

A TALE OF THREE MEN

Colossians 4:7-18

Introduction:

What do you do with a lot of names at the end of a letter? Why is this here? For what reason did God inspire this section? These are great questions for any portion of Scripture, but they take on more significance when you are stuck.

I want to take some time and think about just three men listed here in our portion. Since it is so important that we see these men as real and we only get a glimpse of their lives here, I wanted to take a bigger view of who they are. I wanted to see how their stories fit into the bigger story that God is telling in Scripture. We could do this with all the names mentioned, but for the sake of time we will limit our selection.

Let's take a look at...

Mark

He was a cousin of Barnabas and he did not have a good reputation.

Let's hear his story...

He had served with Paul and Barnabas. He had been with them, working alongside in the ministry and then came the moment, the moment he is probably best known for. He deserted Paul and Barnabas. We don't know the details, but it was serious. It was so serious in fact that it divided Paul and his good friend, Barnabas. Paul thought Mark should have stayed with them before and was now unwilling to bring him along with them, probably fearing for a repeat performance. Barnabas wanted Mark to come along anyway. They disagree so severely that they part company. (*Acts 15:36-41*) How would you like that kind of reputation? How would it be if the story ended there?

Gloriously this is not the final chapter in Mark's life of faith. Paul tells the Colossians to welcome Mark. That means progress had been made. (*Colossians 4:10*)

Paul, later in his life, ultimately desires to have Mark help him in ministry. Reconciliation has happened. Peace is restored. (*2 Timothy 4:11*)

Imagine what joy this would bring Mark!

We know almost nothing else about this man, except he later wrote the gospel we know as Mark.

Amazing! Restoration among Christians. Broken fellowship has been restored. What a great story.

Demas

In our text we read that Demas greets the Colossian church. What else do we know about him?

He was another fellow worker with Paul. He was working alongside the other Christians, serving Christ and testifying to the truth. He probably looked like any other disciple. Actually he did look like one particular disciple—Judas!

2 Timothy 4:10 He loved this present world and departs from Paul. The indication is that he, too, deserts Paul. This time there is not record of reconciliation. We do not know much more.

Would you rather have this as your story?

Listen to the facts of the story.

Paul is in prison and Demas loves the world too much to hang around with him.

Paul is going to die soon since this is the last letter he writes from Scripture and Demas abandons him. All this because of a love of the world! (*1 John 2:15*)

We don't have any more information, but I think it is at least safe to say this is a warning!

Danger, Will Robinson, Danger! Not a great story. A fearful story.

Epaphras

Here was a man who was one of the Colossians. He is a servant of Jesus with Paul right now. What a great, high position—servant of the King!

Listen to his description in this portion.

- ❑ Always struggling on your behalf in his prayers.
- ❑ His longing, his passion, his goal is to see them stand mature and fully assured in all the will of God!
- ❑ Paul testifies that Epaphras worked hard for them.

This is a godly example. This is a man who is active in his love for God and the saints. This is a man who is not turning his back on fellow workers.

This is a man changed drastically by the gospel!

Lessons to Learn:

1. These are real people with real struggles. We should be able to identify with people like this.
2. Who are you most like right now? Who do you want to be like right now? Why? How could you get there?
3. Knowing what we do about the rest of Scripture, what is the difference between these three men? *Colossians 1:21-23* Continuing in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard...