

Colossians 4:7-9

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Paul begins to wind down his letter to the Colossians by giving them a rundown of what to expect from him moving forward. Fellow ministers named Tychicus and Onesimus will give a detailed update to them in person.

This letter, like all of the other letters Paul writes in the New Testament, is constructed at some distance from the recipients. Part of the magic and beauty of these letters is that they help transcend time and distance, uniting the body of Christ over miles and millennia. Having encouraged the believers in Colossae, given them instructions on how to steward life's journey, and warning them of the perils of evil, Paul moves to give a quick update of *all my affairs* (vs 7).

Paul does not so much tell the Colossians what is going on with him; he tells them how he is going to tell them what is going on with him: *Tychicus, our beloved brother and faithful servant and fellow bond-servant in the Lord, will bring you information* (vs 7).

Tychicus is listed as one of Paul's traveling companions in Acts 20, as well as in Ephesians, 2 Timothy, and Titus. Not much is known about the man *Tychicus*. In all of the references to him, he is being sent by Paul as a sort of ambassador, to a place where Paul is not present. Much of Paul's mission in writing these New Testament letters is to keep the growing Kingdom of God united, to remind all of the collective vision of the gospel and the interrelated work of all involved. *Tychicus* seems to be a messenger to that end, going to and fro to speak on Paul's behalf, encouraging and updating people in person.

Paul uses the plural pronoun, *our*, to refer to *Tychicus*. He is not Paul's man. He is a part of the body of Christ. He is part of the ministry team Jesus appointed. Paul calls him a *beloved brother*, *faithful servant*, and *fellow bond-servant* (vs 7). The term *beloved brother* celebrates his connection to the whole; he is a part of the family of God. The second description—*faithful servant*—celebrates *Tychicus*' commitment and sacrifice to their mutual mission to take the gospel to the world. He serves.

No doubt the challenges and dangers of traveling in the ancient world is no small thing. *Tychicus* is doing his job for the ministry team as a *servant*, setting aside his comfort for the sake of the gospel (not to mention the perils he must encounter when he is with Paul). He is *faithful* in this commitment to help others, to do his part.

The third description is a celebration of the shared mission between *Tychicus*, Paul, and the Colossians. A *bond servant* is literally someone who serves the same master; someone in the trenches with you because of a shared mission. Paul refers to himself as a bondservant as well (Romans 1:1). In this manner then, Paul and *Tychicus* are fellow bondservants, serving the same master, who is Jesus.

Paul is sending *Tychicus* to inform the Colossian believers of his ministry, *information* about his *circumstances*. The updates are likely too lengthy, or perhaps too dangerous or too personal to write out in the letter. *Tychicus* will be their messenger. Paul says, *For I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know about our circumstances and that he may encourage your hearts* (vs 8).

So, *Tychicus* is being sent with a double-charge, a two-pronged agenda. The first is to relay the facts and *circumstances* about what is happening with Paul and his other companions. The second is to *encourage your hearts*. The Greek word translated *encourage* here is “*parakaleo*,” which literally means “to beseech” or “to call to one’s side.” Part of the encouragement is an appeal. *Tychicus* is, of course, going to make Paul’s case more fully in person.

Tychicus won’t be traveling alone. *With him* will be *Onesimus*, who Paul describes as *one of your number*. There is an entire New Testament epistle about *Onesimus*; it is the Book of Philemon. *Onesimus* was Philemon’s slave. Paul addresses the slave owner to appeal on behalf of *Onesimus*, who had robbed his master and fled to Rome. In the Book of Philemon, we learn that *Onesimus* is from Colossae; quite literally *one of them*.

Paul uses similar language to that describing *Tychicus* in reference to *Onesimus*—*our faithful and beloved brother* (vs 9). He is also a part of the Kingdom of God, committed to the vision of spreading the gospel to the world, and a key contributor to the body of Christ.

Paul reiterates that *they will inform you about the whole situation here* (vs 9). Paul probably wrote the Book of Colossians while he was imprisoned in Rome (about the same time he likely wrote Philippians, Ephesians, and Philemon). One of the most impactful members of the movement imprisoned in the world’s capital is definitely a *situation* the Colossians would be eager to hear an update about. It could well be that when Paul wrote this letter, he was aware it would be read by his guards, the Roman authorities. So he might have had them as an intended audience, as well as intentionally withholding particular information that would otherwise have prevented the letter’s delivery.

Biblical Text

⁷ As to all my affairs, Tychicus, our beloved brother and faithful servant and fellow bond-servant in the Lord, will bring you information. ⁸ For I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know about our circumstances and that he may encourage your hearts; ⁹ and with him Onesimus, our faithful and beloved brother, who is one of your number. They will inform you about the whole situation here.