

## Unshakeable: Colossians 4:7-18, The Power of Encouragement- 5/28/17

The photo- **Raising the Flag on Iwo Jima** **[Insert Photo]** is an iconic photograph taken on February 23, 1945, by Joe Rosenthal. It depicts six United States Marines from Easy Company raising a U.S. flag atop Mount Suribachi during the Battle of Iwo Jima in World War II after they won a hard fought battle in they experienced the loss of 40% of their company. Three of these marines in this photo would loose their lives just days later in battle. This photo came to be regarded in the United States as one of the most significant and recognizable images of the war. And this photo still moves us deeply today 70 years later. Why? Most of us have not experienced war firsthand; few of us were even alive during WWII. But it grips us none the less. There is something deeply encouraging, powerful and inspiring about this photograph in its display of strength, belief, dedication and teamwork, everyone pulling together for their common cause- freedom. Even the last man, who can no longer touch the flagpole, "has the back" of his comrades. This photo strikes at a core longing in the human heart, something that we were made for, camaraderie for the cause. A deeper fellowship with others not based on personality, ethnicity or class... but a fellowship based on a common set of core convictions and passions. "I got your back" relationships, where others are spurring you on to go further, to not lose heart, to not give up because we are in this together!

As Paul closes out his letter to the church in **Colossae what we see is a snapshot of camaraderie for the cause of Christ.** Paul is going to recognize his fellow soldiers for the cause of Christ who have labored, suffered and supported him together. This is deep fellowship not based on personality, ethnicity or class, but on a blood bought unity through Jesus and empowered by the Holy Spirit. And similarly to the Iwo Jima photo it ought to inspire us to pursue deeper camaraderie with one another for the cause of Christ among us and our community. To know "who has your back" spiritually, to not lose heart in the marathon of the Christian life, to persevere in fighting sin's desire to master us, to inspire us to continue to serve in the ministry God has given us. **The biblical word that best sums up this kind of camaraderie is encouragement.** "Come-Alongside" others to give courage. To put wind in the sails of others... Any of you feel like you could use some wind in your sails? Well not only do we need it but God commands us to be encouragers to one another. One of the 47 One Anothers in the NT.

**1 Thessalonians 5:11**

***Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.***

And that's what encouragement does- it builds other up. Examples....

In Paul's closing words we are going to get a snapshot of who these encouragers are so we can get examples of how to be an encouragement to each other.

**Colossians 4:7-9**

*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.*

Now remember, Paul is writing this letter from a prison in Rome around 60 AD. These first two men Tychicus and Onesimus had been co-laborers with Paul during his missionary journeys. Tychicus, a gentile convert presumably by Paul. Tychicus was with Paul during dangerous journeys and stuck with him even while he was imprisoned. This is why Paul calls him a dear brother and a faithful servant. He was in the foxhole with Paul when things went down. He stuck with him, even while he's in jail. Tychicus is also Paul's personal mailman, which we see here, in Acts 20 and the letter to the Ephesians as well.

Tychicus also brought along Onesimus, the former runaway slave of Philemon who meets Paul in Rome, becomes a Christian, and is now accompanying Tychicus on this important courier mission no longer as a runaway slave, but as a faithful and dear brother who is ONE of you. These two men had clearly been an encouragement to Paul while in prison. And now he sends them to Colossae with his letter. We don't think much about that because I can one click on Amazon from my phone and receive a package at my doorstep tomorrow. But Rome to Colossae is a long trip, perilous trip in 60 AD. [\[Insert Map\]](#) They had to cross Italy on foot. And then they had to sail the Adriatic. And then they had to cross Greece. And then they had to sail the Aegean. Then they had to walk, after they had landed at Miletus, up the steep Lycas River Valley to Laodicea and Colossae, and it wasn't easy. It was a very difficult journey. But they were committed to it. Why? Well it says in *v.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.*

That says something doesn't it? A dangerous mission for the express purpose of encouragement! Two thoughts- 1) It says that we are not emotionless, fiercely independent islands unto ourselves. But God made us with emotional, relational need and encouragement goes a long way. 2) You know, long distance visits from brothers and sisters in Christ from other places in the world are still an incredible encouragement to this day. SALT, missions trips.

How can you go out of your way to encourage someone? Are you willing to get out of your comfort zone to be an encourager? An intentional encourager...Write a letter, make a phone call, meet for coffee, make a trip. I have received letters from some of you and they are always so timely!

**Colossians 4:10-11**

*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 co-workers for the kingdom of God, and they have proved a comfort to me.*

3 other encouragers of Paul that he mentions are Aristarchus, Jesus Justus and Mark. We don't know much about the first two other than that they are Jewish believers who comforted Paul. But the third we do- Mark. This should be somewhat surprising to read that Mark shows up here in a positive way after we find out that Mark abandoned Paul and Barnabus in Acts 13 when things got particularly tough on their 1<sup>st</sup> missionary journey. Two chapters later, Acts 15, when they are ready for the 2<sup>nd</sup> missionary journey Barnabus says- hey I think we should take Mark along... Paul says no way! This guy abandoned us last time. NO second chances... and they go their separate ways Paul takes Silas and Barnabus takes Mark. So how does Mark end up here restored to Paul as a dear comforter in Rome? You know what Barnabus means "Son of Encouragement". Barnabus was the ultimate encourager. Captain 2<sup>nd</sup> chance. He saw the potential in everyone and said, I'm going to choose to believe in Mark. I'm going to show grace. I think spending time with Barnabus helped Mark recover from failure and eventually Paul was convinced of this too.

Don't we all need people in our lives who give us 2<sup>nd</sup> chances? 3<sup>rd</sup> chances? Don't we need people who aren't going to give up on us when we fail and love us enough not to leave us where we are? This is encouragement. Are there people in your life that could use another chance? Who feel like failures that need a Barnabas? Ex: Steve Anderson

**Colossians 4:12-16**

*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.*

*15 Give my greetings to the brothers and sisters at Laodicea, and to Nympha and the church in her house. 16 After this letter has been read to you, see that it is also read in the church of the Laodiceans and that you in turn read the letter from Laodicea.*

We meet several comrades of Paul here, but we want to get to know Epaphras a little more. He planted the church in Colossae and had cared so deeply about this church that he journeyed to go see Paul in Rome so that Paul would address the theological challenges there. How has Epaphras been an encourager? *V. 12 He is always wrestling in prayer for you.*

Wrestling- that the greek word *agonizomai*...agonize. Painstaking prayer. This is no check the box kind of praying... it is sincere, passionate prayer. He's a prayer warrior.

Ex: Willie and Zenia, Boiler Room in Prayer Room

Maybe you can't get around as well these days. Maybe you can't go on a missions trip or go visit people to encourage them. But you can be an encourager through prayer! **Who needs your prayers right now?** Not just physical needs. Who are you praying for that they would stand firm in their faith, that they would mature, that they would have assurance of their salvation?

Colossians 4:17-18

*17 Tell Archippus: "See to it that you complete the ministry you have received in the Lord." 18 I, Paul, write this greeting in my own hand. Remember my chains. Grace be with you.*

The last example of encouragement that we see is what Paul says to Archippus. Now all we know about Archippus was that he was a young leader in the church, possibly Philemon's son according to Phil. 2. He may have been the interim Pastor while Epaphras was in Rome with Paul. All Paul says is *"See to it that you complete the ministry you have received in the Lord."* In other words this encouragement was to not give up. Keep going. You might be getting tired. The work of ministry is difficult, but God is with you, it's not in vain!

*Hebrews 10:24 And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.*

Sometimes we can suffer from poor me syndrome... ex: from when I was going to seminary, working having kids... starting to whine, Sharon Supp.

**Who needs a spur? Who needs you to say keep going! Don't give up!**

**Summary:**

In verses 7-18 Paul gives us a snapshot of his comrades in the ministry trenches. These are his band of brothers that encouraged him and likewise are an encouragement to the church in Colossae. They encouraged through going out of their way, through helping those who need another chance, through prayer and through spurring them on to keep going. Paul wanted to recognize these men and women because they are an example to us nearly 2000 later of the power of encouragement.

**Let's recognize one another here who have been an encouragement to you.**