

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST

SPREADING THE SOUL-SAVING MESSAGE OF JESUS

COLOSSIANS LESSON 4 (Chapter 4)

Introduction by narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST. Spreading the soul-saving message of Jesus. And now, Timothy Sparks and Ben Bailey.

Ben Bailey:

“Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it, with thanksgiving” (Col. 4:2). I’m Ben Bailey.

Timothy Sparks:

And I’m Timothy Sparks. Welcome to our study of the Book of Colossians. We are making these lessons available on CD and DVD. If you would like to have a CD or DVD, we’ll be glad to send you either or both absolutely free of charge. We won’t even charge you for the postage. These lessons are being brought to you by individual members and congregations of the church of Christ. We encourage you to attend the church of Christ in your area. Let them know how much you appreciate their support of these broadcasts. Members of the church of Christ would be happy to study the Bible with you. We also encourage you to contact us. You may come to our website at www.thegospelofchrist.com, fill out the request form you’ll find there to let us know your needs, and we will assist you in any way we can.

As we come to chapter 4 of Book of Colossians, we are going to learn about the responsibilities of masters, and how to apply the lessons Paul offers in our day and time.

Ben Bailey:

We don’t live in as much of a master-servant society as people did in the first century. Thus, the application of Colossians 4 for us today would actually be more in line with an employee-employer relationship. The employer can be compared to the master, while the employee can be likened to a servant. Christians often work for other people. Like the relationship of master and servant, so is the relationship of employer and employee. Slaves are to obey their masters in all things, for this is God’s will. The same is true of employees. We are to obey the employer for whom we work. We are to work diligently. Colossians 3:23-24 tells us we work “unto the Lord,” not unto men. Thus, we ought to be a diligent worker. We ought to do the best we can with what we have. Our responsibility is to do a good job. We should not try to cheat, or steal from, our employer. That’s not what a Christian is supposed to do. We are to work hard, and to be as godly as we can. The reason we do this is to be a good example to our employer. If the person for whom you work is not a Christian, you ought to be the best Christian example you can be. When you are called upon to do things that you don’t really want to do, and your employer sees you work hard at doing them, he’s going to see Christ living in you. He’s going to see a good example in your life.

Timothy Sparks:

Paul makes the application that we also have a Master in Heaven. God is our Master, and we are to serve Him faithfully. Colossians 3:23 teaches us that whatever we do, we are to do it “heartily, as to the Lord, and not to men.” We are not to be the kind of people who serve just as men pleasers; rather, we are to serve the Lord from the heart (Col. 3:24). We serve Jesus Christ. We therefore have a Master in Heaven. There will come a Day of Judgment, in which we are going to be called to “give an account of the things that we’ve done in the body, whether good or evil” (2 Cor. 5:10). We will all have to appear before the judgment seat of Christ. We are going to receive a reward or punishment according to our deeds. If we have done good, we will receive good, according to our works. If we have done evil, then we are going to receive evil, according to our works. God’s judgment will not be based on merit, but on whether or not we have done God’s will. If God judges us to have done well, it will be because we have received His grace, we have accepted it, and we have had the blood of Christ applied to our soul. We’ve been forgiven, and we have walked worthy of the Lord. God is not like your boss, who may not know if you are taking an extra-long coffee break. The Lord sees all and knows all. Hebrews 4:13 teaches us that there is indeed an all-seeing eye watching us, and that nothing is hidden from God’s sight. “All things are naked and open before the eyes of Him to Whom we must give account.” We learn from Revelation 2 that Jesus is the One Who searches our hearts. How does it make you feel when you realize that God knows everything about you? If you are a faithful servant to your Master in Heaven, then that’s encouraging to you, and you can be glad that God knows that you are about His business. But if you are not a faithful servant, if you do not let Jesus rule and reign in your life, then knowing that you have a Master in Heaven should provide motivation for you to repent. “God is not willing that anyone should perish, but all should come to repentance” (2 Pet.3:9). The concept of having a Master is a good motivator. It helps faithful Christians to “keep on keeping on.” If you are not a faithful Christian, you need to become one. When you are baptized into Christ, from that point on you can faithfully serve the Lord. If you go astray, we urge you to come back, because there is going to come a time when you will no longer have time to get your life in harmony with God’s will.

Ben Bailey:

In Colossians 4, Paul also says that we have the responsibility of prayer. Prayer is a privilege, of course, but it ought to be thought of as a responsibility—something we need to do. Paul says in Colossians 4:2, “Continue earnestly in prayer.” Sometimes, I think we as Christians don’t realize the great value of prayer in our life. We don’t pray as often as we should because we don’t realize how powerful and effective prayer can be. James said, “The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous person overcomes much” (Jas. 5:16). Do you want to overcome in this life? Do you want to be effective? Then pray! Pray to God, and ask Him to help you in every area of your life. Paul said that we are to “pray without ceasing” (1 Thess. 5:17-18). That doesn’t mean that your entire life is nothing but one long prayer. Rather, it means that there ought never to be a time in your life when you can’t drop to your knees and pray to God to ask Him for help. We need to realize the great power of prayer. Jesus said in Luke 18:1, “Men ought to pray always and never lose heart.” When you get discouraged, turn to God. Ask Him to help you solve the problem. Peter told us, “Cast all your cares upon the Lord for He cares for you” (1 Pet. 5:7). Turn to God in times of care and anxiety. Talk to God, and ask Him to help you. Jesus was a Man of prayer. Oh, how we need to imitate the example of Christ and His prayer life! In Matthew 26 and 27, we find Jesus praying to God during a difficult time in His life. But he didn’t pray only during the difficult times. He prayed at **all** times. Mark 1:35 tells

us about an ordinary day in Christ's life. What was an ordinary day of Christ like? Early in the morning, before daylight, He departed and went to a solitary place to pray. Christ set aside time to talk to God, to pray, and to ask God for His blessings. We need to continue earnestly in prayer, and to be vigilant in our prayer with thanksgiving. Too many prayers are a "give us" session—give us this, give us that, and help us with this or that. There is nothing wrong with asking God for help, or with asking Him to give us certain things. But as you read the prayers of the Bible, you find that many of those prayers were a thank-you to God. They were prayers intended to praise and magnify the name of God. Think about when Jesus taught the disciples to pray (Mt. 6). Jesus began His prayer by saying, "Our Father in Heaven, hallowed by Your name." How did Jesus begin that prayer? By exalting the God of Heaven! That ought to be the same way we pray. Praise God. Thank Him for His blessings. Be vigilant. We have a great responsibility to pray—one that we don't use often enough.

Timothy Sparks:

In Colossians 4:3, Paul urged the Christians in Colossae to "pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the Word." Isn't this a wonderful illustration? Isn't this wonderful imagery that Paul uses? Paul is telling the Christians at Colossae, "You pray for us brothers and sisters, that God may open to us a door for the spreading of His Word." Paul wants to continue to speak the mystery of Christ, for which he was "in bonds and chains." Paul was in prison. Colossians is one of the prison letters that Paul wrote (Ephesians, Philippians, and Philemon were all prison epistles, too). Paul is writing from prison. He wants a door to be opened for the spreading of the Gospel. He wants other avenues to open up, by which he can continue to spread the soul-saving message of Jesus Christ. Paul wrote to the Christians at Thessalonica, "Finally brothers, pray for us that the Word of the Lord may run swiftly and be honored just as it is with you" (2 Thess. 3:1). Paul's constant plea was that other Christians would join him in prayer, that God might open the door for the Word to be spread, and that good and honest hearts might be receptive to His will so they could be "delivered from darkness and translated into the kingdom of the Son of His love" (Col. 1:13-14). Paul wanted God's Word to run swiftly, without obstacles or blockades, so that ultimately God would be honored and glorified. That's what our life is all about. Isaiah 43:7 says that we were created to give glory to God. Our purpose in life is to glorify God. When we aid in the progress of the Gospel (Phil.1:12), then God is glorified. We need to be actively involved in evangelism because it is the Word of God that does the convicting and converting to Christ. The psalmist said, "The Law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul, and the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple" (Ps. 19:7). We learn from James 1:22 that we are to be "doers of the Word, not hearers only." Therefore, as James said in the previous verse, "We are to receive with meekness the engrafted Word, which is able to save our soul" (1:21). Prayer is powerful! And the prayer of the righteous has powerful results (Jas. 5:16). We are to be people of constant, vigilant prayer. We are to pray without ceasing. Prayer, as we learn in Ephesians 6, is part of God's armor for the Christian.

Ben Bailey:

In Colossians 4:5, Paul teaches us that we are to "walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time." I am to be sure that I am a good example to those in the world, and that I use my time properly. I have a responsibility to live a life that is organized and planned according to God's Will, so that that people in the world cannot look at me as a hypocrite and say, "Oh, there's a person who claims to be a Christian. But if

that's what Christianity is like, I don't want anything to do with it." I need to live in such a way that when people look at my life, they can see Christ living in me, and they can see the example of God's love, God's Word, and God's gift of salvation in my life. Jesus said in Matthew 5:16, "Let your light so shine among men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is Heaven." Whether we realize it or not, there are people who are "just waiting" for Christians to make mistakes. There are people who are waiting for Christians to sin, so they can blaspheme the name of God. It is so sad when people "claim" to be Christians actually live like a Christian only at services on Sunday, while the rest of the week they live like the world. What does that say about Christianity? What a bad taste that must leave in some people's mouths! I have a responsibility. People are watching everything I do—from the clothes I wear to the way I talk. People are watching me every day. I need to dress modestly—in such a way that it promotes godliness (1 Tim. 2:11-12, 1 Pet. 3:1-7). That is what the Bible teaches. Paul will go on to say that our language, too, must be proper. We must talk in a way that shows grace in our speech. We also need to act in such a way that our demeanor is kind and tender hearted. Christians also have a responsibility toward time. We are to "redeem the time." The word "redeem" means "to buy back." This may not be one of the best translations of this idea, because once time is gone, it is impossible to buy it back. Some versions say, "Make the most of your time." The idea is that we must make the most of our time while we're here. The psalmist said that we don't have very long to be here (Ps. 90:10-12). We may have 70 or 80 years if we're fortunate. James asked, "What is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time, and then vanishes away" (Jas. 4:14). Your life is just a drop in the bucket compared to all the time that has already passed and that will yet come to pass. Our time here is very, very short. So, Paul says, "Make the most of your time." Again, several practical lessons jump out at us. We need to use our time to the glory of God. One way we can make the most of our time is by studying our Bibles every day. In Acts 17:11, we learn how the Bereans "searched the Scriptures daily." We need to make the most of our time by seizing every opportunity we have. We must not be slothful or lazy, but must use our time diligently to the service of God. I need to use my time properly. Paul prayed in Colossians 4:3-4 that doors of evangelism would be opened. How many doors have you opened, or helped to open, for evangelism? For example, have you set up Bible studies? You might say, "I don't think I would very good at setting up a Bible study." I know a lot of people who are, and you might be, too. Why not try? We all have a responsibility to evangelize.

Timothy Sparks:

In Colossians.4:6, Paul says, "Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt that you may know how you should answer each one." We need to be very careful in what we say. Jesus said, "Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks" (Mt. 12:34), and "By your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned" (Mt. 12:37). We need to think before we speak. We also need to know how to answer people who question us about our faith. Peter said that we are to "be ready always to give an answer for the reason for the hope that is within us" (1 Pet. 3:15). The defense we offer is for the cause of Christ, to help people realize that they, too, have a Master Who is in Heaven. We learn from James 3 that the tongue is the hardest of all of our members to control. As a matter of fact, James says, "No one can tame the tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison" (vs. 8). James says that with the tongue we both bless God and curse men. He then observes, "My brothers these things ought not to be." (vs. 10). "Let your speech be with grace," Paul says, "seasoned with salt that you know how you should answer each one." Another passage we might consider is Ephesians

4:29, where Paul says, “Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good for the use of edification that it may minister grace to the hearers.” What Paul is saying is, “Let no filthy words come out of your mouth, but speak only those things that are useful for building up and that allow you to minister and serve to others.” We need to pay attention to what Paul says when he tells us how important it is for our speech to be with grace, seasoned with salt.

Ben Bailey:

Now Paul is going to discuss several people who were dear friends of his. He mentions in verses 7-11 people like Tychicus, Onesimus, Aristarchus, Barnabas, and a man named Justus. All of these people played an important role, but in verse 11 Paul says, “These are my fellow workers in the kingdom who have proved to be a comfort to me.” As a friend, are **you** a comfort to other people? Are you faithful and dependable? These men were dependable. They were fellow workers in the kingdom of God. They weren’t afraid to jump in and get their hands dirty and work for the kingdom. These are examples of the kinds of people we need to be. We need to be fellow workers in the kingdom. We also need more workers. Paul wrote in 1 Cor. 15:58, “Be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of God.” That’s what we need to be—people who, when something needs to be done, are the ones who raise our hands and volunteer to do it. Oftentimes, it is hard to find people who are willing to work. God is not looking for a “pew potatoes.” He is looking for workers in the kingdom—people who will get out there and do something to fulfill His will. We need more “fellow workers in the kingdom of God.” Paul told Timothy, “The things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also” (2 Tim. 2:2). It’s a domino effect. We need people who will stand up to be accounted for, and teach, the glorious Gospel (1 Tim. 1:11). Ask yourself: If you were to leave a legacy behind, what would it be? If you were asked to write a statement to be used as your epitaph, what would it say? Would it say, “This man was a faithful worker in the kingdom of God?” Or would it say, “This man just came on Sunday morning to get his ticket punched.” Is that the way we sometimes look at life and religion? We must be faithful, and serve as an encouragement to others.

Timothy Sparks:

In Colossians 4:14, Paul mentions two other faithful brothers when he said, “Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas, greet you.” Luke wrote the Gospel that bears his name, as well as the Book of Acts. Another individual who also greets the Christians in Colossae is Demas, a faithful brother. Did you know that Demas doesn’t always stay faithful? Paul will later write in 2 Tim. 4:10, “Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world.” For whatever reason, Demas abandoned his first love of the Gospel, and was lost. We learn from the Book of Colossians that in order for our lives to be lived properly, we have to be in Christ. Living for Christ is the only life that’s worth living. Christ is completely able to lead us to Heaven. Paul referred to it as “Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Col. 1:27). We are complete only in Christ (Col. 2:10). Paul says, “Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly” (Col. 3:16). The Book of Colossians tells us about a Christ-centered life. We don’t need Christ “plus something.” We need Christ “plus nothing.” If you would like to illustrate and summarize the Book of Colossians, draw a circle. That circle should represent the Christian’s life. At the center of the circle, draw a dot. That represents Jesus Christ. Everything we say, do, or think should revolve around Jesus. Is Jesus at the heart of your life? Are you living for Him, Who died for you? If you are a

Christian, you died to the “old you.” You died to sin. Now, you are alive to Christ. If you were to die this very day, would you appear with Christ in glory? Would you be Heaven bound if you were to pass this life? We have only one life. It soon will be past. And only what is done for Christ will last.

Ben Bailey:

We come to know Christ when we obey His Gospel and do the things that He teaches us to do. We believe in Jesus as the Son of God. We believe so much so that we are motivated to repent of our sins. We confess Him as the Lord of our life, and we are baptized for the forgiveness of those sins. Paul was told in Acts 22:16, “Why are you waiting, arise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on the Lord’s name.” That’s how, in a biblical sense, we call on the Lord’s name. We are baptized to wash away our sins. If you are not a Christian, we want to help you become one. We are offering a CD or DVD on the Book of Colossians. We’ll give you the whole set free of charge. Log onto our website at thegospelofchrist.com, fill out the request form you will find there, and we will be happy to send this to you. As always, it is our prayer that you will conform your will to the Gospel of Christ.

Narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST is brought to you by loving, caring members of the church of Christ. The McLish Avenue church of Christ in Ardmore, Oklahoma, oversees this evangelistic effort. For a free CD or DVD of today’s broadcast, please write to:

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST
607 McLish Ave.
Ardmore, OK 73401

You may call **580-223-3289**. Please visit us on the web at www.thegospelofchrist.com. We encourage you to attend the church of Christ, where “the Bible is loved and the Gospel is preached.”

STUDY QUESTIONS FOR COLOSSIANS LESSON 4 (CHAPTER 4)

1. In Colossians 4, Paul addresses the issue of servant-master relationships. What is the message in this chapter for twenty-first-century Christians?
2. In Colossians 3:23, Paul taught, “whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men.” How does that fit into his teaching in Colossians 4?
3. According to 2 Corinthians 5:10, an “accounting day” is coming. What will happen on that particular day?
4. What is the connection between Hebrews 4:13 and 2 Corinthians 5:10?
5. If we know that we have a Master in Heaven, what should that knowledge do for us?
6. Explain the connection between Colossians 4:2, 1 Thessalonians 4:17-18, and Luke 18:1.
7. What is the message of Matthew 6:33 and 1 Peter 5:7?
8. According to Paul’s comments in Colossians 4:3, what is one of the things for which Christians should routinely pray?
9. Explain the connection between 2 Thessalonians 3:1 and Colossians 4:3.
10. In addition to praying, James tells us in James 1:22 that there is something else in which we should be engaged. What is it?
11. In James 5:17, we are told to pray for one another for a specific purpose. What is that purpose?
12. According to Isaiah 43:7, why are we here?
13. What did Paul mean when he told the Christians in Colossae to “redeem the time” (Col. 4:5)?
14. What is the connection between James 4:14 and Colossians 4:5?
15. Explain the relationship between 1 Peter 3:15 and Colossians 4:6.
16. How do Matthew 12:37 and James 3:8 fit together?
17. What was Paul’s point in mentioning people like Tychicus, Onesimus, Aristarchus, Barnabas, and Justus (Col. 4:7-11)?
18. In Colossians 4:14, Paul mentioned a man by the name of Demas. He mentioned him again in 2 Timothy 4:10. Explain the difference between the two passages.
19. What was Paul’s point in 2 Timothy 2:2?