefulness.

So notice how this continues: "these are the fellow workers for the kingdom of God who are from the circumcision," – referring to Justus, Mark, and Aristarchus; they are Jews who have been converted under the gospel and are now a part of a gentile church. And notice how he ends verse 11 – "and they proved to be an encouragement to me." You think that meant something to the apostle Paul as he spent four years in a prison cell?

Paul was not Superman. In fact, he did have times of discouragement and be downcast. Second Corinthians 1 talks about Paul's emotional life. And to

have someone like this in your ear is like putting wind into the sails of a ship. It's like putting high octane gas into a tank in your car just to propel you forward. The gift of encouragement is an extraordinary gift that every spiritual leader needs, because he's always on the front lines of spiritual warfare, and he's always facing much opposition and persecution. He's always in the line of fire. He's always the one who's targeted out. He's like the tallest tree in the forest draws the lightning in the electrical storm. And that was the apostle Paul; and he is being hit at from every side. And to have someone like Justus sitting next to you and being so positive and being so affirming and being so encouraging, he is one of the most valuable people in Paul's life who is actually helping keeping Paul going with a positive mental focus and a heart attitude. Praise the Lord for people like this; they just go through life encouraging others. And perhaps, no one more so than the one who's on the front line of spiritual battle who needs this kind of encouragement like Paul.

No one else sees this. Paul knows about it, and Christ knows about it, and God knows about it. And there's a verse that flashes into my mind that I want to give you, and I think it should be an encouragement to every one of us here today. It's Matthew 10:42. Jesus said, "Whoever in the name of a disciple gives to one of these little ones even a cup of cold water to drink, he shall not lose his reward." Now in context, I don't think He's talking about working in the nursery here; though you will get a great reward if you work in the nursery. You will also get earplugs if you work in the nursery, but you will get a great reward.

When He says, "little ones, give a cup of cold water to one of these little ones," He's referring to one of His disciples, these who are new in the faith, young in the faith. And as they are preaching the gospel, as they're going from town to town, and as they are on the move and they are being stretched to the limit, "if you come alongside of one of My disciples as they're preaching the gospel and you just give them even a cup of cold water, heaven sees that, and it will be remembered on the last day, and you will be rewarded because you played a vital part in spreading the word of God by keeping God's servant going as he's preaching the word of God." That's what this verse means.



And so someone like Justus is exactly like this verse, giving a cup of cold water to Paul, saying, "Paul, we can do this. God can do this. Paul, don't give up. Paul, keep preaching the word. We have no idea how the word is impacting people out there. Paul, God is using you. Paul, God's hand is on you. Paul, I'm praying for you."

That's Justus. And that needs to be like all of us here today, encouraging those around us: a wife encouraging her husband, a husband encouraging his wife; a flock encouraging the elders, the elders encouraging the flock. It's north, south, east, west; it cuts in every direction. We all need someone like Justus in our life, breathing hope and encouragement into our soul.

Well, these are the first five men in this list. And as I said, this is an unusual passage, but it speaks volumes to the kind of people whom God uses. He uses people just like you and me.

Now as I close this, to raise the question again, "Why were they so committed to Paul?" Because they believed in the message that Paul brought. And what was that message? I think it can be succinctly summarized in 1 Corinthians 1:23, "We preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles."

Paul preached the blood of Christ. Paul preached the death of Christ as the only atonement for sins. Paul preached the one true, pure gospel; and so therefore, they were loyal to Paul, not because of Paul, per se, but because of the message that he brought. And so, here today, if you've never committed your life to Christ, I call you to believe in Christ, who was crucified upon Calvary's cross, who poured out His rich red royal blood and made the only sacrifice for sins that will take away the guilt and the condemnation of those who are sinners. And so if you've never believed upon Jesus Christ, I call you this day, this very moment; I urge you, I plead with you, do not procrastinate any longer. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved. Let us pray.

[Prayer] Father in heaven, thank You for these five men who lived 2,000 years ago that we have looked at today. I pray that You would incorporate character qualities in their lives into our life, and help make us be the embodiment of this kind of loyalty and this kind of allegiance. May you raise up strong men in this church for families to rally around, and raise up strong Bible teachers for classes to rally around. Give us men like the apostle Paul, in Jesus' name. Amen. [End]

And we want to take the Lord's Supper. And as you came in, you should have received one of these; and if you have not, hold your hand, and we would love to bring one to you. As we take the Lord's Supper, just to remind you of the very basics, the night before Jesus was crucified, He instituted what is known as the Lord's Supper. He gathered with His disciples in the upper room, and He broke bread, and He gave it to them, and He said, "This is My body which is given for you." It wasn't His real body, the bread just is a picture of His body. And then He took a cup of wine and passed it to the disciples, and He said, "This is the new covenant that's in My blood; drink this is often as you meet."

And so what we're doing right now is exactly what the Lord requested, we're just not in an upper room, and we just don't have a loaf of bread and a jug of purple wine. But as we hold this, the significance and the meaning of this is still the same.

Now there's two requirements to take this. This is not for everybody. Number one, you have to be a true believer in Jesus Christ. This is not for outsiders, this is for insiders. And only believers in Jesus Christ are in the kingdom of God, everyone else is an outsider, they are outside the kingdom of God; and if you're outside the kingdom of God, this is not for you. We pray that God will use your observation of this to bring you into the kingdom as you observe what this is about. But this is only for the family, the family of God. You do not have to be a member of this church to take this, but you have to be a member of the kingdom of God to take this.

The second requirement is that you take it in a worthy manner, and that means that you come with humility and contrition of heart. It means that you confess whatever known sin there is that would be flashing in front of your mind. It means that you take this with a very sincere faith, a very heartfelt faith. And so if you meet those two requirements, then we invite you to take the Lord's Supper.

We begin with the bread; and you may want to peel open the bread. And the bread, it's like an object lesson; it's like a picture of the body of Christ. It is intended to remind us that Jesus Christ, the second Person of the Trinity, was born of a virgin. He took upon Himself a human nature and a human body, and He lived among us, and He obeyed God throughout the entirety of his life; and when He went to the cross, He was actually crucified on a cross, and our sins were laid upon Christ, and 1 Peter 2:24 says, "He bore our sins in His body upon the cross."

And so our sins have been taken off of us and laid upon Christ. The worst about us, laid upon Christ; and He has taken our sins far, far away, never to be seen again, to come back up and to condemn us. They are as far as the east is from the west. So far has he removed our transgressions from us; "there is now therefore no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."

This is the most important thing in your life. It's the most important thing in my life. This is not a trivial moment, this is a transcendent moment for us in our mind and in our heart to go back 2,000 years to Mount Calvary, as the Son of God was laid on the ground on a cross and nailed to the cross, and the cross was hoisted up; and there He hung suspended between heaven and earth, and became our sin-bearer upon the cross. And the Bible says, "Him who knew no sin, God made to be sin for us."

God made Him to be our sin-bearer upon that cross. And for us as believers today as we take this bread, we are to remember that the heavy weight and burden of sin is no longer on our shoulders. It was placed upon Christ, and it crushed Him. But He took our sins unto Himself and took them far away from us, never to raise their ugly head again.

What took place at the cross is the most important thing that has ever happened in the history of the world. And if you're a Christian, it's the most important thing that has ever happened in your life. Nothing else even comes close. So this is not just a way we close the service, this is the most vital, important thing being represented in our life, and this is what Jesus designed for us to do.

So we read, "The Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, 'This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me.'" We do it together, and we do remember.

Now if you would take the other side of this and peel the top off, and there's grape juice inside, and it is to be a reminder to us of the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ that was shed upon the cross. And let us remember that without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sin. Blood represents the life of one given in place of another, the life of one given unto death.

And so as Jesus hung upon the cross, He shed His blood, He poured out His blood; and as He poured out His blood, He made the sacrifice for our sins that washes away our sins, that purges our guilt-stained soul to make it pure and clean before God. That took place 2,000 years ago, and it was made real in your life the moment you were converted to Christ. There is no saving power in this. If I drop this, nothing is lost. It is simply a reminder and a picture to us of what took place 2,000 years ago upon Calvary's cross; and as the slopes of Golgotha became stained with the blood of Christ, it was made real in your life when you denied yourself and took up a cross and became a follower of Christ. There is power in the blood of Christ to wash away all sin.

And so we read that "Jesus took the cup also after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.'" This little, simple exercise that we have just gone

through is utterly profound, because the death of Christ is the greatest event to ever happen in the history of the world. And so as we bring this service to a conclusion, receive the benediction: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all." God bless you. Let us rejoice.