

Colossians – Chapter 4
“Fulfilling Our God-given Ministry”
Colossians 4:15-18

Verse 15

1. Paul sends greetings to the brethren in Laodicea. Colosse, along with Laodicea and Hierapolis, formed a tri-city area (4:13). Obviously, the churches corresponded and interacted with one another.
2. Paul then mentioned a man by the name of Nymphas. We know nothing about this man, other than there was a local church that met in this man’s house.
 - Some have speculated that the church in Laodicea met in his house.
 - Some have speculated that this man had another church in Colosse that met in his house.
 - It could be that his church was the church in Hierapolis.
3. It was very common for churches to meet in people’s homes in the first couple of centuries of church history. Remember, the Roman government was in control and was not a friend of Christianity. Public buildings would not have been readily accessible.
4. There are those (who love to get an axe to grind) who teach (based on verses like this) that the local church should **only** meet in homes, and church buildings are “unbiblical.”
 - What a lack of common sense!
 - This is like saying that all church correspondence should be handwritten because there are four different times that Paul mentions that he wrote letters with “*his own hand.*”
5. There is no verse that **commands** local churches to meet in homes. The early churches did it out of necessity.
6. The building structure is inconsequential because the church is not the building, the church is the people!
7. The apostle Paul met in the school of Tyrannus for two years while starting the church at Ephesus. Acts 19:9

Verse 16

1. Paul desired that this letter to the Colossians also be read to the church **in** Laodicea. Then Paul mentions a letter that he wanted the Colossians to read **from** Laodicea.
2. Right away, the astute Bible student recognizes that we have no book in our Bible called “Laodiceans.” What is Paul talking about here? Are we missing this letter? Did it get lost? Even worse, are we missing part of God’s Word?
3. We surely are not missing part of God’s Word. If God is powerful enough to inspire His Word and give it to man, God surely will not lose His Word after it is given. We can be assured that we hold the inspired, preserved, and complete Word of God!

4. So what is this letter? Notice, Paul did not say that he wanted the Colossians to read the epistle **to the Laodiceans**. He simply wanted them to read the epistle **from** Laodicea.
5. They had a letter in their possession that Paul wanted the Colossians to read also. It could have been the letter to the Ephesians because Ephesus was not far away and most likely had connections with these churches through Epaphras.
6. I don't believe that Paul wrote a letter specifically to the Laodiceans and that letter was lost. If this was the case, it would make no sense when Paul tells the Colossians to greet the brethren in Laodicea (vs. 15). If he had written them a **personal** letter, there would no need to send greetings through the Colossian church.
7. But even if Paul **did** write a separate letter specifically to the Laodiceans, and that letter was lost, there is still nothing to fear or worry about.
 - Every word that Paul wrote in his life was not inspired by the Holy Spirit.
 - Like any other man, Paul probably wrote lots of notes and letters in his lifetime.
 - He was only inspired by the Holy Spirit when he wrote words that God desired to be preserved in His Word for the future.

Verse 17

1. Who is Archippus? When we cross-reference Philemon 2, it would seem that he was a family member of Philemon's (possibly his son), and it would also appear that he assumed the leadership of the church when Epaphras left to go and see Paul.
 - We cannot prove any of this conclusively, but we are attempting to connect the dots.
2. Paul has a special word of admonition and encouragement to this man. *"Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfill it."*
3. When Epaphras left, he left Archippus with a handful. There were all kinds of false teachers that had infiltrated this church and were attempting to lead these people away from a walk of faith in the sufficiency of Christ.
4. Archippus was dealing with Jewish legalists, Gnostics, religious mystics, teachers of philosophy, and asceticism. He's thinking, "Thanks Epaphras!" Now we know why Epaphras decided to stay with Paul!!!
5. Pastors of churches face many difficult situations, and they sometimes carry a heavy load, and they need encouragement. Paul sensed that this young man needed encouragement.
6. He encouraged him to take heed to his ministry. This carries the idea of looking carefully after it. The opposite would be a person who is very flippant and careless about his ministry.
7. Paul reminds Archippus that he received his ministry *"in the Lord."* It is God's grace that allows us to minister for Him. We must remember that our ministry isn't to be done unto the pastor, or any other man; it is to be done unto the Lord. We receive it in the Lord.

8. Paul also admonished Archippus to fulfill his ministry.
 - The word “fulfill” carries the idea of accomplishing or completing something. Basically, Paul is cheering him on and saying, “Don’t quit, Archippus!”
 - Paul wanted Archippus to be able to say what Paul said at the end of his life, “*I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith.*” 2 Timothy 4:7
9. Christian, I know that sometimes it can get discouraging when we serve the Lord. People can let us down and disappoint us. People can do the craziest things. The problems of life can threaten to swallow us up. Sometimes, in moments of fleshly weakness, we can be tempted to think, “Is this worth it?”
10. But sooner than you think, you will be standing before your Savior, and when you stand before Him, wouldn’t you love to hear Him say, “You fought a good fight, you finished your course, and you kept the faith. Well done.”

Verse 18

1. “*The salutation by the hand of me Paul*”
 - This was a characteristic mark of Paul. He would always sign his letters and end with “*Grace.*”
2. Isn’t it touching that he also adds, “*Remember my bonds.*”
3. People today are so consumed with their stocks and bonds and whether they are gaining or losing. Paul had a different kind of stocks and bonds – the kind you receive in prison.
4. Paul wanted them to remember his bonds (his physical condition) because it was for the sake of the gospel and lost souls that he had those bonds.
5. In particular, it was because of his faithfulness to the heavenly call to take the gospel to the Gentiles. Paul called himself “*the prisoner of Jesus Christ, for you Gentiles.*” Ephesians 3:1
6. Paul was faithful to the Lord, and it cost him a great deal, and ultimately his very life. Faithfulness doesn’t always reap earthly dividends, but it sure reaps an eternal, heavenly harvest!
7. Christian, be encouraged. You are complete in Christ, and have everything you need in Him. There is no need to look anywhere else. You are fully equipped in Christ.