

COLOSSIANS 3:18-4:1 | INSTRUCTIONS FOR RELATIONSHIPS

For Colossians 3:18-25 see session 10 (*Note: section heading changed to include 4:1*)

VERSE 4:1 – BLUE

The word **Masters** is κύριος [kurios], often translated *Lord* and used of the Lord at the end of this verse, referring to a **Master in heaven**. Since 30-50% of Roman population was estimated to be in the *doulos* category, some instruction to the *kurios* category was in order.

The Master was instructed to provide **that which is just and equal**. This does not imply that all servants be paid the same. The word translated as **equal** is ἰσότης [isotes], that which is *fair or equal to the work*. We get words like *isosceles* and *isotope* from this word.

The balance in these instructions (3:18-4:1) is done in such a way that nobody has the "upper hand."

- Wives submit to husbands who love their wives and are not bitter toward them.
- Children obey their parents who do not provoke them to wrath.
- Servants obey their masters who give to their servants and have a Master themselves.

These instructions confirm that **there is no respect of persons** (v. 25).

COLOSSIANS 4:2-6 | REQUESTS FROM PAUL CONCERNING LIFE AND MINISTRY

VERSE 2 – BLUE

The Colossians are given the command to **continue in prayer**, and also to **watch in the same with thanksgiving**. Because Paul often asks for and commands prayer, but never gives instruction, I think we are safe to assume that *prayer is not complicated*, and therefore we should not make it such.

The word **watch** is γρηγορέω [gregoreo] which means "alert." The English name Gregory comes from this word. Our prayers, therefore, should not be lazy, routine, and without focus. Furthermore, they should be **with thanksgiving**.

VERSE 3 – BLACK

Verses 3-4 are an elaboration of verse 2 and a sort of parenthetical statement between verse 2 and 5. Though believers today do not pray for Paul and his companions, these verses do display the heart of Paul and give insight into the spread of **the mystery of Christ**.

The prayer request was for an open **door of utterance** so that **the mystery of Christ** could be spread.

Is **the mystery of Christ** the same as what we would call the *Pauline mystery*? Based on Ephesians 3:3-5, I am assuming these to be the same. This mystery can be summarized as follows: *that God had delayed the judgement of the Tribulation and the return of Christ, and instead inserted a time of Grace in which there is neither Jew nor Greek, with no barrier to receiving salvation, which is now offered to all as a free gift*. Sadly, most of the church today doesn't understand this mystery, thus cannot even properly explain the Gospel.

Paul says that it is **the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds**. He speaks similar words in Ephesians 6:19-20. However, Acts 26:6 says **And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers**. The **hope of the promise** is certainly not a mystery at all. How can Paul be imprisoned for both that which had been revealed and that which was mystery? When reading the book of Acts, the imprisonment was *by Jews and for Jewish things*. The Jews certainly had no issues (nor jurisdiction) over Gentile religious matters.

So, either we have a different imprisonment for a different matter in Colossians or, more likely, the **mystery of Christ** was being used by the Jews against Paul, as if Paul was teaching *the mystery* to Jews. But many times, Paul claimed that he *did not* teach the mystery in Jewish settings. For example, In Acts 26:20 Paul testifies to the King that his message was to **repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance**. In Acts 26:22 he testifies that he was **saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come**.

A clear reading of the book of Acts shows the following:

1. Jews *knew* about the mystery as delivered from Paul (see Acts 15, etc).
2. Jews *questioned* the veracity of the mystery (see Acts 15, Galatians 1-2, etc.).
3. Unbelieving Jews detested Jews who taught Jesus as the Christ (see Acts 4:1-3, Acts 26:9-12, etc.).
4. Unbelieving Jews had no qualms about fabricated charges and excessive punishments against those who taught Jesus was the Christ (see Acts 4:17, Acts 12:1-3, noting the words of verse 3, **because he saw it pleased the Jews**, etc.).
5. With Peter, the Jews arrested him on unrelated matters (for example, the healing of the lame beggar), but the testimony about Jesus was the real issue. With Paul, they used the same strategy. They used the *mystery* to accuse Paul of teaching Jews to abandon Judaism, but Paul had never done such thing. The real issue was that Paul believed that Jesus was the Christ.
6. So, in summary, Paul is in bonds because of the mystery (Col. 3:3), because the mystery was the pretense for the arrest, but Paul was never under any charges related to the mystery, but for simply believing the prophetic word (Acts 26:6).

VERSE 4 – BLACK

Paul's desire for a **door of utterance** (v. 3) is so **that I may make it manifest**. The word φανερώ [phanerōō] is "to shine light upon" or "make visible." We get the English word *phantom* from this root, since a *phantom* is a visible ghost. Of the 49 times the word is used in the New Testament, it is always used of things that do appear naturally but rather by either supernatural power or a confluence of events that serendipitously cause the appearance. Words like *optomai* would be used if there is a simple "bringing into view" concept. Paul adds that he desires to manifest the mystery **as I ought to speak**. The word **as** is an adverb modifying *make manifest*, thus his desire is that he would have the manner of speech that would make manifest the mystery.

A practical note on verses 3-4: This ought to be the prayer that every person who *knows the mystery* should pray for every teacher who *teaches the mystery*.

VERSE 5 – BLUE

Likely because he has been speaking of making the mystery known, now Paul speaks of **them that are without** (i.e.: on the outside). Presumably he refers to any who do not know **the mystery of Christ** (v. 3). Those who do know are to **walk in wisdom** toward these.

The word **redeeming** is ἐξαγοράζω [exagorazo]. The *agora* is the marketplace and *ex* is "out of." Thus the word is a word that means "purchasing on the open market." All of our time is "spent" in exchange for something we value or need, otherwise it is wasted. In context, Paul is talking about our time with **them that are without**, though certainly there is a general application for all our time. For the more general application, Ephesians 5:16 would be more appropriate.

A few questions of analysis might help us determine the best redemption of time toward those who are unknowing:

1. Do they have the prerequisite knowledge to understand the mystery? If not, our time is better spent explaining the work of God in previous dispensations rather than trying to make our own dispensation clear.
2. Do they have a teachable spirit or are they blinded by denominational or cultural manifestos that hinder their ability to understand the Word of God in its literal nature? If they are not teachable, pray for an opening of the mind.

3. Is this the time or place to correct their thinking? A caustic or untimely response to error rarely corrects thinking. Proverbs 25:11 (as well as verse 6) reminds us of the value of **a word fitly spoken**.
4. Are they eager to learn the content of the Word and to learn a clear and simple way of understanding the Word? Then the investment is worthy in every way!

VERSE 6 – BLUE

Paul often speaks of the need for study and knowledge. Here he reminds us that we also need grace in our speech. This is certainly part of the **wisdom** of which he speaks in verse 5. Just as Paul desired to speak **as I ought** (v. 5), so he desires his followers to **know how ye ought to answer every man**. Note that the word **answer** in the Bible does not necessarily require a *question*, but rather implies *speaking to a situation at hand*.

Our speech is to be **with grace, seasoned with salt**. A very literal translation would be “in grace with salt seasoned.” There is an emphasis on both **grace** and **salt**. Could this be reminding us that words do not always have to be “soft and sweet” nor should they always be “salty and sharp”? Wise speech includes both **grace** and **salt**!