



# WEEK EIGHT

COLOSSIANS:



**JESUS** at the  
**CENTRE**

..... of Our Relationships

Whitehill Church of Christ

July - Sept 2016

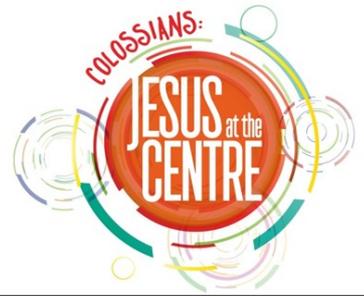
# JESUS - The Centre of our Friendships

Whitehill Church of Christ

Pastor Darryl Seip

Sunday 25th September 2016

Sermon Notes



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**EVERY NUMBER HAS A NAME**

**EVERY NAME HAS A STORY**

**EVERY STORY MATTERS TO GOD**

[7] Tychicus will tell you all the news about me. He is a dear brother, a faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord. [8] I am sending him to you for the express purpose that you may know about our circumstances and that he may encourage your hearts. [9] He is coming with Onesimus, our faithful and dear brother, who is one of you. They will tell you everything that is happening here.

[10] 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.) [11] Jesus, who is called Justus, also sends greetings. These are the only Jews among my fellow workers for the kingdom of God, and they have proved a comfort to me.

[12] Epaphras, who is one of you and a servant of Christ Jesus, sends greetings. He is always wrestling in prayer for you, that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured. [13] I vouch for him that he is working hard for you and for those at Laodicea and Hierapolis.

[14] Our dear friend Luke, the doctor, and Demas send greetings. [15] Give my greetings to the brothers at Laodicea, and to Nympha and the church in her house. [16] After this letter has been read to you, see that it is also read in the church of the Laodiceans and that you in turn read the letter from Laodicea.

[17] Tell Archippus: "See to it that you complete the work you have received in the Lord." [18] I, Paul, write this greeting in my own hand. Remember my chains. Grace be with you.

**Colossians 4:7-18 (NIV)**



Tychius

Onesimus

Aristarchus

Mark

Some time later Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us go back and visit the brothers in all the towns where we preached the word of the Lord and see how they are doing." [37] Barnabas wanted to take John, also called Mark, with them, [38] but Paul did not think it wise to take him, because he had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not continued with them in the work. [39] They had such a sharp disagreement that they parted company. Barnabas took Mark and sailed for Cyprus, [40] but Paul chose Silas and left, commended by the brothers to the grace of the Lord. [41] He went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.

**Acts 15:36-41 (NIV)**

Jesus Justus

Epaphrus

Demas

...for Demas, because he loved this world, has deserted me and has gone to Thessalonica.

**2 Timothy 4:10 (NIV)**

To laugh often and much

To win the respect of intelligent people and the affection of children,

To earn the appreciation of honest critics and endure the betrayal of false friends,

To appreciate beauty, to find the best in others,

To leave the world a bit better,

Whether by a healthy child, a garden patch

Or a redeemed social condition,

To know even one life has breathed easier because you lived

This is to have succeeded.

Ralph Waldo Emerson

# Jesus at the Centre ...of our Relationships

## Day 1

*Colossians 4:7-9 (NIV)*

*"Tychicus will tell you all the news about me. He is a dear brother, a faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord. [8] I am sending him to you for the express purpose that you may know about our circumstances and that he may encourage your hearts. [9] He is coming with Onesimus, our faithful and dear brother, who is one of you. They will tell you everything that is happening here. "*

### NAMES 1

People of my vintage would remember Romper Room. It was a kids show. Miss Pat, or whoever was hosting at the time would get the "magic mirror" and read off a list of names of kids that she could "see" through the television. I know people who remember watching the show as a kid, sitting intently hoping that their name would get a mention. It was a real thrill to have your name called out. It was OK if your name was John or Mary. If you were called Tychicus you probably missed out.

But he DOES get a mention in Colossians. Someone has counted the number of people mentioned by name listed in the book of Acts and Paul's letters. The count was nearing a hundred. In Romans 16 there are 26 names alone. Paul Gibbs said last Sunday that passion is contagious. Paul's passion for God was caught by this great bunch of mates who worked together for the sake of the Gospel.

In his final greetings to Colossae Paul mentions a few more mates who were significant to his ministry. They did more than just hang out and have fun. They worked together and suffered together in the foundational period of church life. Some of these he mentions we know very little about. However they were significant enough in Paul's life for him to give them a mention so that the church at Colossae would know of their relationship.

Tychicus had a job to do. Many scholars believe that it was he who delivered the letter by hand as well as the news of how Paul was doing. (verse 9) He was Paul's email, mobile phone, SMS and Australia Post. He knew what he had to do and he did it. We wouldn't be reading this today if he had slacked off and taken a detour along the way. Paul wouldn't have given him the responsibility if he hadn't showed himself to be faithful in other responsibilities along the way.

Onesimus travelled with him. He was a different case altogether. Onesimus was a runaway slave. In a wonderful "God-incidence" when he ran away from his Master, he ran into Paul. Paul knew his Master Philemon. Through Paul's influence, Onesimus became a Christian. As a play on words, Onesimus who apparently was a bit lazy, (his name means useful but his nickname was "useless") now became useful again to Paul.

Paul didn't define Onesimus by his past. He is not called the runaway slave. He is not called the useless, no good lazy servant. He was one of them now. Spiritually speaking, he was family. He was the faithful brother. In addressing Onesimus this way Paul is trying to help him get re-connected in the church when he gets back.

God uses all sorts of people in his family. We're going to learn some lessons from the rest of the people on the list this week. Reflect on your faithfulness to do the job you are asked to do. Reflect on whether you define people by their past or are able to see them as making a fresh start in Christ.



**What did you hear?**

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**What did you think?**

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**What will you do?**

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**Now talk to God .....**

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# Jesus at the Centre ...of our Relationships

## Day 2

Colossians 4:10-13 (CEV)

*“Aristarchus is in jail with me. He sends greetings to you, and so does Mark, the cousin of Barnabas. You have already been told to welcome Mark, if he visits you. [11] Jesus, who is known as Justus, sends his greetings. These three men are the only Jewish followers who have worked with me for the kingdom of God. They have given me much comfort. [12] Your own Epaphras, who serves Christ Jesus, sends his greetings. He always prays hard that you may fully know what the Lord wants you to do and that you may do it completely. [13] I have seen how much trouble he has gone through for you and for the followers in Laodicea and Hierapolis. “*

## NAMES 2

There are different sorts of friends. Maybe you have your school friends. There are work friends. There are Church friends. Old friends and new friends. There's the sort of friend who you play with or shop with. There is the sort of friend who you'd go to jail with! That's a real friend.

Aristarchus was that sort of friend to Paul. Some scholars have pointed out that “notorious” prisoners, or ones with some sort of following were allowed two slaves with them in confinement. It is possible according to them that at least Aristarchus and possibly Epaphras volunteered to be with Paul in jail as his companion. That's real fellowship. That goes beyond sharing a coffee (or tea) and a biscuit after the church service! That's a real sharing of everything – good and bad.

Jesus Justus had the extra name as a way to distinguish him from the ‘other” Jesus. He is mentioned only in passing but he still gets a mention. Perhaps he is like the many faithful but virtually unknown heroes, who flourish out of the spot light.

But the name that stands out in the three we look at today is Mark. Mark and Paul had a “history” together. Mark had joined Paul for his first missionary journey. But he had fled home after it got too much for him. When it came time for a second journey Paul wanted nothing to do with him. But encouraging Barnabus said he should give him another go. Acts 15:39 says such a sharp dispute arose (yelling and screaming maybe?) that they parted company. Barnabus took Mark with him. Paul and Silas teamed up. Paul and Mark didn't work together but the missionary effort doubled.

But 15 years later, Mark and Paul are back together. Maybe Paul had mellowed and was more prepared to give him a go. Maybe Mark had learned his lesson and had become more skilled at sticking with the task. Whatever the case, Mark is mentioned positively, showing that with God and with us, failure doesn't have to be final. Sometimes even for great people, personality differences make it difficult for them to get along.

Perhaps word had spread to the Colossians about the way Paul treated Mark previously. Who was right and who was wrong? It doesn't say. Perhaps it doesn't matter. I can see here that Paul is reinforcing the point for the Colossians to treat him well now and welcome him because he has changed. This is not the old Mark, and this is not the old Paul. Differences can be forgotten. Broken relationships healed.

Reflect on going the extra mile as a friend like Aristarchus.

Think about those who are happy to be inconspicuous like Justus, but whose contribution is still valuable.

Consider those who have failed and need to be given a second chance like Mark



**What did you hear?**

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**What did you think?**

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**What will you do?**

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**Now talk to God .....**

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# Jesus at the Centre ...of our Relationships

## Day 3

Colossians 4:12-15 (NAB)

*“Epaphras sends you greetings; he is one of you, a slave of Christ (Jesus), always striving for you in his prayers so that you may be perfect and fully assured in all the will of God. [13] For I can testify that he works very hard for you and for those in Laodicea and those in Hierapolis. [14] Luke the beloved physician sends greetings, as does Demas. [15] Give greetings to the brothers in Laodicea and to Nympha and to the church in her house. “*

### NAMES 3

We have already met Epaphras earlier on in the letter. If you remember, he was the one who first brought the Gospel to Colossae. He was the one that also brought his concerns to Paul. He alerted Paul to the people who tried to lessen the importance of Jesus by emphasizing old Jewish customs or worship of other spiritual beings. In bringing this situation to Paul's attention we have this letter in our Bibles today.

But as Paul says, Epaphras also brought it to God's attention. We understand the reason he was such a godly character was the time he spent in prayer. He wrestled in prayer. That is an unusual phrase. Perhaps it shows that prayer is not an addition to the work of say visiting, teaching and preaching – it is just as much work as anything else. Prayer is not a passive thing. Sometimes it takes energy and effort to persevere in prayer. It takes concentration to wrestle in prayer for others.

Luke is with Paul as well, either as a regular visitor or in jail with him. Luke wrote 2 books in the New Testament – Luke and Acts. That was quite a prison cell. Between Paul, Mark and Luke we have the writers of over half of the books of the New Testament. That must have been quite a conversation as they swapped Jesus stories. I can hear Epaphras saying, “Hey you guys, you should each write a book”

You never know what will become of people you sit with, study with or work with. It is great to hear of people with whom we have had some association to be still out there changing lives and making a difference for the Lord. But not everyone remains faithful.

Demas is mentioned here as someone who was one of Paul's companions-then. But later on, in one of Paul's last letters Demas gets another mention – this time negatively. In 2 Timothy 4:10 it says.. *...for Demas, because he loved this world, has deserted me and has gone to Thessalonica.*

One of my greatest heartaches is to see people who once were walking with God now far away from Him. It is very sad to hear of the Demas's who find the lure of the world more enticing than the love of God. I guess like Paul we all may have times where friends not only desert us but our Lord as well.

Reflect on how you can be like Epaphras. Pray for the maturity and assurance of your fellow Christians.

Pray for friends you have met over the years that they would go on in the faith.

Pray for the Demas people in your life.



**What did you hear?**

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**What did you think?**

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**What will you do?**

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**Now talk to God .....**

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# Jesus at the Centre ...of our Relationships

## Day 4

*Colossians 4:16-18 (NIV)*

*"After this letter has been read to you, see that it is also read in the church of the Laodiceans and that you in turn read the letter from Laodicea. [17] Tell Archippus: "See to it that you complete the work you have received in the Lord." [18] I, Paul, write this greeting in my own hand. Remember my chains. Grace be with you. "*

### LOST LETTERS

We used to have Bible book challenges when I was a young guy in Sunday School. Some people might remember sword drills where you raced other students to find a particular verse. Close the Bible. Thumbs on top. Go! But no one ever said, look up and read out Laodiceans 3:16.

There are 27 books in the New Testament. However none of them are called Laodiceans. Some of the books are named after the cities they were written to –Philippians to residents of Philippi, Colossians to the residents of Colossae etc. So what is this letter from Laodicea that Paul is talking about here? Firstly it is most likely to be a letter from Paul written to the church at Laodicea. Where is it today?

There are two theories. One is that this Laodicean letter is actually what we call Ephesians. In Ephesians we have no personal greetings at the end of the book like here in Colossians. Ephesians also has a more general tone than the specific problems addressed in Colossae. Perhaps it was like a circular letter.

The other theory is that the Laodicean letter has been lost. The whole area was earthquake prone and so it is surmised that this letter was buried under some rubble somewhere.

(For extra Credit – Read 1 Corinthians 5:9. This seems to be referring to a letter before 1 Corinthians!? Think about the implications if these 'lost' letters were ever found. Just speculating! We simply have to trust that God allowed the other letters to stay lost and preserved those letters that we needed, to guide us into the truth.)

These final verses show the process of how Paul's letters were distributed around the world. The principle he establishes here is that the letter to the church at Colossae be read and other letters that have good general instruction for any churches be copied, passed on and read as well. In this way Paul's letters were copied preserved and passed on so that what we have today is a reliable transcript of his original thoughts.

Paul achieved his aim of laying a foundation for the new Church, a foundation as we see here in Colossians that is built on Christ himself. His letters were recognized by someone in authority like the Apostle Peter as having the same inspiration as the "other Scriptures" (that is the Old Testament) See 2 Peter 3:16 (another 3:16 verse)

The authority that Paul had been given was expressed in his writing. Christians everywhere and churches even today are built up and strengthened by the truth contained in his letters.

Thank God that we have an ongoing and reliable source of truth. Because of the wisdom of Paul and the guidance of the Holy Spirit the Bible still speaks to us nearly 2000 years later.



**What did you hear?**

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**Now talk to God .....**

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# Jesus at the Centre ...of our Relationships

## Day 5

Colossians 4:17-18 (NLT)

*"And say to Archippus, 'Be sure to carry out the work the Lord gave you.' [18] Here is my greeting in my own handwriting—Paul. Remember my chains. May the grace of God be with you."*

### That's All Folks...

With these words Paul closes his letter and today we finish our last Devotion through Colossians. Thanks for sticking with it all the way through.

Firstly there is a cryptic message to Archippus. The only thing we can say for certain is that we are not certain what he means. Arch (if we can call him that) had a particular role to play in the Ministry of God. We don't know what it was. Most likely it was not an "office" as if he held a particular position in the church. He had a job to do and by what Paul says it seems he was reluctant to do it.

Arch is probably typical of many Christians who are hesitant servants. One of my many issues is the confidence to do the job. I guess anyone who feels like that needs to hear verse 17 afresh – make sure you carry out the work God gave you to do. Sometimes we get to the point where that work comes to a completion. We have done as much as we can. It comes a time where we need to leave it and pass on to someone else to do. There are always seasons in life. It takes wisdom and discernment to recognize those times.

However many times people give up too early. The perceived problems ( lack of confidence, size of the job, busyness with other things, etc.) stop us doing what the Lord has called us to do. We don't know exactly what Arch was called to do. Paul didn't blab it out for the entire world to see. But I'm sure Arch would have got the message. I hope we do too.

Paul autographs the letter to prove its authenticity. Like today, in the ancient world, particularly at a later date, there were plenty of 'genuine' fakes. (Think the Hitler Diaries from years ago. They were supposed to be his memoirs but turned out to be forgeries.) There were Gospels supposedly written by Peter and Thomas and Mary and other significant people containing all sorts of fanciful stories about Jesus. One of them was about Jesus as a boy showing off by making clay doves that he turned into real birds with the clap of his hands. That didn't make its way into the Gospels!

Remember My Chains. (verse 18) He's not asking for pity. I think he's encouraging them to stay strong. There is always the possibility that total devotion to God leads us to some difficult places. It may be the end of comfort and convenience but not the end of our rope. If he could write these amazing letters and have that influence with people while in jail, what could we do while we are free. Make the most of your freedom. I guess Paul might have wanted their prayers too that he might be strong.

Paul ends the letter as he begins, with grace. The grace that God gave *to* them as they centred their lives around Christ now was promised to be *with* them. May God's grace be *with* you as you put this letter down and go back to your daily chores. *With* you as you face your own battles in life. *With* you as you face temptation to centre life around yourself. Grace has been given *to* us. Let us never forget that grace goes *with* us too.

May God's grace be with you as well. AMEN



**What did you hear?**

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**What did you think?**

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**What will you do?**

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**Now talk to God .....**

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# Changing



# with Jesus



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