

Introduction

In this final session, the main idea that we learn is that those who have Christ as their foundation live lives of prayer and faithfulness, which results in holy actions toward both the family of God and unbelievers.

So in this session we hope that our heads, our hearts and our lives will be impacted by God's Word, in the following ways :

Head Change: That we will know what it means to be faithful to God in all circumstances and on a daily basis so that we can apply it to our lives today.

Heart Change: That we may feel devotion to God regardless of external situations.

Life Change: That we may practice faithfulness through prayer, witness, and practical obedience every day.

So as we move into the last chapter of Colossians, it's important to remember the central points that we have learnt so far from this book. **How would you summarize the book of Colossians and its main points?** (Some main points include: Jesus's supremacy over all things, the truth of the gospel and its importance, we are not bound by manmade rules, we take off the old self and put on the new self in Christ, it affects our relationships with those around us.)

All believers are called to daily faithfulness to God and this session will show us what that looks like.

Read Colossians 4:2–18.

Watch the video (from 0:17)

Going deeper

So let's look at these verses in detail

Verses 2-6

What does it mean to be devoted to prayer? Who do you know who practices devotion to prayer?

God doesn't intend for prayer to be an event taking place only at certain times. It is meant to be an ongoing dialogue with the Lord. First Thessalonians 5:17 notes believers are to "pray without ceasing".

Paul goes on to say that we should be watchful and thankful in our prayers. Watchfulness carries the idea of standing guard, or staying awake at night to make sure a location is safe. Prayer demands ongoing attention, just like the guard at a city gate. In practical terms, this means prayer is not supposed to be a careless, casual, or frivolous act. We should pray with specific purpose and with deliberate intent.

Second, Paul says prayer should be thankful. A major benefit of prayer is aligning our will with God's will, which leads to greater understanding and to a greater sense of gratitude.

Louie pointed out how Paul doesn't ask for the church to pray for his escape. Instead, he asks for prayer to be a faithful witness of the gospel. Louie also shared Randall's story—he asked for prayer for his doctors, nurses, and family rather than healing. **When you're in a difficult situation, what do you pray for? How do Paul and Randall's perspectives challenge you?**

How would your prayer life change if you focused your prayers on being a faithful witness rather on changing your circumstances?

Paul tells the Colossians in verses 5&6 to be wise and gracious in interactions with those who aren't believers. He says to make the most of every opportunity. **How would you describe your interactions with nonbelievers generally? What could it look like in your life to make the most of every opportunity you have with nonbelievers?**

Paul shifts his letter in verse 7 from practical instruction to greetings. The Colossians would have known these people and their backgrounds—some of them were even from Colossae—but we'll have to do a little digging to find out more about them. What we do know is the people Paul mentions each embody different aspects of faithfulness to Christ.

Read verses 7–9.

Louie talked about Tychicus—how God used his small faithful action of delivering the letter of Colossians for a greater purpose. Tychicus carried this message, and several others, from Rome and was accompanied by Onesimus. Among the letters Tychicus carried was one Paul wrote to the Ephesians (Ephesians 6:21). Tychicus is also mentioned in Acts 20:4, 2 Timothy 4:12, and Titus 3:12.

Paul makes three positive statements about Tychicus. First, Paul calls him "a dear brother" (also Ephesians 6:21). Tychicus was mostly likely a Gentile believer and had served alongside Paul previously (Acts 20:4) in addition to being with him in Rome to help deliver his letters. Second, he is called a "faithful minister" (also Ephesians 6:21). Tychicus likely served as a church leader. Only Epaphras is given this same title (Colossians 1:7). Third, Paul says Tychicus is a "fellow servant in the Lord," also a title used for Epaphras (Colossians 1:7).

But for me here is a great example of a leader such as Tychicus who, if commentators are correct about the significance of his calling, was also willing to simply be the person to deliver a letter on behalf of Paul.

As a church family, we should never look at the individual actions we do as of little significance. What God values is continued faithfulness to him.

Let's also look at Onesimus. We find more details in Philemon 8-20.

So Onesimus was a slave (v16) and it looks like he ran away from Philemon (v15). But he wants Philemon to receive him back as a brother in Christ (v17). This has to be a tremendous example of how we as Christians can reconcile with others. Onesimus wronged Philemon. But now as a brother in Christ, Paul urges Philemon to receive Onesimus into the community of believers. Our love for each other is a witness to the world of the One who loves us.

And so this theme of reconciliation continues in the next verses

Read verses 10–11.

Louie gave some background on Mark. Mark abandoned Paul and Barnabas on a missionary journey. Barnabas decided to give Mark a second chance, but Paul went his own way without them. We read and studied this in our sermons on Acts on 25th October 2020 (<https://theunitedparish.org.uk/sermons/disagreement/>). You can read the full story in Acts 15:36–41. In this passage in Colossians, Paul tells the Colossians to welcome Mark, showing there's been a change in both Mark and in Paul. Louie pointed out how God redeemed and used Mark regardless of his past.

When we consider the issue of reconciliation and any tensions & disagreements that might exist in the body of God's Church, we must consider the atonement and act of pure reconciliation that Jesus has done with the Father. He empowers us by the Spirit to be unified as the body of Christ. Remember that we put on the new self not just for our own sake, but also for the sake of the Church, out of love and reverence for Christ.

Verses 10 & 11 outline that Paul had Aristarchus, Mark, and Jesus (Justus) who proved a great comfort to him while in prison. Therefore it teaches us that in addition to prayer and witness, faithfulness to God also plays out in how we treat each other. We can seek reconciliation and welcome brothers and sisters into our lives. **As we consider the comfort that Paul received, let's take a moment before God to consider people in our circle of Christians who we can be a source of comfort to in these times.**

[Pause to pray]

The way we treat each other matters. Our actions not only communicate God's love for each other, but also for those who don't yet know Him.

Read verses 12–18.

Remember how we learned back in Colossians 1:7–8 that Epaphras was the one who told the Colossians about Jesus. He continues to pray for them—for their endurance and maturity. God desires maturity (Colossians 1:28), which is a reference to the spiritual strength of our thinking (*1 Corinthians 14:20*²⁰ *Brothers and sisters, stop thinking like children. In regard to evil be infants, but in your thinking be adults*).

Therefore let us move beyond the elementary teachings about Christ and be taken forward to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God (Hebrews 6:1)

Paul develops this theme in Ephesians also, stating, "*Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ*" (Ephesians 4:15).

This has to be my deepest concern for the Church today. We have too many people who claimed to be followers of Christ, and yet they do not exercise in the pursuit of a deeper spiritual maturity. We cannot simply remain as children, never getting beyond the milk and not moving on to solids. The consequence of such laziness is that when things begin to become unstable in life, they have nothing to cling on to spiritually.

We also need to consider the souls of many who have not yet found the love of God in Christ. For this reason I can understand why a fellow Colossian, Epaphras, wrestles in prayer for his fellow Colossians.

Are there people you wrestle in prayer for? What could you pray for now?

The closing of Colossians reminds us that this letter was written not just for the church in Colossae, but also for other churches in the surrounding areas. Paul concludes by reminding the Colossians of his situation in prison.

Looking back on the book of Colossians, what's one thing you want to remember from this study? How could you apply it to your life this week?

Final Word

The question we walk away from Colossians asking is: How will we respond to the supremacy of Jesus Christ? His supremacy and sufficiency demands a response. We must allow Him to reign over all areas of our lives—from our work, to our family, to our friendships.

We begin by reminding ourselves of the full gospel. It is no fake Gospel. And we are not required to sit under any manmade rules that would drag us away from what his will is for us. Jesus has conquered sin and death, set us free, and rules over all things. By faith in Him and in the power of the Spirit, we put on the new self, unify with other Christians, and love each other. It all boils down to the word we discussed in this session: faithfulness.

As we close this series, ask yourself how you will respond to Jesus's supremacy. Will you give Him authority over all things in your life? Will you faithfully follow Him wherever He leads? Let's close by praying God would empower us by His Spirit to live as faithful witnesses to Him.

Living it out

Study of Colossians – Session 8 – Colossians 4:2-18

Here are some practical things to take away from this session today

Pray: Pray that God would build you up in faithfulness this week. Ask Him for opportunities to obey Him by praying for other Christians, being a witness to nonbelievers, and comforting others.

Read: We see in Colossians 4:16 that this letter was read aloud to the believers in Colossae. Carve out time to read the entire book of Colossians out loud to yourself or listen to the audio version. Write down what you learn through that process.

Welcome: Welcome another Christian into your home this week. Consider how you could use the time you spend together to serve them.

Witness: Tell someone about what you learned in this study of Colossians. Encourage another believers in the truths from this book or tell a nonbeliever about Jesus.

Thank: Thank a Christian who has been influential in your walk with Jesus this week. Ask how you can be praying for them and take a moment to pray for them.