##### Paul’s Friends

##### 4:7-18

***Few men made more enemies in the NT, but even fewer had such treasured friends than Paul.*** Someone has said that he had a genius for friendship and this was one of the ways by which the Lrod sustained him. **(2Cor. 7:6)** Paul attracted his friends more powerfully than he repelled his enemies. One of the secrets of us endurance was his close circle of friends and co-workers.

The following are 10 co-workers that Paul mentions by name in his closing remarks to the Colossian church. ***These are some minor people making some major points!*** *At the beginning of each person mentioned, name one lesson to be learned from each life; mention this at the beginning of each person.*

***One of the primary requirements in missions is the ability to work in a team****. You must have the ability to distinguish between the essential and the non-essential. You must be able not just to bend on the little things, but to laugh at them. A sense of humor goes a long ways.* ***It’s different from a normal job for a number of reasons:***

1. ***Your private life and public ministry are blended together; and your co-workers share in this whether you like it or not.***
2. ***The pressure of caring for others can infringe on your ability to care for your marriage and family.***
3. ***God uses the foolish and despised in this world; watch out that you don’t despise foolish co-workers!***
4. ***More often than not you are asked to make sacrifices that you won’t need to in a normal job: financial, cultural, social (lack of comfort in living conditions, education choices for children, little free time).***
5. ***You most often go in with very idealistic expectations which are soon shattered. Loving other Christians can be a big challenge.***
6. ***Tychicus (tik´uh-kus) means “Fortunate”: Carrier of the Colossian epistle vs. 7-8***

## See Acts 20:4 Eph. 6:21-22; 2Tim. 4:12; Tit. 3:12

“Like could water to a weary soul, so is good news from a distant land.” Prov. 25:25 This man was the secretary of Paul when Paul could not write or deliver letters himself. He was a living bridge between Paul and the many people who looked to this now elder missionary statesman for needed counsel and direction in the Lord. Be a living bridge! ***Do we build bridges between people or walls?***

Tychicus is a bright example of wise Christian enterprise. By this we mean that he took advantage of the natural means avaible to him for the cause of Christ. He was able to write and deliver letters in a way that was unheard of before the Roman Empire came into being. Think of the time and distance he went for a letter! But those letters were the very word of God to man, they were living oracles! Don’t underestimate the use our Lord will make of the technology of this world! Roman roads were built for official state business and were protected only those who belonged to the empire. Private transportation was a risky business!

Someone has mentioned that he “went from Rome to Corinth, from Corinth to Ephesus, from Ephesus to Colossea…” He must have been exposed to the same dangers of which Paul speaks in 2Cor. 11:25-26. Practically speaking, we would not have the rich teaching today had not this man delivered these letters to their respective churches. Christians travelling the Roman roads needed other Christians to house them, otherwise they were exposed to great danger.

This man brought Paul, by way of these letters, to many around the Mediteranian world. Again, he was the living bridge to others in the Lord. Did he realize he was carrying the inspired word of God for the next couple millennia? No way. We walk upon roads in this world whose destinations reach into eternity.

He was one of a group who accompanied Paul in Troas. He came from the west coast of Turkey, most likely in Ephesus. He lived through some tough times with Paul. Note the titles he was given by Paul:

“beloved brother”

“faithful servant”

“fellow bond-servant” **(Ex. 21:1-6)**

***He was one who had a ministry of encouragement.*** **(Eph. 6:22 and Col. 4:8)**

*Spiritual encouragement takes place when another person leaves you with a great confidence to trust Christ. This is an invaluable ministry. Someone has said that true encouragement is as close to the ministry of the Holy Spirit as we can get.* ***The word Paraclete comes from a word meaning, “To Come Alongside”. The Romans hired old soldiers to run alongside the new troops to encourage them as they went into battle.***

1. ***Onesimus (oh-nes´uh-muhs) means, “Profitable/ Useful”: Philemon’s runaway slave vs. 9***

## See Philemon 1:8-20 *(Read vs. 10-16)*

Philemon was a resident in Colossea and most likely the church there met in his home. Onesimus was Philemon’s runaway slave. He was a resident of Colossea as was his master Philemon. He very well could have gone to Rome as a runaway thief and slave with Tychius. *(It was common in that day to hire “slave hunters” to bring back runaway slaves. He could have been a man who was being hunt down.)*  He evidently came to Christ while with Paul in prison. It could very well have been that he was recognized by Epaphras in Rome and came to know Paul during that time, who led him to Christ. Note the wording in **Philem. 1:10**. The one who was useless to Philemon as a runaway now had become useful to both Paul and Philemon in that he was now a Christian! **(Philem. 1:11)** And perhaps it was for this reason that he ran away from his master, so that he would become a Christian through Paul **(Philem. 1:15)** What a rich lesson there is in this, what we think is so miserably bad, God works through.

***Read “Disappointments of Life”*** *by Darby*  **Read 1Kings 12:24**

***What is ironic is that the name Onesimus means “useful”!*****(see Philem. 1:15-16)**

*Trust God to work in even broken relationships. He did in this mess. What we mess up in human weakness does not necessarily mean that God has stopped working in a relationship.*

##### When things around you go wrong, know that the Lord is doing what is right!

1. ***Aristarchus (air-is-tahr´kuhs) means, “Best Ruler”: Paul’s fellow prisoner vs. 10-11***

## See Acts 19:29, 20:4, 27:2; Philem. 1:24

He lived through the riot and opposition at Ephesus with Paul and was later sent to Rome with Paul as a prisoner himself. ***One historian suggested that he sold himself to Paul as his slave just so he could accompany the apostle in his time of need as he traveled to Rome.*** He became a prisoner as well, just to be with Paul! This meant that he was willing to befriend someone who had a very bad reputation among his countrymen. **(Acts 20:3; 28:29)** He was one of three Jews (Aristarchus, Mark, Justus: **Col. 4:11**) mentioned at the end of this letter who was close to Paul in his sufferings. How precious it would have been to have had this man at his side during this dark time! For he was an encouragement to Paul at this time. Perhaps that was God’s only purpose for this man, to have him encourage someone else.

*What are we willing to sacrifice for a friend? I would have loved to have had this guy on my team. I don’t know if you have ever been a position where no one wanted you. It’s a very lonely feeling.* **“A man of many friends comes to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.” Prov. 18:24** *These are few and far between; but Aristarchus was one of them!*

1. ***John Mark, John means, “God is Gracious”: The cousin of Barnabas vs. 10-11***

## There must have been something in this man that commended him to others, for he was a help to each one. Peter claimed him as his son; Barnabas claimed him as his cousin; Paul claimed him as his servant. This was a young man who came under the best spiritual influence the church had to offer at that time. *Clement of Alexandria mentions that Barnabas was one of the 70 whom Christ sent out in Lk. 10:1-20.*

*John Mark was the son of Mary, the sister of Barnabas. This Mark was approached by early believers to write an account of the life of Christ because they did not want to merely hear Peter’s preaching, but wanted a permanent record of it for themselves. The early church fathers hold to the tradition that Mark wrote his gospel under the influence and dictation of Peter, most likely when they were located in the literal city of Babylon, a then known center of Jewish learning. Some believe that the Babylon mentioned by Peter in 1Pet. 5:13 is really Rome (Eusebuis holds to this view); and Mark is mentioned in the same verse. The Catholic church holds to the tradition that Peter followed Simeon, the heretic mentioned in Act, to Rome as early as 41AD. This cannot be the case as he is seen to be in Jerusalem well after 41 AD, most likely going to Rome in the early 60’s AD under the reign of Nero. The early church fathers held to the conviction that the synoptic were all written before the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD. Only in the 19th centuries did these view come into question. There are conflicting views that either Mark went to Alexandria in Egypt and ministered there around 60 AD, and died there. Or he accompanied Peter to Rome and finished writing his gospel after Peter was martyred in Rome around 62AD.*

He would have been greatly impressed by the events in Jerusalem, his home. He would have known the events of Pentacost, the healing of the lame man, the deaths of Annanias and Saphira, the sacrifice of his wealthy uncle Barnabas (through whom he became closely acquainted with Paul, the famous convert). He would have been aware of Stephan’s martyrdom and Peter’s miraculous escape from prison. Perhaps he became aware of Peter’s rebuke of Simon who wanted to purchase the power of God with money? Had he heard of Peter raising Tabitha from the dead in Joppa? He certainly would have heard Peter preach. His mother could afford to have a servant in a home which included a courtyard. It seems he came from a well situated home.

He would have been involved in the distribution of goods from the church in Antioch to those living in Jerusalem during a time of severe famine. After Herod was put to death by the Lord for his pride, John Mark was taken back to Antioch by Paul and Barnabas.

When Mark left Paul and Barnabas, let us remember a few things. First, it clearly says that Paul and Barnabas received the call of God at Antioch, but not Mark. He was taken along as a “helper” (Acts 13:5). He was not turning back on a calling. Secondly, this man was younger and inexperienced. When Paul was inflicted with sickness at this time (Gal. 4:14) and was later on faced with opposition and stoning, Mark was on his way for the safety of home. Again, he had not abandoned his call, but Paul’s.

In Jerusalem, upon his return, he would have been received into his mother’s home again and most likely have been taken under Peter’s wing. Peter would have related his own failing of the Lord in that same city!

## This man had his home in Jersusalem and could have been familiar with Paul’s family as it was Paul’s nephew who told him about the plot against him by the Jews. (Acts 23:16) It was John Marks home which was being used by the early church as a meeting place for prayer in a very hostile environment. (Acts 12:12-13) It was also at this time that Paul and Barnabas take John Mark with them as their helper in missions. (Acts 12:25; 13:5) But at some time during their first trip Mark left Paul and Barnabas to return home. (Acts 13:13) It was this act which led to a split in the partnership of Paul and Barnabas. (Acts 15:36-41) They are never seen again in the ministry together. Barnabas was Paul’s first friend in Christ and most likely older. Also, at the end of his gospel it mentions a young man that ran away naked, leaving the sheet behind him. (Mk. 14:51-52) It was this first meeting in Acts 12 which cemented Peter’s relationship with John Mark and could have been the time when this young man was converted. He was mentored by Peter and was given the gospel he wrote through him. At the end of his life, Paul casts a positive light on John Mark and commends him to this church. 2Tim. 4:11; Philemon 1:24

## *The proper translation of 2Tim. 4:11 is that he was “very helpful” or “profitable” to have on Paul’s team! Mark did come to Rome to be a help and comfort to Paul. It was there that Peter related all the events of the Life of the Lord which became the gospel according to Mark. Peter was so big in heart that he allowed Marks name to be associated with this gospel. It is the only one which contains the event in Mark 14:51-52, most likely referring to Mark himself. The very first line of this gospel says, “The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.” Who would have known better than Mark how good the gospel really is!?*

This young man could very well have become a Christian through Peter **(1Pet. 5:13)** and was later picked up by Paul and Barnabas in Jerusalem as their “helper” **(Acts 13:5).** He left them at one point in their journey **(*Acts 13:13*, 15:37)** and hence there was a “sharp disagreement” between Paul and Barnabas as to his suitability for the ministry ***(Acts 15:39).*** *It is assumed that Mark left because the going got tough, the passage doesn’t say that, it’s just that we assume the worst about people. It merely says that he* ***“left them”.***So Paul and Silas went to Syria and Barnabas and Mark went to Cyprus. ***Yes, there was a split between these godly servants.*** What a testimony to Barnabas. He was the one who picked up Paul when no one else would, he even searched Paul out! Look at this servant Barnabas for a minute. **See Acts. 4:36-37, 9:26-30, 11:19-26, 12:25-13:4** God put these two together! Barnabas was the encourager of Paul when no one else would touch him and now Paul splits with him over this man Mark. And now Barnabas was the encourager of Mark when Paul didn’t want him.

***Encouragers can sometimes be stepped on by others!***Mark returned to Paul and was reconciled to him at the end of his life and was an encouragement to him. *Paul even asked Timothy to send Mark to him, for he was useful to the Apostle.* ***(2Tim. 4:11)*** *Paul specifically tells them to “welcome him”; for they had most likely heard of the split among them and were suspicious of Mark! Mark then became the author of the 2nd gospel, most likely through the dictation of Peter, his spiritual father* ***(1Pet. 5:13).*** Don’t give up on the ones who leave you!! Don’t assume the worst about them, God has not written the last chapter. **“Love... believes all things.”** *Naturally we assume the worst about others, love believes the best about them!*

*Yes, even Paul experienced, and most likely caused, a break up among the team! But he also shows us that reconciliation is possible.* ***Things don’t need to stay broken!*** *My history with Capernwray Harbor is a testimony to this. It may take years, but it is worth it.*

1. ***Justus means, “Just”: Unknown, except that he was Paul’s co-worker vs. 11***

*In a footnote in Eusebius’ chapter 8 on the Disciples of our Saviour, mentions this man whose full name was Joseph Barsabas, his surname being Justus. Eusebius says that this man was one of the 70 disciples whom Christ sent out in* ***Lk. 10:1-20.*** *Papias, another early historian says that Justus drank a poisonous drink and suffered no harm from it.*

We know absolutely nothing about this man, other than that he was with Paul in his hardship, and that he was a Jewish Christian. *It was this small group of Jews who were in a minority among their countrymen in Rome who associated with Paul. It would have been unpopular to do and even a risk to be his friend.* Paul had received a cold welcome by his countryman when he came to Rome, but these three Jews stood by him when no one else did. **(See Acts 28:17-29)**

***Justus was a man who was content to be among the “unknown” servants to God. Are we willing to serve the Lord when it does nothing to promote my reputation among men?***

1. ***Epaphras means, “Lovely”: Leader of the Colossian church vs. 12-13***

Only 5 verses and 75 words tell us all we know about this man. But he made a deep impression on the apostle Paul. It is highly likely that this man travelled from Colossea to Ephesus to listen to Paul speak in the lecture hall he rented from Tyrannus for a period of two years. Colossea was only ca. 12 miles from Ephesus. Paul most likely received access to this hall during dinner hours, or some other inconvenient time when it was not be used for the purposes the owner had in mind. Here Paul lectured every day for two years. **(Acts 19:9)** He was converted here and from that time forward Epaphras’ name is not mentioned without the name of Jesus alongside it. Only Timothy had the honor, along with Epaphras, of being referred to as a Bond-servant of Christ.

It appears that Paul could not leave Ephesus at the time of Epaphras’ conversion, so he sent Timothy along with him back to his home in Colossea. **(Col. 1:1; Philemon 1)** It was through this new convert, Epaphras, that Christ was received by those in Colossea and a church came into being. Philemon became a Christain, along with his wife, Apphia and their son Archippus. It was Philemon whose house became the meeting place for this new church.

Along the road from Ephesus to Colossea were two towns, Hierapolis and Laodicea, which were located in the Lycus valley. Hierapolis, or Holy Town, was known for caves which contained poisonous gases into which animals were placed to die, while the heathen priests located above the gases remained untouched. Paul wrote a letter to the church in Laodicea which we don’t have. **(Col. 2:1; 4:13-16)**

When the dangerous, and even Satanic, teaching came to Colossea (most likely via Ephesus and the influences which came upon it from abroad), Epaphras went to Rome to seek Paul’s counsel. At this time, Tychicus became Paul’s secretary and the letters to the Colossians, Ephesians and Philemon were all penned and carried back by Epaphras.

Note as well that Paul calls Epaphras his “fellow-prisoner”, indicating that this man sold himself to become Paul’s slave in order to be close to his friend and father in the faith. Most likely Luke and Aristarchus did the same.

This was most likely the pastor of the church and the one who had come to Rome to seek out Paul’s counsel. He is mentioned earlier in the letter as the one through whom the Lord brought the gospel to them. **(Col. 1:7)** *He is noted as having a “deep concern” for these Christians in Colossea*. **“He is always striving for you earnestly in his prayers, (pleading) that you may-as persons of ripe character and clear conviction-stand firm and mature (in spiritual growth) convinced and fully assured in everything willed by God. For I bear him testimony that he has labored hard on your behalf...” Amp.** Thank God for those who have a pure concern for others. How deep is our concern for others? Is it deep or just fleeting?

**The fact that this guy would travel over 1,000 miles to seek out counsel from Paul on behalf of his church is a sign of the shepherds heart he had for this congregation.**

***We need shepherds today, not superstars! See 1Pet. 5:1-4***

1. ***Luke means “A Light or White”: Paul’s physician, author of the gospel and Acts vs. 14***

In **Prov. 18:24** God speaks of a friend who sticks closer than a brother. Luke was the friend that stuck to Paul, to his last hour! These two are a powerful witness to the healing power of the gospel: A strict Jew had a Gentile friend who stuck closer than a brother. Paul used to pray, “Lord, I thank you that I am not a Gentile or a woman.” Or “Lord, prevent me from seeing a Gentile today.” Wow, these two show the power of the gospel! This was part of Paul’s call. **(Acts 9:15)** Peter fell into this trap of animosity in **Gal. 2:12-14!** It was still rampant in the church! Just note the reaction of the church in Jerusalem in Acts 10 when they heard that the Holy Spirit came upon the Gentiles, they would initially have none of it! But God is the God of the Gentiles as well**. (Rom. 3:29)** This is the mystery of the gospel, it makes to hostile groups into one body. **(Eph. 3:4-7)**

What Jonathan and David were in the OT, so Paul and Luke are in the NT.

Lucas is a shortened from of Lucius and as someone has mentioned, he was not a man of high position. From the church father Eusebius onward, Antioch is mentioned as his home. Titus is said to have been his brother, and it was Paul’s place in the church in Antioch that most likely formed the meeting place for their friendship. It was at the church in Antioch where followers of Jesus were first called Christians.

In **Acts 11:20,28** there are two inferences of the presence of Luke where the Greeks are mentioned. Some 11 years after Pauls return to Antioch from Jerusalem in **Act 12:25,** he arrives with his companions at the port of Troas sick and it is here that Luke is most likely summoned to treat him. This could be the sickness referred to in **Gal. 4:13**. One suggests that the Macedonian man in Pauls vision in Acts 16 was Luke himself, who was travelling with Paul at that time. **(Acts 16:9-10)** Note the word, “we sought to go to Macedonia” in **Acts 16:10.** Philippi could have been Lukes former home. It would make sense that Paul was guided by Luke as he enters Philippi looking for a Synagogue and then finding the local river and the women. He does not use the word “we” between **Acts 16:17** and **20:5**, indicating that he remained in Philippi when Paul moved on. Luke twice sends funds to Paul in Thessalonica to relieve him from having to work for his keep while there in order to be free to preach! **(Phil. 4:16; 2Thess. 3:8)** There were other gifts to arrive from this church as well. **(Acts 26:15; 2Cor. 11:9)**

Luke visited Paul in Ephesus as the crisis in Corinth had reached its peak and Paul encouraged him to go with his brother, Titus, to visit them. **(2Cor. 12:18)** Paul later met the two in Philippi when their mission was accomplished. **(2Cor. 7:5-6)** Later, Luke, Titus and possibly Aristarchus returned to Corinth from Philppi and then sought to return to Jerusalem, only to have those plans fail because a murderous plot was launched against Paul. **(2Cor. 8:16-22; Acts 20:3-4)**

It was while Paul was in prison in Caesarea that Luke compiled his gospel account and the book of Acts to be used in Paul’s defense trail in Rome. When Paul does go to Rome, Luke and Aristarchus sell themselves to Paul as his slaves in order to be able to accompany him on the ship to Rome. The detail with which the sea voyage is recorded make it evident that the write was himself on board the ship.

In Rome Luke remains with Paul for the two years of house arrest, ministering to him under much adversity, for it would have brought much shame, if not danger, upon him for even being associated with Paul. These two most certainly spent time in conversation and prayer during these times. For of all the gospel writers, Luke records more about the subject of prayer, both exemplified and taught, by Christ than the other writers. (The exception being Christ’s prayer in John 17)

It is highly likely that Luke left Paul to return to Philippi where he was later reunited with Paul after he was released from Rome. After Paul was re-arrested, Luke goes with him as the only one to stick with him. **(2Tim. 4:16)** Although mentioned differently above, some suggest that Acts was written after Paul’s death and that Theophilus was in actually a man named Seneca, as a cover name. It has been suggested that Acts was written during the reign of Domitian as an appeal to set the record straight after a time of severe persecution. Luke’s record in his gospel as well as the book of Acts are historically exact and deeply rich in their portrayal of the human experience. He painted colorful portraits of people, including details which the others omit. It is his record which provides truth with which to cure the soul.

Luke was his beloved doctor. *He gave up a lucrative career to care for this man’s physical needs. What a labor of love!* In ***2Tim. 4:12*** Paul mentioned **“Only Luke is with me.”** This was even more significant in that Paul mentioned that at his first imprisonment, “no one supported me, but all deserted me” ***(2Tim. 4:16)*** What a friend Luke was; and a Gentile at that!

*This was a man who loved in deed and in truth. This was a man in whom the love of God had become obvious!* **See 1Jn. 3:16-18**

1. ***Demas(dee´muhs) means, “Popular”: Paul’s co-worker who abandoned him vs. 14***

It is an ominous fact that of all mentioned in this passage, only Demas is names without any adjectives or greetings attached to his name. Did Paul hesitate because he sensed something in this man which would late prove to be true? It would be only 3 shorts years later and Demas would leave Paul in his darkest hour. This could speak of Paul’s discernment into the spiritual character of men and may be the reason why he says, “he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no man.” **(1Cor. 2:15)** Did he have imparted to him the same ability given to Christ who “did not need anyone to bear witness concerning man for He Himself knew what was in man.” **(Jn. 2:25)**

***Demas “loved this present world” (2Tim. 4:10) Paul “loved His appearing” (2Tim. 4:8) We must not assume that it was the riches of this world he was after, it was something different. It was a home in this world. Christ said that we are not of this world (Jn. 17:16) and Paul knew his citizenship to be in heaven (Phil. 3:20). We have changed citizenship, we have been transferred to another domain. (Col. 1:13)***

There is a gulf between those two loves which will determine the eternal reward or loss of each. Thessalonica was a free Greek city, and was safe. Demas may have saved his skin, but did he lose his soul? Paul was not looking for a safe city, but the one whose architect is God, “for He has prepared a city for them” **(Heb. 11:16)** Paul knew that Christ had promised to go ahead and prepare a place for us saying, “I go and prepare a place for you…that where I am, you may be also.” **(Jn. 14:3)** Paul wanted the future, Demas wanted the present. Paul finished strong, Demas dropped out of the race. Demas could not let go while Paul had suffered the loss of all things for Christ’s sake.

Having mentioned this man as one of his fellow co-workers at this time, the desertion of Demas must have been a dagger through his heart. The pain of betrayal goes deep. If Paul faced this is the first century, then how much more will this be our lot when Jesus says, “Then they will deliver you to tribulation...and at that time many will fall away…most peoples love will grow cold.” **(Mat. 24:9-13)**

**Philemon 1:24** We know nothing of this man other than that he was present at Paul’s first imprisonment, but then deserted him in his darkest hour. **See 2Tim. 4:10.** Something of this ***“present world”***caught the affections of his heart to the extent that won him over from his friendship to Paul. What a tragic comment on this man. *We must live in the knowledge that we are not citizen’s of this world.*

**See 1Jn. 2:15-16:** *Watch out for lust, wealth and power!*

*There will always be a lure in the world and plenty of times to think, “Is this really worth it?” It is during these times that one must recognize that we are not citizens of this world.* **(Phil. 3:20-21; Heb. 11:37-38; 1Pet. 2:11)** *We must so walk with Christ that we get homesick for Him.*

*Beware of turning back on your sending!* ***See Lk. 9:57-62*** *We need good finishers!* ***How you start the Christian life is not as important as how you finish!***

1. ***Nympha (nim´fuh) means, “Bride or Bridal”: The host of a church in Laodicea vs. 15***

***The name is in the feminine. Nymphas is in the masculine.*** *We would have no reason to believe that is was not a woman being referred to.* She would be likened to Mary, John Mark’s mother, who evidently offered her home for a local church **(Acts. 12:12);** Aquila and Prisca **(1Cor. 16:19);** Lydia **(Acts 16:15,40).**

The church in Colossea most likely met in the home of Philemon **(Philemon 1:2)** *We don’t know about the letter to Laodicea mentioned here; some think it is the letter to Ephesus or Philemon. We cannot be certain.*

1. ***Archippus (ahr-kip´uhs) means, “Horse Chief”: Epaphras’ co-worker in Colossea vs. 17***

***This man is assumed to be Philemon’s son and a leader in the church.*** *It cannot be emphasized enough that the Lord entrusts us with a specific ministry and we must remain true to it.* ***The fact that Paul allowed this admonition to be mentioned publicly in this letter was evidence of the fact that it was a serious matter.*** We live in the day of the short-term missionary. So many leave their field of ministry for reasons that are not worthy of the name of Jesus.

***Note that Paul calls it “the ministry” and not “a ministry”.******We must be aware of the fact that God sets us aside to a specific ministry of His choosing, not ours.******We don’t apply for a work, He appoints us for a work. (See Jn. 17:4; Acts 13:2; Eph. 2:10)***

*Go where you’re sent and stay where you’re put! Just because there is no response to your message, doesn’t mean it’s time to change it.*

***Vs. 18***

*Paul said that he wrote this greeting* ***“with his own hand”. (Also see 1Cor. 16:21)*** *In other words, what was written before was not. It could have been because he was chained to a guard.* ***(Acts 28:16,20; Eph. 6:20; 2Tim. 1:16)*** *Thus, it would have been hard for him to write if he were chained to a guard.*

*It could also have been the case that he could not see well enough to write himself.*

***Gal. 4:13-15; 6:11,17*** *Paul specifically speaks of a* ***“weakness of the flesh”*** *and that this produced a trial in his* ***“bodily condition”.*** *He makes a point that their sense of blessing and loyalty to him would have been evidenced in this way:* ***“You would have plucked out your eyes and given them to me.”******(Gal. 4:15)*** *He also mentions the fact that he wrote to them with large letters in his own handwriting.* ***(Gal. 6:11)*** *Later we read that people said his personal appearance was unimpressive.* ***(2Cor. 10:10)*** *Five times he received 39 lashes at the hands of the Jews.* ***(2Cor. 11:23-29)*** *The conclusion that some draw from these comments is that Paul had bad eyes. Could it have come from that encounter with Christ in Acts 9 which Christ struck him blind with His glory? Could this have been his “thorn in the flesh” which he mentions in 2Cor. 12? It may well have been. Could it have been that the* ***“brand marks”*** *in* ***Gal. 6:17*** *were scars on his eyes from the time when Christ struck him blind at his conversion and that the meeting left a reminder on his body for the rest of his life?* ***Acts 9***

*Jacob limped for the rest of his life after he wrestled with God.* ***(Gen. 32).*** *We may “limp” as well. But let that “scar” be a reminder of the claim and blessing of Christ on your life. Consider them what Paul did, “the brand marks of Jesus”;* ***the very thing He is able to overcome is me.***