

## COLOSSIANS – CHAPTER FOUR

We have so far seen in the first chapter how to draw on our hope, the ‘bank of heaven’ by using our PIN number, faith, so that Jesus Christ really does live His life in us. In the second chapter we are warned about the robbers who would take away our appreciation of our spiritual riches by deluding, deceiving and defrauding us with philosophy, with the traditions of men which tell us what to do, when to do it and what experiences we should have. The Christian security system against these religious burglars operates when we continue to get to know Him better in His word and let Him be in us, by faith, all that He shows us He is.

Continuing the theme which we have developed in this book of the spiritual riches we have in Christ, the third chapter could be titled, ‘How the rich in Christ live.’ The first half of the chapter, 3:1-17, tells us how to live richly and the second half, 3:18-25, outlines what rich living will look like in practice.

We have two choices as we look at life. We can either see the world through man’s eyes as chapter two has described, or we can see it God’s way. Because we have died with Christ to the old way of living and thinking, and risen again with Him it is logical to think from the standpoint of heaven. At the moment the choice seems confusing but when Christ returns it will be perfectly obvious that His way is the only one which makes sense.(3:1-4)

Our old way of thinking simply does not suit us anymore. It was all about pleasure and possessions, and centred on self. It is the way of thinking which God rejected in judgement, and so did we when we first trusted in Him.(3:5-7) The old way of thinking led to a way of talking which was also about self at the expense of others.(3:8,9) It is as simple as discarding old clothes and putting on new ones. The new clothes look like Jesus. Exchanging one for the other is the only answer for anyone regardless of race, religion or social standing.(3:10,11)

Our new clothes in Christ produce a new way of thinking, His way, which forgets me and seeks the best for others. This way of thinking is expressed as a new way of talking and behaving which can be summed up in one word, love.(3:12-14)

Paul gives us three little steps for making this exchange from our thinking, talking and behaving to Christ’s. The three steps are linked together in one common formula, giving thanks. First we are to be thankful that on the cross, Jesus Christ ended the war between man and God, so we have His peace within us. Second we are to be thankful as we explore His word, the account of our riches in Christ, which good Christian songs also put to music to make them easy to remember. Third we are to be thankful as He turns rich knowledge into rich living in every word and action.(3:15-17)

How will rich living look for wives? What suits their new life is a valuing and respecting of their husbands even when they do not get things right.(3:18) How will rich living look for husbands? What suits their new life is God’s kind of sacrificial love for their wives even when they are inclined to be bitter, or sharp with them. Imagine what rich marriages they will have!(3:19; Eph.5:23-33)

How will rich living look for children? What suits them is a willing obedience to parents even when their peers and their adolescent hormones are pushing them towards rebellion and premature independence.(3:20) How will rich living look for fathers? What suits them is a relationship which does not exasperate their children, literally – stir them up to anger. What angers children most about fathers is excessive absence, selfishness and inconsistency.(3:21)

How will rich living look for slaves, and presumably today employees? Their new life will allow them to look beyond their often unreasonable, demanding and uncaring bosses to an unchanging Master in heaven.(3:22-25)

Chapter four concludes with a quick summary of the how of rich living and some examples among Paul's friends of those who did live richly. I suggest the following sections – verses 1; 2-6; 7-9; 10-17 and 18.

#### SECTION ONE – 4:1

Q.1 How will rich living look for masters? How would being this sort of employer look today? What might it change industrial relations? Would employment laws still be needed?

#### SECTION TWO – 4:2-6

Q.2 How will rich praying look? When, how and for whom are we to pray? What result should we expect? What kind of ministry comes out of rich praying?

Q.3 How will being rich in Christ show in our behaviour towards strangers? What will become our priority when we meet new people? How will this change the way we talk to them? What do you suppose 'speech always with grace, seasoned as it were with salt' sounds like?

#### SECTION THREE – 4:7-9

Q.4 Who were the two who carried this letter from Rome to Colossae? How does Paul describe the first one? How would these qualities help him to carry out his task? What else do we know about him?(Acts 20:4; Eph.6:21; II Tim.4:12; Tit.3:12) What else do we know about the second message bearer?(Philemon 10)

#### SECTION FOUR – 4:10-17

Q.5 Six of Paul's old friends send greetings to the Colossian Christians. List them and see what else you can find about them elsewhere in the New Testament. From what race, town, or occupation had they come? How does the information about them here help to fill in events elsewhere in which they are involved?

Q.6 What do we already know about Epaphras?(1:7) How had his concern for his own people continued after going to Rome? How had his prayer for them helped them? Was Nympha's home unusual in the New Testament?(Rom.16:5; Philemon 2)

Q.7 What is surprising about 4:15,16 in the light of Rev.3:14-22? How does Paul's message to Archippus apply to all of us?

#### SECTION FIVE – 4:18

Q.8 Did Paul always write with his own hand?(Rom.16:22; I Cor.16:21; Gal.6:11; II Thess.3:17) What were his circumstances at the time of writing? How was he able to live richly in such conditions?