

Gravitational Pull

Colossians 4:2-18

Prayer for Opportunity

4:2-4

Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving; praying at the same time for us as well, that God will open up to us a door for the word, so that we may speak forth the mystery of Christ, for which I have also been imprisoned; that I may make it clear in the way I ought to speak.

Colossians 4:2-4

Command for Pull

4:5-6

Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity. Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person.

Colossians 4:5-6

Salt was a preserving and flavoring agent; thus Paul probably refers to speech designed to make sense to outsiders and be relevant to them. When a particular rhetorician recommended salting one's words properly, he seems to have meant sarcastic wit; in this context, Paul seems to mean instead a gentle answer (cf. Prov 15:1).

The IVP Bible Background Commentary

Examples of Pull

4:7-18

As to all my affairs, Tychicus, our beloved brother and faithful servant and fellow bond-servant in the Lord, will bring you information. For I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know about our circumstances and that he may encourage your hearts; and with him Onesimus, our faithful and beloved brother, who is one of your number. They will inform you about the whole situation here.

Aristarchus, my fellow prisoner, sends you his greetings; and also Barnabas's cousin Mark (about whom you received instructions; if he comes to you, welcome him); and also Jesus who is called Justus; these are the only fellow workers for the kingdom of God who are from the circumcision, and they have proved to be an encouragement to me.

Epaphras, who is one of your number, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, sends you his greetings, always laboring earnestly for you in his prayers, that you may stand perfect and fully assured in all the will of God. Luke, the beloved physician, sends you his greetings, and also Demas.

Greet the brethren who are in Laodicea and also Nympha and the church that is in her house.

When this letter is read among you, have it also read in the church of the Laodiceans; and you, for your part read my letter that is coming from Laodicea. Say to Archippus, "Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it." I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. Remember my imprisonment. Grace be with you.

Colossians 3:22-4:1

Because Paul is writing from imprisonment (4:18), this Onesimus could be the same one as in Philemon 10 (cf. perhaps 2 Tim 1:16), at a later period. An Onesimus became bishop of Ephesus by the early second century, although we cannot be certain if it is the same one Paul mentions here.

The IVP Bible Background Commentary

Luke, Paul's dear friend and doctor, stood firm not only in this earlier imprisonment but also in Paul's latter imprisonment, by which time Demas (here with Paul) had forsaken him (2 Tim. 4:10). Luke is the author of the Third Gospel and of Acts (cf. Acts 1:1). By tradition he was one of the 72 (Luke 10:1). Some also suggest he was the anonymous disciple on the Emmaus Road (Luke 24:13). Since the only men with Paul who were "of the circumcision" were Aristarchus, Mark, and Jesus (Justus), Luke may have been a Gentile.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary

Physicians were well educated but were often slaves or freedpersons, with relatively low social status. Although most physicians were men, women physicians besides midwives are known. It is possible that Luke studied medicine in Laodicea (where there is evidence of a prominent medical practice) or practiced for a healing cult in Hierapolis (before his conversion); the readers seem to have heard of him. Demas's ethnic background is uncertain; papyri attest that some Jews did bear the Greek name "Demas" (cf. 2 Tim 4:10), but in this context he seems to be a Gentile.

The IVP Bible Background Commentary

A Christ focused life impacts others.

Q1. How would Paul describe your role in the Gospel's spread?

Q2. What are your most challenging relationships? How can your words be "seasoned with salt"?