

Colossians Chapter Four

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Col 4:1 Masters, grant to your slaves justice and fairness, knowing that you too have a Master in heaven.

This is a continuation of the previous section dealing with family. It also applies to those of us who have people working for us in some capacity as we should treat all people in our family and business as we want our Master to treat us. Saying that God is our Master also reminds us that we are bondservants of His and in service to Him wherever we are and whatever we are doing.

**Col 4:2 Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving;
Col 4:3 praying at the same time for us as well, that God may 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;**

Col 4:4 in order that I may make it clear in the way I ought to speak.

Paul now turns to what applies to the entire church. If we keep alert in prayer we will not become mechanical in our requests but we will be constantly remembering to speak to the Father in all matters before us. Jesus told us to keep watching and praying so that we avoid temptation: *Matt 26:41 "Keep watching and praying, that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."*

Certainly we should all remain thankful for all that God has done for us beginning with our justification. Paul also asks that the church members pray for him and the ones with him so that they might properly evangelize to others. He even states that one reason for his imprisonment is for the opportunities to tell of the mystery of Christ to others being held in prison and to the guards. He asks that the prayers include requests that his statements of the mystery of Christ be made clear to those brought before him. We should all ask for similar prayers as we are in situations every day with opportunities to speak of Christ to those whom God brings our way.

Col 4:5 Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity.

Col 4:6 Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned, as it were, with salt, so that you may know how you should respond to each person.

He first asks that all the Christians act in such a way as not to bring slander upon the Christian life and next that they always speak with appropriateness to others. Every day each of us are brought before people of various backgrounds and education. If we are known as Christians then we should act appropriately. If one has a Christian symbol on his car then he should not be driving against the law or in a way to exasperate other drivers. "Making the most" is a market term meaning to "purchase completely" so we should all make the most of every opportunity presented us to also witness properly to those with whom God brings us into contact. "Opportunity" translates "kairos", which means a point in time rather than some time duration. So, as the opportunity presents itself, we should make the most of it to not slander the Christian

community and to properly present ourselves as a representative of Jesus Christ. Grace in the NT usually means divine favor so it may mean that we should properly represent the divine favor of Jesus Christ in our speech as we witness to someone. He says “as it were” in reference to our speech being seasoned with salt so he certainly is using a metaphor meaning purity and wholesomeness. Salt also made food more palatable so our speech also should be carefully considered to appeal to that particular person. Knowing how to respond to each person also means that we consider the background of the person as well as carefully discerning the meaning of any questions the person asks rather than impulsively blurting out some answer.

Col 4:7 As to all my affairs, Tychicus, our beloved brother and faithful servant and fellow bond-servant in the Lord, will bring you information.

Col 4:8 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;

Col 4:9 and with him Onesimus, our faithful and beloved brother, who is one of your number. They will inform you about the whole situation here.

The body of the letter is now complete and Paul has masterfully refuted the worldly philosophy with its errors presented by the false teachers in the church (1:15-2:23). He has presented the nature of the Christian life and how it is distinguished from the worldly life (3:1-17). He has then shown how Christian principles are used in the Christian households (3:18-4:2) and he has then exhorted the church members to specifically pray (4:2-4).

Tychicus was probably the bearer of this letter to the church as well as the letter from Paul to the church at Ephesus. He also probably accompanied Paul on the trip to Jerusalem with the offering for that church (Acts 20:4; 24:17; Rom 15:25; 1 Cor 16:1; 2 Cor 8:9). He validates the credentials of Tychicus by saying that he is a beloved brother, faithful servant, and fellow bond-servant of Jesus Christ. What a marvelous description of this devoted servant of our Lord. Paul also wanted him to tell them details about their circumstances and that he might encourage the church member concerning the ministry of Jesus Christ. The ministry was flourishing in spite of the imprisonment of some of its major missionaries. From God’s perspective, the imprisonment is part of His plan so that Paul could write more to some churches and witness to guards and others involved in the prison environment. Onesimus was the runaway slave who had met Paul and Paul introduced him to the gospel:

Philemon 1:10-11 I appeal to you for my child, whom I have begotten in my imprisonment, Onesimus, ¹¹who formerly was useless to you, but now is useful both to you and to me.

In his letter to the church at Philemon, Paul urges them to accept Onesimus back into the community but not as a slave but as a freedman who is a bond-servant of Jesus Christ. In verse 9 Paul says that Onesimus is “one of their number”, which would be introducing him as both a former resident and now as a fellow Christian with those at Colossae.

Col 4:10 Aristarchus, my fellow prisoner, sends you his greetings; and also Barnabas' cousin Mark (about whom you received instructions: if he comes to you, welcome him);

Col 4:11 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.

In verses 10-15 Paul mentions six persons who are also sending greetings to them. Aristarchus, Mark, and Jesus Justus were Jewish Christians. Aristarchus was from Thessalonica and was arrested in Ephesus (Acts 19:29) and went with Paul to Jerusalem (Acts 20:4). Calling him his fellow prisoner could mean physically or spiritually or both. We know a lot about Mark who wrote the Gospel but we know nothing more about Justus. We know that Paul felt a strong kinship with fellow Jews and he regretted his alienation from them:

Rom 9:3-6 For I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh ⁴who are Israelites, to whom belongs the adoption as sons and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the temple service and the promises, ⁵whose are the fathers, and from whom is the Christ according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen. ⁶But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel;

These fellow Jews have been an encouragement to him probably in how they can easily trace the development of the coming of Jesus easily from their common history.

Col 4:12 Epaphras, who is one of your number, a bonds slave 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.

Col 4:13 For I bear him witness that he has a deep concern for you and for those who are in Laodicea and Hierapolis.

Epaphras was mentioned in 1:7 as the founder of the church and here Paul affirms his being a child of God and his constant prayers for them as he wants them to remain perfect and completely assured that all is occurring in the will of God (Rom 8:28). He was probably concerned about their possible slipping in their devotion to pureness by the false teaching there. The Greek word "hieros" means holy or sacred so Hierapolis was well known for the importance of religion to its inhabitants. The two cities were close to Colossae. Laodicea was a very wealthy city known for its great medical school and names of its physicians appear on some coins of the area. Laodicea received the sternest warnings of all the churches of Asia in the book of Revelation. This reminds me of a comment made by Jesus to His disciples:

Matt 19:23-24 And Jesus said to His disciples, "Truly I say to you, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven." ²⁴And again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."

Riches can be deceiving and a city so known for its wealth and education could become doubly proud and less likely to remain pure in its devotion to God than a city known for the importance of religion. We should rather be like Hierapolis than Laodicea.

Col 4:14 Luke, the beloved physician, sends you his greetings, and also Demas.

We know a great deal about Luke and Demas is mentioned in Phil 24:
2Tim 4:10 for Demas, having loved this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica; Crescens has gone to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia.

Although Demas was serving with Paul when this letter was written, he later deserted Paul because he loved the world more than the Lord. We may never know here the true heart of a person for a person can fool us as Demas seems to have deceived Paul. However we are reminded of the words of Jesus regarding such temptations possible effects on a person who is not one of the elect. Jesus gave the parable of the sower where three of the four types were not elect and fell away:

Matt 13:22 And the one on whom seed was sown among the thorns, this is the man who hears the word, and the worry of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.

Col 4:15 Greet the brethren who are in Laodicea and also Nympha and the church that is in her house.

Paul asks them to greet fellow Christians in Laodicea and he asks them to greet Nympha in whose house a church was located. It is not clear if the name is masculine or feminine because the Greek name can be either depending upon the accent that is not given in the manuscripts. However it seems that feminine is correct. The word “church” means an assembly of believers and never a building in NT times. The people congregated in homes of believers to worship, praise, and learn more of the Lord. It is not known if the church at the home of Nympha was in Laodicea or in Hierapolis or somewhere near both, which would not have been far from Colossae.

Col 4:16 And 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.

Col 4:17 And say to Archippus, "Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it."

He asks them to also have the letter read at the church in Laodicea and to read a letter that he had written to Laodicea. Evidently this other letter was lost as was one written to the church at Corinth (1Cor 5:9). God has preserved for us all that we need to properly live and serve Jesus Christ so we should not be anxiously searching for “lost letters”. We are not sure of the identity of Archippus although some think he was Philemon’s son. He evidently had some ministerial responsibility in the church at Colossae. We also are not sure why he asks the church members to encourage Archippus to complete his ministry but such was probably just an encouragement.

Col 4:18 I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. Remember my imprisonment. Grace be with you.

Paul used a stenographer but sometimes he would personally sign it such as also in 2 Thess 3:17. He asks them to remember him in his imprisonment and ends it, as he began it, with a wonderful prayer for them all.