

Colossians Chapter Four

Code for Christian Masters (v. 1)

VERSE 1 Masters, grant to your slaves justice and fairness, knowing that you too

have a Master in heaven (Οἱ κύριοι, τὸ δίκαιον καὶ τὴν ἰσότητα τοῖς δούλοις παρέχεσθε, εἰδότες ὅτι καὶ ὑμεῖς ἔχετε κύριον ἐν οὐρανῶ [d.a.w/noun voc.m.p. kurios lord, master + d.a.acc.nt.s. “that which” + adj.acc.nt.s dikaios just + conj and + d.a.acc.f.s. + noun acc.f.s. isotes fairness, equality + d.a.w/noun dat.m.p. doulos slave + pres.mid.imper.2p. parecho grant + pf.act.part.nom.m.p. oika know + conj hoti that + conj also + pro.nom.p. su you + pres.act.ind.2p. echo have + noun acc.m.s. kurios lord, master + prep en + noun loc.m.s. ouranos heaven]).

ANALYSIS: VERSE 1

1. “Master” (*kurioi*) are the third and final group of believers addresses in regard to the household code for the royal family.
2. “Masters” were slave owners who were members of the Colossian church in the 1st century AD.
3. Paul does not deride “masters” for owning slaves as property, rather he lays down guidelines for the behavior of both Christian slaves and Christian slave owners.
4. The institution of slavery existed in the Roman world and there were many abuses on the part of both slaves and their owners as one would suspect.
5. Here Paul enjoins “masters” to treat all their slaves with “justice and fairness.”
6. Inequality of treatment was commonplace with slave owners as they regarded their slaves as property, and so the normal treatment of fellow human beings was not commonly practiced between owner and his slaves.
7. But the CWL calls us to a much higher standard in our dealings with others.
8. The imperative “grant” (pres.imper. *parecho*) is a call to provide something for slaves.
9. This limits the power of the male head of a household.
10. “Masters” were required by law and by prudence to provide the necessities of life for their slaves.
11. “Justice and fairness” was not at the top of the priorities for the support of slaves.
12. “Justice” refers to proper treatment of a fellow human; in order words, it means to be good.
13. “Fairness” (*isotes*) means ‘equality’ and compliments justice (also at 2Cor. 8:13, 14).
14. The spiritual rationale behind this code of conduct toward individuals who did not possess the normal rights and recourse to justice of free men is laid out in the second half of this verse.

15. “Knowing” refers to something that had been taught to the slave owners at Colossae (comp. 3:24 in connection with believing slaves; also Eph. 6:8).
16. To know something that is vital provides insight into how one should conduct themselves under some circumstance.
17. What does “knowing that you have a Master in heaven” influence how one should treat a subordinate?
18. The answer: the supreme Master of all believers makes all slaves.
19. Earthly masters serve a supreme Master who resides in heaven.
20. And they expect to be treated appropriately so they are to act accordingly with respect to fellow members of the royal family.
21. Masters with all their authority over the most vulnerable and exposed individuals are to follow the ‘golden rule’ (e.g., “love your neighbor as yourself.”).
22. “In heaven” refers to the realm of supreme power over the earth.
23. Enthroned in heaven is Christ who is Lord of all who at the right time will be revealed to humanity and will hold all accountable.
24. The parallel directive to “masters” is in Eph. 6:9 “And masters, do the same things to them, and give up threatening, knowing that both their Master and yours in heaven, and there is no partiality with him.”
25. See also 1Tim. 6:2; Titus 2:9; 1Pet. 2:10.
26. In our civilization “masters” correspond to Christian bosses that employ believers and non believers.

Summons to Prayer (vv. 2-4)

VERSE 2 Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with *an attitude of*

thanksgiving (Τῇ προσευχῇ προσκατερείτε, γρηγοροῦντες ἐν αὐτῇ ἐν εὐχαριστίᾳ
[*d.a.w/noun dat.f.s. proseuche prayer + pres.act.imper.2p. proskartereo devote oneself to + pres.act.imper.2p. gregoreo keep alert + prep en + pro.loc.s. autos “it” + prep en + noun instr.f.s. eucharistia thanksgiving*]);

VERSE 3 praying at the same time for us as well (προσευχόμενοι ἅμα καὶ περὶ ἡμῶν

[*pres.dep.part.nom.p. proseuchomai + adv ama at the same time, meanwhile + prep peri concerning + pro.gen.p. ego*], **that God will open up to us a door for the word** [ἵνα ὁ θεὸς ἀνοίξῃ ἡμῖν θύραν τοῦ λόγου
[*conj hina that + d.a.w/noun nom.m.s. theos + aor.act.subj.3. anoigo open + pro.dat.p. ego + noun acc.f.s. thura door + d.a.w/noun gen.m.s. logos*],

so that we may speak forth the mystery of Christ [λαλῆσαι τὸ μυστήριον τοῦ Χριστοῦ, [aor.act.infin. *laleo* speak + d.a.w/noun acc.nts. *musterios* mystery + d.a.w/noun gen.m.s. *christos*], **for which I have also been imprisoned** [δι’ ὃ καὶ δέδεμαι [prep *dia* + pro.acc.nt.s. *hos* which + conj *also* + pf.pass.ind.1s. *deo* imprison]]);

VERSE 4 that I may make it clear in the way I ought to speak (ἵνα φανερώσω αὐτὸ ὡς δεῖ με λαλῆσαι [conj + aor.act.subj.1s. *phaneroo* make known/clear + pro.acc.nt.s. *autos* it + conj *hos* + pres.act.ind.1s. *dei* ought + pro.acc.s. *ego* + aor.act.infin. *laleo* speak]).

ANALYSIS: VERSES 2-4

1. Earlier in this letter Paul reported that he and his associates “have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding” (1:9).
2. In His opening greeting to them he declared “We give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying for you always” (1:3).
3. Here for the first time Paul summons the believers at Colossae to “devote [themselves] to prayer” (v. 2a).
4. The verb is a present imperative (*proskartereo*) which means ‘to devote oneself to’ something or ‘to continue’ in something.
5. Of the 10x the verb is used in the NT, 5x it is used in connection with prayer (Acts 1:14; 2:42; 6:4; Rom. 12:12; Col. 4:2).
6. This call serves to point out the necessity to be consistent and faithful in this spiritual endeavor.
7. The participle (circumstantial) “keeping alert” (*gregoreo* to keep awake; be alert) draws attention to one of the beneficial aspects to engaging in this critical aspect of the CWL.
8. Alertness is a by-product of effective prayer.
9. This verb appears in connection with the onset of the passion where Jesus summoned His disciples to “keep watching and praying that you may not fall into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak” (Mk. 13:38).
10. It is also used in connection with alertness as it pertains to the prophetic setting for the day of the Lord (Matt. 24:42, 43; 25:13).
11. So alertness can refer to awareness in a prophetic sense or with regard to anything that might pose a threat to the well-being of a believer facing potential temptation (1Cor. 16:13).
12. Luke 12:17 combines these two concepts (“Blessed are those slaves whom their master will find on the alert when he comes; truly I say to you, that he will gird himself *to serve*, and have them recline *at the table*, and will come up and wait on them.”; cp. Rev. 16:15 “Behold, I am coming like a thief. Blessed is the one who stays awake/alert and keeps his clothes, so that he will not walk about naked and men will not see his shame.”).
13. That context is dealing with believers alive and waiting for the 2nd Advent.

14. It is used in connection with the dawning of the day of the Lord which is keyed to the rebirth of national Israel (cf. 1Thess. 5:6, 10).
15. It is used in connection with potential attack of the enemy to overturn a believers Ph 2 (1Pet. 5:8 “Be of sober *spirit*. Your adversary the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.”)
16. Here it is used in a general sense for alertness to any threat (like that of the heresy at Colossae) that might throw believers off course with regards to the truth.
17. In the Ephesian parallel of 6:18 which follows the call to put on the armor of God this same idea is highlighted (“With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert (pres.imper. *agrupneo* with all perseverance and petition for all the saints.”).
18. The verb *agrupneo* is found 4x at: Mk. 13:33; Lk. 21:36; Eph. 6:18 and Heb. 13:17.
19. “In it (prayer) with thanksgiving” is yet another call to be thankful found in this letter (3:16, 17; cp.1:3, 12).
20. Prayer should always include this component (cf. Phil. 4:6 “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.”; also 1Tim. 2:1 “First of all, then, I urge entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgiving be made on behalf of all men.”).
21. This verse (4:2) brings to our attention the total devotion we are to exhibit with respect to prayer.
22. In its own right it is as critical and necessary as is the intake of BD.
23. After this general call to prayer, Paul requests that the Colossians prayer “for us as well.”
24. The pronoun “us” occurs twice in this verse and points to Paul’s coworkers, including Timothy (1:1) and Epaphras (1:7; 4:12), but not to be confined to these men.
25. “At the same time” (adv. *ama*) could also be translated “while” or even “in connection with.”
26. The specific prayer petition Paul is asking the Colossians to engage in as a church is introduced by a purpose clause (adv *hina*).
27. “That God will open up to us a door for the word” indicates that content of the prayers Paul is requesting.
28. “For the word” draws attention to “the word of truth, the gospel” in 1:5 & 6.
29. The metaphor of an open “door” refers to an opportunity for gospel presentation (cf. 1Cor. 16:9; 2Cor. 2:12).
30. A second clause (result) using the conjunction “so that” introduces the subject of the new humanity and a new savior with the expression “the mystery of Christ.”
31. For this noun thus far in Colossians see 1:26, 27; 2:2 and here in this verse.
32. The “mystery of Christ” is both the doctrines of Christology and ecclesiology of which the latter was hidden to those with prophetic insight prior to the revelation on this doctrine granted especially to the apostle Paul (cf. Rom. 11:26; 16:25; 1Cor. 2:7; Eph. 1:9; 3:3, 4, *9; 5:32; 6:19).
33. Paul issued a parallel request for opportunities to declare this mystery to the Ephesians (6:19 “and pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness, the mystery of the gospel.”).
34. This is the same context as that of the Colossian letter.
35. “On account of which I have also been imprisoned” points directly to the reason for Paul’s imprisonment.

36. Paul suffered for the truth he proclaimed to the Gentiles relative to their special standing as saints the present dispensation of the Church.
37. His Jewish opponents didn't like it and did everything they could to stir up the pagan Roman authorities to take action against him.
38. Paul's imprisonment was not some divine slip-up but was designed to show that while the apostle was not free to travel, the word of God was not bound.
39. Paul got to witness to a category of humanity that would have not been possible had he never had an run-ins with the governing authorities.
40. In his call to the ministry he was told that he would take the gospel to rulers (Acts 9:15).
41. Also, in the spread of the word of God to the peoples of the earth over the course of the present age timing in crucial.
42. The relationship between Paul's imprisonment and the "mystery" is that fact that there was great resentment over the fact that all men regardless of race or status were accorded equal status in God's plan of salvation.
43. People resented those who called into question the old traditions and especially had it in for those who taught men how to think and live.
44. In Acts chapters 20-26 the story of Paul's 1st Roman imprisonment and how he ended up in the capital city was his proclamation of the gospel (esp. to the Gentiles).
45. The sentence that begins in v. 3 and concludes in v. 4 contains three clauses the begin with the conjunction "that/so that."
46. The first item that he asks believers to pray for him with respect to is that God opens a door, that is, provides new audience(s) to evangelize and that result in the second clause is that "the mystery of Christ" will be declared.
47. In v. 4 the 2nd result he desires for answered prayer is that when he gets the chance to declare this mystery he will choose the right words for the occasion at hand.
48. Paul would go on trial and there he would have to deal with the charges brought against him.
49. What Paul is saying in these two verses is in his request for prayer support is: (1) Pray that God may open a door (purpose clause) (2) that we may declare the mystery of Christ; (3) so that I might make it clear as to ought to communicate.
50. The first clause focuses on God would open the door (set things up) and the second and third focuses on Paul the communicator.
51. Paul is not content to merely have the opportunity to communicate truth to whoever, but he wants the way he frames it to be just right for any particular occasion.
52. Eph. 6:10-20 constitutes a parallel sentiment to v. 4: "and pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, on behalf of which I am an ambassador in chains, that in *proclaiming* it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak."
53. God gave Paul the opportunity to evangelize and in so doing defend the slander leveled against the Christian faith even while he was a prisoner of the state.
54. Also, 2Tim. 2:9 "for which (gospel) I suffer hardship even to imprisonment as a criminal, but the word of God is not imprisoned."