

Place: Lurgan Baptist 14:4:2013

## COMPLETE IN HIM

Reading: Colossians 4:7-18

### 13. WITH A LITTLE HELP FROM MY FRIENDS

Sometimes it is said of a Christian worker, “ *He is very good but nobody could work with him.* ” Have you ever heard that remark ? Dr. Sangster told a story of an organist giving a recital in a village church where the organ was pumped by hand. After each piece played there was loud applause and the organist would then announce what he was going to play next. Behind the curtain was a simple man pumping the bellows that give wind to the organ and he was getting increasingly irate at the organist taking all the praise. Finally, the man could take it no longer. When the organist announced his next rendition in the same conceited manner and then sat at the keyboard to play there was no sound from the organ. The man at the pump had stopped working. He poked his head out from behind the curtain and shouted at the organist, “ ***Let’s have a little bit of ‘ we,’ in it instead of ‘ me,’ all the time.*** ”

You see, Christian service is never a solitary effort. Many others have their part to play in any work undertaken for the Master. There are others who went before us, there are others who will come after us. Paul says, “ *We then as workers together with him,* ” ( 2 Cor 6:1 ) He says, “ *I*

*have planted, Apollos watered but God gave the increase.* ” ( 1 Cor 3:6 ) My ... Paul never lost sight of the fact that there were others in the battle besides him. *You see, Paul was not only a great soul winner, he was a great friend maker.* Indeed Paul lists over 100 people by name in his epistles showing how closely involved Paul was in the lives of people. Paul was definitely a “ *people person.* ” Indeed Paul closes Colossians by referring to his “ *co-workers,* ” whom he was associated with in the ministry. What you have here at the close of Colossians is a group photograph. Paul has grouped together in one portrait at the end of this epistle, all of the people who helped him in his ministry while he was a prisoner in Rome. So we have called this “ **With a little help from my friends.** ” Because Paul realizes that these people were indispensable assets to his ministry. You see, he knew that he could not do it alone, no one can. God’s servants have always depended on others to support them in their ministry. Do you recall that Moses came to recognize this ? On one occasion fed up with the grumbling of the Israelites he cried out to the Lord, “ *Wherefore hast thou afflicted thy servant ? and wherefore have I not found favour in thy sight, that thou layest the burden of all this people upon me ?* ” ( Num 11:11 )

The Lord answered Moses by giving him some help. “ *And the Lord said unto Moses, gather unto me seventy men of the elders of Israel .... and I will come down and talk with thee there and I will take of the spirit which is upon thee and will put it upon them and they shall bear the burden of the people with thee, that thou bear it not thyself alone.* ” ( Num 11:16-17 ) Moses could not have

accomplished what he did without the support of others. I was reading the other morning. “ *Iron sharpeneth iron, so one man sharpeneth another.* ” ( Prov 27:17 ) Leaders are more effective by those who help them. Did you know that Paul never ministered alone ? He shared his first leadership opportunity in the church at Antioch with four other men and throughout the following years of his missionary travels, he always had companions. And now though he is a prisoner as he writes Colossians he is still not alone. Sure, the men that he mentions here may not be as gifted or as well known as the apostle Paul, but there are indispensable to his ministry, and they are special to him. These are the folks who have been making his ministry possible. Now I want to pick up five of them this .... and as we shall see there’s a story behind each.

### **(1) TYCHICUS: THE MAN WITH A PARCHMENT**

I say that because Paul chose Tychicus and Onesimus to deliver the Ephesian letter ( Eph 6:21 ) and the Colossian letter ( ( 4:7-9 ) Of course they also took the personal letter to Philemon and Paul instructed Tychicus all the details of his situation there in Rome. *And so, you see, he became a man with a message.* He was a rather insignificant man but he was a man on a very important mission. He was a human being that God selected through Paul to carry these three Bible books to their destinations. Now who was Tychicus ? Well, his name means “ *fortunate,* ” and he was fortunate to have ministered with Paul for so many years. He joined Paul from Ephesus to Jerusalem at the end of Paul’s third

missionary journey ( Acts 20:4 ) And he went with Paul on his final visit to Jerusalem. ( Acts 20:4-5; 1 Cor. 16:1-4; 2 Cor 8:19 ) Do you recall that Paul was going up to Jerusalem with a love offering for the needy saints ? And he planned to take some Gentile believers with him, well Tychicus was one of them. And now he is still with Paul, in his first Roman imprisonment. I mean they spent much time together, therefore Paul got to know him very well and knew he could depend on him. Do you see here,

### **(a) HIS CHARACTER:**

The emphasis here is upon his character rather than his personality. Our generation of Christianity loves to focus on personality, not character. My .... Tychicus was not a well-known or famous. Tychicus was “ *Mr. Ordinary,* ” and a “ *team-player.* ” But he was,

1. “ *A beloved brother.* ” He had endeared himself to Paul.

2. A “ *faithful minister.* ” Not multi-talented, but steady, solid, and stable. He was faithful day in and day out. No one patted him on the head and told him how great he was, but he was a man Paul could depend on. Someone said, “ *the greatest ability in the world is dependability.* ” My .... can people count on you ? Can people trust you to deliver the goods ?

3. A “ *fellowservant in the Lord.* ”

The use of the term “ *fellowservant* ” indicates how Paul viewed his status among his co-workers. He viewed them as his equals. Now we do not read of any sermons that

Tychicus preached, or books that he wrote or churches he founded. He was one of those no-name servants of God in the New Testament who made a big impact for the cause of Christ. Do you know something ? God uses people who are not prominent or spectacular, just dependable.

### **(b) HIS COMMISSION:**

For Paul says “ *Whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose,* ” in other words Tychicus will tell you about me and he will tell me about you. Now Paul repeatedly sent Tychicus on errands. He planned to send Tychicus or Artemas to Crete to free Titus to join Paul at Nicopolis. ( Titus 3:12 ) At the close of his life Paul sent Tychicus with Trophimus on a missionary to Ephesus ( 2 Tim 4:12 ) possibly as a replacement for Timothy. But here he is sending him to Colossae,

#### **1. To Bring Encouragement:**

“ *And comfort your hearts,* ” Paul does not write, “ *When Tychicus comes he will inspire your mind.* ” Tychicus was a heart specialist ( 4:8 ) He had the capacity to comfort others. Now don't we need people like Tychicus to do the little jobs and be an encouragement to others ? People need a warm handshake, a friendly smile, a word of comfort, a helping hand, a personal visit. My .... are you an encourager ? 1.

#### **2. To Bring Enlightenment:**

Remember he holds in his hands the Colossian letter and what's it all about ? It's all about the pre-eminence of Jesus Christ. Now Tychicus did the “ *little things,* ” he did not deem it below him to carry the epistle of Colossians to Colosse. He would be content to serve God in the “ *shadows.* ” Are you ? Just willing to mow the grass, to clean the building, to help the kids, to supervise the bus, to welcome the stranger, and to encourage the saint. (1)

### **(2) ONESIMUS: THE MAN WITH A PAST**

The ringing of the bell in the preacher's house in the middle of the night nearly wakened everyone in that home. The boyish voice of the speaker reminded the preacher of a week at Glorieta Baptist Assembly. *The preacher had met a boy from the distant city who had come along.* He wasn't a member of the church, indeed he was not a Christian. The preacher and the boy came to know each other through the Bible study class they shared. Many long conversations during the afternoon of that week helped the speaker know this lonely boy, at odds with this world, estranged from his family and groping to find his way in life. Those conversations also brought that boy to a realization of his need of Christ. It was a wonderful moment when that boy said “ **yes,** ” to the Lord. Now he was calling, having just arrived in town with no place to stay. The boy had run away from home, at least his parents did not know where he was. He poured out the frustration of his soul, telling about the impossibility of getting through to his parents who had never accepted his new found faith.

Problems were many and serious, but step by step the situation was faced. A call was made to the parents to calm their fears, and at last that boy was persuaded to board a bus for home. Mixed emotions swept through the preachers heart as he watched the boy who didn't want to go home, board that bus. ***I wonder what did Paul feel that day when he watched Onesimus start back to Colossae ? What ran through the mind of Onesimus, the runaway slave as he started back to his master ?*** You see,

***(a) In the Past: Onesimus was known for his Failure:***

You see, Onesimus was a slave belonging to Philemon who had not only runaway from his master but probably had stolen from him also. ( Philemon v 18 ) How he had managed to get away from Colossae in Asia to Rome is not told, but the runaway had met Paul the prisoner at Rome. Paul led Onesimus to faith in Christ and became so fond of this new convert that he spoke of feeling for him as father would for his child ( v 10 ) So he writes to Philemon requesting him to forgive Onesimus, to receive Onesimus, to recognize Onesimus not now as a slave but as “ *a brother beloved.* ” ( Philemon v 16 )

My .... isn't God's grace amazing ? I mean, here was Onesimus running away from Philemon, a distance of over a thousand miles to Rome, only to fall into the hands of Paul of all people, who led him to Christ. My .... is this God of providence your God ? Is this God of power your God ? Is this God of patience your God ? ***Have you become discouraged because of the indifference of your unsaved family ? Have you become disheartened***

***because of their disinterest in the things of God ?*** Will you remember Onesimus who ran away from his master, only to run into His Saviour. Am I speaking to someone this and you say “ *Well, Preacher, I've got a past. Preacher, you don't know the life I've lived, you don't know the things I've done, things I'm so ashamed of.* ” No, I don't know your past but I'll tell you what I do know. I know that Jesus Christ is “ *able to save to the uttermost,* ” ( Heb 7:25 ) I mean look at Onesimus. He ran away a delinquent and he came back delivered. (a) But,

***(b) In the Present: Onesimus was known for His Faithfulness:***

“ *A faithful and beloved brother,* ” ( 4:9 ) Do you know what his name means ? “ *Useful.* ” Oh, while he had lived for sin his life had been useless but now he's transformed by the grace of God and the man who had left Colossae as a runaway slave now returns as “ *one of you.* ” ( 4:9 )

“ *Philemon, you have a new Onesimus, a profitable Onesimus. He will work his fingers to the bone for you.* ”

My .... is this not the purpose of God in conversion ? That we live a purposeful, useful, fruitful life. Do you know what we are saved for ? To glorify God and to enjoy Him forever. Do you know how that is done ? By purposeful, useful, fruitful lives. Do you recall that old adage ? “ ***Saved to serve.*** ” Is that you ? So many Christians think they are “ *saved to sit,* ” “ *saved to sermonize,* ” “ *saved to scandalize.* ” My .... is the purpose of God being fulfilled in your life ? (1) (2)

**(3) ARISTARCHUS: THE MAN WITH A PASSION**

The man with a heart. What a comfort this man was to Paul. ( 4:11 ) Aristarchus was a Jewish believer, though like many Jews of the Dispersion he had a Greek name. A native of Thessalonica ( Acts 20:4 27:2 )

### **(a) HIS ASSOCIATION WITH PAUL:**

Was over many years. His name appears five times in the New Testament and each time it's associated with the name of Paul. Do you recall that Aristarchus was one of Paul's traveling companions ? ( Acts 19:29 ) He was with Paul in the middle of a riot at Ephesus. ( Acts 19:29 ) He sailed with Paul to Rome ( Acts 27:2 ) He was washed up the on shore with Paul at Malta. He stayed with Paul no matter what the circumstances were, a riot, a voyage, a storm, or even a prison. He seems to have been one of those kind of people that you could count on in a tight spot. I mean, he was one of those kind of men that when you were in a tough place you could look around and Aristarchus would be right there. *Do you know that kind of person ?* Someone has said that when the “ *going gets tough the tough get going.* ” Well, that was Aristarchus. He seemed to be a personal valet of the apostle Paul. I mean every time there was a real need old Paul could look around and there was Aristarchus.

He just saw a burden and he decided to life it, he saw a need and he decided to meet it, he saw a circumstance and he decided to relieve it. Do you know what Paul wrote ? “ *Bear ye one another's burdens and so fulfil the law of Christ.* ” ( Gal 6:2 ) My .... are of the family of Aristarchus ? (a) Then there was,

### **(b) HIS AFFECTION FOR PAUL:**

You see, he was Paul's cell mate “ *my fellow prisoner,* ” Now the word fellow prisoner is a beautiful word. ( aikmalotos. ) Do you know it means ? It means one caught with a spear. Literally it means a war captive or a prisoner. You say, well why did they capture him ? They never did. Well, why did they put him in prison ? They never did. But why does he call him that ? Because he just spent his time with a prisoner, he might as well have been a prisoner. You see, he chooses to be beside Paul. If Paul's in prison, he's in prison. He shared Paul's confinement so that he could minister to the apostle Paul. He made Paul's lifestyle his lifestyle because he was sympathetic, because he cared, because he loved, because he knew Paul needed him. *He was a man with a sympathetic heart.* He cared. My .... do you ? Now the New Testament does not tell us any of the great messages he preached or any of his great accomplishments. No, he was one of the “ *little people,* ” he had no sensational gift but he got his name five times in the Bible.

“ *Just being there,* ” means a lot. Do you know what Proverbs says ? “ *A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.* ” ( Prov 17:17 ) That describes Aristarchus. He was “ *a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.* ” ( Prov. 18:24 ) Willing to give up his freedom, to be a prisoner with Paul. Thank God for men who stick with you when it's gets hard because all of them won't. When it gets rough and really tough and Paul says. “ *Who will volunteer ?* ” Aristarchus,

*is the first one with his hand up. “ Me Paul. Where are we going ? To what prison ? Great.” But look quickly,*

#### **(4) MARCUS: THE MAN WITH A PROSPECT**

Mark or Marcus was his Roman name, which gradually came to supersede His Jewish name John. “ *John Mark,*” the man who wrote the gospel. Do you recall,

##### ***(a) HOW MARK STARTED:***

He traveled with Paul on the first missionary expedition because Barnabas was his uncle ( Acts 12:12, 25 ) Mark was “ *their minister,*” ( Acts 13:5 ) He was their “ *attendant.*” He carried the briefcase and the notebook computer. He was the chief cook and bottle washer. He carried the bags. He made the reservations. It had all started so well. But do you recall,

##### ***(b) HOW MARK STUMBLED:***

“ *And John departing from them returned to Jerusalem,*” ( 13:13 ) My .... as Paul and Barnabas packed their bags for hardship, Mark packed his for home. Change, homesickness, disease, danger, no response in Salamis, demonic activity in Paphos and Mark went to pieces. Do you know anyone like John Mark ? I do. People who said the call of God was on their life but they did not stick it. People who said, “ *I’ll go, I’ll help, Count on me,*” and they backed down after a little while. My .... have you drawn back from a commitment you have made ? Did you quit when the going got tough ? Do you feel that you have

blown it ? Do you feel that the Lord has set you on the shelf never to be used again ? Do you remember that Paul and Barnabas split up over John Mark ? But you know what ? If you’ll read the rest of the story, if you’ll read the record you will discover,

##### ***(c) HOW MARK SERVED:***

For by the time Paul wrote Colossians Mark was a changed man. He had been restored to usefulness probably through the ministry of Peter himself. So maybe John Mark went back to his spiritual father and just said, “ *Simon Peter, I can’t do it. I started off serving the Lord and I blew it real bad, and I know the Lord will never use me again, and I’m so ashamed of the fact that I turned and went back home.*” I can almost imagine Simon Peter saying, “ *Well now, son, let me tell you about our Savior. Son, let me tell you about the night before the cross. I’m ashamed to tell it but the night before the cross I denied my Lord three times. But I want to tell you John Mark He give me another chance, And He’ll give you another chance also.*”

My .... aren’t you glad that our God is the God of the second chance ? I wonder is there someone sitting out there today and you were saved and on fire for Jesus Christ and going to change the world for the Lord, and then you got out there and you just fell flat on your face, and you just blew big time and the devil’s been whispering in your ear, “ *There’s no hope for you.*” But, praise God, I’m here to tell you today our God is the God of the second chance and He will use you again.

Do you remember old Jonah ? “ *And the word of the Lord came unto Jonah the second time.* ” ( Jonah 3:1 )

My .... John Mark made good. In fact he’s the one God used to write the second gospel. Isn’t that great ? John Mark wrote the second gospel. And do you see what Paul says in ( 4:10 ) ? “ *Receive him.* ” “ *Don’t hold it against him.* ” My .... are you an encouragement to those who may have blown it along the way ? Do you extend your hand and say, “ *Brother we are so glad to have you today ?* ” Do you receive them ? Now are you beginning to get a snapshot of some of Paul’s friend’s ? (1) (2) (3) (4) Finally,

#### **(5) JUSTUS: THE MAN WITH A PURPOSE**

Jesus Justus was a Jewish believer who served with Paul but we know nothing about him apart from this verse. The name “ *Jesus,* ” is the Greek form of Joshua which means “ *Saviour.* ” His Roman name “ *Justus,* ” means “ *righteous.* ” Now what can say about this man ? Well,

#### **(a) HE WAS COURAGEOUS:**

Do you see what Paul says ? “ *These only are my fellow workers unto the kingdom of God.* ” These are the only Jewish fellow-workers who were a comfort to Paul. Isn’t that sad ? Except for Aristarchus and he had been around for a long time. And Mark, and he had been around for a long time too. And then, this new one, Jesus Justus. You see, he was courageous for he had to step out from his own people. ( Acts 28:24 ) Only three Jewish fellow workers stuck by Paul and Jesus Justus was one of them.

#### **(b) HE WAS COMMITTED:**

For Paul says “ *Which have been a comfort to me,* ” Paul says “ *Justus Jesus was one of the ones who have soothed me and encouraged me.* ” My .... we cannot all do the same thing but we can do something. Perhaps you feel that you don’t count for much. Maybe you are saying, “ *I am not gifted, I am not talented. I can’t do anything well.* ” How wrong you are for God has a plan for your life. I think of a man by the name of John Warr. He was an 18<sup>th</sup> century apprentice shoemaker, who was determined to be a faithful witness for Christ. Another apprentice by the name of William was hired, and John repeatedly talked to him about spiritual things, but the new worker didn’t want to be bothered. Then one day he was caught exchanging a counterfeit shilling for a good one. In his guilt and humiliation he asked John for help and prayer. Through the faithful witness of John Warr, that man put his faith in Christ and developed into a committed disciple.

Do you know who he was ? William Carey, who became the founder of modern missions, and had a remarkably fruitful ministry in India leading thousands to Christ. Near the end of his life, William Carey said that his influence on others was owed to the influence of a shoemaker, John Warr, upon his own life. Do you know something ?

“ *Little is much when God is in it.* ”

