

# Hope of the World

## Part 1, Colossians 1:3-14

1. **Read and discuss:** *If the church was a person and as one of the powerful biblical images for the church is the bride (Revelations 19:7), then if the church was a person today, she would be deep in therapy. Think about it, for the last fifty years the bride of Christ has been the subject of systematic disrespect, vilification, and name calling in an increasingly secular culture. She has been derided by the beautiful and the powerful and ignored by her neighbours. She has been told that she is a stupid superstitious bigot by a sneering intelligentsia and in recent years she has had to endure the complete trashing of her reputation through the royal commission on sexual abuse. Worst of all many of her friends have stopped believing in her and have abandoned her. If a person was to go through that sort of experience, you can rest assure that they would end up in the foetal position on a therapists couch going through boxes of tissues like lollies.*  
*But the church isn't a person, it's a community, an incredibly resilient community still alive and kicking after two thousand years of coping everything history can throw at her. However you have to wonder what kind of impact this flow of increasingly negative and hostile opinion has had on the church?*
2. If you were to rate the churches confidence in itself, 1 being no confidence at all and 10 being super-confident, where would you rate the churches self-confidence? Why? What impact do you think that makes on Christian witness?
3. How can we improve our confidence in the mission of the church?
4. Read Colossians 1:3-14. What is Paul loving about this church?
5. What does Paul want this church to remain confident in?
6. Are you confident about the importance of Christ in the world?
7. What does Paul mean that Christ has “rescued us from the dominion of darkness”? (Colossians 1:13). What does a world look like in which there is no one to rescue us from the dominion of darkness?
8. *So what I want you to do is to remember whenever you hear a criticism or a snide comment about the church, say to yourself, the church is the hope of the world because Christ is the hope of the world and we are the bearers of Christ.*  
– Can/do you want to do this?