

The Gospel Creates a New Community

Colossians 3:12-14 & Colossians 4:7-14, 18



Scripture

^{3:12} Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. ¹³ Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. ¹⁴ And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

^{4:7} Tychicus will tell you all the news about me. He is a dear brother, a faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord. ⁸ I am sending him to you for the express purpose that you may know about our circumstances and that he may encourage your hearts. ⁹ He is coming with Onesimus, our faithful and dear brother, who is one of you. They will tell you everything that is happening here. ¹⁰ My fellow prisoner Aristarchus sends you his greetings, as does Mark, the cousin of Barnabas. (You have received instructions about him; if he comes to you, welcome him.) ¹¹ Jesus, who is called Justus, also sends greetings. These are the only Jews among my fellow workers for the kingdom of God, and they have proved a comfort to me. ¹² Epaphras, who is one of you and a servant of Christ Jesus, sends greetings. He is always wrestling in prayer for you, that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured. ¹³ I vouch for him that he is working hard for you and for those at Laodicea and Hierapolis. ¹⁴ Our dear friend Luke, the doctor, and Demas send greetings. . . .¹⁸ I, Paul, write this greeting in my own hand. Remember my chains. Grace be with you.

Main Idea

Paul is often isolated and put on a pedestal as a super-Christian. Yet one of the most striking aspects of Paul's life was the fact that he intentionally lived in community – he always had friends with him. We get a glimpse of how his friends loved him through sacrifice and commitment in the passage above. This passage is an example of how Paul put into practice one of his most important theological beliefs – that the gospel creates a new community. Paul consistently taught that the power and presence of Jesus are most powerfully unleashed when believers commit to live their lives together in community. Here we find Paul living out his theology that community centered on the gospel is the essential context for our spiritual growth.

Discussion

Q1: Paul highlights the different ways each of his friends uniquely ministered to him and to others. Share about how God has used a friend to encourage, serve, suffer with, comfort, pray for, or care for you and how that friend's actions brought you closer to Jesus.

Q2: Which of the above characteristics (of Paul's friends) do you most value and appreciate in a friend? Why?

Q3: Why is it so important to our spiritual growth to have people with the above characteristics as a devoted friends?

Q4: What are some of the barriers we face in developing devoted friendships? What can be done to overcome these barriers?

Q5: Look at Colossians 3:12-14 above. Paul emphasizes that the only way we can become more compassionate, kind, humble, gentle and patient with one another is to realize we are dearly loved and forgiven in Jesus. Why do we need to realize this first in order to become a truly loving friend?

Prayer

Spend some time sharing needs. Pray that friendships would develop and that the love and forgiveness that are ours in the gospel would move us to become sacrificial and committed friends.