

Final Greetings to the Colossians

Colossians 4:7-9

Colossians 4:7-9 - *“Tychicus, a beloved brother, faithful minister, and fellow servant in the Lord, will tell you all the news about me. ⁸ I am sending him to you for this very purpose, that he may know your circumstances and comfort your hearts, ⁹ with Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you. They will make known to you all things which are happening here.”*

Background Notes

We’ve come to the final greetings of the epistle to the Colossians, and we may tend to think that there’s no “spiritual meat” in the “greetings” section of an Epistle. But remember, this is part of the Bible, so there’s bound to be something for us to learn!

Tychicus was one of Paul’s fellow workers. It seems that he was not an up-front preacher like Paul, but he was a very important behind-the-scenes member of Paul’s missions team. He was *“a beloved brother, a faithful minister, and a fellow servant.”*

Verse 8 indicates that Tychicus carried the letters from Paul, who was in Rome, to the believers in both Colossae and Ephesus. Ephesians 6:21: *“But that you also may know my affairs and how I am doing, Tychicus, a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, will make all things known to you whom I have sent to you for this very purpose, that you may know our affairs and that he may comfort your hearts.”* Although Tychicus wasn’t a preacher like Paul, one of his very important missions was to carry the letters from the apostle to the Ephesus and Colossae, cities that were about a hundred miles apart, and encourage the believers there (v8).

Onesimus was traveling with Tychicus, and Paul described him as *“a faithful and beloved brother.”* We learn a lot about Onesimus from Paul’s letter to Philemon. Onesimus was a slave who had run away from his master, Philemon, in Colossae. He had made his way to Rome, probably because it was a big city and he would be less likely to be traced there. And in Rome he crossed the path of the apostle Paul! Maybe he was wandering on the streets and Luke found him and brought him over to Paul’s house. Remember, Paul was under house arrest, but people could come and go from his rented house. Thus Onesimus became a Christian - so now he was *a beloved brother!* Talk about the sovereignty of God! God worked out all the amazing details so that Paul and Onesimus would meet, and Onesimus would become a Christian.

Notice what Paul says here: that Onesimus is “*one of you.*” That meant he had become a believer, and that he was now in the family of God. Imagine the surprise of the Colossians when they got this letter, and rejoicing that he had become a Christian.

But remember - the church at Colossae met in Philemon’s home, and that fact complicated the situation. What were the circumstances of Onesimus’ departure from Philemon’s household? Besides running away, had he stolen money from Philemon to finance his escape? Could this problem from the past be resolved?

Whatever the circumstances of his escape, Onesimus was now returning to get things straightened out with Philemon. As a Christian, he had a social and legal obligation to do so. And he was carrying a personal letter from Paul to Philemon! In that letter, Paul paved the way for Onesimus to come back to Philemon. He didn’t demand that Philemon set Onesimus free, but he certainly suggested it!

Doctrinal Points

1. In Tychicus, we learn three of God’s “quality control standards” for Christians.

What is “quality control?” When a company makes a product, there are certain standards for quality that the product must meet. If it doesn’t measure up to those standards, it’s not released to the public. In the same way, God has some “quality control standards” that He wants every Christian to meet. Here are three of them:

a. Beloved brothers and sisters.

What does it mean to be a “beloved brother” - not just “a brother”? Tychicus was the kind of Christian that you would really like to have around. He had a good attitude, he was helpful, and he was easy to love. Some Christians are not like that. All Christians are brothers or sisters, but they’re not all “beloved.” Some Christians don’t bring with them an atmosphere of love.

We need more beloved brothers and sisters like Tychicus. They’re the all-important and necessary oil for the machinery of Christian ministry to run smoothly. Are you a beloved brother or sister - or do other Christians wish you would “move on”?

b. Faithful ministers.

Tychicus was not only a beloved brother; he was a trusted assistant to the apostle Paul. He was dependable and reliable. He could be counted on to show up to help and to do the job well.

Have you ever worked with a Christian who is not reliable? They say they're going to help you in your youth ministry, but they rarely show up. They say they'll teach Sunday school - but it's not long before they cop out. They say they're committed to counseling at camp, and then they're no-shows. They're not faithful servants.

No wonder the apostle Paul chose Tychicus to carry the letters to the Ephesian and Colossian believers. Suppose those letters had been lost? Tychicus probably didn't realize how important that mail was! Many times we think that the small jobs we do are insignificant, but they're very important for the smooth running and ongoing mission of a church or a ministry. So don't think belittle yourself if you think you're "only a Tychicus"! Tychicuses are very important – they are faithful servants.

c. Slaves of Jesus Christ.

Tychicus was a fellow bondservant – a *slave*! That's what a "bondservant" is. Paul considered himself to be a slave of Jesus Christ - and so did Tychicus.

Do we consider ourselves to be bondservants of Jesus Christ? Do we obey whenever He calls, and do whatever He asks us to do? That's part of the quality control standard. We like to think of ourselves as the sons of God, in the family of God, and fellow heirs with Christ, and that's all true. But this is also true: we are called to be obedient *bondservants!*

2. In Onesimus, we learn that salvation does not relieve us of our obligations.

When Onesimus became a Christian, Paul did **not** say, "Well, it's OK that you're a runaway slave. Forget about it - that's in the past." No! In fact, as a Christian, Onesimus had an *obligation* to return and make things right with Philemon. He was not to just to "sweep it under the rug."

Salvation doesn't relieve us of our obligations - legal or social or family obligations. In fact, salvation makes it even more incumbent upon us to fulfill **all** our obligations!

Practical Application

Be a typical Tychicus and an open Onesimus!

What a tremendous commendation it would be if someone described you as a "typical Tychicus" - a beloved brother or sister, a faithful servant, and a fellow bondservant! God is not looking only for the "Peters" and the "Pauls" – God is looking for the "Tychicuses," too.

And let's be an open Onesimus - "open" in the sense of being willing to do whatever it takes to get past wrongs straightened out. Open to counsel, as Onesimus was to Paul; open to doing the right thing; open to making past wrongs

right. Suppose you were a shoplifter before you became a Christian. As a Christian, God has forgiven your sin - but you need to make correct that wrong-doing as best as you can, if possible by paying the shop back. You've got to be open to doing whatever it takes to make things right. It's an obligation, and we see that in Onesimus. We're not sweep past sins under the rug.

There are certain wrongs you can't undo. We shouldn't break the speed limit, but we can't undo that kind of wrong that we've already done. But there are other things that we may have done in the past - like cheating or stealing. Maybe nobody knows about it, and it's possible to get away with it, but we should be open to making it right. Remember that Onesimus was open to becoming a slave again when he returned to Philemon!

Let's be typical Tychicuses and open Onesimuses!