



## Colossians - Chapter 4 v 7 to 18

## Remember my chains

Paul clearly has a vast network. He is sometimes characterised as a rather aloof character bent only on the task of preaching to as many people as he could get to sit in front of him. But often his last chapters have a list of names (see Romans 16) who were people he knew from his vast travels around the Mediterranean. His descriptions of people were not always positive but many were people he was devoted to. Remember he never went to Colossae so he needs to be sure his letter will be well received.

Paul's list of co-workers is immense. It often comes at the end of his letters. The expansion of Christianity was clearly a team effort.

Are there dangers if we lose the idea that ministry is a team effort?

Although some deserted him or let him down, the majority appear to regard Paul as a worthy leader. It took a lot of effort to maintain such a network where the only communication available was person-to-person.

Reflect on people who have been supportive to you and what they did to support you.

Person-to-person was the only way to get Paul's letter to Colossae – enter Tychicus (also mentioned in Acts 20:4 and 2 Timothy 4:12 and he is a native of Asia Minor – Turkey). He is given the highest praise by Paul – 'a dear brother, a faithful minister and fellow servant of the Lord'. He is travelling with Onesimus (probably the lead pastor at Colossae) who is also described as a 'faithful and dear brother' and also as 'one of you'. So, Paul has picked the A-team to carry this letter in person such was the importance he attached to it.

Paul states two purposes in verses 7 to 9. He wants them to know of his 'circumstances' and to 'encourage their hearts'.

Is this kind of mutual exchange common in our fellowships?

Are we sometimes too reluctant to share personal news?

Is sharing sometimes too one-sided?

In verses 10 to 14, Paul shares greetings from his associates with the believers in Colossae. It was important for these fairly isolated believers to know there were people outside their patch who were concerned about them. Aristarchus is mentioned in Acts 19:29 as a man who comes from Thessalonica in Macedonia. Paul identifies him as a fellow prisoner (Romans 16:7).

With the growing threat of persecution, it was vital that Paul's whole network supported one another. Aristarchus (the fellow prisoner) sends greetings to isolated Colossae.

How important is it for us to support our sisters and brothers who are struggling?

Could each small group give time to pray for the persecuted church? (there is material available – e.g. Open Doors)

Mark is an interesting mention. He fell out with Paul (Acts 15:36f) but, by now, is a well know figure in the early church. He is no longer a cause for dispute but has become a source of comfort as a co-worker. Paul even endorses him as someone who should be well received. (v10)

So much of this passage is about the web of relationships that existed in the early church?

There were fall-outs and they were resolved – nobody's perfect.

Does this mean we should all be developing relationships with sisters and brothers even if we are loners?

How should we deal with people we fall out with?

Epaphras is also identified as 'one of you'. (v12) But is 'sending greetings' so he is with Paul. This new and isolated church has already sent one of its number on missionary service. But he's still praying for his friends back in Colossae and working hard on behalf of churches close to home (Laodicea and Hierapolis)

What steps should we take to support those we have sent on mission?

Having passed on greetings from his group, Paul greets believers in the area of Colossae. When you arrive in a Roman church, they always officially greet you and ask you to take greetings back to your home church which they expect you to deliver personally to the whole congregation. Laodicea was close to Colossae and Paul would have expected his letter to be read in all the churches in the area (v16)

Does this suggest we have become overly involved in our own congregation and less aware of the global (even local) church?

Paul's strategy was clearly to develop a strong church based on more than one congregation – how important is it for us to be part of the church community in Winchester?

But there's a sting in the tail for Archippus. Paul's cryptic comment about getting a job finished gives us no clue about the nature of the work. It's similar to a comment made to Timothy (2 Timothy 4:5).

If someone has promised to do a job, should we hold them accountable or let it slide?

Paul writes this letter 'in his own hand'. We think most of his other letters were dictated. He asks for them to remember him and extends the grace of God to them. Again, we see this 'giving and receiving' pattern in Paul's relationship with these young churches. He has tried to support them with this very personal letter but he is not afraid to ask for their support.

If you have time, share what Colossians has taught you about THANKS LIVING.

## THE DOWNLOAD VERSE

From the first chapter full of encouragement and one of the great biblical statements about Jesus and on through learning what it means to be alive in Christ, Paul has, in four chapters, helped the Colossian believers see that the Christian life is about what you believe and how you behave. Perhaps the most compelling verse is

*'So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught and overflowing with thankfulness'.*

*(Col 2 v 6 & 7)*

***Let's ask God to help us to live like this with the help of his Holy Spirit.***

***And don't forget to pray for one another !!!!!!!***