



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of Dan Duncan

Colossians 4: 7-18

Lesson 15 of 15

2018

"Band Of Brothers"

TRANSCRIPT

Well, since the first lesson in Colossians, I knew this day would be coming pretty quickly because it's a very short book, four chapters, but it is a book filled with profound theology. Of course every book is, but the center theme of this book is what theologians call 'Christology'—the study of Christ. And we have had magnificent statements on His Deity and humanity, the work that He has accomplished for us, and the sufficiency of it all for us. We do not need anything in addition to what He has done, we simply receive it through faith—What a blessing. So, we now come to the end with verses 7 through 18 of chapter 4,

⁷As to all my affairs, Tychicus, *our* beloved brother and faithful servant and fellow bond-servant in the Lord, will bring you information.

⁸For I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know about our circumstances and that he may encourage your hearts; ⁹and with him Onesimus, *our* faithful and beloved brother, who is one of your *number*. They will inform you about the whole situation here.

¹⁰Aristarchus, my fellow prisoner, sends you his greetings; and *also* Barnabas's cousin Mark (about whom you received instructions; if he comes to you, welcome him); ¹¹and *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.

¹²Epaphras, who is one of your number, a bonds slave of Jesus Christ, sends you his greetings, always laboring earnestly for you in his prayers, that you may stand perfect and fully assured in all the will of God. ¹³For I testify for him that he has a deep concern for you and for those who are

in Laodicea and Hierapolis. ¹⁴ Luke, the beloved physician, sends you his greetings, and *also* Demas. ¹⁵ Greet the brethren who are in Laodicea and also Nympha and the church that is in her house. ¹⁶ When this letter is read among you, have it also read in the church of the Laodiceans; and you, for your part read my letter *that is coming* from Laodicea. ¹⁷ Say to Archippus, "Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it."

¹⁸ I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. Remember my imprisonment. (*literally, that is 'Remember my chains'*), Grace be with you.

Colossians 4:7-18

May the Lord bless this reading of His Word and bless our time of study in it together. Let's pray.

Father, we thank You for this time together with Your people. What a blessed way to start the week, meeting with Your people and meeting around Your Word, reading it, spending time considering its meaning. I pray that as we do that, Lord, You bless us and You would give us understanding. Help us to gain the simple truths that Paul is stating here, commending these men for their faithfulness to him and faithfulness in the ministry. And may it be something of a standard for us. May their lives encourage us to do the same. Life is short; it flies by. It's like a "sigh", as Moses said. (Ps 90:9&10). It is short. "We are like a vapor", James said. (4:14). May we not waste our time. And may the lives of these individuals give us some kind of encouragement to be like them, to be servants of You. So, we do thank You for the time we have to study the Scriptures, study this passage, and hope for the kind of benefit and effect upon us that I have just mentioned. Bless us in that way.

This very thing we are doing is a great privilege, to be able to come to Your throne of grace. We will again consider, for a moment at least, prayer and the importance of it. What a blessing to speak to the God of the universe and lift our hearts up to the throne of grace and make requests and know that You hear and that You answer, wisely and in a timely way. So, we thank You we can make our requests and ask for help, help for ourselves, help for one another, and give You praise. Thank You,

Father, for Your goodness to us and the grace You have poured out upon us, the mercy that we receive from You. We need to always remember that. So, we thank You, Lord, and pray Your blessings upon this hour.

We pray as well that You would bless those who are in need for physical help. Some are facing surgery. We have been reminded in our bulletin about those who have undergone treatment for cancer and the success of that treatment, with the ongoing situation with it. So Lord we pray for them and pray that You would give healing, give encouragement and give strength in the midst of what a difficult, protracted trial to endure. But we can do that through Your strength, and I pray You bless them in that and others who will someday go through that. Prepare us for the trials that are coming in life, and strengthen us in the trials that we may have at the present time.

Bless us, Lord, and build us up and strengthen us. Even through those kind of afflictions, You make Your presence known and You use them to bless us and make us more like Your Son. What a mysterious thing that I cannot explain, but I know that You do; You use the afflictions of life for a good purpose.

Lord, bless us now as we sing our next hymn; use it to prepare our hearts for a time of study together we pray. We pray these things in Christ's name. Amen.

The speech that King Henry V gave before the Battle of Agincourt is one of the best-known passages in any of Shakespeare's plays. People who may not be familiar with Shakespeare are familiar with those lines, especially where Henry calls his troops, "We few, we happy few, we band of brothers." A person – man or woman – is blessed who has around him or her a band of brothers or sisters.

Paul had that. He and his friends were fighting together in the common cause for the kingdom of God. And here, in the final verses of the book of Colossians, he mentions them by name. They were faithful friends who helped him with his needs. He was chained in a Roman prison, restricted in his movement. But they could go to churches for him, represent him, and assist him in his ministry. The passage has rightly been called an honor roll of Christian workers. They were faithful friends and true brothers,

all the result of Christ being in them, the mystery that Paul spoke of back in chapter 1 and verse 27.

The first one that Paul mentions is Tychicus. He was Paul's messenger, the man who would bring this letter to the Colossians church and he would give them information about Paul's imprisonment. We know, from Acts chapter 20 and verse 4, that he was from the province of Asia, probably a Gentile, and had had a long association with the apostle Paul. He was with him on his third missionary journey and traveled with him to Jerusalem when Paul took the collection from the Greek churches to the poor Jewish Christians there.

Paul sent him on other missions as well. One was to Ephesus, and possibly he went to Crete to relieve Titus. He was a trusted friend and collaborator in the ministry. Paul calls him a beloved brother and faithful servant and fellow bond-servant. He sort of piles up the descriptions there to give a high praise to this man Tychicus. He had been through the battles with the apostle, and in so doing, he proved to be good and loyal.

Along with him, Paul sent Onesimus, who is described as our faithful and beloved brother. There is some beautiful irony in this description, intended to underscore God's sovereign grace. Onesimus means 'useful', but earlier in his life, he had been neither useful nor faithful – just the opposite. He was the slave of Philemon, in whose house the church of Colossae met. But he fled Colossae and escaped to Rome, where he had hoped to lose himself in the great city. But there, in the providence of God, he came in contact with Paul, the prisoner, and was converted. Paul speaks of this in his letter to Philemon, where he strongly pleads for mercy to be shown to his new child in the faith. He told Philemon to receive him back, "... no longer as a slave, but more than a slave, a beloved brother, especially to me, but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord." (Phm 16). What a brilliant and compassionate verse.

'Christ in you' makes a great and glorious change, from a slave to a brother, from faithless to faithful, from useless to truly useful, a slave and a master are equals. Obviously Philemon responded well, received Onesimus back as a brother, and allowed

him to be used of the Lord in service to Paul and the church. And we have good reason to think, gave him his freedom.

In verses 10 through 14, Paul sends greetings to the church from six more of his companions. Three are probably Jewish – Aristarchus, Mark, and Jesus who is called Justus. The second three are probably Gentiles – Epaphras, Luke, and Demas. Warren Wiersbe classified these men in three groups: the men who stayed, the man who prayed, and the man who strayed.

Aristarchus is a man who stayed, and he can be described as a true and loyal friend. He is found in Acts chapters 19 and 20, and in chapter 20 it is stated that he was a native of Thessalonica. He was probably converted there through Paul's ministry, and from there he accompanied Paul on many of his travels, in which he was exposed to many of the dangers that the apostle Paul faced. He was with him in Ephesus when the riot broke out and was even caught up in the violence of it when the mob dragged him into the theater where they staged their protest against Paul. Later he went to Jerusalem with the apostle and sailed with him from Caesarea to Rome. So, he went through the storm at sea and the shipwreck that are described in Acts 27. Paul identifies him as "my fellow prisoner," which literally means "my fellow prisoner of war." And while that is not literal, it's not far from it. They were together in violent, life-threatening circumstances. And he volunteered to be there with Paul in all of those circumstances, volunteered to be there with him in his imprisonment to serve the gospel. They were involved in a spiritual war that was every bit as life-threatening as a conventional war. He did not desert Paul. Paul and Aristarchus were fellow warriors, brothers in arms.

Mark is one of the most interesting and happy names listed here, because years earlier, he had deserted Paul. It was on the first missionary journey. It was hard. All of those missionary journeys were very hard, but it was too difficult for Mark, and he gave up and went home. He was young; he was immature. His cousin Barnabas wanted to give him an opportunity to redeem himself when he and Paul planned a second missionary journey, but Paul refused. He couldn't risk it. Paul was right; Mark wasn't

ready. So, Barnabas took him home to Cyprus, took him under his wing, gave him guidance and encouragement, and Mark grew up. Mark wrote the second gospel, the Gospel of Mark, and was reunited with Paul. Later, at the end of 2 Timothy 4:11, during a second Roman imprisonment, he called for Mark, 'Bring Mark', "...for he is useful to me for service." Great words. God uses our terrible failures – failures that affect others – to change us, to mature us and make us useful, useful for service.

The third companion, who sent greetings, is Jesus, named Justus. Nothing is known of him other than his name, but we can infer from his name that he was Jewish, and he is in this list of those from the circumcision. So, at some point, he made a life-changing choice to trust in Christ, follow Him and be cut off from his family and nation. That's a reasonable assumption. He very likely lost much for the gospel. But he had gained much – gained much more than he had lost. His name is listed in the Bible. He is not one of the countless forgotten names of history; he is honored here – honored in his generation, honored now as we read this text. He had the privilege of ministering with Paul and to Paul. Paul speaks of how he and Aristarchus were an encouragement to him. And weary warriors in the spiritual battle do need encouragement. He is described by Paul as a worker 'for the kingdom of God'. Paul usually means the future glorious kingdom, the millennial kingdom, when he speaks of the kingdom of God. For example, after he was stoned in Lystra on that first missionary journey from which Mark departed, he told the saints, in Acts chapter 14, verse 22, "Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God." That's the future kingdom. Living for it involves hardship—hardship in the present. But living for it is an investment that has treasures and payoffs and dividends that are eternal—and that never fade. And Justus devoted his life to that. He suffered with Paul, helped Paul, encouraged Paul. He may have had scars like Paul had, but knew that he suffered nothing and lost nothing in this life that would not be more than made up for by Christ in the kingdom to come.

In verse 12, Paul sends greetings from the Gentile Christians, and the first listed is Epaphras. He was a native of Colossae and an evangelist. —He brought the gospel to them. He was also a prayer warrior. That naturally goes with evangelism. I think really it

naturally goes with any gift that we have – whether it's evangelism, or teaching, or helps, or encouragement, or faith, or whatever – we pray. We pray that God will bless us in whatever we do, in whatever the ministry is that we have received from Him. But certainly in evangelism one prays that God will prepare the way, God will open hearts to receive the gospel. It is so important that we put prayer into our evangelism. And so, it is very natural that this man, Epaphras, would have been a man of prayer. And Paul wrote of him that he was "...always laboring earnestly for them in his prayers." (vs12). 'Laboring earnestly' is the word from which we get our word 'agony.' This is quite descriptive. He was always agonizing for them, wrestling in prayer for them, fighting for them before the throne of grace.

It may seem like an easy thing to be a person who prays. What's involved? 'You just bow and talk to God.' Well, it is just the opposite. This is where so much of the spiritual battle is fought, trying to talk to God, trying to talk to the God of the universe. And because that is where so much of the battle is fought, Satan works hard to keep us out of prayer. We considered this very thing last week. Prayer is one of the most difficult things in the Christian life. It is hard to be consistent, in that so many things distract us: 'I'll get to that later'; or 'I'll do that this evening'. Next thing you know, we have fallen asleep. It is difficult to be consistent, yet Epaphras was. Epaphras knew the importance of prayer—that it is God's means of grace for getting the blessings and promises that He has given to us. What a good brother for Paul to have around him there in Rome, a man of serious, diligent prayer.

But the question is often asked, at least to someone like me who believes in the absolute sovereignty of God, "God is sovereign. If things are predestined, why pray? Everything is predestined, isn't it?" Well, the answer to that is not original with me, but it's a good answer. The God who ordained the end ordained the means to the end. And the means to gaining the blessings that He has preordained for us in His sovereignty, is prayer. So if you do not pray, you will not get the blessings. It is those who pray, who

seek—that find and receive. No wonder the devil is keeping us out of prayer, keeping us off our knees.

Epaphras knew that, and he was diligent in it. And not only was he diligent in prayer, Paul spoke of him to the Colossians, in verse 13, as having a deep concern for them. He was emotionally involved in his concern for them. He loved these people; he knew these people. He understood better than anyone the situation in Colossae and the danger posed by the false teachers there. So, even though he was away in Rome, he could fight the battle with them through prayer. He is hundreds of miles away, and yet through his prayers, he was right there with them battling, and he was doing so with deep concern because he loved his people.

It is an important part of prayer I think in loving someone. If you love someone, you are going to pray for them. And I think the more you pray for people you don't really even know; you will come to love them through the time you have invested in prayer for them. What he prayed for his friends in Colossae and also those in the neighboring towns of Laodicea and Hierapolis, (where he also brought the gospel), was that they all "...may stand perfect and fully assured in all the will of God." We must "stand"; we are responsible to do that. It takes knowledge and effort to stand. It takes an act of the mind, the intellect, and the will. But dramatically, this is a passive verb—which indicates what is done to us; rather than what we do. And what it indicates here is that our 'standing', ultimately, is God's work. We are to do it. We must understand the importance of it and act in faith, but ultimately God causes us to stand. We can do it because He enables us. That is the reason we pray to Him; He gives the strength. Therefore, 'Stand'. This is what soldiers do: they stand their ground in battle. This is the same word Paul used in Ephesians 6, verse 14, where he speaks of the Christian's armor and tells them "stand firm." Epaphras' prayer was that his friends would "stand perfect and fully assured"; that is, complete in their knowledge and firm in their assurance. That is so important.

There is no standing firm, no effective effort in the Christian life if there is confusion and doubt. There is no spiritual growth when the Christian life is frustrated

with doubt. He was praying that they would stay firm in their faith in the gospel as they had when they first heard it. Be convinced of the truth, grow in maturity, and fight the good fight of faith against those who were challenging the faith and trying to corrupt the faith. Christians need to know what they believe and be convinced of it if they are going to do this. They must understand the Christian faith, the doctrines of the Christian faith; they must understand the very thing that Paul was teaching here: The person and work of Christ, the Deity and humanity of Christ, the theanthropic person, the second person of the Godhead, and that what He has done is absolutely sufficient and complete. We need to understand that, and know that, and believe it firmly if we are going to fight the good fight; if we are going to do the things that Paul would have us to do - to 'stand firm'.

Well, to have that assurance and to have that knowledge, there must be a consistent reading and studying of the Scriptures. I think everyone of us, as believers in Christ, want to have a mature faith. How do we do that? How do we grow? How do we have a stronger faith? Paul gives a simple formula that I have quoted often, Romans chapter 10 and verse 17, "Faith *comes* from hearing, and hearing from the word of Christ." Do you want to have a strong faith? Do you want to grow as a Christian? Do you want to have assurance in your faith? Read the Bible; study the Bible; know the Word of God. That's it. That is what nourishes the soul; that is what the Spirit of God uses to strengthen us in our knowledge, our faith, and give us wisdom and standing. So, this is what God wants all of us to do. He wants us to 'stand firm'—to "...stand perfect and fully assured..."

Now, do you think God will give you the knowledge and strength to stand if you seek it from Him? This is what Epaphras prayed for. If you pray for that, do you think He is going to give that to you? Of course He will. He will not deny us any good thing we need, and we need to know Him better, to stand firm and fight the good fight of faith. So, seek it. Seek it for yourself and, like Epaphras, seek it for others. Pray for others. He prayed for His friends. You and I need to pray for one another for this very thing, that

we have a perfect knowledge—that is a complete knowledge; know the whole range of the Word of God and the doctrines of the Word of God—and ‘stand firm’.

The other two Gentile converts that are mentioned here are Luke and Demas. It's this verse, verse 14, that informs us that Luke was a doctor. Paul calls him the beloved physician, and Paul was blessed to have him near. When you consider all of the beatings and stonings Paul experienced, you can imagine the suffering that he had had. He must have had chronic pain all of his life. He describes these things in 2 Corinthians 11, the difficulties that he had. And all of the rough places he traveled – over mountains and across seas – and all of that, it must have taken a toll on him physically. And then, in addition to that, he speaks in chapter 12 of 2 Corinthians of this mysterious ‘thorn in the flesh’. It was an angry affliction that he had continually. God's grace was sufficient for him. That's what He says, "My grace is sufficient for you," the Lord assured him in prayer. But he also blessed the apostle with brother Luke, a beloved physician who could look after him, and Paul certainly needed a physician.

What a fascinating man Luke was: a medical doctor, a true scholar, a genuine historian. His Gospel and the book of Acts, which make up so much of the New Testament, were carefully researched. (That is how he introduces both of those books.) He was a gifted, brilliant man who sacrificed a career, that would have been lucrative for him, in order to assist Paul. We know from 2 Timothy 4, verse 11, that he was with him to the end. In fact, he wrote to Timothy, "Only Luke is with me." That is a true brother. In fact, he was the “friend” of Proverbs 18, verse 24, “...who sticks closer than a brother.”

Unfortunately, Demas was different. Every war has its casualties, and Demas was one. In 2 Timothy 4: 10, in Paul's final letter, he wrote the tragic words, "...Demas, having loved this present world, has deserted me..." What happened? Was this apostasy? Did Demas deny the faith and show that he never was a believer to begin with? I don't think so. In Philemon vs24, Paul identified him as a “fellow worker”. Now, Paul didn't just write that and mistakenly write it. Those words are inspired by the Holy Spirit. That was put within his mind by the Spirit of God. He was a fellow worker. A

genuine fellow worker. But he did what Mark had done when he left Paul and Barnabas to return to Jerusalem. Mark recovered from his failure. Maybe Demas did also; we don't know. He disappears from the New Testament.

His end, though, reminds us that the path of the Christian is lined with pitfalls. John warned of those, "Do not love the world nor the things of the world." (1 Jn 2:15). John gave that warning to Christians because the world is attractive, and it has a strong appeal, even to Christians, even to those who are born again, who have a new heart with new inclinations. The appeal of the world is very, very strong, and Christians often succumb to the temptation and are carried away by it. It is all part of the spiritual warfare we are in. It is not always persecution that we face. Often, maybe even more than often, it is seduction with promises of pleasure or reward now. 'We don't have to wait till tomorrow; we don't have to wait till the millennial kingdom; we can fulfill our desires today. Just take it; eat the fruit.' That is a temptation, but it is wrong and foolish. As John goes on to say, "The world is passing away and also its lusts..." (Jn 2:17), which is to say whatever we get we can't keep; it's temporary; it's passing. The way he puts that is, 'This world that is so alluring, that is so attractive, it is passing away as you look at it; it fades quickly.'

But what captured Demas isn't told. Maybe he went to Thessalonica because he missed the comforts of home, or perhaps he was embarrassed by Paul's chains. Whatever it was, it cost him blessing and honor and left him on a sea of regret. —And it will us, too. Demas was doing well when Paul wrote to the Colossians. Maybe you are doing well, also, as you hear this read. Stay vigilant; stand firm; devote yourself to prayer, keeping alert in it. We are always to be on the alert. Demas let down in some way and was carried away.

Now in verse 15, Paul returns to some other matters and asks the Colossians to give his greeting to the Christians in Laodicea, which was a city ten miles west of Colossae. His greeting was to Nympha and the church that is in her house. That is interesting for the background that it gives on the early Church. The local churches met in homes; they were house churches. The church in Colossae, as mentioned earlier, met

in Philemon's house. The church in Philippi probably met in Lydia's house. In Corinth, it met in the house of Gaius. And wherever Priscilla and Aquila went, they opened their house to the church.

And I do not take this as a precedent for the modern church. There are advantages to having a building like ours. What it suggests to me, though, is the simplicity of the early Church. You could not get very elaborate within a small house; so, things were simple. And I think that is very significant to know and to understand, because there is value in that. It is not the building that is important. This is a wonderful thing to have, and it should be kept up: And it is, I think, a witness, a testimony, to our diligence in the faith the way we keep things up. And it is, as I say, a blessing to have. But what is really important is what goes on within the building, and that is the teaching of the Word of God and obedience to it. That is what really characterized the early Church. They receive a letter; they read it; they studied it; they talked about it; they sang hymns. Their worship was very simple; it was biblical worship and that is what we need to practice.

Paul then instructs the Colossians to pass his letter on to the Laodiceans after they had read it publicly, and then they can expect to receive a letter from the Laodiceans. That statement in verse 16, "Read my letter that is coming from Laodicea," has caused a lot of speculation about that letter. We do not have a letter to the Laodiceans. —We are missing *The Book of Laodiceans*. Was it lost? Well, that is the question. I think the best suggestion, the best answer to that, at least to my mind, is that Paul was referring to the epistle to the Ephesians. Many feel the book of Ephesians was a circular letter—that it was sent to all of the churches in that region. So, it was sent on a circuit, and it was at Laodicea and would soon be coming to Colossae. So the idea is, when the Laodiceans finish reading and studying the *Book of Ephesians*, they would send it on to Colossae, and those in Colossae were to be looking for it—to be expecting it.

In verse 17, Paul gives a special message to Archippus, a man of some position and authority in the church. Paul also greeted him in Philemon 2. He wrote here, "Say to

Archippus, 'Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it.'" Now, reading that in the context of this letter and the problems in the church, it's not hard to imagine that Paul knew that Archippus was tired and discouraged from the battles with the heretics. And so, he wrote this to encourage him to keep at it. He needed to be reminded of this; he needed to be reminded that this is not some ministry that Archippus had taken upon himself and could just quit whenever he felt like it. The Lord had given this ministry to Him and he had received it. This was both a great blessing and great responsibility—one he would give an account of to the Lord. He had no choice but to continue in it and go forward for Christ and the gospel. So, Paul says, "Fulfill it." It's a little bit like saying, "Play the man; do it; the work is not yet finished, finish it." And he can do that; Archippus can do that because he has the Lord who is sufficient for all the challenges that we face.

In chapter two, verses nine and ten, Paul said that "All the fullness of Deity dwells in Christ, and in Him we have been made complete" – or literally “been made full”. In other words, we have Christ and He is sufficient; we need nothing more. So, here it seems Paul was using this word "fulfill" to remind Archippus of who he is and what he has as a Christian. That he is literally full, and he can fulfill what he is to do because Christ has made him ‘full and complete’.

And that is true for all of us; Christ is sufficient; He has made us full; He has equipped us completely; and we are to act upon that. And that is the book of Colossians. That is the subject of it: ‘The sufficiency of Christ.’ We are in Him, and He is in us. We can do all that He has called us to do – not in our own strength; we certainly can't do anything in our own strength – but in His we can. In Him, as Paul said back in chapter 2:3, “...are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”

And yet, still, we need one another in all of this. Paul did not minister alone. You never see Paul out there on the mission field all by himself. He was surrounded by brothers and they were a great help to Him. ‘Fellow workers’ and ‘fellow prisoners,’ he called them. It is in this way, at least in part, that the sufficiency of Christ's life is communicated to us. And it is as we bear each other's burdens that we are able to give

through us the life and sufficiency of Christ, at least in part. And as we do that, we strengthen the hands that are weak; we bear the burdens of each other. This is what we are to be doing.

You see how important brothers and sisters were to the apostle. They are no less important to us. We cut ourselves off from so much of what the Lord gives by not joining with fellow believers in worship and service. One of the greatest gifts that God gives to each one of us is a good friend. Be that. Be that to others.

The letter ends with Paul's signature. He normally dictated his letters, and then at the end would take up the pen himself and put his personal signature on them. And here, "I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand." Paul's signature was distinctive and well known. He, for example, says to the Galatians at the end of the book, Galatians 6: 11, "See with what large letters I write." Evidently that was the distinctive aspect of his signature. Something about it was very distinctive, and that signature was proof that the letter they received was genuine. And so, he gave the stamp of apostolic authority to his letters.

Paul then makes a request and gives a benediction, "Remember my imprisonment. Grace be with you." Literally, it is, "Remember my chains." What a picture that gives of the great apostle, laboriously writing his name with a heavy chain on his hand. "The apostle of the heart set free," as F. F. Bruce called him, "in chains." And yet he was free, the freest man in Rome. Christ had given him freedom; freedom from the penalty of sin, freedom from the power of sin, and Christ was in him. And He is in every believer. And being in every believer, He is the hope of glory. He is the certainty that we will enter into the glory to come. That is why Paul could end as he did, not with chains, but with, "Grace be with you." It was with him even in those chains. Christ was with him and would never forsake him. And in His sovereign grace, the Lord had blessed Paul with friends. And blessed those friends with the privilege of ministering with Paul and ministering to Paul.

Is there a greater honor roll in all of the world than this one? For 2,000 years these names have been read by Christians and remembered in churches for the sacrifice and service they represent. In Shakespeare's speech, King Henry told his soldiers 'That in years to come men among them would tear their sleeves to show the scars they got at Agincourt, while gentlemen in England, now abed, shall think themselves accursed they were not here.' We could think ourselves accursed for not being there in Rome with the apostle, at his side as he wore those chains, but that would be wrong. We have the opportunity now to join the same battle. We have the same opportunity now to serve Christ, to further the kingdom of God and have our names mentioned with those listed here when Christ returns with His reward. Then He will call us His band of brothers. And then whatever scars we got in the spiritual battle we fought will become glorious badges of honor. What a day that will be!

It is coming, maybe soon, but even now the author of Hebrews tells us, 'The Lord Jesus Christ is not ashamed to call us His brothers.' (Heb 2:11). The reason is He made us saints; He made us a new creation through His sufferings and death. Saints are soldiers. How are you soldiering? How am I soldiering? It is a question we must ask ourselves because the pull of the world is strong. The desire for ease is great. The longing to avoid embarrassment from giving the gospel pulls at us. May God make us all, every believer here, to 'stand perfect and fully assured', in all of the will of God, a band of brothers to one another and to Christ our Savior. He is the Savior, the only Savior.

Is He your Savior? Have you believed in Him? It is all one must do; it is all one can do. He did all that was necessary for salvation on the cross when He suffered the penalty of our sin in our place. There is nothing we can add to it. —No extra formulas that some teacher can come along and share with us that we need. No extra ceremony. Simply, trust in Christ. Faith is the open hand that receives the gift. If you have not believed, open the hand of your heart and receive the blessing of life, the blessing of forgiveness that is in Jesus Christ. Look to Him; He receives all who do, fully forgives

them, and gives them life everlasting. And then, by His grace and power, live for Him. Stand like a soldier in all of the will of God. May God help us all to do that. Let's pray.

Father, we do thank You for Your goodness to us. You have been good to us by giving us this brief book of Colossians which reminds us of who Your Son is; who the second person of the Trinity is, and that He is sufficient for our salvation; our sanctification; for everything; and He never leaves us; He will never abandon us.—Even when we are in a difficult circumstance. As dark of a place as Paul was in Rome, he knew You were with him, and he could rejoice and serve even there; so can we. Lord, use us, strengthen us. We thank You for Your Son, for His death for us, and it is in His name we pray. Amen.

(End of Audio)