

The Interdependency of Christian Synergism

“⁷ All my state shall Tychicus declare unto you, *who is* a beloved brother, and a faithful minister and fellowservant in the Lord: ⁸ Whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that he might know your estate, and comfort your hearts; ⁹ With Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother, who is *one* of you. They shall make known unto you all things which *are done* here. ¹⁰ Aristarchus my fellowprisoner saluteth you, and Marcus, sister’s son to Barnabas, (touching whom ye received commandments: if he come unto you, receive him;) ¹¹ And Jesus, which is called Justus, who are of the circumcision. These only *are my* fellowworkers unto the kingdom of God, which have been a comfort unto me. ¹² Epaphras, who is *one* of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God. ¹³ For I bear him record, that he hath a great zeal for you, and them *that are* in Laodicea, and them in Hierapolis. ¹⁴ Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas, greet you. ¹⁵ Salute the brethren which are in Laodicea, and Nymphas, and the church which is in his house. ¹⁶ And when this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and that ye likewise read the *epistle* from Laodicea. ¹⁷ And say to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it. ¹⁸ The salutation by the hand of me Paul. Remember my bonds. Grace *be* with you. Amen. *Written from Rome to Colossians by Tychicus and Onesimus*” (Colossians 4:7-18).

It can be said of the ocean of souls born again into the family of God, no person is an island unto himself. Each of us is a connecting link to another brother or sister in Christ. Each life touches the life of another positively or negatively for the cause of Christ. In this text we have a record of the positive aspects of this truth. What a sweet testimony of love and appreciation for one another. What a wonderful example of encouraging one another in the Lord.

We find in this text a number of examples of how believers are to minister one to another. We see a sweet harmony of lives focusing on edifying the *body of Christ*. There is a real interdependency of believers striving for a common goal. We see a group of believers laboring together in blessed fellowship even though some of these were in prison at the time.

We do not see the petty bickering that is evident in so many churches today. We don’t see a power struggle. We don’t see any behind the scene political manipulation. We just see each individual Christian doing whatever he could to help his brother or sister in Christ succeed in ministry. What a glorious testimony to the Lordship of Christ in the lives of these believers. What a contradictory testimony to the Lordship of Christ when these things are not evident.

Tychicus was a communicator of needs (Colossians 4:7-9).

Tychicus was an apostolic delegate used by Paul on numerous occasions to carry offerings and messages (*such as the Epistle to Colosse*) to other local churches. He communicated the needs of Paul and the other missionaries with him.

“And there accompanied him into Asia Sopater of Berea; and of the Thessalonians, Aristarchus and Secundus; and Gaius of Derbe, and Timotheus; and of Asia, Tychicus and Trophimus” (Acts 20:4).

“But that ye also may know my affairs, and how I do, Tychicus, a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, shall make known to you all things” (Ephesians 6:21).

“Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen. <<To the Ephesians written from Rome, by Tychicus” (Ephesians 6:24).

“All my state shall Tychicus declare unto you, who is a beloved brother, and a faithful minister and fellowservant in the Lord” (Colossians 4:7).

“And Tychicus have I sent to Ephesus” (II Timothy 4:12).

“When I shall send Artemas unto thee, or Tychicus, be diligent to come unto me to Nicopolis: for I have determined there to winter” (Titus 3:12).

Paul’s commendation of Tychicus (Colossians 4:7)

1. He was “a beloved brother.”
2. He was “a faithful minister.”
3. He was a “fellowservant in the Lord.”

Do you suppose Paul and Tychicus ever had a disagreement in all the time they spent together? Do you suppose they knew each other’s character flaws, spiritual weakness and faults? Do you suppose Tychicus was without faults? Does Paul mention one of them?

When we find fault with a brother or sister in Christ (*and there will always be a when*), if we feel a need to communicate that fault, it should ONLY be with that brother or sister. When we focus on a person’s strengths, we help him capitalize on those strengths. When we focus on a person’s weaknesses and try to bring everyone else’s focus there, we rob him of his potential in Christ and destroy his opportunity to minister successfully. Paul promoted Tychicus’ strengths so that Tychicus could be the most effective in his ministry to others.

It is apparent from Colossians 4:10-14 that this was a group of believers who really loved and cared for one another. It is obvious these people shared a bond that is seldom seen in local churches today. Perhaps it was because they were so busy fighting to just stay alive and be effective they had little opportunity to turn on one another. When we understand the dynamic of spiritual synergism and understand that we depend on one another for the survival of that synergism, we will tend to protect each other rather than devour one another. It is usually the Christian who is not involved in the struggle for souls who turns to attack one of his brethren. The greatest dangers in any local church are those who consider it their duty to criticize and evaluate all the other people in the church.

Even though Aristarcus and Epaphras were imprisoned with Paul at Rome, their ministry and concern was still focused on others (Colossians 4: 10 & 12-13). The probability is that these two men voluntarily alternated in sharing Paul’s prison cell, even though they were not required to be in prison. They really cared for Paul. Epaphras was with Paul when the church at Colosse, Laodicea and Hierapolis were founded.

His love and concern for the people in these churches never stopped. Even though he was no longer their pastor, he continued to be genuinely concerned for them. They were more than fellow Christians. They were truly viewed as brothers and sisters in Christ. They were a loving, caring family whose love for one another was not minimized by the miles between them.

The family ties are evident in Epaphras’ intercession for his brother’s and sister’s in Christ. Paul’s testimony about Epaphras was he was “always labouring fervently . . . in prayers” for them, usually to the point of exhaustion. “Fervently” in Colossians 4:12 is from the Greek word *agonizomai* (ag-o-nid'-zom-ah-ee). It means to enter a contest such as contending in the gymnastic games, to contend with adversaries; to fight. Metaphorically it referred to a struggle with the potential of great difficulties and dangers).

Epaphras had “a great zeal” for these believers. He really wanted them to succeed in their ministry. But most of all he loved them with an overflowing heart.

“Remember my bonds” (Colossians 4:18)

Paul (*and each of the men listed*) had invested their lives so these believers could be saved and established in the faith. These men gave up much in life to preach the gospel. Ministry is about sacrifice. Sacrifice is the measuring stick of love.

“¹ Am I not an apostle? am I not free? have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? are not ye my work in the Lord? ² If I be not an apostle unto others, yet doubtless I am to you: for the seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord. ³ Mine answer to them that do examine me is this, ⁴ Have we not power to eat and to drink? ⁵ Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas? ⁶ Or I only and Barnabas, have not we power to forbear working? ⁷ Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges? who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock? ⁸ Say I these things as a man? or saith not the law the same also? ⁹ For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen? ¹⁰ Or saith he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written: that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope. ¹¹ If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things? ¹² If others be partakers of this power over you, are not we rather? Nevertheless we have not used this power; but suffer all things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ. ¹³ Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? ¹⁴ Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel. ¹⁵ But I have used none of these things: neither have I written these things, that it should be so done unto me: for it were better for me to die, than that any man should make my glorying void. ¹⁶ For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel! ¹⁷ For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward: but if against my will, a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me” (I Corinthians 8:1-17).

These men had given their lives for the cause of Christ. The recipients of this epistle (*and the others*) were their long term investment. Sometimes Christians forget, or take for granted, the investment people (*pastors and missionaries*) have made in time and effort to bring them to Christ and lay the necessary spiritual foundations so they can live for Christ. We take for granted those Missionaries who labor for a lifetime in some small city thousands of miles from their families.

God’s calling binds them there as much as any prison cell. They come to minister, trusting God that their needs will be provided for. They trust God that He will raise up faithful people who will provide those needs. However, they will stay and do whatever is necessary because God has called them there. Christians need to “remember” that these people are “bondslaves” of Christ. They serve Him where ever He calls them, regardless of the sacrifices necessary because He is Lord and they love Him.

Studies in the Epistle to the Colossians
Chapter Twenty-two
The Interdependency of Christian Synergism

1. Read Acts 20:4. What was Tychicus' relationship with the Apostle Paul? _____

- Do you suppose they knew each other intimately? _____
2. List Paul's three commendations of Tychicus in Colossians 4:7.
A. _____
B. _____
C. _____
3. Do you think Paul was familiar enough with Tychicus to know his faults, failures and spiritual weaknesses? _____
A. Does he mention any of them? _____
B. Why not? Didn't these people deserve to know these things if he was going to minister to them? _____

4. What happens when we are able to focus others on another's strengths? _____

5. What happens to a person's potential for a successful ministry when we bring focus on their weaknesses? _____

6. Read Colossians 4:10-14. Why do you think these people shared a bond that is seldom seen in local churches today? _____

7. What is usually characteristic of a believer who spends all of his/her time criticizing or attacking other believers? _____

8. Read Colossians 4:12-13. What can we learn about Epaphras from Paul's commendation of him regarding the people he had brought to Christ and pastored even though he was quite a distance from them? _____

- Why did Epaphras pray so fervently for these people? _____

9. Read Colossians 4:18. What is Paul reminding these believers about by the words "remember my bonds" (compare 1 Corinthians 8:1-17)? _____

