

THE PRISON EPISTLES: NURTURE FOR OPPRESSED BELIEVERS

II. Colossians: Nurture In Living Focused On The Supremacy And All-Sufficiency Of Christ

J. Nurture In Applying Christ's Supremacy And All-Sufficiency To Our Walk

8. Nurture In Applying Christ's Supremacy And All-Sufficiency For Ministry Faithfulness In Hardship (Colossians 4:7-18)

I. Introduction

- A. Paul's call for believers to focus on their positional certainties in Christ in the heavens to offset trials faced from evil pressures on earth as Colossians 3:1-4 with its Colossians 2:1-23 context teaches finds a potent application in the believer's need to remain faithful in serving the Lord amid ministry hardships.
- B. Paul applies this truth to various cases in Colossians 4:7-18 with important applications for us (as follows):

II. Nurture In Applying Christ's Supremacy And All-Sufficiency For Ministry Faithfulness In Hardship.

- A. In Colossians 4:7-18, Paul referred to ministry faithfulness in hardships that various believers faced, indicating the need for them to rely by faith on the exalted Christ in Colossians 3:1-4 for the needed faithfulness.
- B. Thus, Tychicus, a faithful minister and fellow bondservant (Col. 4:7 ESV fn.), one dedicated for life to serve the Lord, was being sent by Paul with the Colossian epistle to report on the welfare of his readers and to comfort their hearts concerning Paul's imprisonment, and all by relying on the exalted Christ, Col. 4:7-8.
- C. Similarly, Paul was sending Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother, a former faithless runaway slave who had since been saved and had returned to his master Philemon at Colossae all by the power of the exalted Christ, and Onesimus would also report to the Colossians all of Paul's matters, Col. 4:9 with Philemon 10-21.
- D. Paul added that Aristarchus, a fellow prisoner under the same trial as Paul in his imprisonment, also sent his greetings, an act obviously empowered by reliance upon the exalted Christ, Colossians 4:10a.
- E. Poignantly, John Mark, Barnabas' nephew who had failed to be faithful in abandoning Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey (Acts 13:13; 15:36-40), was rebounding from that lapse and was to be received by the Colossians with instructions, a rebound occurring by Mark's reliance on the exalted Christ, Col. 4:10b.
- F. Paul added that Jesus who was called Justus along with the others he had mentioned were alone those of Hebrew backgrounds who as Christians had remained as Paul's faithful fellow workers in the kingdom of God, men who had comforted him by way of their dependence on the power of the exalted Christ, Colossians 4:11.
- G. Epaphras, who was one of the Colossian group of believers, sent his greetings through Paul's hand, a man who always struggled in behalf of the Colossian Church in his prayers that they might stand mature and fully assured in all the will of God by Epaphras' dependence on the power of the exalted Christ, Colossians 4:12.
- H. Paul added that Epaphras had worked hard for the believers in Colossae, Laodicea and Hierapolis, a dedication and faithfulness also empowered by his dependence on the exalted Christ, Colossians 4:13.
- I. Luke, the beloved physician and fellow traveler with Paul, along with Demas who was also with Paul, sent their greetings to the Colossians, men who faithfully helped Paul by the power of the exalted Christ, Col. 4:14.
- J. Himself depending on the exalted Christ, Paul who faced Roman imprisonment (Col. 4:18b) still very much cared for the churches to send greetings to the believers at Laodicea, to Nympha and the church in his house, and to instruct that the Colossian and Laodicean believers to read each other's letter from Paul, Col. 4:15-16.
- K. In the final case, a believer named Archippus at Colossae who had received a ministry assignment from the Lord was apparently much like John Mark before him tempted either to quit that assignment or not even to begin to perform it, Colossians 4:17. Paul accordingly directed that believers around Archippus were to charge him to "perform, fulfill" (*pleroo*, Arndt & Gingrich, *A Grk.-Eng. Lex. of the N. T.*, 1967, p. 676-678) the ministry he had received in the Lord, Colossians 4:17.
- L. In closing the epistle, Paul added that he had taken the pen from his secretary to write in his own hand his final greeting, Col. 4:18a. In that very personal section, Paul asked his readers to recall his chains in prayer before God, indicating his own need to continue to rely on the exalted Christ to be faithful in his ministry, Col. 4:18b.

Lesson: Paul applied the heavenly supremacy and all-sufficiency of Jesus Christ for faithful service to God amid hardships not only in his own case, but also in the cases of all other fellow Christian servants of the Lord.

Application: (1) May we ALL who serve the Lord in assignments HE has GIVEN US rely by faith on our Supreme, All-Sufficient Savior, the Exalted Lord Jesus Christ, to stay FAITHFUL in MINISTRY even in hardship. (2) If we need to rebound from a lapse in faithfulness, may we heed Paul's instructions to Archippus, and follow the example of John Mark and eventually end up like Onesimus in victory over failure in ministry faithfulness.