

Colossians Chapter 4

Colossians 4:1 "Masters, give unto [your] servants that which is just and equal; knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven."

The reason earthly masters should give their "servants that which is just and equal" is that the masters themselves "also have a Master in heaven." As they want Him to be just and fair with them, so they must be toward their servants (see note on Eph. 6:9).

Paul is reminding these masters that they have a Master up in heaven, who is watching the way they deal with their subordinates here. To have a really good servant, you must be a good, honest master. Give them a job to do, and when they have done a good job, let them know that you are pleased with them.

The way we measure to the people here on the earth is the same way God will measure to us in heaven. We should never take advantage of someone, just because they are working for us.

Masters and servants are brothers, if they are both believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. God is not a respecter of persons. We are all one in Christ. Whatever position you are filling here on the earth, do it to the best of your ability. Be kind to all people, and especially those you are over.

Colossians 4:2 "Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving;"

"Continue in prayer" means "persevere in prayer." To be courageously persistent" or "to hold fast and not let go" and refers here to persistent prayer (Acts 1:14; Rom., 12:12; Eph. 6:18; 1 Thess. 5:17; Luke 11:5-10; 18:1-8).

"Watch in the same" means that the Colossians are to be mentally alert and spiritually sensitive to the needs for which they pray. In the most general sense this means to stay awake while praying. But Paul has in mind the broader implication of staying alert for specific needs about which to pray, rather than being vague and unfocused (Matt. 26:41; Mark 14:38; Luke 21:36).

"With thanksgiving" signifies that gratitude is the attitude in which prayer is offered. The readers are to persevere in prayer with alert minds and grateful hearts.

We should give God thanks for everything. Remember, if you are a Christian, the devil cannot do anything to you that God does not permit. We should grow in every tribulation that we have. They come to make us strong in the Lord.

James 5:16 "Confess [your] faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."

Prayer is a conversation with God. Jesus taught the disciples the way to pray in what we call the "Lord's Prayer". He told them in this prayer to reverence the Father. Prayers are prayed to the

Father in the name of Jesus. Jesus opened the way for us to go to the Father, when the veil covering the holy of holies was torn from the top to the bottom at the crucifixion of Jesus.

We have power of attorney to use the name of Jesus. Pray believing that you will receive your answer. The following verses are some things that Jesus said about prayer.

John 14:12-14 "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater [works] than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father." "And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son." "If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do [it]."

Notice, all prayer should be given in the name of Jesus. The power is in His name.

Verses 3-4: The Colossians are asked to make two prayer requests for Paul and his associates:

- (1) That God would grant them opportunities both inside and outside prison to preach the gospel (verse 3); and
- (2) The evangelists would make the truth "manifest" as they "ought to speak," that is, to preach it with courage and clarity.

"Withal praying also for us" means praying for Paul "together with" the prayer commanded (in verse 2).

Colossians 4:3 "Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds:"

"A door": An opportunity (1 Cor. 16:8-9; 2 Cor. 2:12).

"The mystery of Christ" (see notes on 1:26-27; 2:2-3).

Paul is in chains when this is written. This does not stop him however. He has his door of utterance. Some of Caesar's household were saved. Paul also, preached in the home where he was under house arrest. Wherever you are, God will open a door for you to minister. The only thing you must do is say Lord, here am I, send me.

Be willing to minister wherever you are. Christianity is an individual thing. If there is just one person there, tell them about Jesus. Paul was in bonds, because he would not compromise the Word of God. Look how far his message went, and is still going, in these letters he wrote.

Colossians 4:4 "That I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak."

To manifest is to make real. Paul wanted to make Christianity real to the people he spoke to. The best way for any of us to minister, is for Christ in us to minister. Turn yourself, especially your tongue, over to God and let God minister through you.

Colossians 4:5 "Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time."

“Them that are without”: This refers to unbelievers (see notes on Eph., 5:15-16). Believers are called to so live that they establish the credibility of the Christian faith and that they make the most of every evangelistic opportunity.

Paul turns from his responsibilities for evangelism (verses 3-4), to the Colossians’ evangelistic duties (verses 5-6). They are to “walk in wisdom” or “live wisely” in their relations toward “them that are without.” That is, unbelievers.

“Redeeming the time” is to make the most of every opportunity. They are to seize each opportunity to display wise behavior toward the unsaved and to use it as a chance for witnessing.

Our life on this earth is such a short time, so we must make every minute count. Walking in wisdom is walking the path that God has chosen for you, doing the things that God would have you do. This is saying; minister to everyone the love of Jesus.

There are still people in the world who have not heard the name of Jesus. Tell them before it is too late. I talk to church people who have been Christians for years, and they are still sitting in the congregation soaking up all the good teaching. That is fine, but there is a lost world out there that they could be ministering to.

I hear Christians say, I am not qualified. Find someone who knows less than you do about God and share with him or her, what God has shown you. Be wise and do what you can at whatever level you are. Don't waste precious time.

Colossians 4:6 "Let your speech [be] always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man."

“With grace”: To speak what is spiritual, wholesome, fitting, kind, sensitive, purposeful, complimentary, gentle, truthful, loving, and thoughtful (see notes on Eph. 4:29-31).

“Seasoned with salt”: Just as salt not only flavors, but prevents corruption. The Christians’ speech should act not only as a blessing to others, but as a purifying influence within the decaying society of the world.

An example of wise conduct (verse 5), is daily “speech” that is gracious (“with grace”), in nature. Such speech is to be “seasoned with salt,” that is, characterized by the wisdom of (verse 5). Gracious, wise conversation will enable the Colossians to know how “to answer every man” when speaking to him about the gospel.

When teaching others of the Lord Jesus, we must do it in love and gentleness. Salt is a preservative. The salt in the teaching must be something that will help them keep their salvation, after they have received it. The evangelist, who comes through town, many times gets people saved, but the pastor of the church applies the preservative.

The sermons the pastor gives are to help the people live their salvation. They must grow in Jesus. This salt is truth that helps us grow in grace. Paul is saying; tell them to seek the power of God in their own lives.

I believe there should be a time for the new convert in church to ask questions, so the things puzzling them can be answered. Of course, the best answers given are when the Holy Spirit answers them through you.

Colossians 4:7 "All my state shall Tychicus declare unto you, [who is] a beloved brother, and a faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord:"

"Tychicus ... a beloved brother ... a faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord": In describing Tychicus (believed to be the Colossians' pastor), in such glowing terms, Paul puts his apostolic stamp of approval on him, so the church will accept his ministry as he deals with the current heresy.

The name means "fortuitous" or "fortunate." He was one of the Gentile converts Paul took to Jerusalem as a representative of the Gentile Churches (Acts. 20:4).

He was a reliable companion of Paul and a capable leader, since he was considered as a replacement for Titus and Timothy on separate occasions (2 Tim. 4:12; Titus 3:12). He had the responsibility to deliver Paul's letters to the Colossians, the Ephesians (Eph. 6:21), and Philemon (verse 9).

We see that Paul is sending Tychicus to them. Paul gives him a recommendation, when he calls him, beloved brother.

"Fellow servant": We also see in this, that he was a capable minister. Perhaps, Paul had trained Tychicus as he traveled with him.

Colossians 4:8 "Whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that he might know your estate, and comfort your hearts;"

Paul was very interested in what became of these Christians, and it appears that Tychicus was to bring a report back to Paul on their growth in the Lord. They had desired Paul to come, but since he was in chains, he sent Tychicus in his place. This showed the loving care of Paul for these people.

Colossians 4:9 "With Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother, who is [one] of you. They shall make known unto you all things which [are done] here."

"Onesimus": The runaway slave whose return to his master was the basis for Paul's letter to Philemon.

"With Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you": This prepares the Colossians for the return of Onesimus, the runaway slave who stole from his master Philemon, a

prominent member in the Colossian church. Paul hopes this remark, along with the letter to Philemon, will gain for Onesimus, a new Christian, forgiveness and acceptance on the part of the church.

Onesimus was apparently a native of Colossae and the slave of Philemon. He fled from and probably robbed Philemon (Philemon 18). During his travels, he reaches Rome, hears the gospel, and is saved.

Paul then writes to Philemon exhorting him to restore Onesimus, not only as a slave, but as a brother in Christ. Paul uses this opportunity to teach both the position (Philemon), and the responsibility (chapter 3), of Christian slaves.

Jesus had taught them to send them out by twos. I believe that it was important for two to go out, so they could have the power of the prayer of agreement. I still believe that it would be much better, if two ministers could work together in a church.

Possibly, one of the reasons it was him going instead of someone else, is the fact that he knew the country.

Colossians 4:10 "Aristarchus my fellow prisoner saluteth you, and Marcus, sister's son to Barnabas, (touching whom ye received commandments: if he come unto you, receive him;)"

“Aristarchus”: The Greek name of a Jewish (verse 11), native of Thessalonica (Acts 20:4; 27:2). He was one of Paul’s companions who was seized by a rioting mob in Ephesus (Acts 19:29), and also accompanied Paul on his trip to Jerusalem and his voyage to Rome (Acts 27:2).

Aristarchus was a Thessalonian. It seems that he had gone to Rome with Paul. Whether he was in chains, or not, we cannot tell. Perhaps, he was just staying in the place where Paul was under house arrest. At any rate, he was with Paul.

“Marcus” will probably visit the Colossian assembly in the near future. The Colossians may be hesitant to welcome him, since he once abandoned Paul on the mission field (Acts 15:36-39). To ensure that this does not happen, Paul describes Mark as the cousin of Barnabas, a highly-esteemed Christian, and gives the Colossians instructions to receive him.

This Marcus is the same one that had caused a division between Paul and Barnabus earlier. This is the same as John Mark who went with Paul on the first missionary journey. Sometime during the journey, he left Paul. It seems that this was several years after that happening (it could have been about ten years).

Mark, after having fallen out of favor with Paul for some time, he is seen here as one of Paul’s key helpers (2 Tim. 4:11).

The mother of John Mark was thought of very highly in the church in Jerusalem. It is good to know that Paul forgave him, and even recommends him here. Paul tells them to receive John Mark, if he comes, as a brother.

Colossians 4:11 "And Jesus, which is called Justus, who are of the circumcision. These only [are my] fellow workers unto the kingdom of God, which have been a comfort unto me."

“Jesus which is called Justus”: Possibly one of the Roman Jews who believed Paul’s message (Acts 28:24).

“Who are of the circumcision” identifies Aristarchus, Marcus (verse 10), and Justus as Jewish Christians. Of all Jews converted to Christ, only these three are known to have been Paul’s fellow workers in the ministry.

The name Jesus was sometimes Joshua. It seems in this case, it is Justus, however. This name means just, or righteous. Notice this has to do with the Jews (of the circumcision). Paul is saying that these are brothers that are still with him here in Rome.

Colossians 4:12 "Epaphras, who is [one] of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always laboring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God."

“Epaphras”: The church at Colossae began during Paul’s 3 year ministry at Ephesus (Acts 19). Its founder was not Paul, who had never been there (2:1); but Epaphras (1:5-7), who apparently was saved during a visit to Ephesus, then likely started the church in Colossae when he returned home.

“That ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God” means that “you may appear perfect and fully assured in all His will” (Luke 1:23, 29). This refers to the Colossians being ushered into God’s heavenly presence in a morally perfect state. When this someday occurs, their experience of progressive maturity and assurance will have preceded it.

“Perfect and complete”: His goal for the Colossian believers was the same as Paul’s (1:28 – 2:2).

It appears that Epaphras was a native of Colossae. It also appears that he was devoted to the work of Christ (servant of Christ). We see that he is sending greetings to his people in Paul's letter. There is no more important job in a church than the job of prayer intercessor. Any church is just as strong as the prayers that are prayed for it.

This is unusual in that the desire of the prayer is made known here. Paul says, the desire of the prayers was that they would be in the perfect will of God.

Colossians 4:13 "For I bear him record, that he hath a great zeal for you, and them [that are] in Laodicea, and them in Hierapolis."

Tychicus labored not only in the Colossian assembly, but also in the churches at Laodicea and Hierapolis. These cities were six miles apart and 12 miles from Colossae.

Laodicea was the seventh of the Asian cities addressed (in Revelation 2 and 3). It lay at the junction of east-west and north-south highways and in a fertile valley. It was located some distance from the other cities of Revelation, but was close to Colossae, being 11 miles northwest of that town (see note on 2:1).

Whereas Colossae was declining during the New Testament era, Laodicea was prospering and was noted for its black wool, medicinal powder, and banking. Laodicea did not possess its own water supply. Rather, water had to be piped through huge cubical blocks of stone from distant hot springs, and it arrived lukewarm.

In A.D. 60 the city, along with the neighboring towns of Colossae and Hierapolis, was greatly damaged by an earthquake. Of the seven churches of Revelation, Paul mentions only Ephesus and Laodicea. The church at Laodicea (like Colossae), was no doubt established by Paul's coworkers while he was in Ephesus (Acts 19:10; Col. 2:1).

Paul also mentions a letter "from Laodicea" (verse 16), which the Colossian church was to read. This phrase omits of several interpretations, among them:

- (1) A letter to Paul from them;
- (2) A letter written by Paul from Laodicea;
- (3) The letter to Philemon who may have lived in Laodicea; and
- (4) The epistle known as Ephesians.

The church in Laodicea is mentioned in Revelation as one of the 7 churches. It seems they had fallen to a lukewarm condition at that time. It seems that Epaphras' prayers were needed for this church. Perhaps, Epaphras was the one who started these churches, or perhaps he was an overseer. The Scripture does not say. We do know that he had great concern for them.

"Hierapolis": A city in Phrygia 20 miles west of Colossae and 6 miles north of Laodicea.

Colossians 4:14 "Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas, greet you."

Of all the individuals mentioned (in verse 7-14), only "Demas" is given no commendation by Paul. Perhaps Paul already senses some glaring flaw in his character. This verse may well foreshadow (2 Tim. 4:1), where "Luke, the beloved physician," has remained loyal to Paul, but Demas has forsaken him.

Demas was a man who demonstrated substantial commitment to the Lord's work before the attraction of the world led him to abandon Paul and the ministry (2 Tim. 4:9-10; Philemon 24).

"Luke", mentioned by name only three times in the New Testament (verse 14; 2 Tim. 4:11; Philemon 24), was nevertheless an important individual in early church history. Though not

identified by name in his writings, he was the author of the third gospel and Acts for the following reasons:

- (1) The author places himself with Paul on three occasions in Acts, which are indicated by the author's use of "we" instead of "they" and other third-person references to the group. Of Paul's companions, only Titus and Luke could have been with him on these occasions.
- (2) The author demonstrates a knowledge of medicine. Luke was a physician (verse 14).
- (3) Early traditions unanimously concur that Luke was the author of both acts and the third gospel.

Though he was a Gentile, he authored more of the New Testament than even Paul, writing over 28 percent of it. Many, including the early church historian Eusebius, identify Antioch of Syria as Luke's home, which might explain why the Book of Acts gives much space to events in that city.

Luke enters the narrative of Acts when he joins Paul at Troas during the second journey (Acts 16:10). He remains with Paul only briefly, because when Paul leaves Philippi, Luke seemingly stays behind (Acts 16:40). At the end of Paul's third journey, five years later, Luke rejoins Paul as he passes through Philippi (Acts 20:5-6).

Luke later continues with Paul on his way to Rome and during the two-year imprisonment (Acts 27, 28; Philemon 23, 24). Several years later, after Paul's re-imprisonment in Rome, Luke supports him to the end (2 Tim. 4:11). Tradition says that Luke subsequently served the Lord in Greece until his death at the age of 84.

2 Timothy 4:11 "Only Luke is with me. Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry."

Luke and Paul were good friends. This Demas is possibly, the one from (2 Timothy), that had forsaken Paul. At any rate, Paul did not give him a recommendation.

Colossians 4:15 "Salute the brethren which are in Laodicea, and Nymphas, and the church which is in his house."

While Paul greets all Laodicean Christians, he especially singles out "Nymphas, and the church which is in his house." If the church of Laodicea was too large for any one house, this likely refers to that part of it meeting in the house of Nymphas. (Church buildings set apart solely for church activities were not used until much later).

It appears that Nymphas was a man, or woman, who had turned their house into a church. Most Bible scholars believe this Nymphas to be a woman, and not a man. It really does not matter. The important thing is whoever it was, he or she was devoted to God. This person (male or female), was a leading member of the Laodicean church.

Colossians 4:16 "And when this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and that ye likewise read the [epistle] from Laodicea."

“When this epistle is read among you”: This letter was to be publicly read in the churches in Colossae and in Laodicea.

“Epistle from Laodicea”: A separate letter from Paul, usually identified as the epistle to the Ephesians. The oldest manuscripts of Ephesians do not contain the words “in Ephesus,” indicating that likely it was a circular letter intended for several churches in the region. Tychicus may have delivered Ephesians to the church at Laodicea first.

This letter is more of a general nature, and it appears that it should be read in all the churches in this area.

Colossians 4:17 "And say to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it."

“Archippus”: Most likely the son of Philemon (Philemon 2). Paul’s message to him to fulfill his ministry is similar to the exhortation to Timothy (2 Tim. 4:5).

“Take heed to the ministry” can be interpreted in one of two ways:

- (1) It is a rebuke to Archippus for failing to finish his Christian service; or
- (2) It may be Paul’s way of informing the Colossian church of his approval on Archippus’ ministry, and the church was to let him finish it.

It appears from this, that Archippus had an important job in the church at Laodicea. Whether he was pastor, we cannot say. It does appear that he has been discouraged, and Paul is telling him to stay in there and do the work that God has called him to do. Paul also says in this, that he was chosen of God for this job, he had not appointed himself.

Colossians 4:18 "The salutation by the hand of me Paul. Remember my bonds. Grace [be] with you. Amen."

“By the hand of me”: Paul usually dictated his letters to an amanuensis (recording secretary), but would often add his own greeting in his own writing at the end of his letters (1 Cor. 16:21; Gal. 6:11; 2 Thess. 3:17; Philemon 19).

“Remember my bonds” (see note on Phil. 1:16; Heb. 13:3).

This letter, and the greeting at the end here, were from Paul himself. Paul asks them to pray for him, remembering that he is still in bonds. Paul always speaks grace to the one he is writing to. "Amen" means so be it.

Colossians Chapter 4 Questions

1. Masters, give unto your servants that which is _____ and _____.
2. We must remember we have a _____ in heaven.
3. How can you have a really good servant?
4. What makes the master and servant brothers?
5. Continue in _____.
6. Why do Christians have tribulation?
7. What did Jesus have to say, in John, about prayer?
8. All prayer should be in the name of _____.
9. Paul wanted them to pray that a door of _____ would be open for him.
10. What mystery did Paul want to speak?
11. Where is Paul, when this is written?
12. Who was saved while Paul was ministering in Rome?
13. Why was Paul in prison?
14. What does manifest mean?
15. Why must we make every minute count?
16. Let your speech be always with _____.
17. Season it with _____.
18. Salt, in the Scripture, is a _____.
19. Who is Paul sending this message by?
20. What does fellow servant show us about Paul and Tychicus?
21. Onesimus was from where?
22. Who did Paul call fellow prisoner?
23. Marcus here, is the same as whom?
24. What nationality was Aristarchus?
25. Who was Mark's mother?

26. How were they to receive Mark?
27. What does the name Justus mean?
28. Who prayed for them often?
29. What is one of the most important jobs in the church?
30. Where is the church at Laodicea mentioned?
31. Who was the physician mentioned?
32. Why did Paul not give a recommendation to Demas?
33. What was Nymphas?
34. What other church was this to be read at?
35. What warning did he send to Archippus?
36. How does Paul end every letter?