

A Study of Colossians 4

I. **Outline.** Taken from G.G. Findlay in *Pulpit Commentary*, p. 147 and Coffman.

1. Instructions to Masters (Colossians 4:1).
2. Prayer and Christian conduct (4:2-6).
3. Paul tells of matters pertaining to him and his imprisonment (4:7-9).
4. Greetings from and to (4:10-17).
5. Paul's autograph, salutation, and benediction (4:18).

II. **Summary.**

The same practical advice from an inspired apostle spills over into the fourth chapter. He also gives clear indication that he is in prison as he writes these words and speaks of some who have helped him in his preaching there.

III. **Chronology.**

BIBLE PERIOD: The Period of the Church.

If you are not familiar with the 15 Bible Periods, please click here:

<https://maplehillchurchofchrist.files.wordpress.com/2018/05/15bibleperiods.pdf>

IV. **Words/Phrases to Study**

Colossians 4:1... **MASTERS, GIVE UNTO YOUR SERVANTS THAT WHICH IS JUST AND EQUAL**—"A brief but solemn warning is addressed to *masters*. They are not commanded to free their slaves, but to treat them justly and fairly. The motivation for this is basically the same as the slave's motive for obeying his master: both alike have a greater *Master in heaven*. Both owe obedience to that heavenly Lord. So their relationships with each other are to be understood in the light of this" [Carson, D. A., France, R. T., Motyer, J. A., & Wenham, G. J. (Eds.). (1994). *New Bible commentary: 21st century edition* (4th ed., p. 1275). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press].

||||| "Paul has been criticized by some for not openly condemning slavery. However, the instructions he gave to slave and master must have hastened that terrible system's end. If a servant wanted to please the Lord, he would obey his master and do his work so as to be acceptable in God's sight. Pleasing God can only be accomplished by doing things right through and through and not merely on the surface. Such service would quickly attract the master's attention and might cause him to ask what was different about the slave. Because Christians wear the name of Christ, they should give their very best in service. Everything believers do should first be done to please the Lord. Men might fail to give a proper reward for things one does but God will always reward appropriately. In Paul's day, slaves could not receive an inheritance. In Christ, one is not a slave but a son and is thus eligible for an inheritance in heaven (Galatians 4:7). God's children serve Christ Jesus and He will not have them go unrewarded. Whether slave or master, the one who violates Christ's law will be rewarded with punishment. God is impartial and will reward each according to his deeds (Galatians 6:7-8). Masters of slaves needed to remember that they had a Master in heaven. That Master will judge them in the same manner they have judged their slaves (Colossians 3:22-25; Col 4:1; Matthew 7:1-2; Ephesians 6:8-9)" [Gary C. Hampton, *The Sufficiency of Christ*, an e-Sword Module].

Colossians 4:3... A DOOR OF UTTERANCE—“A door of utterance’ is *thuran tou logou* (θυραν του λογου), ‘a door of the Word.’ Lightfoot interprets, ‘a door of admission for the Word, i.e., an opportunity of preaching the gospel.’ ‘To speak’ is *laleō* (λαλεω). It is an infinitive of the consequence, ‘so as to speak’ (Lightfoot)” [Wuest, K. S. (1997). *Wuest’s Word Studies from the Greek New Testament: for the English Reader* (Col 4:2). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans].

Colossians 4:4... THAT I MAY MAKE IT MANIFEST, AS I OUGHT TO SPEAK—“Paul asks their prayers for himself. We must note carefully exactly what it is for which Paul asks. He asks their prayer not so much for himself as for his work. There were many things for which Paul might have asked them to pray--release from prison, a successful outcome to his coming trial, a little rest and peace at the last. But he asks them to pray only that there may be given to him strength and opportunity to do the work which God had sent him into the world to do. When we pray for ourselves and for others, we should not ask release from any task, but rather strength to complete the task which has been given us to do. Prayer should always be for power and seldom for release; for not release but conquest must be the keynote of the Christian life” [William Barclay, *Daily Study Bible*].

Colossians 4:5... REDEEMING THE TIME—“...is somewhat of an idiomatic expression, meaning ‘buying up the opportunities,’ ‘taking advantage of all occasions for doing good,’ etc. Here again, in this passage, is encountered the startling likeness and subtle differences in this passage and the parallel in Eph. 5:15” [Coffman]. ||||| “*Make the most* (literally ‘buy up’) suggests an intensive activity, a buying which exhausts the possibilities available because they recognize that their time is limited” [New Bible Commentary, p. 1275]. ||||| “‘Redeeming’ is *exagorazō* (ἐξαγοραζω), ‘to buy up the opportunity for one’s self,’ that is, to make a wise and sacred use of every opportunity for doing good, so that zeal and well-doing are, as it were, the purchase-money by which we make the time our own’ (Thayer)” [Wuest].

Colossians 4:6... SEASONED WITH SALT—“Salt, among the Greeks, was the emblem of wit. Here the meaning seems to be, that our conversation should be seasoned with piety or grace in a way similar to that in which we employ salt in our food. It makes it wholesome and palatable. So with our conversation. If it be not imbued with the spirit of piety, it is flat, insipid, unprofitable, injurious. The spirit of piety will make it what it should be - useful, agreeable, beneficial to mankind. This does not mean that our conversation is to be always, strictly speaking, religious - wherever we may be - any more than our food should be mere salt; but it means that, whatever be the topic, the spirit of piety should be diffused through it - as the salt in our food should properly season it all - whatever the article of food may be” [Barnes’ Notes]. ||||| “*Seasoned with salt* meant ‘witty’ in pagan usage but here suggests language that is not dull or flat but is interesting and well chosen (the rabbis sometimes used ‘salt’ to mean ‘wisdom’). Christians need to respond with the right word to those who ask questions, perhaps in connection with their beliefs and behavior. The response should be appropriate (1 Peter 3.15): ‘every one is to be treated as an end in himself and not subjected to a stock harangue’ (G.B. Caird)” [New Bible Commentary, p. 1275]. ||||| “As to the expression, ‘seasoned with salt,’ Lightfoot says: ‘Salt has a twofold purpose; (1) It gives flavor to the discourse and recommends it to the palate. This is the primary idea of the metaphor here, as the word ‘seasoned’ seems to show; (2) It preserves from corruption and renders wholesome. It may be inferred that this secondary application of the metaphor was present to the apostle’s mind here, because of the parallel epistle (Eph. 4:29)” [Wuest]. ||||| “The first truth some people see is that which shines in the

lives of Christians (Matthew 5:14-16; 2 Corinthians 3:2-3). So, in addition to the earlier reference Paul made to the change that should take place for those risen with Christ, the Lord's followers need to carefully consider their example and its influence upon unbelievers. Every opportunity to influence them for good should be seized immediately. This means disciples of Christ must pay particular attention to their speech to make sure it is acceptable. The things one says often leave the longest lasting first impression. Coffman tells us the classical Greek writers used the word salt to describe wit used to flavor conversation. It would certainly be far better to use appropriate humor in the place of suggestive stories" [Gary C. Hampton].

Colossians 4.7-8... TYCHICUS—"Tychicus was one of those who accompanied the gift bound for the needy saints in Jerusalem (Acts 20:4). Paul apparently sent this letter by him to Colossae. He also sent him to Ephesus (2 Timothy 4:12) and proposed sending him to Titus (Titus 3:12). The apostle may have sent him to Ephesus twice as it appears he carried the Ephesian letter (Ephesians 6:21-22). Paul often used the word beloved as an endearing term for his brethren (Romans 1:7; Rom 12:19; Rom 16:8-9; Rom 16:12; 1 Corinthians 4:14; 1 Cor 4:17; 1 Cor 10:14; 1 Cor 15:58; 2 Corinthians 7:1; 2 Cor 12:19). He urged the Colossians to consider Tychicus as they would him. They had surely heard of Paul's imprisonment and would want to know of his condition. Paul told them he had sent Tychicus to learn of their spiritual welfare and to encourage them in their fight with the false teachers. The apostle always tried to help young churches in their growth by such visits (Colossians 4:7-8; Acts 15:36)" [Gary C. Hampton].

Colossians 4.9... ONESIMUS—"Onesimus, the faithful and beloved brother who is one of you.' We know more about Onesimus from Paul's letter to Philemon. He was an escaped slave who had made his way to Rome and there been converted by the preaching of Paul, and had become a faithful and beloved brother. But Paul had learned from him his history, and knew that he belonged to a fellow Christian and brother, Philemon. Thus he was determined to return him to his master to right the wrong that had been done. He would return home with Tychicus and the letter to Philemon hoping to be forgiven and accepted there as Paul requests. 'One of you' suggests that he was a Colossian. He and Tychicus could have an important impact on the Colossian church as having been companions of Paul and fully aware of his teachings" [Peter Pett, *Commentary Series on the Bible*, an e-Sword Module].

Colossians 4.10... ARISTARCHUS—"Aristarchus was from Macedonia and had traveled with Paul as he went to take the collection to Jerusalem for the needy saints (Acts 19:29; Acts 20:4; Acts 27:2). He was also with the apostle as he journeyed toward his Roman imprisonment. It is impossible to know if he voluntarily joined Paul in that imprisonment or was also bound involuntarily. Certainly, Paul counted him as a friend. Paul's directions for a hospitable reception for John Mark appear to show that he has now realized his value in service (Acts 15:36-41; 2 Timothy 4:11; 1 Peter 5:13)" [Gary C. Hampton].

Colossians 4.11... JESUS, WHICH IS CALLED JUSTUS—"Jesus who is called Justus.' Only mentioned here (and not to Philemon). Probably mentioned here because of his personal devotion to Paul and because with Aristarchus and Mark he is the only Jewish Christian in Rome to give him firm support at this stage" [Peter Pett].

Colossians 4.12-13... EPAPHRAS—"The name 'Epaphras' is the shortened form of Epaphroditus. He was not the man of that same name who was associated with Paul in the Philippian letter. Lightfoot suggests that he was the one who brought the gospel to Colossae. He was a native of that city as is seen by the phrase, 'who is of you'" [Wuest]. **LABORING FERVENTY**—"Laboring

fervently' is *agōnizomai* (ἀγωνίζομαι), 'to contend in the gymnastic games, to contend with adversaries,' figuratively, 'to contend, struggle with difficulties and dangers antagonistic to the gospel.' Lightfoot translates, 'wrestling,' Vincent, 'striving'" [Wuest].

Colossians 4.14... LUKE, THE BELOVED PHYSICIAN—"The Greek text has, 'Luke, the physician, the beloved one.' The word 'physician' is *iatros* (ἰατρος), the verbal form of which is *iaomai* (ἰαομαι), 'to heal, cure.' This is Luke, the evangelist, and the writer of the Gospel that bears his name. He was a Greek, a Gentile, as is shown by his Greek name, and the fact that Paul does not include him with those of the circumcision of verse 11. He shows a knowledge of medical terms in the Gospel he wrote. The practice of medicine was highly developed among the Greeks, Greek doctors being in attendance at the royal courts in the Roman Empire. Luke was the personal physician of Paul. The words, 'the beloved one,' breathe with Paul's gratitude for his services" [Wuest].

Colossians 4.16... THE EPISTLE FROM LAODICEA—"No doubt, the Colossians knew exactly what the epistle from Laodicea was. Now, no one knows. Tolbert spoke honestly when he offered: 'Probably it has been lost, and we do not have it at all.' Vincent succinctly declared: 'The letter cannot be positively identified.' After all has been said and done, Zerr may have said it best—'There is some uncertainty as to what epistle is meant that was to come from Laodicea, but whatever it was, the brethren at Colosse were instructed to read it'" [Tommy J. Hicks, "To What Does the 'Epistle from Laodicea' Refer," in *Studies in Philippians and Colossians*, Editor: Dub McClish, 2000, p. 285].

Colossians 4:17... TAKE HEED TO THE MINISTRY...--"Observe, (1.) The ministry we have received is a great honour; for it is received in the Lord, and is by his appointment and command. (2.) Those who have received it must fulfil it, or do the full duty of it. Those betray their trust, and will have a sad account at last, who do this work of the Lord negligently" [Matthew Henry].

V. Lessons & Applications.

01. Enroll in Paul's School of Prayer (Col 4:1-3).
02. There is a DEFINITE separation and distinction between the church and the world (Col 4:5).
03. The Christian and his TIME (Col 4:5). We should treasure it properly and buy it up as it comes to us—each minute of it!
04. The Christian and his SPEECH (Col 4:6).
 - 1) Grace.
 - 2) Salt.
 - 3) Know HOW to answer every man. It is very important to know not only WHAT to answer, but also HOW to answer.
 - 4) There must be BALANCE.
 - 5) Cf., 2 Pt 3:15; Isa 50:4; Mt 10:18-19.
05. TYCHICUS, a New Testament Christian (Col 4:7).
 - 1) Brother—Loving—Beloved.
 - 2) Minister—Responsible—Faithful.
 - 3) Servant—Cooperative—FELLOWservant.
05. It IS scriptural to use doctors and medicine (Col 4:14). Cf., Mt 9:12.
06. READ YOUR BIBLE (Col 4:16).
07. Take heed to the ministry (Col 4:17).

Enlist—Edify—Evangelize! Take a self-inventory.

VI. Questions.

True or False

- 01. ____ Paul asked that the Colossian saints remember his bonds.
- 02. ____ Justus, who was mentioned in this reading, is the heathen god of “justice.”
- 03. ____ Onesimus is described as a faithful and beloved brother.
- 04. ____ Salt should have nothing to do with the speech of the Christian.
- 05. ____ Paul wanted God to open to him a door of utterance.

MATCHING

- 06. ____ You also have a master A. to speak the mystery of Christ
- 07. ____ Onesimus B. in heaven
- 08. ____ door of utterance C. how ye ought to answer every man
- 09. ____ I bear him record D. he has a great zeal for you
- 10. ____ that ye may know E. a faithful and beloved brother

Fill in the Blanks

- 11. Paul called Luke, the _____.
- 12. Our speech should be _____ with grace, seasoned with _____.
- 13. Paul asks that these Christians _____ my _____.
- 14. _____ in prayer, and _____ in the same with thanksgiving.
- 15. Walk in _____ toward them that are without, _____ the time.

Each Question is worth 7 Points

My Score is: _____

Answers will be found on next week’s handout

ANSWERS to Colossians 3 Questions... **01**—True (3); **02**—True (7); **03**—False (11); **04**—True (16); **05**—False (24); **06**—D (5); **07**—A or C (8); **08**—E (15); **09**—B (16); **10**—C or A (21); **11**—heartily, Lord (23); **12**—bitter (19); **13**—Lie, old (9); **14**—name, Lord, Jesus (17); **15**—well, pleasing (20).

ANSWERS to Colossians 4 Questions... **01**—True (18); **02**—False (11); **03**—True (9); **04**—False (6); **05**—True (3); **06**—B (1); **07**—E (9); **08**—A (3); **09**—D (13); **10**—C (6); **11**—beloved physician (13); **12**—always, salt (6); **13**—remember, bonds (18); **14**—continue, watch (2); **15**—wisdom, redeeming (5).

VII. Seek-A-Word Puzzle. The words may be backwards, diagonal, upside down, etc. See if you can find them all. The more you use the words of the Bible, the greater blessed you will be! You might be surprised at how much this little exercise will help you retain important truths. THANK YOU for the good effort you are putting forth in Bible study. –DRL

C H U R C H R I S T L O R D
 P E S A L U T E T H R E A D
 M A W I T H A L C A E B E D
 O V A U T T E R A N C E L J
 E E Y S A M E P W K E L A T
 W N M A S T E R R S I O O Q
 Q G A L S O W A F G V V D U
 D R K U E M B Y A I E E I K
 P A E T R D R I I V N D C N
 R C T E V C O N T I N U E O
 A E Q U A L T G H N B W A W
 Y O P E N N H E F G O A L D
 E P I S T L E Q U I N T W O
 R C O M F O R T L V D C A O
 S P E A K J U S T E S H Y R

ALSO	ALWAYS	BELOVED	BONDS	BROTHER
CHRIST	CHURCH	COMFORT	CONTINUE	DOOR
EPISTLE	EQUAL	FAITHFUL	GIVE	GRACE
HEAVEN	JUST	KNOW	LAODICEA	LORD
MAKE	MASTER	OPEN	PRAYER	PRAYING
READ	RECEIVE	SALUTE	SALUTETH	SAME
SERVANT	SPEAK	THANKSGIVING	UTTERANCE	WATCH
WITHAL				

IX. EXTRA CREDIT FOR “SUPER” Bible Students...

Will you please consider answering these three SIMPLE questions based on the Bible text of this chapter? I will try to make use of your answers. Bring them with you next week. Tear out this last sheet from the Study Guide and be prepared to put it in a basket. I think it will be a great help to all of those in the class if you will do so. Thank you in advance for your marvelous cooperation!

W O R D: What word would you like to know more about in this chapter?

W O N D E R: I wonder what this phrase, verse, or series of verses means...

W I S H: I wish myself—or others whom I know or even don’t know—would understand this fact, principle, or concept from this chapter...