

# Relationships In And Out Of The Christian Church

This article is a study of **Colossians 3:18 – 4:18**.

**In this part of his God-inspired epistle Paul describes the kind of conduct that true Christians [those whose “life is hidden in Jesus Christ”] should have towards all people in or out of the true Christian Church.**

**Colossians 3:18-19** [New King James] *“Wives, submit to your own husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives and do not be bitter toward them.”*

Paul includes brief comments for Christian marriages, including husbands to have self-sacrificing love towards their wives and put limits on their God-given authority as head of the household.

**Colossians 3:20-21** [New King James] *“Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing to the Lord. Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged.”*

**Paul addresses the children as morally responsible people who care about their relationship with the Creator God.**

Fathers, who are primarily responsible for discipline, are warned to be careful in that role and consider the emotions of their children.

**Colossians 3:22-25** [New King James] *“Bondservants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but in sincerity of heart, fearing God. And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ. But he who does wrong will be repaid for what he has done, and there is no partiality.”*

Paul’s advice for slaves is much more extensive.

Paul does not really mean “*in everything*” for if their masters told the slaves to stop believing in Jesus Christ as their Saviour and Lord, Paul is speaking in generalities, just as he did for wives and children. **Repeatedly Paul connects his commands with the Lord Jesus Christ, Who has something to say about how we conduct ourselves in society.**

Slaves should work sincerely, not reluctantly, whether or not their master sees them, [**verse 23**].

The slave’s position in life, although far from ideal, is a way in which they can serve their Lord Jesus Christ.

**Paul does not publicly call for an immediate end to slavery, that would only invite additional persecution for something that was then politically impossible. But Paul’s teaching paved the way for the eventual abolition of this type of slavery.**

**Although our society is far different, the advice Paul gives here is often relevant to modern employment.**

Even if we feel we are trapped in an unpleasant job, we should be a good worker, because we are servants of Jesus Christ, [**Romans 12:1-2; Acts 20:25**].

**Reliable workers are often rewarded in this life, but there is an even more significant reward for true Christians, [verse 24].**

In the Roman Empire slaves could **not** inherit anything, but in Jesus Christ's Kingdom they do. We belong to Jesus Christ, we work for Him and are rewarded by Him.

In **verse 25** Paul is apparently referring to the rewards or penalties of the final judgement. Misconduct will be viewed negatively and it applies to slave masters as well as slaves.

**Colossians 4:1** [New King James] *“Masters, give your bondservants what is just and fair, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven.”*

Masters must always remember they also have a Master, Jesus Christ, they are slaves of Christ and this should affect the way they treat their slaves.

#### **Good words for everyone –**

**Colossians 4:2-4** [New King James] *“Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving; meanwhile praying also for us, that God would open to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in chains, that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak.”*

**Prayer should be a consistent part of our lives, and we should be watchful or alert to our own response to what is happening to us and what is happening in the world at this end time**, as part of the gospel message reaching the whole world, [**Matthew 24:3-14**].

**Colossians 4:5** [New King James] *“Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time.”*

**One element of wisdom is knowing that our personal conduct with others may affect their attitude to the gospel message.**

**If we are selfish, opinionated and judgemental, our neighbours may find our message hard to believe.**

**Colossians 4:6** [New King James] *“Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.”*

**If our words are gracious, they will make the gospel message more attractive, more likely to be accepted.**

#### **Exchange of greetings –**

**Colossians 4:7-9** [New King James] *“Tychicus, a beloved brother, faithful minister, and fellow servant in the Lord, will tell you all the news about me. I am sending him to you for this very purpose, that he may know your circumstances and comfort your hearts, with Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you. They will make known to you all things which are happening here.”*

Ancient Greek letters often closed with an exchange of greetings, and Paul follows this custom, though he mentions many more friends than most letter-writers did.

Tychicus is probably the fellow servant who carried the letter to Colosse.

Paul says three times that these messengers will bring news of Paul's circumstances, this hints at something important.

Perhaps they will give details which Paul did not want to put in writing lest they be intercepted or censored.

**Colossians 4:10** [New King James] *“Aristarchus my fellow prisoner greets you, with Mark the cousin of Barnabas (about whom you received instructions: if he comes to you, welcome him),”*

Paul once objected to Mark, [**Acts 15:37-38**] but he is now on good terms with Paul.

**Colossians 4:11-13** [New King James] *“and Jesus who is called Justus. These are my only fellow workers for the kingdom of God who are of the circumcision; they have proved to be a comfort to me. Epaphras, who is one of you, a bondservant of Christ, greets you, always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God. For I bear him witness that he has a great zeal for you, and those who are in Laodicea, and those in Hierapolis.”*

Paul saves his longest comments for Epaphras, the person who started the church in Colosse, [**Colossians 1:7**].

Epaphras had a special fondness for these people and Paul could hear his concerns and felt it would be helpful to tell the Colossians what Epaphras wanted for them, that is perfect [Greek means obtaining the goal aimed for] and complete, fully mature.

**Colossians 4:14** [New King James] *“Luke the beloved physician and Demas greet you.”*

Luke is the author of a gospel and the Book of Acts.

Demas mentioned here eventually deserted Paul, [**2 Timothy 4:10**].

**Colossians 4:15-16** [New King James] *“Greet the brethren who are in Laodicea, and Nymphas and the church that is in his house. Now when this epistle is read among you, see that it is read also in the church of the Laodiceans, and that you likewise read the epistle from Laodicea.”*

Paul then greets people in and near Colosse.

Nympha’s church may have been nearby in Hierapolis, and instructs the letter to be read in the church of Laodicea. Paul tells them to exchange the letters he sent to particular churches.

**Colossians 4:17** [New King James] *“And say to Archippus, ‘Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfil it.’”*

Archippus was part of the church that met in the home of Philemon, [**Philemon 2**]. We do not know what “work” he was doing, but Paul encourages him and affirmed its importance.

**Colossians 4:18** [New King James] *“This salutation by my own hand, Paul. Remember my chains. Grace be with you. Amen.”*

Letters were normally penned by scribes who had the experience of writing on papyrus, but the real authors often signed the letters themselves. Grace is central to the Christian life and Paul ends most of his letters on a note of grace.

**Malachi 3:16** [New King James] *“Then those who feared the LORD spoke to one another, and the LORD listened and heard them; so a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the LORD and who meditate on His name.”*

**Where Christians are unable to physically meet with each other, correspondence by letter or telephone is very important to encourage one another to remain faithful to Jesus Christ whatever may happen.**