

---

# Colossians

## The Supremacy of Christ

---

Bible Commentary by Joshua Fox

[www.joshfox.co.uk](http://www.joshfox.co.uk)

# Contents

<a href="#"><u>Overview.....</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>3</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Colossians 1:1-8 - Gospel Growth.....</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>4</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Colossians 1:9-14 - Knowing God's Will.....</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>6</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Colossians 1:15-23 - Christ is Preeminent.....</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>8</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Colossians 1:24-2:5 - Ministers of the Mystery.....</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>11</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Colossians 2:6-15 - Fullness in Christ.....</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>14</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Colossians 2:16-23 - Freedom from Rules.....</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>16</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Colossians 3:1-17 - Put on the Nature of Christ.....</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>18</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Colossians 3:18-4:1 - God over Marriage, Family &amp; Work.....</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>22</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Colossians 4:2-18 - Pray for Opportunities and Eachother.....</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>24</u></a>

# Overview

## **Christ is all...**

- 1:1-8 - Gospel Growth
- 1:9-14 - Knowing God's Will
- 1:15-23 - Christ is Preeminent
- 1:24-2:5 - Ministers of the Mystery
- 2:6-15 - Fullness in Christ

## **So make Him all**

- 2:16-23 - Freedom from Rules
- 3:1-17 - Put on the Nature of Christ
- 3:18-4:1 - God over Marriage, Family & Work
- 4:2-18 - Pray for Opportunities and Eachother

## Colossians 1:1-8 - Gospel Growth

1Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, 2To the saints and faithful brothers in Christ at Colossae: Grace to you and peace from God our Father.

- Paul is an apostle not by his own will but by the will of God
- Paul is writing to the saints and faithful brothers at Colossae, which are not two groups but one. The word saints means to be holy and set apart and so reveals God's grace to them, God has made them holy. The word faithful means reliable and believing and so reveals the faithful perseverance of the church in their faith

3We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, 4since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints, 5because of the hope laid up for you in heaven.

- Here we see Paul's use of faith, love and hope again as used in other epistles
- What is of primary importance to Paul is knowing that people have faith in Christ Jesus, the faith that saves the sinner
- What stems from a sincere faith in Christ Jesus is a love for all the saints, loving those who have received God's grace just as we have
- Our faith comes from the hope laid up in heaven for us. We have faith that Jesus died for our sins, was raised to life and has won for us eternal life with God. This is the hope laid up for us in heaven which we have faith that Jesus has accomplished for us.
- These are the things that Paul thanks God for in prayer; faith, love and hope. We often give thanks for trivial and material things in life (and rightly so for we should be thankful for all things) but how much greater is it to thank God for spiritual blessings such as these: faith, love and hope.

Of this you have heard before in the word of the truth, the gospel, 6which has come to you, as indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit and increasing—as it also does among you, since the day you heard it and understood the grace of God in truth,

- The hope which is laid up for us, is the very thing the Colossians have heard before in the word of truth; the gospel. The gospel is a message of hope, requires faith and results in love.
- 'word of truth' - the gospel is not simply something which is true, but is sort of THE message of truth. For the gospel in entirety is not simply how man can get to heaven but God's solution to sin and even his purpose behind creation - indeed the truth of the universe.
- 'which has come to you' - the gospel is not something which we discover ourselves through our own merit but 'presented' and given by the grace of God
- The gospel is bearing fruit and increasing through the whole world, as it is also doing amongst these believers. What is the fruit of the gospel? Faith, hope and love. More people placing their faith in Jesus Christ and the hope of salvation, for this faith and hope to become more certain and steadfast and to produce a love inside the believer. The evidence of faith, love and hope in these believers is proof that the gospel is growing amongst them.

- So the gospel must also grow in us individually, becoming a larger and larger influence on our life.
- 'understand the grace of God in truth' - this would be more easily understood as 'truly understand the grace of God'. All mankind has experienced the grace of God in part, even without knowing it. Life itself and its many blessings are due to the grace of God, but God's grace is most fully and truthfully articulated in the message of the gospel. To receive the gospel is to truly understand God's grace.

7just as you learned it from Epaphras our beloved fellow servant. He is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf 8and has made known to us your love in the Spirit.

- The gospel which 'came' to these believers came from God but via human hands and mouths. The gospel grows throughout the whole world through the hands and mouths of people as we spread around this divine message.
- The believers 'learned' this and came to 'understand' the message of the gospel. Paul's language here is not that we simply believe the gospel but that we learn and understand it. God is shrouded in mystery yet it is faith which makes things clear and understood. The root word for 'learned' is the same as that for 'maths'.
- 'on your behalf' - Epaphras is a faithful minister on behalf of the Colossians for they are the beneficiaries of his ministry, with the gospel of truth being passed from him to them. Just as Paul would say that other believers are his glory and joy, there is a great and invaluable bond between those who share Christ and those who receive him. We must remember that others were ministers to us on our behalf and we (at least partly) owe our faith to them.
- 'love in the spirit' - despite us needing to learn and understand the message of the gospel it is not a dry and mindful experience but one which should be accompanied by a 'love in the spirit'. Epaphras sees a clear evidence of spirit empowered love in these believers. So growing in the gospel is both learning in truth and loving in the spirit.

## Colossians 1:9-14 - Knowing God's Will

9And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, 10so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him:

- Paul's primary concern for these new believers is no material need but that they might know God's will. The 'will of God' here is not a specific will for a given situation but the general will of God in how these believers (and us) might please God and walk worthily before him.
- 'spiritual wisdom and understanding' - Spiritual because it is a thing of God which is given, not a thing of man which can be learnt. Wisdom and understanding because it is something to be fully embraced and become part of our lives, not just saved to memory. We do not recite the will of God from cerebral knowledge, but live it out with practical wisdom. It shows that we must use wisdom day by day, moment by moment to discern and decide how best to please God and walk worthily before him.
- Paul then starts to list some of the ways in which we can please God...

bearing fruit in every good work

- GOSPEL FRUIT
- The first way we are to please God is bearing fruit in good work. What is the work and what is the fruit? The work is the mission of God to redeem all of creation to himself, and our work is to be ambassadors of his gospel, making disciples of all nations. The fruit then is as pictured in verses 4-6, new people placing their faith and hope in Jesus Christ and in result loving God and each other.
- Churches and individual believers must ask of themselves, are we/am I bearing fruit in every good work?

and increasing in the knowledge of God;

- GOSPEL KNOWLEDGE
- The second way we are to walk worthily before God and please him is to grow in the knowledge of God. This is to grow in our knowledge of his person and plans, who God is and what he is doing.
- The Greek for 'knowledge' here is epignósis, meaning 'first-hand knowledge'. It is elsewhere translated as 'true knowledge' or 'real knowledge'. It is knowledge and understanding gained through personal experience and relationship with God. Not knowledge imported from others but developed through personal relationships and learning.

11being strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy;

- GOSPEL POWER
- The third way in which we please God is to be strengthened with His power. Note that this is not simply a means towards holiness but something that God actually delights in; we being strengthened by his power.
- The purpose of his power is that we might be empowered to endure ('remain under'), be patient (long-suffering) and be joyful. These three states build on top of each other. God empowers us to 'remain under' and endure the hardships of life without

quitting and forsaking God. Not only this, but he empowers us to do so patiently and without anger. Finally, it is not just this but the abundance of joy which he blesses us with, that we might endure the hardships of life patiently and with joy.

- His power (described here) produces endurance, patience and joy, not supernatural workings. This is truly the power of faith, trust in the unseen which produces fruit of character. Therefore, a 'powerful Christian' is of sincere faith and godly character.

12giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. 13He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, 14in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

- GOSPEL THANKS
- The fourth way in which we please God is simply by giving thanks. Just as God delights in empowering us, he also delights in our thankfulness for it gives him glory. The more we rely on God and thank God, the more we glorify God.
- 'qualified' - we thank God because he has qualified us (made us sufficient) for his inheritance. We were not good enough, but he has made us good enough through Jesus Christ.
- Our inheritance is something we share with all other saints, and so as our sharing is corporate, so should our thankfulness be too. This is partly why we sing songs of praise and thanksgiving in church, so that we corporately share in thanking God
- 'in light' - just as one might feel a sense of joy stepping out of a gloomy cave into the light, so we can be filled with joy and thankfulness stepping out of sin into the light of God's grace. We have been delivered from the domain of darkness and transferred to the kingdom of his son
- Our thankfulness is two fold here, thankfulness for deliverance from the oppression of sin, and thankfulness for the forgiveness of the conviction of sin. In sin we are both victims and offenders. In Jesus we are delivered victims and redeemed offenders.

## Colossians 1:15-23 - Christ is Preeminent

**15** He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.

- To say that Christ is the image of God is that Christ is the representation of God, by which we can see, know and experience God. He is not all of God, but we can know all that is of God through him. God is invisible/unseen but he has revealed himself through the person of Christ.
- Image = Greek word 'eikon' where icon/iconic comes from. Jesus is the iconic resemblance of God, his supreme expression
- Christ is described as firstborn over all of creation, not that he was created but that he comes first and is 'chief' over all creation (the firstborn would possess leadership rights to the family).

**16** For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him.

- All things were created in (en) Christ, through (di') Christ and for (eis) Christ
  - In (en) Christ - Christ is the context of creation
  - Through (di') Christ - Christ is the agent of creation
  - For (eis) Christ - Christ is the purpose of creation
- Paul makes clear that all things in creation exist in, through and for Christ. Whether things of natural, visible and earthly nature, or of supernatural, invisible and heavenly nature. All creation is consumed in Christ.
- Also, the power and authority of these various things does not matter, even though they might have a sense of origin or beginning. Rulers (arché) means to have a beginning/origin. Whatever sense of authority or origin these things possess, is absorbed in the ultimate authority and origin of Christ.

**17** And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

- To summarise verse 16, Paul makes clear that Christ is before (pro) all things, he is their beginning and origin.
- hold together - (synistáō) which comes from sýn (being in sync) and histémi (to stand). Literally means 'stand in sync', meaning there is no departing from the sovereignty of Christ. All things 'stand in sync' and are held together in Christ
- In all this, Christ is shown to be preeminent over all creation, over all heaven and earth

**18** And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent.

- Head of the body - this insinuates that Christ is one with the church, as a head is one with the body. But that he holds sovereignty and authority over the body, just as a head controls the actions of the body
- Christ is firstborn from the dead, not that he was first to be raised from the dead but that he holds power over death, and with that power is able to raise us from the dead too.
- 1 Thessalonians 4:14 "For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep" - Christ is



firstborn from the dead and will bring us with him through the veil, by which he has made a way.

- Christ is firstborn over all creation (v15) and firstborn from among the dead (v18). By this, Christ is not just preeminent over (this) creation, but over the new creation too

19For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, 20and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

- God was pleased that Christ contained and displayed the fullness of God, being the very image of the invisible God (v15). It pleases God that his fullness is seen and made accessible through the person of Christ, nothing of God is hidden.
- It also pleased God that Christ would reconcile all things through himself. In doing so, he would have a people for himself (Titus 2:14) to whom he may reveal his fullness
- The mention of earth and heaven continues the theme that Christ is preeminent over all creation, but also shows that there are created things in the heavenly realms which need to be reconciled too - i.e. demons, principalities.
- Our reconciliation and redemption came at a cost; the blood stained cross of Christ.

21And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, 22he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him,

- Christ has had to make peace by the cross because we were alienated, hostile in mind and doing evil deeds.
- Hostile in mind - this is very strong language here as *exthrós* means to be 'openly hostile and animated by deep-seated hatred'. It 'implies irreconcilable hostility, proceeding out of a "personal" hatred bent on inflicting harm'
- Because of our alienation/estrangement from God, we were not only hostile in mind but evil in our deeds too.
- body of flesh - Paul makes clear that Christ suffered in his body of flesh and by this suffering and death he has reconciled us. It is true that Christ endured the wrath of God on the cross, as propitiation for our sin. We can say that Christ endured spiritual wrath through physical means.
- The cost of Christ's sacrifice was so great because it was in order to present us holy, blameless and above reproach before God so that we might be pleasing in his sight.

23if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister.

- If ever there was the assumption that there was no duty on man, since Christ is preeminent and sovereign over all creation, Paul makes clear that our reconciliation to God is dependent on our stable, steadfast and unshifting hope in the gospel.
- The language here is likened to a building, which has stable (established) foundations, is seated firmly and does not move away from its foundations. As Christians we need to have deep rooted convictions in the gospel and a stubborn resilience against anything that would move us away from that hope.
- proclaimed in all creation under heaven
  - Galatians 3:8 shows that God "announced the gospel in advance to Abraham" and through faith Abraham looked forward to a 'heavenly country' (Heb 11:16). So before Jesus, God had already been proclaiming a 'partially

revealed' gospel, the 'serpent crusher promise' that he would make all things new.

- This gospel has not just been proclaimed to mankind but all creation, for in the gospel God is making all things new. Romans 8 shows us that all creation is groaning under the bondage of sin. In Ezekiel 36, God tells Ezekiel to prophesy to the mountains of Israel, as they had endured the sin of the people. The gospel has a universal impact, therefore the proclamation is universal too.

## Colossians 1:24-2:5 - Ministers of the Mystery

24 Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church,

- Paul is writing to Colossians from prison (Col 4:10), which would be his 'sufferings'. He had not met the Colossians personally, but they had come to faith through Epaphras' ministry (Col 1:7). So Paul is suffering for them as he is doing for all Gentile converts, since they are the fruit of his ministry whether directly or indirectly.
- in my flesh - Paul had just made clear that Christ suffered in his body of flesh (Col 1:22) to reconcile us. So if Christ endured suffering in his flesh for his church, then we should embrace suffering in our flesh for him too. Note that 'flesh' refers to our human nature, physical, emotional, mental, anything other than spiritual.
- filling up what is lacking - this does not mean that Christ's afflictions were not good enough but that there are afflictions still remaining from the world, to be borne by the church. These afflictions are not the wrath of God in account of our sins, there is nothing lacking there. But these are afflictions from the world and its animosity towards Christ. Christ did not soak up all these afflictions but has invited his body, the church, to suffer with him amongst them.

25 of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God that was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known, 26 the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints.

- minister - this is the Greek word *diákonos* which simply means a servant. It properly translates to 'kick up dust' as one running errands. So to be a minister is not a privileged and honoured position, it is simply to work as a servant
- make the word of God fully known - this is better translated as 'complete/fulfil the word of God'. The same Greek word *πληρῶσαι* (*plērōsai*) as used in Matt 5:17 where Jesus says "I did not come to abolish the law and prophets, but to fulfil them". In the same way as Jesus fulfilled the law and prophets, so Paul's stewardship was to fulfil the word of God, bringing it to completion by making Christ known throughout the world. The word of God is not fulfilled until it produces the fruit of faith in people, it will 'not return void' (Isaiah 55:11)
- Paul shows that the mystery which has been hidden for ages and generations is the word of God. God is spirit and is an unseen God, but has made himself known through his word. His word was communicated in part through his prophets, but now fully revealed in his son (Heb 1:1-2)

27 To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

- Since the Israelites rejected God and did not 'consider themselves worthy of eternal life' (Acts 13:46), God chose to make his mystery known amongst the Gentiles.
- Paul now reveals that this mystery is not just the word of God, but is Christ in us. So the mystery is both the word of God and Christ himself, dwelling inside of us. John reveals in both his gospel and epistle that Christ is the true Word of God, the living word who is the very image of the invisible God.
- Christ in you - the Bible raises (and answers) the question of 'how can a sinful humanity live with a holy God'? This is the reason why Adam and Eve were exiled

from the Garden of Eden and why the Israelites were exiled from Canaan. The only solution was for God to cross the divide and transform us - put simply, Christ in us. His presence within us is not only for peace and comfort in life, but so that we possess his righteousness to gain eternal life, our hope of glory. Because of Christ in us, we have the hope of eternal glory.

28Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. 29For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me.

- Him we proclaim - Paul's stewardship was to proclaim and fulfil the word of God, but this was not some abstract theology, for he says here that he proclaimed Christ himself. This further shows that Christ is the very Word of God, when we proclaim the word we proclaim we Christ. This must be the central purpose and goal of every church, 'to proclaim Christ'. All other teaching which misses this mark is not the gospel
- warning and teaching - these terms appear as separate and distinct functions here. It literally reads 'admonishing every man and teaching every man'. Warning/admonishing means to reason with and persuade someone, which is most often accomplished through preaching, Then there is teaching which is to impart knowledge and understanding. So here we see the functions of preaching (persuading) and teaching alongside each-other as elsewhere in the scriptures
- present everyone mature in Christ - the very purpose of Paul's ministry is to present saints before God, for we are God's own inheritance. When we are presented we will be mature (perfect, complete) in Christ. Maturity here does not speak of Christian maturity and our ongoing sanctification, but rather our perfect state of righteousness before God
- Paul toils and strives towards this end, to see the lost won to Christ, as should be the attitude of all churches. He struggles and strives towards this goal not by his own power but with the powerful energy and working of God. This is the same power that works in us all, persuading and motivating us towards Christ and his mission.

1For I want you to know how great a struggle I have for you and for those at Laodicea and for all who have not seen me face to face,

- Paul is not only struggling and striving to see the lost won to Christ, but for the edification of the church too. The struggle he expresses here is likely in prayer since he is a prisoner.
- We also see here that even though Paul had never met the Colossian church, or the Laodicean church or indeed other churches, it did not prevent his ministry towards them. This should serve as an encouragement and challenge to us, that we do not need to be physically present or local to be an encouragement to others.
- The Laodicean church was to whom God said in Revelation, 'you are neither hot nor cold' and that 'I stand at the door and knock...'. It seems their love for Christ grew cold and that they needed more encouragement.

2that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ, 3in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

- One of the most simple acts of ministry we can do is to encourage one another's heart. Many may feel they do not have a lot to offer in the church but to provide encouragement is a crucial act of service
- being knit together in love - this is past tense and refers to our bondage and unity in Christ, that in Him we are knit together into a loving family where we all share a common love for Christ
- riches of full assurance - one of the reasons why we need much encouragement in our Christian walks is that we often lack assurance. But what riches we have when we have a full assurance and conviction in our knowledge of God's great mystery, which is Christ.
- treasures of wisdom and knowledge - this is not to say that in following Christ we have access to special wisdom and knowledge for our self-centred gain, but simply that because the world was created in, through and for Christ, He holds all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

4I say this in order that no one may delude you with plausible arguments. 5For though I am absent in body, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and the firmness of your faith in Christ.

- We need full assurance and understanding so that we will not be deluded (paralogízomai which means to "deceive close-beside"). We can easily be deluded by plausible arguments which have the appearance of truth but later show themselves to be empty and void. This is why our assurance needs to be based upon our knowledge and understanding of Christ.
- with you in spirit - to say he is with them in spirit carries more than just an encouraging sentiment, but that his prayers for the Colossians are effective through the power of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, he really is 'with them' in spirit for the Holy Spirit may administer the encouragements and petitions Paul has offered in intercession.
- good order and firmness of faith - the good order likely refers to the full assurance and understanding of the Colossians, that their theology and understanding in Christ was well ordered/thought-out. But that order was not without strength, it was also firm and deeply rooted. So our theology needs to be well ordered but also with simple conviction.

## Colossians 2:6-15 - Fullness in Christ

6Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, 7rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.

- Paul continues that just as the Colossians received Christ as a result of his ministry (indirectly), they should continue to 'walk' in Christ.
- These are similar themes and instructions to what Paul expressed in Colossians 1:9-12. Paul is saying to walk in Christ as he has taught them, and what does this consist of:
  - [having been] rooted and [being] built up in him - to grow in knowledge and understanding and to bear the fruit of Christlikeness (1:10)
  - [being] strengthened in the faith - to be strengthened with power for endurance, patience and joy (1:11)
  - abounding in thanksgiving - to give thanks for he has qualified us to share in his inheritance (1:12)
- This is a reminder and challenge for all believers, that we should walk well in Christ - to be growing in him, strengthened in him and abounding in thankfulness

8See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ.

- We can easily become captive to the traditions of mankind and the basic principles of the world, such as:
  - seeing mankind simply as part of the natural evolved world
  - 'do whatever you want as long as you don't hurt others'
  - 'doing good to others' as the highest goal of humanity (it is a good thing but not the highest goal!)
  - allowing our lives to be heavily influenced by money, convenience and entertainment - simply because they are the traditions of our society
- These things may boast in their philosophy and wisdom but they are full of empty deceit, lacking any spiritual value. They taint our gospel with a worldly veneer
- Instead of walking (living) by these things, we should live by Christ. We should exalt the gospel higher than any worldly wisdom we may encounter for it is true wisdom.

9For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, 10and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority.

- There is no need to pursue empty philosophies and human traditions in a search for fullness of life, for Christ is the very essence of fullness.
- Deity - theotés = God head (the essence of deity)
- Verse 9 then is quite an emphatic statement of the fullness of God in Christ. In him is the WHOLE FULLNESS of the GOD-HEAD (i.e. all of God)
- dwells bodily - The God-head has not temporarily placed its fullness in Christ, but 'dwells' there permanently. 'Bodily' is not a reference to Christ's human body, but his heavenly one, i.e. the body of a person whom we can see and know.
- filled in him - as we enter into the body of Christ, we become filled with the fullness of God. There is nothing more left to fill, nothing more for the world to offer us.
- We are filled by becoming part of his body, who is the fullness of God, and both the head of us (his body) and of all rule and authority.

11In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, 12having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead.

- In order for us to receive the fullness of God in Christ, we must first rid ourselves of our body of flesh. Paul uses two biblical pictures here of circumcision and baptism, the cutting away and burying of our sinful self.
- This is a spiritual action, for it is the 'circumcision of Christ' and 'powerful working of God', done by God, not us. However, that which is done spiritually, should be mirrored practically in our earthly lives and daily living, by continually putting off and burying our sinful selves. This is why we obey the sacrament of baptism, an earthly sign of a heavenly reality.
- So by faith in the work of God, we are assured of a new spiritual reality, that we have been raised with him. It is not just faith in God generally, but faith in his work, that he has accomplished all that is necessary for our salvation. Just as one puts faith/trust in the work of a tradesperson, so we trust that the work of our salvation is complete.

13And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, 14by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross.

- The work of God raising us to life in him is two-fold: forgiving our trespasses and redeeming us from our sin. Out of the riches of his mercy, we have been forgiven of all our trespasses, in every way in which we have rejected and rebelled against God. But God has not left us in our sin, he has cancelled the debt that was against us through the atonement of Christ. The price was paid at Cavalry and the debt of our sin was nailed to the cross!
- 2 Cor 5:21 "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" - on the cross Jesus' body became sin for us, so that as he was nailed to the cross, so was our sin!

15He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him

- Christ has not just redeemed us from our sin but also claimed victory over evil (rulers and authorities). He has disarmed them, stripped them of their power and claim of us so that by faith we are free from their claim - truly nothing can separate us from the love of God!
- He has put them to open shame, making a public spectacle of them. The picture here is Christ leading a victorious procession with the bound captives of evil in his train.
- The intentions of the devil and his dominion were to rob God of his glory by ruining and enslaving humanity to himself. Truly, Christ has triumphed over them in the cross, for we are truly free and Christ is glorified forevermore!

## Colossians 2:16-23 - Freedom from Rules

16Therefore let no one pass judgement on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. 17These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ.

- Since we have received fullness in Christ (2:10) we should not be taken captive through human tradition and basic worldly principles (2:8), which Paul now extends upon here with practical application.
- The trap of human traditions and basic worldly principles is that they induce a false sense of obligation to fall in line and comply with them. If we do not comply with them then it can elicit judgement from others.
- Paul gives the examples of food and drink, festivals, new moons and Sabbaths, all of which carried a lot of religious and cultural weight. Note that Paul even groups the Sabbath with these things, showing that living under the law and according to the old covenant was just as futile as worldly customs.
- Parallel examples of modern day traditions could be as follows, for which not complying may elicit judgement from others:
  - Having Santa at Christmas
  - Home-schooling your kids (particularly for British people)
  - Being environmentally conscious
  - New Year's Celebrations / Valentine's Day
- We do not live according to these things for they are just shadows, whereas the substance of life is Christ. We live according to him. So whether we comply with these habits and traditions or not is of little significance (unless they detract from our walk of faith), however living for Christ is of eternal significance.

18Let no one disqualify you, insisting on asceticism [false humility] and worship of angels, going on in detail about visions, puffed up without reason by his sensuous mind,

- To not comply with human traditions may present an attitude of stubbornness or arrogance to the non-believer, suggesting that we will do what we want. This is matched by a want of false humility, as if we are under obligation from higher powers.
- This suggests why people of old (and even today) worship angels, for there is something innate in us to be conformed to a higher power. People may conclude (knowingly or not) that we are under the higher power of fate, the universe, angels or even humanist ideologies.
- Our desire to be conformed by a higher power, and so be 'mastered', leads some to be obsessed with visions and be puffed up without reason. We look for patterns and signs in the world, even attributing them to God, distracting ourselves from the call of Christ and his kingdom. These things have the appearance of meaning and value, but are simply puffed up, lacking nothing of spiritual value.

19and not holding fast to the Head, from whom the whole body, nourished and knit together through its joints and ligaments, grows with a growth that is from God.

- We may be tempted to follow futile and dangerous paths, such as worship of angels and puffed up ideologies when we do not hold fast to Christ, who is our head. Just as a body without a head is lifeless, so a church without Christ is truly dead!



- We are nourished (supplied) and knit together (united/taught) by Christ, who causes us to increase. There is nothing lacking from him, he supplies us and unites us. We do not need anything additional in life to help us succeed/grow as humanity, for he supplies the growth which is from God.

20If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the world, why, as if you were still alive in the world, do you submit to regulations— 21“Do not handle, Do not taste, Do not touch” 22(referring to things that all perish as they are used)—according to human precepts and teachings?

- Paul challenges the Colossians, that though they have died to the basic principles of this world, why they still conform. It is not known why they were still conforming to these human and futile traditions, perhaps for fear of what would happen if they no longer conformed.
- Likewise, we must ensure that we have not erected for ourselves regulations which are not according to Christ, otherwise we are serving the wrong master. Examples of this could be gambling, smoking, drinking, language, whereby we erect concrete walls between right and wrong, and not out of obedience and want to please Christ.

23These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion and asceticism and severity to the body, but they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh.

- Man-made regulations have the appearance of wisdom and portray the ‘right way to live’. They appear good, noble and right however they have no value in stopping the indulgence of sinfulness. It is simply sinfulness in a different form, in internal pride, boasting in self-righteousness and vain glory.
- The Christian is not to live by empty man-made regulations but to throw himself upon the mercy of Christ, depending on Christ to lead and guide him daily.
- Throw out of your heart your man-made rules, and erect a passion to pursue and follow Christ.

## Colossians 3:1-17 - Put on the Nature of Christ

1If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 2Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.

- We have been raised with Christ (2:12), our lives now living for an eternal purpose, not an earthly one. Therefore we should seek and pursue the things of Christ, that our heavenly reality might invade our earthly experience.
- Our duty and calling is to mirror our spiritual realities with earthly obedience, that we would 'live out our calling'
- Christ is seated at the right hand of God in a place of victory, after "triumphing over them in the cross" (2:15). We do not live with vain hope, not knowing whether our efforts and faith will be worth it, but we live with a sure and victorious hope knowing that Christ has won the victory and is already seated at the right hand of God.
- We seek the things above by setting our minds on them. It is only through the mind first which truth and conviction can enter the heart. As Paul writes to the Philippians; 'whatever is true...noble...right...think about such things' (Phil 4:8)

3For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. 4When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

- We have died through the waters of baptism, and our spiritual lives are currently hidden with Christ in God. They cannot be seen but like God they are a sure reality. The Christian experience then is often like living two lives, for one life is here and present, the other is hidden in God, unseen by the world around us. Of course we saturate our earthly lives with the things of the kingdom but there is always some level of disconnect.
- Our spiritual lives are not simply with Christ, but totally absorbed into Christ, so that it can be said "Christ is your life". If Christ has not been raised then neither will we. We are part of his body, so that when he appears on that final day, we will appear with him with resurrected bodies (1 Cor 15:52)

5Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. 6On account of these the wrath of God is coming.

- Since we have died to sin and self, we should mirror that reality in our practical lives by putting to death all that is sinful in ourselves.
- This first list concentrates on our sexual and selfish lusts, which can enslave us to serve them. This is idolatry for we make these our masters instead of God.
- These sinful passions are about power and selfish gain, and invariably result in manipulative control of others. When we live by these selfish lusts we effectively make ourselves god, attempting to suck in all things for our own selfish gratification, which incurs his wrath.
- This first list then is about putting to death what dishonours God, for when we serve God, we acknowledge his Lordship and seek his desires, not our own.

7In these you too once walked, when you were living in them. 8But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth.

- The Colossians seemed to have walked in these behaviours beforehand, as we all have, but now in Christ are instructed to put them away.
- This second list concentrates on socially destructive behaviours. They all involve other people in a way which causes conflict and hatred between people. In the fall not only was our relationship with God severed, but our relationships with each other were also cursed. The gospel not only reconciles us to God but us to each other.
- This second list then is about putting away all which dishonours and harms each other. Instead of enemies we become brothers, sisters and friends in Christ.

**9Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices 10and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.**

- We have put off the old self, we no longer live for self-gratification or the condemnation of others, for now we live to serve God and bless others.
- put off = apekduomai - which means to “thoroughly strip off/renounce”. This is a very emphatic word which strongly emphasises the ‘stripping away’ of sinful practises. This word is only used two times in the New Testament, here, and in Colossians 2:15 where “Christ disarmed (apekduomai) the rulers and authorities”. Just as Christ violently and totally stripped the rulers and authorities of their power, so we should violently and totally rid ourselves of all which is sinful and unholy.
- put on = enduo - which means to be clothed, in the sense of sinking into a garment. Just as a child lifts their arms to be dressed by their parents, so as we lift our hands in prayer and worship to God, so our heavenly Father clothes us with our new self.
- Both of these are middle verbs, neither active or passive, implying that it is by God’s grace and our participation/obedience through which this is accomplished.
- Our sanctification is not a finished work though, for our new self is still being renewed. It is God who is renewing us back into the image of himself, our creator, for our image was marred in the fall. God alone has the knowledge of what we should be and how we should live, and so he is constantly renewing us towards that image.

**11Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all.**

- We are all brought to unity in Christ and therefore there are no exceptions to allow sin to continue in our lives. We die to our whole selves and we are raised wholly in Christ.
- There are no religious exceptions. These instructions do not apply to Jews only but Greek (and all gentiles) too. It is not a matter of physical circumcision, for we show by faith whether we are circumcised in the heart or not.
- There are no cultural exceptions. Whether from a barbarian (non-Greek, non-civilised) or Scythian (considered the wildest of barbarians) culture it does not matter. Culture and background does not permit anger, violence, obscene talk or any other sinfulness. We must be careful not to overlook sin in our lives simply because it is our cultural norm!
- There are no exceptions to life circumstances. Whether slave or free it does not permit sinful behaviours to exist in our lives. Those in slavery and suffering may be tempted to show contempt and hatred for their masters or those in power. Those who are free or wealthy may be tempted to hoard more and more wealth and possessions.

- The gospel shows no partiality to culture, religious background or life circumstances, for there is only Christ and those in him. Christ is all and in all.

12Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, 13bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.

- Put on - Paul now starts to describe what the born again life should look like, going in reverse order; dealing with the social behaviours first and then those between us and God.
- God's chosen ones - as before we should 'live up to our calling and election', mirroring the spiritual reality of our salvation in our earthly lives.
- holy and beloved - when we truly believe in faith that we are holy and beloved then we start to live according to that in our daily living,
- Paul fleshes out the social behaviours which we should clothe ourselves with, which draw us together instead of causing conflict and separation:
  - Compassion instead of indifference
  - Kindness instead of cruelty
  - Humility instead of arrogance
  - Meekness/gentleness instead of aggression
  - Patience instead of anger
- Even though we are born again and raised with Christ, we are still being renewed and inevitably will have complaints against each other. So there must also be forgiveness, it has been said that Christians are to be 'experts in forgiveness'. We stand and live in the forgiveness of Christ. Therefore, how can we not also forgive our brothers and sisters in Christ for their sin, which shrinks in comparison to our sin against God?

14And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.

- Above all these things we should love each other, for that is how God has approached us through the cross of Christ.
- If love is the perfect description of God's attitude towards us, then it should be the perfect description of our dealings with others. Our lives are to be shaped by the love of God, and the cross is the shape of love.

15And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful.

- Paul has shown what holy social behaviours (v12) should take the place of sinful social behaviours (v9). Paul now starts to address his first list (v5) and describe what should take the place of these sinful and selfish desires.
- The first of which is peace. Instead of selfish and lustful desires ruling our hearts, we should let the peace of Christ rule our hearts. The reason why we lust and crave with never ending selfish passion is because we have no peace. But when we come to God in prayer, being filled with the Holy Spirit and reminded of God's promises in the gospel, our hearts can be filled with an eternal peace. That peace is like the water which quenches selfish and lustful desires.
- If we lack peace in our hearts then it is like there is a division in our body, we are conflicted. For some part of us trusts in the Lord, yet another part of us is serving our

selfishness. We have been called 'in one body' so should let the peace of Christ rule all of it.

- The second is thankfulness. We lust and crave more in life because we feel we do not have enough, yet the more we get the more we want. However, in the gospel we are to be thankful, for thankfulness fills our hearts with contentment and gratitude. We have much to be thankful for in the gospel, for God's rich blessings have been poured out on us abundantly, therefore we should overflow with thankful joy.

16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

- To remain within the peace of God and maintain a thankful attitude, we must let the word of Christ dwell in us richly. This harks back to verses 1 and 2 whereby we set our minds on things above. We allow the word of Christ to dwell in us by reminding ourselves of the great truths of the gospel, thereby deepening our convictions and allowing the peace of Christ to rest on our hearts. It is often the believers experience that simply reading the word of God lifts the believers spirit and brings greater peace.
- This need not be just an individual activity, for we are to teach and admonish one another with the word of Christ. There is where the body of Christ grows as each part, joint and ligament does its work. We should be proactive then in sharing the word of God with each other that we might bring about greater peace and thankfulness in each other.
- This need not be a dry and cerebral activity either, for we are to sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs out of our thankfulness to God:
  - Psalms (psalmos) are the songs of the Old Testament, for remembering all that God had done for his people. Some songs are great for reminding us of the great truths and promises of God.
  - Hymns (humnos) are songs of praise, honour and celebration, much like the song which Israel sang about David; "David has killed tens of thousands". Some songs are enthused with celebration, joy and victory in Christ.
  - Spiritual songs (pneumatikos ódé) are spontaneous songs of praise from a spirit filled heart. Some songs are simple and spontaneous and erupt from a heart filled with the spirit of God.

17 And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

- Finally, as before, let Christ be all and in all. Since we have died to sin and self and are putting on the new Christlike self we should do everything in the name of Jesus.
- How foolish it would be to only put on half of the nature of Christ, and to allow duplicity within our lives. It would be like only getting half dressed in the morning and commencing with our day. Yet that is how many believers live! All that we speak and do should be in honour to and accordance with Christ.
- The goal then is to live a life consumed with Christ and his gospel, continually giving thanks for God through him.

## Colossians 3:18-4:1 - God over Marriage, Family & Work

This section is very similar in structure and theme to Ephesians 5:22-6:9, albeit more condensed. The close similarity shows how concerned Paul was with encouraging believers to live Christ centred lives which affected their daily living.

Note how in all these examples, Paul mentions the 'lesser/weaker' partner in the relationship first, showing his concern for equality, justice and grace.

**18Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. 19Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them.**

- Submit = hupotassó - which means to arrange under, be under God's arrangement. As is fitting in the Lord - just as we all submit ourselves to God, arranging ourselves under his will, so wives are instructed to submit to their husbands. Note this is different to hupakouó (obey) as in the context of children and their parents (v20). Submission implies order within a team context, whereas obedience simply implies carrying out a command.
- Likewise, husbands are to love their wives (as Christ loves his church), expressing care, kindness and gentleness instead of being harsh. Harsh = pikrainó which means to 'make bitter'. A wife's report of her husband should not be an embittered complaint but a thankful delight.
- In the order which God has established with and among his people, love and care should flow downwards whilst submission should flow upwards

**20Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. 21Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged.**

- Obey = hupakouó - which means to 'hear under', obeying what is heard. Just as we incline our ears to God and be attentive to his word in order to obey, likewise, godly children are eager to obey.
- in everything/all things - sometimes obedience comes at a cost or is not easy. Children do not understand all of the context and reasons why decisions are made but are told to obey likewise. This serves as a helpful reminder for adults too, that we too, like children, can struggle to get on board with the will of God.
- It is a godly trait when children obey their parents in all things, proving their respect and submission to their parents even when they would rather do something different. This truly pleases the Lord and should be praised in children.
- Provoke = erethizó, which means to stir up/arouse anger. The temptation to parents is to call upon the obedience of their children according to their own selfish preferences, defending their case with "because I said so". Often, demands can be made for selfish motives and based on questionable reasoning. Children who are growing in awareness and reasoning see this and are provoked to anger, and so become discouraged from further obedience.

**22Bondservants, obey in everything those who are your earthly masters, not by way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord.**

- Similarly, servants are called to obey their masters in all things.
- God's objective is not simply to better the human condition (in an earthly context) but to receive obedience and praise, in all circumstances, for his own glory. Therefore, we should not just seek to obey God and our masters when it serves us (as eye-service), for our goal is not simply to better our own circumstances but to serve the Lord.
- Neither should we live as people-pleasers placing our ultimate trust and hope in the hands of men. God alone is whom we should trust and seek to please, for he ordains our destiny and 'prepares in advance good works for us to do'.
- sincerity = haplotés, meaning singleness/simplicity, without folds (as of a cloth laid out without folds). We should seek to obey God with a simple sincerity, with no caveats or hidden motives. A pure and undiluted reverence for God.

23Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, 24knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ. 25For the wrongdoer will be paid back for the wrong he has done, and there is no partiality.

- Above all, we should work as if working for the Lord, not men.
- heartily = psuché, which is the life/breath/soul of a person. The sentiment here then is to work 'with all your soul'. This is a far cry from how many of us approach our working lives.
- The reason given is that we will receive our reward from God
- reward = antapodosis, used only once in the New Testament, meaning a recompense that richly rewards services rendered, emphasising that they match (anta) the service given. Even when we are not rewarded for our work/service on earth, we can be assured that God will recompense us within his inheritance. Therefore we should not lose heart when we are not shown justice or not recognised for the work we have done, for there will be a full reward/recompense in our heavenly inheritance.
- In a likewise manner, those who do wrong, do wrong to the Lord. If we cheat our masters and employers of work then we are trying to cheat the Lord. There is no partiality, we cannot excuse wrongdoing on account of other reasons, even if they seem justified to us.

4:1Masters, treat your bondservants justly and fairly, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven.

- Finally, masters, as those with authority and power should treat their servants justly/rightly and fairly/equally.
- Justly, in terms of the relationship between the master and servant, that all service has been recompensed at the agreed and correct value so that there is innocence and transparency before God.
- Fairly/equally, in terms of how servants are treated in relation to each other. Just as God shows no favouritism or partiality to us, so masters should not show favouritism or partiality to their servants.
- Similar to the other relationships, justice and equality should flow down, as it does from God.

# Colossians 4:2-18 - Pray for Opportunities and Each other

## 2Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving.

- Continue steadfastly = proskartereó, which means to attend constantly, enduring and persevering in prayer. It means always seeking to pray, even when we don't feel motivated. The greatest faithfulness of the church should be prayer, we should attend to it constantly.
- watchful = grégoreó, meaning to stay awake/be vigilant. We should not slumber in our prayers and just 'go through the motions' of reciting empty words, but always praying in the spirit (Eph 6:18). Our prayers should be 'watchful' to how the Holy Spirit is prompting us, and alert to how we might be sliding into slumber or temptation.
- thanksgiving - our prayers should be characterised by a spirit of thankfulness, whenever we come to the Lord, for this pleases him. One of the ways in which we can please God and obey his will is simply by giving thanks (Col 1:12).
- Paul requests prayer for himself next, implying that this instruction is simply for the church to continue in personal prayer for themselves, out of thankfulness for Jesus. We may be motivated to persevere in intercessory prayer, but are we just as motivated to persevere in personal prayer of thankfulness?

## 3At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison— 4that I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak.

- door for the word - salvation is by his Spirit, through his word. It is God who creates opportunities for us to declare the word to unbelievers, as he 'prepares [good works] in advance for us to do' (Eph 2:10). We faithfully minister underneath his sovereign plan.
- Why do these open doors/opportunities depend on prayer? Why does God not simply open every door/opportunity for us, if he desires all to be saved? - God has invited us to be co-workers with him in the gospel, and seeing the fruit of our labour in souls won to Jesus gives us a deeper joy, love and wonder in the gospel.
- Paul is in prison on account of preaching the gospel, and yet he asks for prayer for more opportunity to do so! Such is his obligation and desire to preach the gospel that he disregards suffering on account of it. As Paul says elsewhere "...I am compelled to preach. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!" (1 Cor 9:16).
- make it clear - i.e. to make known/manifest. It is necessary that Paul should make the mystery of Christ clear/known to the Gentiles.

## 5Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. 6Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.

- 'Making the best use of time' is better translated as 'redeeming the time'. The same word (exagorazó) is used in Eph 5:16 where Paul adds "...because the days are evil". Satan is working to blind the hearts of man, turning them away from God, therefore we should redeem what time we have available to make known the mystery of Christ.



- Our gospel conversations should be gracious, which build ‘favour and credit’ with outsiders. Even though the gospel starts with bad news about our sin, even though we may incur opposition because of the gospel, our attitude should never be to ‘make enemies’.
- seasoned with salt - this is the only reference to saltiness in scripture, except for where Jesus describes us as the ‘salt of the earth’. Salt can either be for preservation or seasoning, and the sentiment here is clearly to season our conversations, that outsiders may taste the goodness, grace and wisdom of God.
- This then is how we should know how to answer each person, when in conversation about our faith. Our question should always be “How can I respond with wisdom and grace?”

7Tychicus will tell you all about my activities. He is a beloved brother and faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord. 8I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are and that he may encourage your hearts, 9and with him Onesimus, our faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you. They will tell you of everything that has taken place here.

- Tychicus had been part of Paul’s missionary journey (Acts 20) and It is Tychicus who brought Paul’s letters to the Colossians, Timothy (2 Tim 4:12) and the Ephesians (Eph 6:21), and to Titus in Crete (Titus 3:12).
- There is no sense of hierarchy between Paul the Apostle and Tychicus his postman, for he is described as a beloved brother, faithful minister/deacon and fellow servant. Truly in Christ we are all brothers, ministers and servants, regardless of position or authority in the established church.
- Paul is sending Tychicus to the Colossians, not just as the messenger of his letter, but that they might know how Paul and his fellow prisoners are, and that they might be encouraged. This shows that Paul is not just concerned with the contents of his writings, but in fellowship and mutual encouragement. It could be supposed that his letter was a secondary thought, after deciding to send Tychicus for their encouragement. This reveals further Paul’s deep concern for fellowship and mutual edification. As it says in Heb 10:25 “Let us not neglect meeting together, as some have made a habit, but let us encourage one another”

10Aristarchus my fellow prisoner greets you, and Mark the cousin of Barnabas (concerning whom you have received instructions—if he comes to you, welcome him), 11and Jesus who is called Justus. These are the only men of the circumcision among my fellow workers for the kingdom of God, and they have been a comfort to me.

- Mark, the cousin of Barnabas, is likely the same Mark who in Acts 15 causes the disagreement and separation between Paul and Barnabas. The reason given is that Paul thought it unwise as Mark had deserted them earlier. But here we see a grateful plea for the Colossians to welcome him and likely a separate commendation.
- What a comfort and joy it is to see; that men who were formally Jews and part of the circumcision had laid their religious background down to take up the cross of Christ. How we pray for more of this amongst Jews today, that they too would become workers for the kingdom of God.

12Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ Jesus, greets you, always struggling on your behalf in his prayers, that you may stand mature and fully assured in all the will of God.

13For I bear him witness that he has worked hard for you and for those in Laodicea and in Hierapolis.

- Epaphras, mentioned in Col 1:7, is likely the one who introduced Christ to the Colossians. He continues to be a blessing to them by struggling in prayer for them, that they might stand mature and assured. This is how we should pray for each other, wrestling in prayer for maturity and assurance in each other!
- worked hard = this is better translated as 'great concern' and refers to Epaphras' painful anguish for the Colossians and for those in Laodicea and in Hierapolis. Truly the sign of deep and holy intercession is wrestling in prayer with great anguish for the blessing of others.

14Luke the beloved physician greets you, as does Demas. 15Give my greetings to the brothers at Laodicea, and to Nympha and the church in her house. 16And when this letter has been read among you, have it also read in the church of the Laodiceans; and see that you also read the letter from Laodicea.

- It is unclear whether Nympha was a woman or man (Nymphas) and so it's uncertain whether they were a leader of the church or whether the church simply met in their house.
- If 'brothers' principally included the leaders of the church then it is probable that Nympha was just the host.
- Colossae and Laodicea were in close proximity to each other (along with Hierapolis). Paul's encouragement for the letters to be exchanged and read by each other gives us encouragement that his writings were not strictly locked within local context. Whilst some epistles are more contextual by nature, we must be wary of limiting the scriptures to time bound context, when the authors may have intended a timeless application.

17And say to Archippus, "See that you fulfill the ministry that you have received in the Lord."

- We have all received different gifts and callings to discharge the grace of God, we all have our race to run, battle to fight, and ministry to fulfil. We all need encouragement from time to time to persevere with our ministry, for we can easily 'grow weary in doing good'.

18I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. Remember my chains. Grace be with you.

- Paul likely dictated to someone else for them to write, and then added his own greeting at the end. Potentially because he had trouble with eyesight, he points out the 'large letters' he writes in his epistle to the Galatians.
- Remember my chains - a plea for the Colossians to remember him in prayer and provide mutual encouragement during his time in prison.