

# 05. COLOSSIANS

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## INTRODUCTION

**In many areas of life it is possible to become so introspective we begin to lose perspective.**

Examples: new relationship, first child, Westpac (bank in Australia), churches

Churches too often become inward focused and forget that the church is one of the few entities in the world that exists for non-members as much as members.

The church in Colossae could easily have become such a church.

Paul reminds them:

**If the fullness of God is in Christ, all who have Him are full to overflowing.**

**Christian living is the grateful outworking of Christ's gracious work in us.**

And Paul now lifts his/their gaze from 'theology' to 'public Christianity'

### 1) HORIZON OF THE HOUSEHOLD (Col 3:18-4:1)

#### 1.1 Living on a more public horizon

Christians are to honour their wider household: wives → husbands, husbands → wives, children → parents, parents → children, slaves → masters, masters → slaves

Click [here](#) for an article on 'submission and slavery'

#### 1.2 Submission

Submission and love are both ordinary Christian virtues, which all Christians show to all.

Yet, in the wisdom of God there is something about the relational dynamic of a marriage that flourishes when—within the broader Christian ethic of mutual love and submission—the husband reflects deeply on how to love his wife sacrificially and the wife reflects deeply on how to respect/submit to her husband.

Submission can **never** lead to abusive relationships.

When Paul, and Peter, ask slaves to honour and obey their masters (1 Peter 2:18; Colossians 3:22, Ephesians 6:5), they are not mandating, teaching, or even endorsing slavery as a system. It's about how to cope within existing structures they couldn't change at that time.

#### 1.3 Are we honouring our wider family, especially those who don't believe?

### 2) HORIZON OF THE UNIVERSAL CHURCH (Col 4:7-18)

#### 2.1 Mentioning special people

Tychicus (letter-bearer), Onesimus (former slave of Philemon)

#### 2.2 Greetings from other famous missionaries (Col 4: 10-15)

Mark (v. 10): not Gospel writer but one who had a falling out with Paul, 'Jesus' (v.11) called 'Justus', Epaphras: (v.12) founder, Luke (v.14) possibly author of Luke's Gospel

#### 2.3 Connect with the church at Laodicea 20kms away (Col 4: 16)

#### 2.4 Colossians/we are to lift their/our sights out of their/our internal disputes to issues of the wider church.

### 3) HORIZON OF THE MISSION (Col 4:2-6)

#### 3.1 Prayer (Col 4:2-4)

Prayer is an upwards activity addressed to God with 'thankfulness' and an outward-looking activity not an inward, private activity.

Of all the things Paul urges his churches to pray for in his letters, prayer for mission is the most common.

And of all the activities Paul urges us to do to reach out to others with gospel, the most frequent one is prayer!

**Mission**

There is lots stacked against our mission.

Outside: opposition, apathy, huge cultural change, Inside: own apathy, comfort, weakness

Above all, we need a spirit of prayer.

Without that our gospel work here/abroad, will be determined by mere circumstances!

**3.2 Lifestyle (Col 4:5)**

Paul wants us to walk in wisdom (knowing Christ and his ways) toward (implying full engagement with) outsiders.

We are to seize opportunities to do good as Christian living is not just 'politeness'; it's active service!

Confucius famously said: "Do not inflict on others what you yourself would not wish done to you." (Confucius, Analects 15.23.). Jesus: "Do to others as you would have them do to you" (Luke 6:31)

The difference in these two ideas is the difference between deciding not to punch you in nose and deciding to build a hospital.

**3.3 Conversation (Col 4:6)**

God can use all our words to convey His grace which is why our words are to be "filled with grace, seasoned with salt".

Answer everyone with grace because the manner of our replies says as much about what we believe as the content.

**CONCLUSION****Reminders**

If the fullness of God is in Christ, all who have him are full to overflowing.

Christian living is grateful outworking of Christ's gracious work in us

**Now it's time to look up and out**

To give honour to our wider household, perhaps to our extended families.

To pay attention to the universal church where the needs are great, but where amazing things are happening all around the world

To focus on the gospel mission praying for the work of the gospel, seizing opportunities to do grace to others, never failing to speak up with grace

To let the grace we've received overflow in our lives and words of grace

Paul's final word to the Colossians is the word that animates all of this and compels us to look up and look out toward the world "Grace ..." v.18