

<sup>32</sup>And what more shall I say? I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson and Jephthah, about David and Samuel and the prophets, <sup>33</sup>who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised; who shut the mouths of lions, <sup>34</sup>quenched the fury of the flames, and escaped the edge of the sword; whose weakness was turned to strength; and who became powerful in battle and routed foreign armies...<sup>39</sup>These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised, <sup>40</sup>since God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect.

From the moment mankind put quill to vellum to craft a story, superheroes with capes have flown off the cowhides and into the hearts of people of every tongue, of every tribe, and of every nation. The reason they have is fairly simple: we look to superheroes as beacons of selflessness in a world that has been - and will continue to be - corrupt and self-centered. From some of you more ancient than others in this place today, you begged your mom and dad to drop you off at the Drive-In to prevent people from knowing you failed your driver's test so that you could watch Captain America so you could hear him say: "I'm not looking for forgiveness and I'm way past asking for permission." For others, like me, who are less ancient but well on the way, you couldn't wait to drive your DeLorean to the Movie Theatre that's actually inside a building so that you could hear Alfred Pennyworth tell Batman: "Don't take the Batpod, Mr. Wayne. Take the Lamborghini. It's much more subtle." And for those of you not ancient and not getting there any time soon, you promised your parents you would double mask inside the theatre if they took you to the X-Men in 3D because you wanted to hear Wolverine say, "I'm the best there is at what I do and what I do isn't very nice." /// But in my comic book collection, one superhero stands out from the rest in terms of volume and influence long before he entered the movie business. And he never wore a cape. He's that son of a lighthouse keeper you know as Aquaman. Aquaman encounters a lot of things in his life as a hero, but a smooth sea is never one of them. For a smooth sea would never make for a noble and skillful Aquaman. And the storms of Aquaman's adversity, like those of the ocean, roused the faculties, fortitude, and skills necessary for his voyages. /// Many heroes of the Bible don't wear capes either. Their stories don't gross a billion dollars for movie studios. And in most cases, you even skip over them when you see them mentioned because you do want to read the stories in the Bible about heroes that do wear capes like the Apostle Peter or the Apostle Paul. But I wouldn't gloss over them if I were you. If you do, you will miss one of the most important bible lessons of all: God performs some of his greatest acts with some of the most common people. They are the heroes without capes. We see several of them in Colossians 4:7-10, 14-15. Let's read the text together and learn from the Word why the God of the Bible considered them heroic enough to be read thousands of years later in this setting in Vero Beach, Florida.

<sup>7</sup>Tychicus will tell you all the news about me. He is a dear brother, a faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord. <sup>8</sup>I am sending him to you for the express purpose that you may know about our circumstances and that he may encourage your hearts. <sup>9</sup>He is coming with Onesimus, our faithful and dear brother, who is one of you. They will tell you everything that is happening here. <sup>10</sup>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...<sup>14</sup>Our dear friend Luke, the doctor, and Demas send greetings. <sup>15</sup>Give my greetings to the brothers and sisters at Laodicea, and to Nympha and the church in her house.

### Heroes Without Capes Have These Qualities

#### 1. Faithful (7-9)

- **The Cornflake King** – (1) When I lived in New Orleans, I was the takeout king because the golden rule of Nawlins is this: if you can't make Red Beans and Rice, seafood gumbo, or crawfish etouffee, then you don't try it. (2) As a result, the only thing I was allowed to make myself was Cornflakes because I can sure make a mean bowl of them. (3) Interesting thing about cornflakes: John and Will Kellogg discovered them accidentally when they accidentally left a pot of boiled grained corn on the stove for several days.
- **Main Idea** – the most faithful acts of the Christian faith in the economy of God happen in the course of everyday life with ordinary people doing ordinary things.
- **Tychicus**: (1) Faithful, trusted, and loyal; (2) So much so that Paul entrusted him to carry his letters to Colossae and Ephesus; (3) Paul wrote Colossians from Rome and Tychicus took it to them across (a) Two continents; (b) 2000 miles; (c) Two seas; (d) by foot and (e) by boat and then took another letter to Ephesus, which tacked on another 200 miles

- **Why he's significant:** (1) If we knew ahead of time, we were carrying the inspired Word of God in our hands, we still would think about it long and hard before saying yes; (2) Tychicus didn't know that. He was just carrying a letter from a friend he went to see in prison named the Apostle Paul to Colossae that he had to smuggle out of the jail; (3) Quite an ordinary task; but little did he know God saw fit to make him a man you read about thousands of years after.
- **Onesimus:** (1) He was a runaway slave who stole property from the household of Philemon; (2) Paul converted him during his visit to Ephesus; (3) Paul then sent him back to Philemon to make things right; (4) He sent a letter to Philemon with him in your Bible that basically says "if Onesimus owes you, charge it to my account."
- **Why he's significant:** (1) Mercy made Onesimus do what was right by God toward Philemon; (2) He was faithful to do exactly what Paul told him to do; (3) As a result, this former thief and run-away slave became the Bishop of Antioch who changed his name to one you may have heard: Ignatius of Antioch.

## 2. Available (10)

- **Finding a Roofer After a Hurricane** – (1) Hurricane Matthew nailed our roof in 2016; (2) Our insurance adjuster came prominently so that we could get our roof replaced; (3) But finding a licensed roofing contractor to do the work was a different matter; (4) We called 365,000 of them – give our take a few – and got virtually the same response: "We're covered up. We got all we can do."
- **Main Idea** – Availability isn't about perfection; or even being remotely qualified. It's about being available, not "covered up" because you "got all you can do."
- **Mark** – (1) John Mark, who was converted by Peter; (2) He was raised by a single widow who was absolutely loaded; (3) He joins Paul on his first missionary journey; (3) But when the going got tough, he wanted to back home to momma; (4) So he did. He abandoned Paul and the work.
- **Barnabas** – (1) His name means "son of encouragement." (2) He never abandoned Paul and (3) wanted Paul to reconsider and take Mark on 2<sup>nd</sup> missionary journey. (4) Paul said: "no way, Jose." (5) So Barnabas took him to Crete.
- **But Here:** (1) Paul's finished all his missionary journeys; (2) He's in Rome waiting execution; (3) And Mark is with him, even though he abandoned Paul the first time and Paul rejected him the second time.
- **Significance:** Barnabas was committed regardless. Mark was committed when convenient. Barnabas was always available. Mark learned to be. And with it came a third chance. And this time, Mark passes with flying colors.

## 3. Teachable (14)

- **Siberian Husky Challenges for 1<sup>st</sup> Time Dog Owners:** (1) A Siberian Husky is one of the most beautiful specimens on the planet; (2) They are also exceedingly smart and strong, able to pull a sled all over Alaska; (3) But take my word for it, be leery of purchasing one if you've never had a dog because you can't train them; they already know it all (4) If you try, they'll whine; (5) If you don't do something they won't, they'll throw temper tantrums; (6) And if you put them in the back fenced in yard for relief, they'll get out.
- **Luke** – (1) A doctor; (2) A Gentile, the only one to write anything in the New Testament; (3) Had a scholar's vocabulary and a commanding knowledge of the Greek language (he wrote in Classical Greek, unlike the others); (4) But that's not what makes him great. He risked his own life to be with Paul on numerous occasions because he knew Paul was onto something that he didn't know; (5) That's why he never abandoned him.
- **Demas** – (1) By contrast, Demas was likeable and capable; (2) So much so that Paul put him in a leadership position; (3) But later Paul tells the Thessalonians Demos left him in the lurch; (4) That means he just didn't abandon the work; (5) He left him specifically because Paul faced death; (5) When Paul needed him the most, he chose to set sail.
- **Significance** – One of the most important qualities of a hero and true leader is recognition of his/her limitations. Demas had it all figured out and liked to tell everybody about it. He abandoned the faith and Paul in a time of need. Luke had ten times the qualifications of Demas. But he didn't tell any about it until his teacher, Paul, had gone on to be with Jesus.

## 4. Hospitable (15)

- **Welcome Mats** – (1) You see them all the time: "welcome to our lovely home." (2) Mine doesn't say that. (3) Instead it says, "we are probably just pretending not to be home."

- **Significance** – The gift of hospitality is one of the most underappreciated gifts specifically because the hospitable are those totally content with being hospitable and then exiting stage right.
- **Nympha** – (1) Only time she's mentioned in the Bible is here; (2) But what it says is extraordinary; (3) She was a wealthy woman who saw fit to risk her life and use her wealth by hosting a church in a place where Christianity wasn't welcomed. It was persecuted.
- **Significance** – Nympha didn't have to wear a cape. She wore the invisible coat of being faithful, available, teachable, and hospitable. May we, the people of God, be heroes without capes like Nympha in other people's lives.