



"REASONS TO REJOICE"

"Your Words were found and I ate them, and Your Word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart." Jeremiah 15:16

COLOSSIANS LESSON 4

This week we will be wrapping up the book of Colossians as we study chapter 4. We must remember the main theme of Colossians is Christ, the head of all things. He is preeminent and supreme. He is in all, over all, and through all. In chapter 3, Paul discusses the personal characteristics of the new man in Christ (3:5-17) and relationships between the new man and others (3:18-4:1). Paul admonishes them to strive for holiness in their personal and family life, as well as in their work life. It seems that a chapter break would have been more appropriate after 4:1, because Paul continues his exhortations regarding work life, then transitions on to the new man's relationship to the outside world.

As you read, ask the Holy Spirit to show you how this chapter relates to the main theme of the book. How does Paul's conclusion support the main theme? How does this chapter wrap up the entire book? Ask the Lord to show you the answers to these questions and to prepare your heart to receive the admonitions in this chapter.

First Day

1. Begin by reading Colossians 4:1-18. Observe and list the facts you find. Are there any repeated words? Phrases? Thoughts? Any new characters?
2. How does Paul transition from general to specific?

3. How is the theme of the book of Colossians carried through in this chapter? How is this chapter a practical application of 3:17?

4. Whom else does Paul want to read this letter?

5. Whom does Paul refer to? What does he say about each of them?

6. Describe Paul's conclusion.

7. How would you describe Paul's tone?

8. What specific Scripture or thought ministered to you today from this chapter?

We'll end here for today. Paul sure did love people, didn't he? He loved people because he knew that God loved people. He knew Jesus came to seek and save the lost, and he wanted that same heart. Do you love people?

Memory Verse of the Week: "Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one." Colossians 4:6

Second Day

Practice your memory verse. Don't just practice saying the verse, practice "doing" the verse!

1. Read Colossians 4:1. How does Paul tell masters to treat their slaves?
How does the Golden Rule of Matthew 7:12 apply?

2. Why does Paul remind them about their "Master" in heaven?

3. How does this verse apply to us today?

4. Why do you think Paul isn't more specific in his advice to master and slaves in regard to their relationship with each other?

5. How do you treat those who are under your authority? Are you "just and fair," knowing that you also have a Master in Heaven? Do you treat everyone like you would want to be treated, including your children and your husband?

It's important to remember that Paul wasn't trying to reshape or abolish the social structures that existed at the time, but to "Christianize" them. A. Richardson, in his book The Biblical Doctrine of Work, wrote, "The household codes do not give detailed advice for the complexities of modern industrialism. For that matter, they do not even give detailed advice for critical situations which might arise in the first century between master and

slave, when one or both belonged to Christian fellowship. Had such detailed advice been given, in place of the more general exhortations which are found in the codes, readers of other days would derive less help from them than they do. **They embody the basic and abiding Christian principles, which can be applied in changing social structures from time to time and from place to place.”**

Masters were to treat slaves like brothers in Christ, and like they would desire to be treated by the Lord.

Paul now addresses the topic of speech, and it's appropriate that he begins with the subject of prayer, which is the most important thing we can do with our mouth.

6. Read Colossians 4:2-6. What three elements of prayer does Paul give in verse 2?

Paul tells the Colossians to "continue earnestly," or to "devote themselves" to prayer. This phrase literally means "to be courageously persistent" or "to hold fast and not let go."

7. How can we be "courageously persistent" in our prayers? (Are you?)

Paul tells them to be vigilant, or to "keep alert" as they pray. Paul most likely means more than just physical alertness. John MacArthur wrote, "Paul also means that believers should look for those things about which they ought to be praying. Christians sometimes pray too vaguely. To be devoted to prayer requires something specific to pray for. We will never persistently pray for something we are not concerned about. And to be concerned, we must be alert to specific needs."

8. Name some practical ways we can "keep alert" as we pray.
(What can you do to be more alert as you pray?)

9. Paul wants us to pray with thanksgiving. Why does Paul often put prayer and thanksgiving together?

This is the fifth time Paul refers to thanksgiving in this book (1:12, 2:6-7, 3:15, 3:17, 4:2). Prayer and thanksgiving go hand in hand in the Christian life.

10. Read the following verses on prayer and note the exhortation in each.

- A. Mark 14:38
- B. Luke 18:1
- C. 1 Thessalonians 5:17-18
- D. Ephesians 6:18
- E. Romans 12:12

11. Are you slacking in any of the three elements of prayer? Are you being persistent and holding fast? Are you getting and keeping alert? Are you praying with thanksgiving?

12. Are you growing tired of praying for anyone or any specific situation? How do these verses on prayer encourage you?

F.F. Bruce said, "Men and women of persistent prayer are those who are constantly on the alert, alive to the will of God and the need of the world, and ready to give an account of themselves and their stewardship." Does this describe you and your prayer life? Think about it ...

Third Day

Work on your verse. Let the Holy Spirit guard your mouth.

1. Today let's read Colossians 4:2-6 again. Paul moves from a general exhortation to pray, to a specific prayer request for himself. **What does Paul ask them to pray for?**
2. Why doesn't Paul ask them to pray for his release from prison instead?

A "door" in Scripture usually refers to "opportunities."

(1 Corinthians 16:8-9, 2 Corinthians 2:12) Paul continually prayed for opportunities to share the Gospel. He saw prison as that opportunity. He not only prayed for open doors, he looked for them, and he walked through them. He wanted to be able to make the Gospel "manifest," or "clearly understood." He wanted to be able to give a thorough and complete testimony.

3. Do you usually pray for God to get you out of a situation, or that God would use it as an opportunity to share the Gospel? How can we change our perspective?
4. What keeps us from walking through the doors of opportunities that the Lord does give us?
5. Has the Lord set "an open door" before you? Are you willing to seize the moment and grab this season of opportunity for Jesus?
6. In verses 5-6, how are we to live with outsiders, or non-believers?

7. Paul says to redeem the time, or make the most of the opportunity. How do we do that? Why is it so important?

Although Paul reminds them of the special opportunity he has to be a testimony for Christ, he also reminds them that every believer has special opportunities to be a witness and should make the most of them. We are to "make full use" of every season of opportunity. He also tells them to behave wisely in their dealings with unbelievers.

8. Why is it so important to use wisdom when we deal with unbelievers?

Living our life by making the most of opportunities and using wisdom in our dealings with others is important. Paul goes on to tell them that their speech must also be consistent with the Gospel. He points out that the way they answer questions concerning their faith should always be acceptable, gracious, and courteous. This applies generally to our speech as well. To be "seasoned with salt" means that we should be tasty and should have an effect, acting as a purifying influence. Salt adds and enriches flavor.

9. What does it mean to speak with grace?

10. Read Psalm 141:3. Take some time and reflect on your own speech. Do you usually speak with grace? In a wholesome fashion? In a gentle way? Lovingly? Thoughtfully? Do your words add a good flavor to the hearers? Does it have a purifying effect on others? Are there any changes you need to make?

11. How can our speech have an effect on others? How can our speech influence that of others? (How are you influencing those in your home by your choice of words?)

There's a lot to think about in these five verses, isn't there? I pray that our speech would reflect Christ this week. When Jesus spoke, others marveled at the "gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth" (Luke 4:22). What do people do when you open yours?

Fourth Day

Spend some time learning and meditating on your verse. If you have time, write it out and put it on your frig. May it be a reminder that our speech and conduct is a reflection of our King.

1. Read Colossians 4:7-18. How does Paul add a personal touch?

Paul did not minister alone. He had many friends that labored with him in ministry. He loved and valued each one of them, knowing that they had helped him incredibly. Paul knew that spreading the Gospel and the work of the ministry was a team effort and he lends his final thoughts acknowledging those brothers in Christ.

2. Why was Paul sending Tychicus to the Colossians? What commendation does Paul give him?
3. What else do we know about Tychicus? Read Acts 20:4, Titus 3:12, 2 Timothy 4:12, and Ephesians 6:21. (Remember that Tychicus was the one who carried this letter to the Colossians and the Ephesians.) What does his heart to travel for the ministry tell us about his heart?

The next man that Paul names is Onesimus, who was the runaway slave discussed in the book of Philemon. Philemon was one of the leaders in the Colossian church, and his slave ran away to Rome. Somehow he met Paul, who led him to Christ. Paul wrote to Philemon, urging him to forgive him and take him back.

Paul now names three of his Jewish friends; Aristarchus, Mark, and Justus. Aristarchus is sometimes known as the man with a sympathetic heart. Paul referred to him as a fellow prisoner, which means "war captive" or fellow "prisoner of war." He traveled extensively with Paul and appeared to stay with him throughout his imprisonment. (We can read about him in Acts 20:4, 27:2-6, and 19:29). Most scholars believe that he wasn't actually a prisoner, but that he shared Paul's captivity voluntarily. He chose to make Paul's lifestyle his own so he could minister to Paul's needs.

4. Do you have a sympathetic and caring heart like Aristarchus? Do you willingly endure hardships of others in order to minister to their needs? Do you have an Aristarchus in your life?

5. Why do you think Paul makes special note to welcome John Mark? Read Acts 12:25; 13:13, and 15:37-41.

6. John Mark once again became a co-laborer with Paul. What does Paul say about him in 1 Peter 5:13, Philemon 24, and 2 Timothy 4:11? What does this tell us about Paul's heart? What about Mark's heart? What lesson can we learn from this?

7. We don't know anything more about this man Justus in verse 11. What does the fact that he was one of the only Jews tell us about him? Why is he sometimes known as the man with a strong commitment?

8. Are you willing to leave your "people," your "comfort zone," or your group of friends, in order to better identify with Christ? (What does that mean?)

Now Paul mentions three of his Gentile friends who have labored with him. Meet Epaphras, Luke, and Demas.

Remember that Epaphras was the founder of the Colossian church, and had come to let Paul know about the heresy that was facing the church. He continued to labor, or agonize, or fight for them in prayer. He was a good example to the believers in Colossae on what it means to "devote yourself to prayer." Not only did he pray for them, he loved them dearly.

9. What was Epaphras praying for?

10. Do you have a great zeal for those you are ministering to? Are you praying for them fervently? (What about those in your household? Are you "fighting" for them in prayer?)

Luke had the privilege of writing the Gospel of Luke, and was Paul's personal physician. Luke was a traveling companion and close friend of Paul's. During Paul's second Roman imprisonment, only Luke was with him (2 Timothy 4:11). He was loyal to Paul in the face of danger.

11. Our last man mentioned is Demas. Although Demas was standing with Paul at this time, what do we know about his future? Read 2 Timothy 4:9-10.

Demas' love for the world outweighed his love for the Lord and the work of the ministry. We see this happen every day in the church. The pleasures of the world are alluring and attractive, and daily act as a magnet, trying to pull us away from Christ.

12. Is there anything in this present world that is trying to pull you away from Christ? Is something drawing you? How can you fight it?

Ladies, don't be a Demas. Don't abandon the work of the ministry and the call of Christ to satisfy the desires of your flesh. Demas will go down in history as the man who abandoned the ministry to follow the world. Instead of forsaking the world, he forsook the Lord. Ladies, don't be a Demas!

Fifth Day

Write out your verse from memory.

1. Let's read over Colossians 4:10-18 again. As Paul takes time to mention those he loves and have been helpful to him, let's do the same. Make a list of people who have helped you, stood beside you, and encouraged you in ministry. Write their names and what they did. Spend some time in prayer, thanking the Lord for each one of them. (This question is private. You don't have to share it with your group if you don't want to.)
2. Whom else does Paul want to read this letter? Why do you think?

Paul exhorts Archippus to complete the work he had received. Paul's letter to Philemon is also addressed to this man. Some scholars speculate that he was a Roman soldier who had accepted Christ and become part of the Colossian church, or that he may have been Philemon's son.

Paul usually dictated his letters to someone and then ended it with his own hand, letting the recipients know that the letter was really from Paul (1 Corinthians 16:21; 2 Thessalonians 3:17; Philemon 19).

3. Why do you think Paul tells them to "remember his chains" in verse 18?

Now let's take a few minutes to review the book of Colossians. Glance back over your studies and the first three chapters.

4. What is one of the most significant things you learned about Christ from this book?

5. What effect did this book have on your life?

6. Did the Lord reveal any changes you needed to make in your life? Did you make them?

7. What was your favorite chapter, and why?

"And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him."

Colossians 3:17