

Colossians 4

[Col. 3:12](#) So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience;

[Col. 3:13](#) bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you.

- Paul is moving away from a discussion of what we shouldn't be doing, to one on what we should be doing
 - This list came as a result of the false teachers levying their own set of (incorrect) do's and don't's
 - Things based in works
 - But first, Paul reminds them of who they are
 - Who you think you are affects how you behave
 - You are a child of the King, chosen of God, set apart for great things
 - We then learn gratitude through receiving something we didn't deserve
 - So act accordingly:
 - Compassion (Gk. *splanchna oiktirmou*) shows sensitivity to those suffering and in need
 - Kindness (*chrestotes*) manifests itself in a sweet disposition and thoughtful interpersonal dealings
 - Humility (*tapeinophrosyne*) means having a realistic view of oneself, thinking lowly of ourselves because we are so
 - Gentleness (*prautes*) means not behaving harshly, arrogantly, or self-assertively but with consideration for others
 - Patience (*makrothymia*) is the quality of being long-suffering, self-restraining
 - Then he expands on what patience looks like in the Christian walk:

- Forbearing (*anechomenoi*) means putting up with others and enduring discomfort
- Forgiving (*charizomenoi*) involves not holding a grudge or grievance
- We could ask ourselves, does our life mirror this list?

Col. 3:14 Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity.

- Paul is speaking of agape love, a unique form in contrast to the world's love
 - Absent the Holy Spirit, it is impossible to show agape love
 - The expectation is that we would love in the manner that God loves
 - The world forgives conditionally
 - We forgive those who forgive us
 - Those who earn our forgiveness
 - Those who deserve forgiveness
 - And forgiveness is special, valuable commodity
 - If you hurt me, or offend me too many times, then I have the right to limit or withdraw my forgiveness
 - But we are to forgive like the Lord did
- First, we forgive them before they stop offending us

Rom. 5:8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Rom. 5:9 Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him.

Rom. 5:10 For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.

- When God was taking action to forgive us, in that moment we were still enemies of Him

- So even while the offense is ongoing, our forgiveness needs to begin
- Secondly, He forgave those who were undeserving

1Pet. 3:18 For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit;

- God's forgiveness was extended in the form of His perfect just Son dying for the unjust
 - God forgave those who deserved punishment
 - Do we extend forgiveness to those who truly deserve our anger, or do we only forgive those who are innocent?
- Finally, do we demand performance for forgiveness?
 - Conditional forgiveness

2Tim. 1:9 who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity,

- God extended His grace to us, not based on our works
- But will we forgive one who is not grateful for it, doesn't change their behavior?
 - The neighbor who keeps parking over your drive
 - The kid who keeps throwing things at your house
- Then Paul culminates his description of the Christian formula for living with the ultimate measure whether we are living up to God's expectations

Col. 3:14 Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity.

Col. 3:15 Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful.

Col. 3:16 Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

Col. 3:17 Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.

- Paul continues in his instruction defining the Christian lifestyle with 5 commands or imperatives
 - Previously he has been talking about the traits of a Christian walk
 - Now we move to the actions that put those traits into practice
- First, put on love
 - In the Greek it literally means love brings the group to perfection
 - The thought is that the love of God is most clearly understood and experienced in a group setting
 - One individual cannot demonstrate God's love in its fullness
 - We need someone to forgive, have compassion on, show grace, mercy and kindness towards
 - Argues for the need to work in the body of Christ
- After love, Paul says let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts
 - Paul frequently expresses peace in his letters
 - It echoes the Jewish greeting shalom
 - It means well-being and contentment
 - And this was a command to the church, not simply the individual
 - The church should not be ruled by personal ambition, material desires, or any other selfish desire
 - Instead we should have contentment in what God has provided
- Then at the end of verse 15 (repeated at the end of 16 and 17) is to be thankful
 - You cannot be at peace unless you are constantly reminding yourself of all that God has given you already
 - And the need to be thankful
 - Here is where peace and contentment fit
 - If you are wanting something you don't have, it's hard to be thankful for what you do have

- But as sinners who deserve none of what God gives us, saved from judgment and condemnation, thankfulness is the natural result
- People who carry a thankful attitude in everything are the most pleasant and approachable people
 - They give rise to questions about why they are so thankful and hopeful
 - Which leads to an opportunity for a witness
- Then in 16 and 17, probably the most concise statement of how the corporate Christian life should be carried out
 - The word of Christ is to dwell in every Christian
 - This is the only use of the Greek term *logos christos* – the word of Christ, the teachings of Christ
 - We're not talking about the word of God as Paul describes in Romans 10:17 – the word about Christ, meaning salvation
 - The focus is more on Christ's literal instruction to us dwelling within us
 - The word dwell reminds us of the difference between the owner of a house and a visitor
 - If someone passes through your house, they are only a visitor
 - They will never be mistaken for the master of the house
 - But the one who sets up residence in your home and never leaves, then they are clearly the master of the home
 - Likewise, if the Word of God is given its proper place in your heart, a constant presence in your daily life, then it will truly be the master of your body
 - Better than treating the Bible simply as a reference book
 - The Bible needs to be center place - reading it even when we don't have a question or problem to solve!
 - Studying the word should be like breathing or eating

- And that word is to be used to teach and to admonish
 - To build up the good and tear down the wrong in our lives
- Paul sums it up this way:
 - Whatever you do, do in the name of Jesus
 - In the Eastern thinking, The name always embodied the character of the individual
 - The name was the perfect representation of the person
 - So by speaking something in the name of Christ we invoke His person, nature and authority
 - As His ambassador, we carry His reputation with us
 - So are we sullyng His name by our words and actions?
 - To those who put on agape love, peace and contentment with the life God has given, and exercises thankfulness in all things, and allows God's word to set up residence in their heart...
 - That person is walking in a way that will reflect glory upon the name of Christ
- What a stark contrast to the commands of the false teachers!
 - The false teachers wanted the congregation to focus on the here and now, the temporal
 - They had to perform works of their own to please God
 - They couldn't be content or at peace
 - They had to worry and work to please God
 - That led to a life of discontentment and worry
 - They taught that some rules were preferred, festivals, Sabbaths, food, drink
 - Which led to judgment of others, enforcing those rules
 - That led to disunity and unwillingness to accept others or to defer to others' wishes

- Ultimately, it was made possible because of a lack of appreciation of God's word and a lack of thankfulness for the grace that God had bestowed upon them
 - Now Paul teaches the opposite of all those things
 - What a liberating message
- And just to make sure that they understand how this liberty in Christ looks in practice, Paul finishes Chapter 3 with a few specific examples

Col. 3:18 Wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.

Col. 3:19 Husbands, love your wives and do not be embittered against them.

Col. 3:20 Children, be obedient to your parents in all things, for this is well-pleasing to the Lord.

Col. 3:21 Fathers, do not exasperate your children, so that they will not lose heart.

Col. 3:22 Slaves, in all things obey those who are your masters on earth, not with external service, as those who merely please men, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord.

Col. 3:23 Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men,

Col. 3:24 knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve.

Col. 3:25 For he who does wrong will receive the consequences of the wrong which he has done, and that without partiality.

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

- Now each of these examples could be a Sunday preaching on its own, but I will cover them somewhat in passing, allowing you to study them on your own later
 - Each group Paul mentions is called to be self-sacrificial, loving, content and loving in light of their circumstances
 - No one is more or less obligated to the Christian walk, but their individual circumstances dictate the way in which they exhibit their Christian walk
 - A wife demonstrates the Christian walk most clearly when she submits to the authority of her husband
 - Likewise, a husband shows Christian walk by showing love to his wife, love that is agape – serving
 - Just as Ephesians tells us how Christ loved the church, and gave everything up for her

- Ephesians also teaches not that the husband demands submission, but that the woman gives submission
- If you have to ask for it, is evidence it is not being given
 - Notice submission is not conditional
 - Should women only submit to their husbands when they're doing the right thing?
 - Should men only love their wives when they're being submissive?
- Children show their Christian walk most clearly by obedience to parents
 - Likewise, a father shows a Christian walk by not making their obedience a weight around their necks, where obedience is met with harshness or unfairness or indifference
 - An important corollary, a parent who will not demand respect and obedience from their children is dishonoring the Lord through their children
 - But parents should not achieve this by compromising their own walk, but rather do it in an encouraging and scripture-driven way
- To slaves, Paul says serve your master out of a sincere desire to please the Lord, not merely because you have no choice
 - Even a slave can present a witness of his faith by showing love and patience and contentment
 - We don't need to use words to witness and show others what makes us different
- Then Paul sums up his examples
 - What we do we don't do because of someone else
 - The praises of men are not what we seek
 - When we make decisions about what we do based on what men will say, we will inevitably make wrong choices
 - We will make choices depending on how it is received by others
 - Or we will intentionally do the wrong thing because we don't feel the other person deserves the right thing

- Or the other person has done something to offend us, so we feel the right to retaliate
- When we work for the Lord, our decisions will always be based on what He expects
 - And His holiness, and His worth and what He deserves
 - And that standard will always drive us to the right place
 - And don't worry about men's rewards, because God has your back – eternal rewards you can work towards
 - And don't worry about those who deserve punishment, God has that in control too

[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 will 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](#) that I may make it clear in the way I ought to speak.

[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, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person.

- As Paul wraps up the letter, he makes mention of how the church should respond to the world at large
 - Up to now, he's focused on how they live with one another
 - But now, he speaks about how to treat the world
 - First, be devoted to prayer
 - The word devoted means ceaselessly active
 - And be alert in it
 - This means looking for needs, paying attention to where you can engage in prayer for the needs of God's work
 - And carry an attitude of thanksgiving into the prayer, not one of sorrow or anger or disappointment

- And in those prayers, Paul specifically says remember him and his companions to have success in carrying the Gospel
- Paul asks the church to use wisdom to make the most of every opportunity God gives them
 - Paul is saying that the church's purpose as Christ's ambassadors is to use every opportunity to tell the foreigners around us about the home we have in heaven
- And to accomplish this, let your speech be seasoned with grace
 - This is two concepts together
 - First, speak graciously, building relationships and drawing people toward us through genuine expressions of love and friendship
 - Second, bring God's grace into your conversations, not hesitating to speak of your faith and God's impact in your life
 - Season your talk with what God is doing in your life, which might prompt discussion with those God has opened their ears to hear

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.

Col. 4:10 Aristarchus, my fellow prisoner, sends you his greetings; and also Barnabas's 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.

Col. 4:12 Epaphras, who is one of your number, a bondservant 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 testify for him that he has a deep concern for you and for those who are in Laodicea and Hierapolis.

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

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

Col. 4:16 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 Say to Archippus, "Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it."

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

- Paul uses this list to continue to build credibility, remind them of relationships they share in these men
 - Tychicus was a beloved member of the Colossian church
 - Paul sent him to relay additional information not in the letter and to encourage the church
 - Onesimus went with Tychicus delivering the letter to Ephesus, Laodicea and Colossae
 - Aristarchus was from Thessalonica (Acts 20) and had ministered with Paul in Ephesus before accompanying Paul to Rome
 - Paul says he was a fellow prisoner, but the word in Greek is unusual and literally meant prisoner of war
 - Some believe Paul was using it as a play on words
 - Paul was a prisoner of Caesar, but Aristarchus was a fellow prisoner in the spiritual battle that they were fighting
 - Barnabas and Mark are mentioned
 - They were cousins
 - This is the Mark that wrote the gospel
 - Mark had failed Paul earlier in Pamphylia having deserted Paul there
 - Paul didn't want Mark to accompany them, and it caused a split between Paul and Barnabas
 - Now it appears they are all reunited in Rome
 - Encouragement that disappointments and disagreements in ministry aren't the last word

- Jesus Justus is a unique mention
 - Together with Mark and Barnabas, they are the only Jews (circumcision) to accompany Paul to Rome
 - This would have added emphasis to Paul's teaching that all men – Greek or Jew – are one in Christ
- Paul mentions Epaphras
 - He commends him for prayers and concern for the church
 - He's not meddling, he's concerned
- Luke was there
 - Between Luke, Paul and Mark, these three men have written two gospels, the book of Acts, and 13 letters of the New Testament
 - 60% of the NT
- Demas was there with Paul
 - But we hear later in 2 Timothy 4 that he turned against Paul
- Finally, greetings to
 - Laodicea, to the church in the house of Nympha
 - Probably a house church in that city
 - There were no church buildings until at least the third century
 - The church met in homes or public places longer than the United States has been in existence
 - Don't ever think that a church begins with a building or even needs one
 - Paul refers to a letter written to Laodicea, but obviously not part of the Biblical record, and therefore not inspired for inclusion in God's word
 - Archippus seems to be the son of Philemon and perhaps the leader of the Colossian church
 - Paul's statement would then be a statement of correction to a leader who has failed in his responsibilities in this church

- A leader must take hold of their responsibility to lead God's people
- Finally, Paul says he wrote this letter in his own hand
 - Likely, that sentence was the only one he wrote, to authenticate the letter
- So to sum up the letter:
 - We are all soldiers working together serving the same Lord
 - The church isn't a club or a pastime or a social event
 - But because we are ambassadors of Christ and are called to a life that mirrors Him
 - And there are eternal consequences for how we carry it out
 - We must not allow false teachers to draw us off from the purpose God has set in front of us