

Worship Material
Encouraging words
Material from Roots Bible Study
Sunday 13th July

Begin with an opening prayer

Lord, help us know what it is we are called to do
and help us listen and act.

As we gather today, may we hear your
encouragement and share it with others.

Amen.

Read Colossians 1:1-14

Bible notes

Paul wrote one of his most theologically rich and philosophically well-informed letters to a place that was not really on anyone's map, the city of Colossae. When it was destroyed by an earthquake in AD 64 no one bothered to rebuild it, preferring to move down the road to other more important cities. The city might not have mattered to Caesar but it mattered to God, and Paul writes encouraging the new Jesus followers in the city to stand firm in their faith and support for one another.

In the contemporary world, spirituality is often individualistic – my inner peace; my private walk with God. For Paul, however, it is a gift from God (v.2), that comes through others, like Epaphras (v.7) who spends his life serving the needs of others. All the verbs and the 'yous' in this opening section are plural; truly we are all in this together.

And so, in this world of everyone for themselves cut-throat competition, we learn to be human from each other as God works in the community of the church. Paul's focus is on 'love' (vv.4 and 5), and fruit and good works (v.10). As we do good, we get to know God better – he meets and blesses us as we do this, so we grow not by living for ourselves in splendid isolation but for God and others in a community of love and mutual encouragement – the polar opposite of the rugged individualism promoted by both Rome and our world.

Because we are not self-made, God has given us life with one another in his kingdom, so we can live open-handed lives, sharing responsibility for one

another and ensuring everyone's needs are met. Basil of Caesarea, a fourth-century bishop, said: 'When someone steals a person's clothes, we call him a thief. Should we not give the same name to one who could clothe the naked and does not? The bread in your cupboard belongs to the hungry; the coat hanging unused in your closet belongs to those who need it; the shoes rotting in your closet to the one who has no shoes. The money which you hoard belongs to the poor.'

This way of living is not easy or popular, but it is evidence of grace and is possible for those who belong to a community of love.

Prayer

Based on Psalm 25

God of all the world, in you we trust for you are our Saviour.
Your faithfulness guides us, your humility inspires us,
your Spirit encourages us and your Word feeds us.
We praise you for all your blessings, all your gifts
and for those you have entrusted to us,
to bless, encourage and care for.
In Jesus' name.

Amen.

A prayer to conclude

As we go out in the world today,
help us to treasure the encouraging words we have heard.
May our mouths be full of encouraging words for others.
Help us to look out for opportunities to share them this week.

Amen.