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Decoding Colossians 4: 10 Truths Every Believer Should Know

Jim Staley



<https://youtu.be/aLuM2LF91W8>

What is the formula for actually being faithful to Christ? We're gonna talk about it at the very end of this broadcast, finalizing all four chapters of the book of Colossians. This is the culmination—the fireworks are gonna go off. The top 10 takeaways from this entire book. What does salt have to do with anything? And how in the world are Mark and Paul back together as friends in ministry? We're gonna unpack it step-by-step, verse-by-verse from the original Jewish Hebrew perspective, bypassing centuries of Christian dogma to get to the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, to do Bible things in Bible ways, coming up right after this.

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conversations about Scripture, faith, culture, and the issues that matter to believers today. The Passion for Truth Podcast, available on YouTube and Spotify every other Wednesday at 7 p.m.

Hello everyone, Jim Staley here, Passion for Truth Ministries, and like always, welcome to our channel, welcome to this week's broadcast, and welcome to the final chapter of Colossians—verse-by-verse study from the original author's perspective, which was not Greek, wasn't Roman, and it wasn't American, believe it or not—it was Jewish. That's right, we love going back to the Hebrew, the original culture, the Semitic languages, learning all of the idiomatic expressions, the jargon of the day, who the people groups were, what the debate was, who were the players in the debate, and all of the above. We want to absolutely know the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Not for the truth's sake, but because truth is a person. The more we learn about this person, the more we learn about what He requires of us, the more we can better transform our lives through the power of His Spirit so that we can better be an ambassador of Him. If this is the type of content that you're looking for, would you please hit subscribe right now? We are all about looking at the Bible from the original author's perspective. We have hundreds and hundreds of videos, both on our YouTube channel, all of our social media accounts, as well as our website at passionfortruth.com, so you can check them out there. Okay, let's begin.

We've been going verse by verse through the entire book of Colossians, and we are ending in chapter four. It's a very short book, but it's powerful because it gives us not only a zoomed-in view, but it gives us a zoomed-out view as well of multiple topics that we've talked about. And so I'm not going to do a review on that quite yet. We're going to do that at the very end. I'm going to do a top 10 takeaways of the book of Colossians as we move through the very short chapter of chapter 4. So stick around to the end, because you're going to get an entire review of the book of Colossians wrapped up in one here in this last chapter. But for now, let us begin.

Let's go over to chapter 4 and verse 1, which strangely should be the last verse of chapter 3, which was talking to bondservants—to people that have sold themselves because of debt, or what have you, into being servants of others. And he ends with this thought, which is the first verse of chapter four: "Masters, give your bondservants what is just and fair, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven." Now, this is revolutionary thought. Now, for us, we read it, we just read right past it, because that's exactly what we should do as nice little Christian boys and girls, right? But in the first century, you don't tell masters what to do. They are the ones that are in charge. That's why they're called the masters. But Paul shows no partiality. As a matter of fact, God Himself speaks through Paul in the very last verse of chapter 3, saying, He has no partiality. And that's why he says, "Look, I'm giving instructions to wives. I'm giving instructions to husbands. I'm giving instructions to children, slaves, bondservants, and their masters." He says to the masters, "Make sure that you're just and fair. Why? Because you have a Master in heaven." And I love this, because he's showing that there is absolutely accountability. Because no matter what kind of authority that you are, if you don't have accountability—he tells the masters to be just and fair because they have a Master themselves. When you are submitted to Christ and ultimately to God Himself, you should understand that every single thing that you say and do to those that are under you, you will be held accountable for. This is why the Bible says teachers will be judged more strictly. Sometimes they're judged more strictly now, and sometimes they're not. Sometimes the judgment is on Judgment Day, and He's going to hold us accountable for every action and how we treated people along the way.

"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." Let's read that again, because I believe there's something here that we need to hear. He says, "Pray that God will open a door to us to speak—even though we are in chains right now—to speak the mysteries of Christ," meaning unpack all of the Old Testament prophecies that have been obscured and not quite so clear. "Help us to unpack that mystery to those that need to hear it, that I may make it manifest as I ought to speak." Guys, this ministers to me, because Paul is probably one of the best orators that have ever lived in the first century, and maybe far beyond that. His only concern is that he only speaks what God wants him to speak, and that he says it in the way that he needs to say it. How often do some of us just speak without thinking? I remember one of the most common phrases that I heard in my house growing up was, "Jimmy, think before you speak." I had it in reverse down very well, which shows that I was Hebrew in thought. I spoke before I thought, but that is not how it's supposed to happen. Paul is very careful to say, "I want the gospel, the mystery, to manifest through me as I ought to speak." What beautiful language that is.

"Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time." And I love this. He says, "Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one." So he's really concerned about how we evangelize, about how we share the gospel, about how we live our lives. And you know what? Most people hear the gospel long before a word—a single word—is ever given to them. They hear it. So if you are giving the gospel without speaking, by the time you actually speak, you'll have credibility. My mentor growing up, when I was a teenager, was the head of a ministry called St. Louis Teens for Christ here. He used to tell me, "Jim, preach the gospel 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. And when necessary, use words." And those words can be salt to those that are listening. Now, why is the author here using salt? Well, this was a very powerful visual analogy that he's using that all of his readers in the first century would have been very familiar with. Salt was a preservative. It added flavor. It was required in every sacrifice. And salt symbolized covenant faithfulness across the board, right? The covenant of salt out of Numbers chapter 18. When you season your words with salt, it means that it's very intentional, because you don't just throw salt on a sacrifice. It's very, very intentional. If you've ever had steaks or chicken and you're seasoning them, you don't just pour the salt all over it. You want to make sure it's even. You're very, very intentional. You have to be very careful that you don't put too much in one spot, not enough in another, and so on and so forth. This is exactly how our speech should be. It should be the exact amount that makes everything that we're saying make sense and pliable in the ears of the ones that are hearing. It's truthful speech, my friends, but delivered with wisdom. Most of us are not delivering our truth with wisdom. We're delivering it with a hammer or a nail gun in some people, but we should be doing it in love, gentleness, and respect, the Scriptures say. It should preserve truth. It should bring life. And it should reflect covenant faithfulness on our part. The gospel message, my friends, it doesn't change. But what Paul's point is, is our approach many times does, and it needs to, depending on who we're talking to.

All right, let's move on to some of his final greetings. He says, "Tychicus, a beloved brother, faithful minister, and fellow servant of the Lord, will tell you all the news about me. I'm 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

the things which are happening here. Aristarchus, my fellow prisoner, greets you, with Mark, the cousin of Barnabas, about whom you received instructions. If he comes to you, welcome him." Now let's stop here for a second, because this is very interesting. This is the same Mark who abandoned Paul on his missionary journeys in Acts 13, leading to a total sharp disagreement between him and Barnabas, if you recall, and it caused them to split. Yet now Paul welcomes Mark as a total valued co-worker in Christ. He's a co-laborer in Christ. Later, he even writes in 2 Timothy 4, I believe it says, "Bring Mark with you, for he's useful to me." So, this is beautiful, because this tells us—in Paul's mind, it shows us that he can get over offense, that the real gospel restores relationships. Failure is not the end of God's story. Let me say that again, because I believe the Holy Spirit just spoke that, and you need to put that in the comments. Failure is not an end to God's story. In our story, the way we all believe, failure is the end. It is the termination of God's story in that person's life. We even have lines where you fail, you fail, you fail, you fail. "Here, we're done with you." God says, "I don't care where you fail. I'm never going to be done with you. Until your last breath is over, then I will judge. Even then, I'm going to defer the judgment until the end of the thousand-year millennial reign of Christ." Failure is not the end of God's story in your life. So, if you feel like you're a failure—maybe you're not a good enough dad, you feel like you're not a very good husband or wife—God says it's not the end. Pick up your cross, look into His eyes, follow Him. Amen.

All right, let's continue. In verse 11: "And Jesus, who is called Justus." Interesting—we have another Jesus in the Bible. Did you know that there's two Jesuses? Did you know, if you're watching this for the very first time, somebody sent this to you, that Jesus is not even the name that His disciples called Him, or anybody in the first century for that matter. There is not even a J in Hebrew. It is Yeshua. Yeshua is what they called Him, which means salvation in the original Hebrew tongue. And when you transliterate Yeshua into both Latin and then Greek and then to modern-day English, it ends up being a transliteration into Jesus. That's where we get to Jesus today. But this Yeshua here in verse 11 is also called Justus. "These are my fellow workers for the kingdom of God who are of the circumcision," meaning that they're Jewish. "They've proved to be a comfort to me. Epaphras, who is one of you, a bondservant of Christ, greets you, always laboring 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. Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas, greets you. Greet the brethren who are in Laodicea and Nymphas and the church that is in his house." Do you see that, my friends? We have, first of all, the church of Laodicea right here next to Colossians. Ephesians is right down the road. That's what we're going to do next. You can check out that series when it's available. But the part that I want to just kind of focus on for 10 seconds is the church that's in his house. You see, all the early congregations were in their homes. It's where all the ministry actually happens. It's in community. You can't run. This is why home groups are so powerful. When you're meeting together with multiple families and you're getting together inside of a home, you're going to do two things—well, four, sharp. You're going to fellowship. You're going to have a fellowship meal, and you're going to have faith. So, it's those three F's—food, faith, and fellowship—that make it so fun. That is where the power of God lies. In the first century, it was inside of these house churches. It started out that way, and ladies and gentlemen, I'm here to say, I'm going to prophesy, it's going to end that way.

Let's close out this chapter and get to the top ten takeaways from the entire book of Colossians. "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. And say to Archippus, 'Take heed to the ministry you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it.'" Now, this is pretty cool, because Paul gives a total public challenge to Archippus. He wants him to "take heed to the ministry you have received from the Lord, that you may fulfill it." What does that mean to us? It means every single believer has an assignment from God. Listen, the question is not whether you have a ministry. The question is whether you will complete it. And most people spend their whole lives looking for a purpose instead of just accomplishing the purpose that's right in front of them. Because if you put one foot in front of the other, you'll be shocked that you actually have won the race. Most people never start the race, because they don't know what the first step is. The first step is the step you're taking right now. The step is not tomorrow. The step is not planned a week from now. It's what does God have you doing right now. Maybe that just means faithfulness and prayer. Maybe it just means that you're waiting on the Lord by loving those around you. Maybe it's just doing the last thing He told you. Well, Paul's words are a reminder that ministry requires perseverance and faithfulness to the end. Now, does that mean that we're always going to be faithful? No. It means that sometimes we're going to really mess up, but we're falling forward. And that's what the book of Colossians is all about.

Alright, so now, here is the top ten takeaways as we close out this entire book.

Number one takeaway from the book of Colossians: He is the Creator. Yeshua is the Creator. It's what he says. He's the Sustainer. He's the Redeemer. He's the head of the body of Messiah. He's the firstborn over creation. He's the firstborn from the dead, and He's the fullness of God dwelling bodily—human form. He's cloaked in humanity. Everything else in Colossians is totally built off of this foundation. So if the Messiah is completely at the very top—He's supreme, if you will—nothing else can compete with Him. And this is what was going on. There were all kinds of mystery religions and even doctrines and traditions of men that were coming down from Jerusalem—Jews that were getting saved, that were coming out of Judaism, that were very, very legalistic. They were trying to add things to Christ, and you can't compare to Christ. Everything is founded—which is number two—everything is found in Christ. The groups that were coming in and messing with this congregation were saying, "Hey, look, Messiah Yeshua, He's good, but you also need this. You need mystical experiences. You need angelic mediators. You need secret knowledge. You need philosophy. You need human traditions and our doctrines and our club membership rules. You need to be like us—see our robes that we're wearing." That diminished Christ down to a very low level, and it was elevating them, which was their entire point.

Number three: the gospel doesn't replace the ongoing story of Israel. This is something you're going to hear on this channel a lot, because we only use the Bible. The Bible is very clear: the entire story from Genesis to Revelation is about this people called Israel. If it weren't so, there wouldn't be 12 gates getting into the New Jerusalem with the names of the 12 disciples on them. There is a lot to be said about this, but for now, the short end of the story is he talks about creation in this book, Passover, the exodus, the inheritance, the Promised Land, circumcision, the firstborn, walking like a new man. All of these concepts are coming right out of the Torah and the prophets. They are not a new made-up doctrine or cute analogies that Paul is making. It's all about the ongoing story of Israel. He's pulling from the prophets to make a point.

All right, let's move on to number four. The problem? Well, it's not the Torah. It's man-made doctrine. Philosophy, human tradition, as we saw in chapter two, asceticism, angel worship, legalistic judgments that were wrong, and man-made regulations as gatekeepers into some sort of higher club membership. This is the problem in the book of Colossians that Paul is dealing with.

Number five: well, we learned this in chapter two as well. The debt of our sin was nailed to the cross, not God's laws or commandments. May it never be. Almost all the translations agree on this point. It's literally just traditional Christian dogma that has read into this, because almost all Christian translations make it very clear, and virtually all Christian theologians agree on this, that the book of Colossians has nothing to do with the Torah at all. It has to do with the traditions and doctrines of men. The Torah was not nailed to the cross, my friends. He says it was the handwritten record of our debt. This is the tickets—the speeding tickets, if you will. Those were removed. When I was younger, that would have been really nice, because I had quite a few. The law reveals our debt. This is why Paul says, "I didn't even know what sin was in Romans 7 until I read it, and then it killed me." Messiah paid for our sins. Those are two completely different things. The law reveals our sins, and the Messiah paid for our sins. If we remove the law, we remove the condemnation, which means we have absolutely no definition of sin. As a matter of fact, nobody can sin, because 1 John 3:4 says sin is the transgression of the law. Get rid of the law, you have no transgressions, which means we don't need a Savior, and we could save a lot of money on mission trips, that's for sure. But the law still is in effect, because people are still sinning, which means they're breaking it, which by default means that it's still there. And that's the right circle to be on.

All right, number six: holiness flows from identity. Let me say that again. Holiness doesn't flow from what you do. Oh, that's really going to step on some toes. "Wait a minute, Jim. God says that if you keep His commandments, you'll be holy." No, no, sorry. Holiness—that's a part of holiness. You're revealing your holiness. Like James says, "Show me your faith without what you do. I'll show you my faith by my works, by what I do." And what He wants to do is the perfect law of liberty—God's commandments. I get it. David is the same way. "Perfect law of light. It's a lamp unto my feet, a light on my path," all of that. That's great. But that's not where it flows from. That's the outward expression of holiness. Holiness flows from identity. Once you understand your identity is in Him—it's not in what other people say, it's not in what you do—your holiness is completely separated from all of those things. He says, "You died, you were raised, and you're hidden in Christ." Now He just simply says, "Now that you have the identity of Christ, live like it." You see, identity produces behavior, not the other way around. Religious circles build identities based on their brand, but their brand almost always never lines up with His. It's always bannerizing their brand. The Christian life is not "try harder," "get better branded," "don't do what your denomination says don't do, and do what it says to do." No, it's "become who you already are in Christ." Know who your true identity is. By the way, if you really want to learn more about that, watch the number one teaching that I have ever produced. It's called Identity Crisis. You can watch it here when it's available. Identity Crisis 2.0 is absolutely going to help you understand your identity and make the whole Bible make sense. Hundreds of thousands of people have watched this over the last 13 years. We've redone it and updated it so that it will be more relevant to your life today. I encourage you to watch that.

Number seven: put off the old man. Put on the new man. That is a simple statement. Put off the old man. Be done with it. Take him, strangle him, throw him out the back, and drown him in the lake. You don't need him anymore. You don't simply stop sinning when you become a believer. You replace. As a matter of fact, this is the only replacement theology that I actually agree with. You replace anger with compassion, lies with the truth, greed with generosity, and bitterness with forgiveness. And there's some of you out there that really, truly are stuck on that last one. You struggle with bitterness because you don't know who your identity is. You let someone hurt you. You heard what I just said—you let someone hurt you. It doesn't mean that you can't be hurt. But if you stay hurt, you're letting them hurt you. Let that sink in for just a moment. If you continue being hurt, you're letting them hurt you. Bitterness will drive you away from your destiny. And what you're looking for is peace and reconciliation in your heart. You'll never find it. Forgiveness is the moment where you crawl up on the cross like He did. And you only say these short words, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Sometimes people don't realize the depth of the hurt they've caused other people. That's okay. We forgive them anyway, because Christ forgave us. Whatever you're holding on to, give it to Him. Paul, he's always replacing darkness with light. Let us be children that live in the light.

That brings us to number eight: everything belongs to Messiah. Half the book of Colossians is about this. Your marriage, your work, parenting, hobbies, your prayer, your speech, evangelism, everything that you do, ministry work for those of us that are in ministry, your thoughts—everything belongs to Him. You cannot separate your spiritual life from your secular life. There is no such thing in biblical understanding. There's no church on the weekend and then Monday morning we're going to go curse like a sailor. No. Go to church and curse like a sailor, or bring church with you Monday morning. But don't be in the middle. Either be hot or cold, the Bible says. Because if you're lukewarm and you're compromising, the Bible says, yeah, that kind of reminds Him of vomit. It makes Him gag. Kind of a crazy thought, isn't it?

Number nine: unity matters. Coming up with these 10, when I came across this, I just kept seeing one, one, one, one, one. And in Hebrew, that word is "echad," echad. And echad, it's not one as a numeral one, or single. It's like a cluster of grapes. The cluster is one cluster, but it's made up of multiple grapes. It's one body, one head, one family, one inheritance, one gospel. Christianity was never designed to be lived alone. Following Christ was never designed to be a solo sport. It's more like those long boats in the Olympics where they have like six or eight people rowing together. The ones that go the fastest are the ones that are in sync. This is what we should be doing. Let's major on the majors and minor on the minors. God is looking for the body of Christ that's growing together.

And number 10, last but not least: those who follow Christ should seek to be mature. What does mature look like? It means humble. It means forgiving, compassionate, truthful, thankful, prayerful, loving, wise, and faithful. Can we all take a minute and just grade ourselves on a scale of 1 to 10? 1 being absolutely terrible, 10 being fantastic. How humble are you? I know I struggle with that. What about forgiving? What about compassionate? I'm growing in that. What about being truthful or thankful? I tend to come from a background of complaining. I don't want to complain anymore. I want to look for something to be thankful for. How about prayerful? I think all of us could spend more time in the dark. Loving? Even when people are not actually lovable? Because isn't that when it really matters? Yeshua said it's easy to love someone that loves you.

How difficult it is to love a tax collector? Why Matthew had such a hard time getting along with the disciples, I would imagine. Wisdom—we should be seeking. And let us be found faithful when it's all said and done. After all, Yeshua says, "Look, regardless of whether you are faithful or not, I'm going to remain faithful." Whether you're faithless, you need something to come back to when you slip and fall. And we've all done it.

So, my friends, we have come to the end of the book of Colossians. It's a book that's inspiring. It's a book that is amazing. And all of this was right before one of the greatest earthquakes that ever hit this area, that destroyed that entire city of Colossae, but never destroyed the church, never destroyed the ecclesia, that faithful assembly. Some of them probably went on to be with the Lord that day, but many went on to be gospel bearers, light bearers in other cities around the world. Here's a question as we close out: What is your light? Are you hitting your full potential in Christ? What does your walk look like? If your children saw you and your thoughts, what would they think? Because that's exactly what God is doing every single day.

All right, my friends, thank you so much for spending time with us here as we've walked through all four chapters in an introduction and a conclusion to this most beautiful book. I pray that as we continue to dive into the Scripture and the Word of God, that you'll be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you'll be encouraged not only just learning the knowledge and the deeper things of God's Word, but you'll learn to apply them to your life, and it will transform you, your spouse, your family, your loved ones, how you think, how you act, how you behave—that you'll be more forgiving, you'll be a little bit more humble, you'll be more compassionate, knowing that you once have made mistakes in your past; that you'll be more truthful, you'll be more thankful, you'll spend more time in prayer, you'll spend more time wrapping your arms around your loved ones and actually loving them. And that will bring you wisdom, cause you to be faithful. That's why faithful is last. Faithful is not first. Faithful is last for a reason. Because until you are humble, you're forgiving, compassionate, truthful, you're thankful, you're prayerful, you're loving, and you gain your wisdom, there's no way to be. You will choose yourself all day long.

All right, my friends, I appreciate the time that you spent. I pray that you would be blessed as I am blessed presenting this to you. If you have not followed our ministry, I encourage you to hit subscribe right now, and like, and send this to someone else. It's the greatest compliment that you can give us. For those of you that are prayer warriors, we could certainly use your prayers every day. We are on the tip of the spear here. The enemy does not want people to hear this message, because it brings people into deeper covenant. And for those of you that understand finances and you recognize that, hey, we are literally just modern-day Levites trusting God with every shekel that comes our way, and you're not a part of a local congregation, and you would like to underwrite us and support us and help us—we've got employees around the world and we are in a growing phase right now, and we need all the help that we can get. You can go to passionfortruth.com in the top right-hand corner, and you can help with your monthly donation. But please don't do so unless the Holy Spirit moves upon you and nothing less. It is our gift to you to be a part of your lives. Thank you so much from my house to yours. I'm Jim Staley, and like always, I'll see you in the next video.

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