

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

This chapter continues seamlessly in context with the previous chapter. This verse is very similar to a verse from Ephesians quoted in the last chapter.

Eph. 6:9 And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening: **knowing that your Master also is in heaven;** neither is there respect of persons with him.

I have to keep reminding myself that Paul is addressing these letters to Christians. My first thought is that what he is saying is a “no brainer.” Then all I have to do is remember my own personal failures, and I realize that we all have a continual struggle with the sin nature and need encouragement and reminders to do what is right. He is giving Christian “masters” instruction to treat their servants with justice (according to what is right morally and ethically) and equality (without respect to persons, neither inferior nor superior to each other). The prime motivation—You have a Master in heaven and are servants to Him. There is no doubt that He deals with His servants justly and without respect to persons. Your treatment of those under your authority falls under the disciplining authority of your Master—the Lord Jesus.

Col. 4:2 Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving;

“continue” = to be earnest towards, i.e. (to a thing) to persevere, be constantly diligent....

The first thing I notice is that the Colossians evidently have a reputation of being a praying people since Paul is encouraging them to “continue” in prayer. The Greek for *continue* made it clear that prayer is worth the effort and energy devoted to it; it also requires a heart commitment (to be earnest). The Greek for *watch* is a reference to awareness and *vigilance*, a desire to discover and avoid danger. In other words, it shouldn’t be a time of rote repetition. Your heart and mind should be involved, and your words should have purpose.

Our time of prayer should always include expressions of thanksgiving. This is an area in which I have grown through the years. When you talk about prayer, most people think about asking God for things. Prayer is a time of fellowship with the Lord. As a loving Father, He definitely wants to hear our burdens and requests, but He also wants to hear words of love, appreciation and thanksgiving for the many blessings He gives us and the amazing love and forgiveness which He so freely and unceasingly gives us.

Col. 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:

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

Paul does not hesitate to request prayer for himself and those ministering to and with him. Scripture is full of references to the Lord hearing and responding to the prayers of His people. There are many scriptures that encourage us to pray and let us know that our prayers delight the Lord.

Prov. 15:8 The sacrifice of the wicked *is* an abomination to the LORD: but the prayer of the upright *is* his delight.

Prov. 15:29 The LORD is far from the wicked: but he heareth the prayer of the righteous.

Matt. 21:22 And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.

James 5:16The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.

Paul's desire was to be able to continue sharing the gospel with the Gentiles, the very thing that had led to his imprisonment at the time of writing this letter. Paul had already defined this "mystery" in chapter 1 regarding the truth that salvation was meant for Gentiles as well as Jews. He is also asking for prayer to share the message clearly and in the right way. It's interesting to me that although he was very well spoken, Paul didn't depend on natural abilities in sharing the gospel message, he wanted supernatural provision and empowerment.

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

Paul is basically encouraging the Colossians to have a good testimony before the unbelieving world—those outside the family of faith. Your life needs to back up the message you are sharing to be most effective. Redeeming time is a reference to making the most of every opportunity (as stated in several other translations), and I would add learning to recognize those opportunities as well.

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

Christians are to be prepared to answer why we believe what we believe.

1Pet. 3:15 But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and *be* ready always to *give* an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:

I think the words from Peter complement the words of Paul. Our speech should always be gracious—but especially when sharing the gospel and the truth of God's word. Again, the word for *grace* references a divine influence upon the heart, which I relate to being yielded to the Holy Spirit. We aren't to try to beat people over the head with the truth or present it in an offensive manner.

The Greek for the word *salt* gave reference to *prudence*, which Webster defines as "wisdom in the way of caution, discretion and carefulness." I think this includes Peter's admonition to speak with meekness and fear (before the Lord). When salt is added to food it enhances the flavor. When we season our speech with salt we are speaking so as to make the message more effective—not less.

When looking for extra insight, I came across a good quote from the web at <http://www.saltinstitute.org/pubstat/malott.html>, from an article written circa 1970 by H.R. Malott, Chief Field Representative, Salt Institute.

I like to think that seasoning with salt means the salt of truth and that knowing how ye ought to answer every man is answering truthfully. My father taught me that if I did not tell a lie I did not have to remember what I had said."

Col. 4:7 All my state shall Tychicus declare unto you, *who is a beloved brother, and a faithful minister and fellowservant in the Lord:*

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

Col. 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.*

At this point Paul begins to close his letter. We learn that this letter will be delivered by Tychicus and Onesimus. Based on my conclusions at 1:8, I would assume that Philemon had responded positively to Paul's request regarding Onesimus.

Paul is not going into detail regarding his circumstances since Tychicus and Onesimus can give them a personal report. Tychicus is also going to bring a report back to Paul about how the Colossian believers are doing. He is also representing Paul in bringing *comfort* to the Colossian believers. The Greek would imply through fellowship, exhortation [from the Word of God] and prayer.

Tychicus is described as:

- A beloved brother – In other words, he is a dearly loved brother in the faith.
- A faithful minister and fellowservant – The Greek for *minister* referenced two things that I think apply here—an attendant and a Christian teacher. I think Tychicus attended to the needs of Paul and assisted him in teaching believers in Rome. *Fellowservant* references the truth that both Paul and Tychicus considered themselves servants of the same master, the Lord Jesus.

The phrase “in the Lord” applies to both relationships.

Onesimus is identified as “one of you,” in other words, a member of the church at Colosse. The wording does not indicate that he was expected to return to Paul with Tychicus. My original assumption could be wrong, and he could be returning to Philemon with letter in hand from Paul. We learn from the letter to Philemon that Onesimus came to know Christ through the ministry of Paul during the time he was in prison.

Philem. 10 I beseech thee for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds:

The fact that Paul describes both Tychicus and Onesimus as “faithful” indicates to me time and service spent to prove themselves such. So I still lean toward thinking that Paul is finally sending Onesimus home after Philemon generously allowed Onesimus to return and minister to Paul. Paul didn't come out and ask Philemon to do that, but the wording of one verse gives indication to me of that expectation.

Philem. 21 Having confidence in thy obedience I wrote unto thee, **knowing that thou wilt also do more than I say.**

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

Col. 4:11 And Jesus, which is called Justus, who are of the circumcision. These only *are my fellowworkers unto the kingdom of God, which have been a comfort unto me.*

Paul continues sending greetings to the believers at Colosse from others who are in prison with or serving with him. Aristarchus is identified as a fellowprisoner. In Acts Aristarchus is identified as a Macedonian from Thessalonica. Acts 19 states that he was one of Paul's traveling companions in Ephesus.

The next greeting is from Marcus [John Mark], Barnabas' cousin. Paul and Mark had a rocky start in their relationship because Mark was not faithful to complete a journey he undertook with Paul and Barnabas. In fact, Paul refused to take Mark with them the next time and the dissension caused Paul and Barnabas to go in different directions—Paul took Silas and Barnabas took Mark (Acts 15). There are several scriptures that testify to the fact that their relationship was restored. In fact, in a letter to Timothy he identifies Mark as one who “is profitable to me for the ministry.” (2Timothy 4:11) After reading several translations, it seems clear that Paul had given previous instruction that Mark was to be received. Evidently, the fact that he had fallen into disfavor with Paul was well known.

I can't seem to find any other information that I am sure is connected to this Justus. Verse 11 indicates that Justus, Mark and Aristarchus are the only Jewish believers serving with Paul. (Verses 11-12 are one sentence.) They are all identified as:

- Fellowworkers unto the kingdom of God – Paul is basically stating that these men are serving with Him—side by side—as they serve the Lord.
- Being a comfort to Paul – Part of the service to the Lord of these three men is as a comfort and encouragement to Paul. I am sure that they would have the same to say about Paul's ministry to them. It's a wonderful truth that when we minister to one another in the body of Christ, we are ministering to the Lord.

Col. 4:12 Epaphras, who is *one of you*, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.

Col. 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.*

Epaphras was identified at the beginning of the letter as having spent time in prison with Paul previously and as the probable founder of the Colossian church. He is now serving Christ with Paul and is known for being fervent in his prayers for the believers at Colosse. Paul even knows how he prays for them, which seems to indicate times of fellowship in prayer one with another. He prays for the Colossian believers to “stand perfect and complete” in the will of God. After looking at the Greek, I think he is praying for their spiritual maturity and effectiveness in the ministry through the empowerment of the Spirit. Any time we pray in the will of God, we are praying according to His truth as stated in His Word. Paul could testify that not only did Epaphras have a burden for the

church at Colosse, but also for the nearby churches at Laodicea and Hierapolis. According to Eerdman's Dictionary, Laodicea was "a banking and finance and textile center, as well as a famous site for gladiatorial games." It's very sad to note that according to the Lord's letter to the Laodiceans in Revelation, this church became a place that the Lord was ready to "spue out of His mouth." (Revelation 3:16) Also according to Eerdman's, "Hierapolis was known for its production of textiles and was the center of mystery cults."

I think it is also important to note that prayer is connected with "laboring fervently." Prayer is hard work. The Greek references "to struggle, literally (to compete for a prize), figuratively (to contend with an adversary." There are times when it is easier than others, but the flesh and the enemy fight me constantly in my efforts to labor in prayer.

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

Paul goes on to send greetings from Luke and Demas. I have done previous reading regarding the possibility of Luke being a Jew, but since Paul did not identify him as one of the circumcision in verse 11 above, I would conclude that Luke is a Gentile. He is the accepted writer of Luke and Acts. Evidently, Luke was a doctor and Paul identifies him as "the beloved physician." I would think that this indicates that he was able to minister to Paul's physical needs—maybe even regarding his eye problem referenced in his letter to the Galatians (4:15). The term *beloved* indicates a strong heart bond between the two men.

At this time Demas is serving with Paul, but it's interesting to note that nothing further is noted regarding his character or Paul's heart connection to him. Maybe this indicates that for Paul "the jury was still out" regarding this man's sincerity and commitment. In his second letter to Timothy (4:10) Paul notes that "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica."

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

Col. 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.

Paul sends his greetings to the church at Laodicea and asks that they share this letter with that church. He also instructs them to read the letter he wrote to the Laodiceans. Paul knew he was sharing the truth as revealed to him by the Holy Spirit. God's truth is meant for all believers. Even though Paul's letters were addressed to churches with a specific message for that church, the truth they contained was applicable to all churches.

Paul also sends greetings to "Nymphas" and the church which is in *his* house. Several translations reference Nymphas as a *she*. According to Eerdman's, the available texts are inconclusive. What jumps out to me is that many believers during this time met in homes—Priscilla and Aquilla (Romans 16:3-5), Philemon (v2), and Mary the mother of John Mark (Acts 12:12). Paul seems to be making a

distinction between the church that met at Nymphas' house and the brethren in Laodicea, so maybe the house church was in an area close to the city.

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

According to Paul's letter to Philemon, it would seem that Archippus was a part of Philemon's family. Some suggest a brother; others a son.

Philem. 2 And to *our* beloved Apphia, and Archippus our fellowsoldier, and to the church in thy house:

Whichever, he is identified as a fellowsoldier, one who is willing to put his life on the line for what he believes. Evidently, Paul is aware that Archippus had received a specific calling from the Lord. Paul is either aware that that calling was yet to be acted upon or was still incomplete. He is encouraging Archippus to accomplish or complete it. I sympathize with Archippus. Even when I desire to do God's will, I sometimes find myself putting things off that I know I should be doing or am slow in completing things I have started—for various and sundry reasons. We all need a little encouragement along the way to stay focused and stay engaged in service.

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

Written from Rome to Colossians by Tychicus and Onesimus.

As usual, Paul closes his letter with his own handwriting for authentication to prevent heresy being taught and attributed to him.

2Th. 3:17 The salutation of Paul with mine own hand, which is the token in every epistle: so I write.

"Remember my bonds" seems to be a request for prayer.

"Grace be with you" seems to be expression of prayer on their behalf in closing.

"Amen" is a reference to the trustworthiness of the truth presented in this letter.

The end tag verifies that the letter was written to the Colossians from Rome and delivered by Tychicus and Onesimus.