

Colossians 4:10-14 - Tom Grass

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Preacher: Tom Grass

[0:00] We welcome you to the media ministry of Bethel Community Church, Knowing Jesus, Making Jesus Known. This morning, we continue our study on the New Testament book of Colossians.

Let's open in a word of prayer. Father, as we come to your word this morning in Colossians, we realize a lot of thoughts go through our heads, our minds, when we see these guys, these men of faith, these men of renown.

You have Paul and Luke and all these guys that just seem giant in their faith and work for you, but yet we realize they're just flesh and blood like us.

We look at them and we are challenged by their lives, challenged by their faith, and we say, I want to be like them. And in our failings and shortcomings, we realize we feel like we don't measure up, but our security, our measuring up, and our standing is in Jesus Christ and his work on the cross, not based on my works, and my continued righteousness before you in my works was based on the blood of Christ.

And I thank you for the clarity of that message in your word. As we go and read your word this morning, will we be changed and glean a few things that will help us in our daily life?

[1:15] We ask this in your name. Amen. You know, if you want to write the takeaways, I'll give them to you right at the beginning and then at the end, okay?

Takeaways. Be a servant of the Lord Jesus, be a fellow worker with other believers, and be useful. Do something. I'm a simple guy.

We talked about spiritual gifts this past couple months in a youth group. And one of the things I told the group of guys that I'm over, the younger guys, I said, do something, whatever it is. Every week the communion cups need to be clean.

Do something. Take it. Do something. You'll find your gift as you're doing something. You won't find it waiting for it to be revealed to you. So, simple takeaways, right? I was thinking about something, and I'm just going to share.

There's this guy in this chapter that we're going to talk about, Demas, and he kind of stands out as a hard one for you to categorize.

[2:22] But I just want to share something that happened in my life. When I got saved, I was 19, 1980. I was 19 years old. A lot of things happened at that time, and the next couple of years were very up and down as a Christian.

And I walked away from the Lord, walked with the Lord, walked away from the Lord, walked with the Lord. So, in 1980 or so, after all that frustration, 1981, I had books and songs and records and notebooks and Bibles, and I stuck them in a little wood crate because I was so frustrated with my Christian walk, I shoved them in the closet.

I was living at my parents' house. So, I moved that box from my parents' house to my first apartment when I moved out of my parents' house. Then, when Nikki and I got our first apartment, when we were married, I moved that box again, put it in the closet.

First house, put it in the closet. So, I had this box of Christianity that I put aside until things made more sense in my life, until I could straighten out my own feelings, my frustrations, my youthfulness, and relationship with God, and frustrations with my own life.

Then I'd pull it all out again. And that happened about 1986. So, over a period of about five years, let's put it aside. Didn't mean I didn't seek God or go to church, it was just that stuff was put aside.

[3:41] All that to say, God wants to use you. He wants to use me. And eventually, I took that box out, you know, fall of 86, and the Lord started moving again in my life.

I allowed Him to move in my life. He never stops moving toward you. But we change our address, you know. We move away from God.

Let's read these verses this morning. And we're getting in chapter 4 of Colossians. I'm going to read 7 to 14, just to give us some context. Here we go.

I'm going to butcher the first name. Tichicus will tell you about my activities. He is a beloved brother and faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord. I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are, and that we may encourage your hearts.

And with him, Onesimus, our faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you. They will tell you of everything that has taken place here. Aristarchus, my fellow prisoner, greets you.

[4:43] And Mark, the cousin of Barnabas, concerning whom you have received instructions, if he comes to you, welcome him. And Jesus, who is called Justice, 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.

Epaphras, 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.

For I bear him witness that he has worked hard for you, and for those in Laodicea and Hierapolis. Luke, the beloved physician, greets you, as does Demas.

Colossae is a little city, a little mountainous area, and these other two cities are near it, Laodicea and Hierapolis. It's this little region. And we've got this one guy, Epaphras, who comes and visits Paul in Rome while he's in prison.

When I consider the writings and teachings of Paul done as a prisoner, I find it to be such a contrast from what the world would consider religious leaders' accommodations to be like.

[5:58] You know, do you ever think about that? You know, Paul's writing these glorious doctrines and all these things. I imagine Paul the executive in a corner office, overlooking the city, overlooking a big body of water, maybe San Francisco, you know.

Or what about a monasterial setting with an expanse of land and buildings that promote or facilitate deep reflective thought?

Doesn't that make more sense? Paul the apostle. Apostles of the Gentiles. This guy knocking out this Christianity, laying it all out for us, you know, but here he is in prison, writing this.

Prison in Rome. At this point in chapter 4, Paul is concluding his letter to Colossians. And he mentions eight individuals by name who have been with him at this time in Rome when he was a prisoner.

Paul, who accomplished great things for the Lord in the gospel, and who himself is an example of a servant and faithful minister of Jesus Christ. He needed the help of others, didn't he?

[7:01] He couldn't do it by himself. There's a quote here out of the Expositors Bible Commentary.

And I kind of summarized it and took some thoughts out of it, but it's on your handout, I believe. We must understand that all believers are servants of the same Lord who has set each of us his task.

And though the task be different, the obedience is the same. Small things done for Christ are great. All done in obedience to the same Lord is the same in essence, for it is all obedience.

And work done for the same God is the same essence for it is all worship. Paraphrase. Little things are as important as big things to God.

Being useful, doing something for him, is important. When we were doing the spiritual gifts thing in the youth group, like, they would rate these categories, and you know, you would have these categories, evangelist, administration, knowledge, mercy.

[8:10] You know, some I had a one. Some were a six. Some were a five. And I thought, taking that, I thought it was interesting. You know, I used to think, okay, if I had the gifted administration, why aren't I like David or Jeff Estes?

You know, people we may know, they're just great administrators. Well, I might have that gift, but it might not be like theirs, right? So I could still have that gift. That number might be a four, not a seven or a six, right?

That doesn't, that just says, where a strength of mine might lie of all my personality traits and abilities. So, all that to say, even though the number is low, maybe, doesn't mean that I can't use that gift.

Does that make sense? Yeah, you could, you could do a personality test and your numbers could be threes, twos, ones, three, twos, ones, your threes, your strong ones, then okay, you have the gift to evangelize.

I mean, it's only a three. It's better than me, a one, right? I mean, you know, it's just how we're, it's how we're made. But in God's eyes, we're all unique and special.

[9:13] And he wants to what? Use us. Isn't it simple? You know, a basketball team made up of how many guys? How many guys play at a time?

Five. But can you really win with five guys? No. No, you can't. You know, you only can play five at a time, but six, seven, eight, sometimes are the more valuable players on the team, even though they're not the, the top guys, you know?

It's really, it's really something for us to consider, for us to grasp, for you personally to take into your heart and say, I can be used of God.

I'm responsible to be used by God, and I can be used by God in the way that he sees fit. It's important. Aristarchus, the first man on this list, we find, first, he shows up in Acts, in Ephesus, when this riot is going on, if you will.

And, it's really a neat passage. If you turn there in Acts 19, 23 to 30, I'll read parts of it.

[10:23] About that time, there arose no little disturbance concerning the way. That's the truth, the gospel, the Christianity that was spreading. For a man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of Artemis, brought no little business to the craftsmen.

That means, silversmiths were making money off false gods. And the gospel comes and says, there is no other God but Jesus. He's Lord. There is no other God but the one true God.

And so, it was wrecking their business. Well, it turned the city upside down. So, the city was filled with confusion. And they rushed together into the theater, dragging with them Gaius and Aristarchus, Macedonians, who were Paul's companions in travel.

But when Paul wished to go in among the crowd, the disciples would not let him. I bring this up because that is this guy that we see in Colossians. This is where you first see him show up on the pages of scripture.

It was in the city of Ephesus. And then in Acts chapter 20, 1 through 6, and in Acts 27, 1 to 2, we learn that he is from Thessalonica, and he was a traveling companion of Paul.

[11:34] So, this is a guy that at some point in Paul's ministry latches on to him and stays with him. This guy's been around a while. Let's just say that, right? Right? Right? Right? Right? Right?

Right? Right? Right? Right? Right? Right? Right? Some people think that Aristarchus may have been one of Paul's early converts in Europe, but there's no evidence for that.

Though he has a Gentile name, he was a Jew. It is not clear how much he traveled with Paul or how long he remained with him, but we do find him in Rome with Paul. So that's what we know. Paul refers to him as my fellow prisoner. It's not clear if he was actually in prison with Paul because of something they did together and both were in prison, or if he willingly submitted to be Paul's companion in prison and Paul likens him to be my fellow prisoner.

So that prison situation there for Paul was kind of unique, it seems like. We do know this about Aristarchus.

[12:47] He was a companion of Paul in his travel. He was in prison with him. He was a fellow worker with Paul and a comfort to Paul. This we know for sure. He was a solid friend and brother to Paul and a faithful servant of the Lord Jesus.

Right? We can say that's true of him. The next guy is Jesus called Justice. Not much said about him. Is there?

It's just right there. That's it. Can't find him anywhere else in the Bible? It's just that he's of the circumcision. He's a comfort to Paul. Pretty neat.

What if that was your epitaph? What if that's all anybody ever knew about you? It would be pretty good, wouldn't it? A lot of people want great things about their name after they die and go, this guy, just a couple little words, he's in there forever, right?

There's a common name, Justice. Jesus was a common name. I think if Steve St. Clair wrote this verse, it would read like this. And Justice, who went on to do great things for the Lord, or however he says it.

[13:54] He says it like you ever see him do a slide and he'll mention these youth that go to school. He went off and did great things for the Lord. I think that sums him up. The last one of the three that Paul mentions as part of the circumcision is Mark.

Mark, I like Mark a lot. I like him. I find him to be, the little bit that we know about him, I just think he's a neat guy, someone I can relate to.

In Acts chapter 12, this is really interesting, this one little verse. You know, when Peter gets thrown in jail and he gets out and they appear to the house and they think they see a ghost.

Remember that story? That account, I like to say story when it's real, right? It says, in verse 11 of Acts 12, when Peter was come to himself, he said, now I know of a surety that the Lord has sent his angels and he delivered me out of the hand of Herod and from all the expectation of the people of the Jews.

And Peter, when he had considered this thing, he came to the house of Mary, the mother of John, whose surname was Mark, where many were gathered together praying. This is where Mark first comes onto the scene.

[15:07] Isn't that interesting? It's the mother's house. Peter comes to Mark's mom's house. Right? Did I say that right? Yeah. And then we know in Acts chapter 15, Paul and Barnabas go out on their first missionary journey and they have John Mark with them.

And then they come back and Paul says, let's go out again. And Barnabas says, let's bring Mark. And Paul says, no, he's not coming. He's not fit because he turned back. Remember? He left the missionary field, if we will, the travels and came back home to his mommy, some say.

Mark's not worthy to go. So, so that's interesting because then you have the travels of Paul and who's the other one? Silas. That's on your handout.

Paul and Silas go off on their missionary journeys and Barnabas takes Mark. And in the book of Acts, you see Paul and Silas and the works of Paul being accounted for, but you don't see what happens with Barnabas, right?

That's really not recorded. It's not known how Paul, I mean, Mark, got to Rome to be one of Paul's companions and fellow workers, comforters, but he's there at this point.

[16:34] So at some point, Mark finds his way back. And that's really interesting, isn't it? It may be that, you know, it's Paul's little words here back in Colossians about Mark.

He says, concerning whom you received commandments, if he comes unto you, receive him. Paul sends this letter to the Colossians and says, if John Mark shows up at your church, receive him. He may have held this stigmatism of being unfaithful for a long time. We lose, in our current age, we lose the understanding of how things might have been a lot slower back then.

You know what I mean? Like, to travel from Rome to Colossae, would it be like, what, three to four months, maybe? You know, some of it by ship, some by land. But, how would news travel?

You would send a messenger, right? So, it's not like today where I can know what Daniel's doing in the Philippines on Facebook, right? But, this would be a lot slower time.

[17:50] So, Paul's sending this letter. If he comes around, receive him as a brother because he is. He's a faithful brother. I guess, Mark, I'll just say in my own words, I have a bunch of words written down here.

Mark is an example to us of a guy who appears to be useless, if you will, but later is useful. Like Onesimus, same kind of thing, right?

God uses, there's a lady that used to say, I don't know her name, used to say, God uses cracked pots. You remember that phrase? God uses me. He uses a cracked pot. You know, God can

overcome my weaknesses and does and wants to use me in spite of my weaknesses.

I find that to be very hard to live with and very much a contradiction because I feel like a hypocrite sometimes. You have a position in the church as an elder, you teach, you do these things, you're supposed to be this and that, but in your heart you're not and you know, there's this dichotomy going on sometimes.

But God uses cracked pots. A young cult might be rebellious and not trainable, but later might become a great horse.

[19:10] Useful, right? But when you look at them when they're little, who's had a puppy that's unruly and chewed up your house? But then later maybe it's, you'll say, this is the greatest dog I ever had.

But meanwhile, it ruined how much furniture at your house. Have you heard anybody ever have a dog like that? Yeah, well we got several like that. Or cats. Never mind about that. My thoughts about why Paul mentions these three men as being of the circumcision is because they had an identity in Judaism, but now they identify with Christ alone.

I think Paul is trying to stress that point. Yeah, they were of the circumcision. They were strong Jewish guys. Lawmen, law keepers, you know? They were proud of it.

They're Jewish brothers now serving in Rome. John, Mark from Jerusalem, the heart of Judaism, and two Jews from Rome, the heart of the pagan world at this time. It's like God takes both, all that, and says, I can use it just for me.

They're following me now. They're not pagans. They're not Romans. They're not Jews. They're Christ's disciples, right? They're co-workers, fellow workers with Paul.

[20:18] And the next guy we see in the pages here is a countryman of the Colossians, and that's Epaphras. And he's from Colossae. You can find that in the beginning of Colossians.

We learn that. He introduced the gospel to the Colossians. Let's see where that's...

In chapter 1 of Colossians, verse 5, For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, of which you heard before in the word of the truth, the gospel, which is coming to you as it has in all the world, and bringeth forth fruit, as it does also in you since the day you heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth.

As you learn of Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is for you a faithful minister of Christ, who also declared unto us your love in the Spirit.

These are the early words in the epistle about this man, and in the later part of the book is where we're at today. He's one of you, a servant of Christ. He labors fervently for you in prayers that you may stand perfect and complete in the will of God.

[21:29] For I bear him witness, Paul says, that he has a great zeal for you and for them that are Laodicea and Hierapolis. This guy, Epaphras, his prayer was that they would stand.

He was concerned. He's away from the church that he started, and he's concerned. Paul sees this guy laboring in prayer for them, and his prayer for them is that they would stand. Stand perfect.

That they would be complete. Let me look at my notes. That they would be perfect or mature.

That they would have mature Christian character. He wants them to grow up. You know, we read in other parts of the scripture, don't longer be babes in Christ, but grow up. Be mature. That's this man's prayer for the church that he's away from.

The second thing is that be fully assured in all the will of God. That's a hard phrase for me. Be fully assured in all the will of God. The reason I say that's hard for me is because I'm not always sure.

[22:39] Are you always sure what the will of God is for you in your life? But tomorrow, I know what I'm supposed to do. You know, today I know what I'm supposed to do. Today it's my turn to share. It's on the calendar, right? So that's the will of God for me today.

Tomorrow I'm supposed to get up and go to work. I know that. Is that enough? Yeah. I'm a man that's married to a wife. I'm supposed to be a father.

I'm supposed to be a husband. These are things I know to be the will of God. Don't complicate it sometimes. You know? Isn't it simpler? Thanks for laughing. I mean, sometimes, you know, I think that there should be so much more in my Christian walk.

But God just says, be what you're supposed to be where you are now. And that's important. If you're a student, be a student. If you're an internship, what are you supposed to be? A good intern. If you're an employee, put a good employee. If you're the master, what did Colossians say? How are you supposed to live? If you're the master or the boss, how are you supposed to be? You're supposed to act a certain way, right?

[23:39] Remember earlier in Colossians, we had put on love. It was the last thing that we were supposed to put on. There was all these things we were supposed to be in chapter 3. Put on tender mercies, kindness, humbleness, meekness, long suffer, forbearing one another.

Isn't that the will of God? Simple. Simple. I complicate it so easily. God, is this really what you want for me? I don't know. But I know if I look back on my life, God's been faithful to me, and I just try to do what I'm supposed to be doing that is in my path now.

Because I don't know what tomorrow is. And be content with how God made you. You know, I went to a certain kind of school, and a lot of the people I went to high school would do this and that. You know, I'm not. So, you know, can you feel bad about that? Yeah, sure. But am I right with God? Yeah. Am I content with what He's done in my life? Yeah. Am I content with who He says I am in Him?

Yeah. That's better, isn't it? You know? It's interesting. I ranted. Don't mind that, right?

[24:51] Let's go on to the next section then. I labeled this part men of contrast. I'm going to read this.

It gives me context. Simple verse. Luke, the beloved physician and Demas greet you. One little verse, right?

If you turn to Philemon, and I believe on your handout I have the, almost the whole verse written there. Philemon, verse 23 and 24. It says, Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, sends greetings to you as do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke, my, the blank is, fellow workers. The reason I did that is because, it's kind of interesting, we have a different guy who's Paul's fellow prisoner in this passage, in Philemon.

but, the point is, Demas and Luke are what? And according to Philemon, are fellow workers with Paul. Follows the same theme as the other guys that Paul mentioned, right?

[26:14] Second Timothy 4.10. This gets tricky. If you think of our Sunday school message that we watched the video of, what do you do with Demas? Right?

First, Second Timothy 4.10 says, For Demas, in love with this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica. Okay.

So is he a believer? Does he shipwrecked his faith? Where is he at? Where is he? Is he a disciple? Do you cast him away? Scripture doesn't tell us, does it? Scripture doesn't tell us the end like Mark. Like in Mark, we read, Mark, bring him to me in Rome.

He's useful to me now. One that wasn't useful to Paul. Demas has forsaken me, loving this present world, went back to wherever he went. Thessalonica. Whatever was there in the world.

[27:17] We believe he went back there. But think about this time in Timothy where Paul is in Rome.

What's Paul facing now in prison in Rome? Certain what? Death. Certain death. You're Demas. You want to hang with him? The next thing coming for you if you hang out with Paul might be what? Roman death. Death. I don't know.

Do you blame him? Wrestle that out in your own heart. We don't know the end of the story though, do we? All we know at that point, that snapshot, is that he left Paul. No longer a companion of Paul's.

All that Paul charges him with is that he was a faithless friend and too fond of the present world. It's possible that he did not become an apostate.

[28:16] It's possible he didn't reject the faith. We don't know. Right? We really don't know. It's interesting, Mark, we have a 19 year span of Mark.

If you look at the different times where Mark shows up on the scene, there's a period of 19 years. Early in Acts 12, roughly, and then 2 Timothy, that's a period of roughly 19 years.

I mean, that's a long time, right? But at this point, we're not sure. Maybe, in Thessalonica, he repented of his evil, and perhaps Paul and Demas met again before the throne and there clasped inseparable hands.

Let us not judge a man of whom we know so little, but take to ourselves a lesson of humility and self-distrust. Can I read that again? Let us not judge a man of whom we know so little, but take to ourselves a lesson of humility and self-distrust.

All of our hearts are prone to wander. Right? There's a song about that, I think, right? Prone to wander. I can feel it. Anyway, let's move on to Luke. Luke is Paul's long and faithful companionship. [29:30] And, you know, we know that at some point in the book of Acts, Luke starts journeying with Paul, and he writes Acts, and he says, and we, you see that phrase, we.

He never names himself, but he says, we traveled here, and we did that. Luke is fascinating in a sense to me. It's like this guy, you know, what does Paul say about him here in Colossians? Luke, the physician, the beloved. He really had an affection for this guy. It's possible that maybe Luke was able to help Paul with his health issues.

I never really considered that to studying this. Maybe there was a guy that helped Paul be able to continue on in the work, and he nursed him along. You know, Paul had some physical ailments. Paul, man, he did so many things, right?

But, we find him here, sharing the Roman captivity, and even in the second imprisonment, he was Paul's only companion.

[30:32] All others had been sent away or had fled, but Luke could not be spared and would not desert him, and no doubt was by his side till the end, which soon came. What a guy!

What a faithful friend! What a faithful servant of the Lord! How strikingly, these two contrasted characters of Demas and Luke bring out the possibility of men being exposed to the same influences and yet ending far away from each other.

Isn't that true? We see that in some families. Sometimes a Christian family will have, boy, these three of the kids are doing great, two are just way out there, you know. What happened? Well, there's something in the heart of man that is strong, and it draws us away from the Lord.

Lord. We're wrapping this up, so if the musicians want to come up, we'll wrap up with a few more thoughts.

We are reminded from these two men, Demas and Luke, who stand before us that no loftiness of position nor length of Christian profession is a guarantee against falling and apostasy. How can a man fail or fall?

[31:43] So long serve the Lord. Demas had stood high in the church and had been admitted to close intimacy of the apostle, was evidently no raw novice, and yet the world could drag him back from so eminent a place in which he had so long stood.

This verse will be familiar. Let him that thinks he stands take heed, lest he fall, right? We've all been tempted to deny the Lord, walk away, haven't we?

Sure. Maybe some haven't, I don't know, but I know it gets frustrating. It's hard to walk the Christian life sometimes. 1 John 2 says, Do not love the world nor the things in the world.

If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, is pride of life, is not from the Father, but it's from the world. The world is passing away and the lusts thereof, but he who does the will of the Father abides forever.

You know, we're challenged and called to follow the Lord and not the world. The takeaways, I started at the beginning.

[32:51] Be a servant of the Lord Jesus. Be a fellow worker with other believers. Be useful. Do something. Do something. Really. Isn't there enough to do?

Yeah. People that are doing things know there's plenty to do. But Colossians 3, verse 1 to 3. Flip in your Bibles to that or on your phone, whatever you're using this morning, but read these in closing. Therefore, if you have been raised up with Christ, I mean, you're a believer. You claim to be a believer, right? Keep seeking the things above where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.

Set your mind on the things above, not on things of the earth. Easy to read these words, hard to do. For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ and God.

I guess to sum it up, God wants to use you, wants to use me. These guys, this list of men, were just faithful guys, did what they could. Companions of Paul. And I think we're challenged to be the same thing to each other and in the world.

[33:59] Lord, we thank you for your word. Thank you that it's not based on our righteousness that we can stand before you. It's based on your righteousness, Jesus.

And we thank you that you want to use us in spite of our frailties, in spite of our shortcomings, in spite of ourselves. And may we find ways to be used with you in a way that glorifies you and not out of selfish pride.

We say that's this in Jesus' name. rather than what we'll get in the earth. Give our God a good looked like man. In seconds he fears and he throws up to death going wymAY.

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