

Notes for the Ones Called-Out to Meet

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The Message of the Messenger

by Dan Trygg

“He was accompanied by Sopater, son of Pyrrhus, from Berea, Aristarchus and Secundus from Thessalonica, Gaius from Derbe, Timothy, and Tychicus and Trophimus from Asia (or, some MSS say, ‘Ephesus’).” Acts 20:4

“But that you also may know the things according to me, what I am doing, Tychicus, the beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, will make everything known to you. ²² I have sent him to you for this very purpose, so that you may know about us, and that he may comfort your hearts. ²³ Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴ Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ with incorruptible love.” Ephesians 6:21-24

“As to all my affairs, Tychicus, our beloved brother and faithful servant and fellow bond-servant in the Lord, will bring you information. ⁸ I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know the things concerning us 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.” Colossians 4:7-9

“When I send Artemas to you, or Tychicus, make every effort to come to me in Nicopolis, for I have decided to spend the winter there.” Titus 3:12

“Make every effort to come to me soon...; ¹² But Tychicus I have sent to Ephesus.” 2 Timothy 4:9,12

We are finally at the end of our study of Ephesians. **The book closes with Tychicus, ...a younger convert and one of Paul’s trainees and co-workers..., commissioned to deliver the letter to be read by the church, and also to inform the gathering of believers in Ephesus about Paul’s situation and activities.**

Tychicus first appears in the biblical account in Acts 20:4. According to some manuscripts, he was originally from Ephesus, so he would have known the believers from that city. Furthermore, he was a trusted leader. The people listed in Acts 20:4 were delegates sent by their respective churches to accompany Paul to Greece, where he went through Macedonia and Achaia to collect contributions for the poor in Jerusalem. (This is also described in 1 Cor. 16:1-4; 2 Cor. 8,9 and Rom. 15:25-27.) **These representatives were to personally convey the contributions from their local churches to the Jerusalem community of believers, as an expression of their love. They also served to provide oversight and accountability to assure that these funds were handled properly and that there would be no question of impropriety, ...a wise precaution by Paul and these local churches from Asia, Macedonia and Achaia.**

They had intended to arrive by the Feast of Weeks (Pentecost, or Shavuot – cf. Acts 20:16), which would have been June 2nd in 57 A.D. While there, Paul was falsely accused of bringing Gentiles into the temple, attacked by a mob, and was arrested by the Roman guard (Acts 21:27-34). Because of a plot by the Jews, he was transferred to the Roman provincial capital, at Caesarea Maritima (“by the sea”). **He spent the next two years imprisoned there. Then, because he appealed to Caesar, he was sent to appear before the emperor.** He was shipwrecked along the way, but eventually made it safely to Rome. **There, he ended up under house arrest, waiting for two more years for his hearing.** During his imprisonment at Caesarea and in Rome, he was given considerable freedom to receive visitors and write to whomever he desired. **It was during this period that the NT letters to Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon were written.** (For this reason, they are referred to as “the prison epistles”.) **It is clear from the passages above that Tychicus delivered the letters to the Ephesian and Colossian churches.**

It appears that Paul was released from his house arrest (ca. 63). He went on to minister in places not recorded in the book of Acts. In Titus 1:5, he mentioned that he had left another disciple/co-worker, Titus, behind in Crete. **When it was time for Titus to be relieved, Tychicus was one of the two men Paul had in mind to replace him (Tit. 3:12).** Paul was arrested again, and imprisoned in Rome (ca. 66). **When he sent for Timothy to come to see him, Paul dispatched Tychicus to Ephesus to take his place (2 Tim. 4:9-12).** According to tradition, Tychicus later served as a leader in several cities nearby. **Eventually he was martyred for his faith in Colophon, 24 miles from Ephesus.**

From this background, we see that **Tychicus was more than just a courier, or a messenger.** We don’t know if Paul led him to Christ. He had briefly preached there at the end of his second missionary journey (ca. 52), and left Priscilla and Aquila behind to disciple new believers and establish a church in their home. On his third missionary journey (53-57), however, Paul spent three years ministering there (Acts 20:31), and through his work, and that of his team, “all who lived in Asia heard the word of the Lord” (Acts 19:10). Whether he came to faith through Paul, directly or indirectly, **Tychicus became a committed co-worker who identified with Paul’s team of compatriots. He knew Paul well, ...well enough to speak of him, his circumstances and activities, as well as his walk with God.** In fact, this was a key aspect of his ministry, ...to inform people about *Paul’s example* in the midst of *his* circumstances, and to “encourage” their hearts. **Tychicus was an encourager.** Through the next decade, or more, he became a key part of the

apostle's ministry team, visiting Paul in several places, delivering his letters and taking other leadership assignments. **He was also a wise and capable leader, ...one who could step in to take over in almost any circumstance.**

So, what was it that Tychicus was commissioned by Paul to do?

First of all, he was to carry the letters written to the Ephesian, Colossian and Laodicean churches, and probably the letter to Philemon (which was also to be read to the church that met in their home – Philem. 1:2). Rome did not have a public mail service. If you wanted to write to someone, you had to also provide for the passage and delivery of the letter. Usually this involved giving the letter to someone who would be traveling to the location you desired, and paying for them to deliver it. Or, you could pay for a courier, which would be very expensive. Or, in the case of Tychicus, **Paul gave him these four letters, and sent him from Rome to deliver them to their intended recipients.** As he travelled, he would be able to stop at the homes where Christians met. The people there would take him in, and he would be given an opportunity to share his testimony, or a word of encouragement for the group, or some important news.

Second, Paul wanted him to tell the recipients about his circumstances, his activities, and that he might “comfort their hearts”. This was a common practice. Writing materials were expensive, so most letters and documents were brief. Often, as in this case, the courier was known to the sender, and would expand on the content of the letter, or give greetings and news about the sender. We see this same dynamic in Acts 15, where Judas Barsabbas and Silas not only delivered the letter from the Jerusalem church, but also each gave a message to encourage and strengthen the hearers. Paul himself benefited from the news that Titus reported, regarding the response of the Corinthians to his letter to them (2 Cor. 7:6,7), so information and encouragement could go both ways through the couriers.

What was the message of the messenger? (1.) The circumstances Paul was dealing with. Paul wanted people to clearly know what he was dealing with. At this point, he was living in a rented room, at his own expense. He was chained to a Roman guard, to guarantee his presence for his upcoming hearing. But, he was allowed to receive visitors, write letters and continue to make tents with his hands. In the final chapter of Acts, he even was able to have gathering of a large number of Jews who were interested in hearing of his views. **(2.) Paul's well-being and example.** A repeated exhortation in Paul's letters was for his readers to look to him as a example to be imitated (1 Cor. 4:16; 11:1; 1 Thess. 1:6; Phil. 3:17; 2 Thess. 3:7,9). He was also mindful of handing down teaching, practices and traditions that he expected them to follow (1 Cor. 11:2; Phil. 4:8,9; 2 Thess. 2:15). He also reported his responses to his challenges, ...both the responses of his faith, his awareness of his human weaknesses, and his need for strength and support from God and other people (e.g., Phil. 1:16-26; Eph. 6:19,20; Col. 4:2-4). **(3.) The activities Paul was engaged in.** In addition to the visitors he was able to entertain, he was having an impact on the whole praetorian guard, and many others, as they interacted with him, or heard of him. **His imprisonment was not limiting the gospel, it was actually advancing it!** He also asserted, in each of these letters, that he was interceding on their behalf, as well. **He was also continuing to invest in them, both through prayer, letters, and the exhortation of men like Tychicus. Furthermore, because these charges were without basis, he fully expected to be released soon, and to come to visit them again!**

In a very real sense, Tychicus himself embodied the message. His presence among them was the confirmation of the discipleship process that they all (hopefully) were on. He was one of their own, ...a common, local man who came to know Jesus. **Paul described him as “beloved”.** This is the Greek word “*agapētos*”. This was not a normal description used by people of that culture. They might use the word “*philos*” which refers to mutual affection. **“Agapētos” refers to a person who is the recipient of an unconditional, chosen-love.** It is used 61 times in the NT. 8 times it is used of God's acknowledgment of Jesus (Matt. 3:7; 12:18; 17:5; Mk. 1:11; 9:7; 12:6; Lk. 3:22; 20:13). 52 times it is used in reference to believers. **We are recipients of God's chosen-love, His love given without limitation. We are “beloved-ones”.** **Do you see yourself in that way? NT Christians commonly referred to one another by this term. It was a foundational starting point to their identity.** Tychicus was a “beloved-one”. **He was also “faithful” or “trustworthy”.** **He responded to God's grace and call, and put into motion a life that was built around God's chosen-love for him.** “Faithful” implies being given a trust, calling or responsibility, and acting to affirm that summons. “Faithful” indicates that **Tychicus acted in ways that took seriously this calling. He became a seeker, a follower, a disciple-apprentice. As he followed, God opened up opportunities for service. He became an active servant for Christ, and eventually a joint-servant in Paul's team.** Are you faithfully responding to God's love? Are you in motion seeking to deepen your walk, affirm your calling, and step into the opportunities for service God would bring to you?

This did not happen overnight. **As you read about Paul's team of fellow-servants, you realize that it was very relational. These people spent, ...I mean invested..., time, ...time to grow, time to serve, time to discover and develop relationships with other like-minded, service-oriented Christ-followers.** It takes a *history* of interactions and working together to develop *trust*. **Along the way, because of his response to love, and the inworking of God's love, Tychicus learned how to build up and affirm people.** He became an encourager to others. Paul had seen him at work, had sent him on assignments, and knew how he would operate. **He not only would be the perfect person to bring the message to add to what Paul had written, he himself was the demonstration of all that Paul had worked for among them.**