

## A Concluding Assignment # 15

Colossians 4: 15-18

We have spent several weeks moving through the book of Colossians and tonight we come to Paul's closing thoughts. He has instructed and challenged them in many areas of Christian service. The troubles they faced had not miraculously vanished, but I am sure they felt encouraged and better equipped to deal with the struggles they face. The same is true in our lives as well. The Bible is God's Word given to us for our benefit. Studying and applying the Word to our lives will not necessarily remove the troubles we encounter, but it does provide instruction and comfort as we navigate the stormy sea of life. We realize our hope is secure in Christ the Lord, and this life, even though filled with difficulty, is but a temporal span that prepares us for eternity.

After taking time to study the depths of such a profound portion of Scripture, we are often tempted to hurriedly read the closing thoughts. We tend to think the meat is in the middle and the introduction and conclusion have less importance. Remember, all Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for our lives. God gave Paul a word for the Colossians, as well as each of us, in these closing comments. He leaves them with some final challenges. I want to consider these [challenges](#) as we think on: [A Concluding Assignment](#). We are challenged to develop:

**I. An Appreciation for the Saints** (15) – [Salute the brethren which are in Laodicea, and Nymphas, and the church which is in his house](#). Paul shared the blessing others had been to him in ministry and he challenged Colossae to develop an appreciation for those whom God had placed in their lives. They were to embrace those who served alongside them. Paul offers insight as to why we should appreciate the saints of God.

**A. Their Character** – These were [brethren](#) in the faith. We have discussed this at length, but it bears repeating. These had come to faith in Christ as well. They were striving to serve the Lord while facing similar difficulties. They too were sharing the Gospel with a desire to see others saved. They were part of the body of Christ and should be embraced as such.

- The modern church needs challenged in this area. We tend to be exclusive in ministry rather than inclusive. As I have said, we are not expected to abandon biblical standards, but we could do a better job of embracing the brethren. There is much jealousy and skepticism among churches. We tend to think that others must worship and serve the Lord exactly as we do if we are to fellowship with them or support their work. We serve the same Lord even though our approach may not be exactly the same. We need to develop a healthy appreciation for our brethren.

**B. Their Cooperation** (15) – Salute the brethren which are in Laodicea, and Nymphas, and the church which is in his house. Paul emphasized the church was not limited to Colossae. They did not have a monopoly on the message. He urged them to cooperate with fellow believers in surrounding areas. They were called to serve at Colossae while others were called to serve in Laodicea. He knew they would be stronger and accomplish more working together.

- There is no place in ministry for lone rangers, whether it is an individual or a congregation. We cannot fulfill the Great Commission by ourselves. I am convinced that I serve the true and living God. I have no doubt that Jesus is the only way of salvation; He is the only One who can give eternal life. However, I do not have a monopoly on the message. We are blessed with sister churches that are actively engaged in ministry and bearing fruit for the Lord. We must be willing to embrace them, support them, and work together with them! [Ecc.4:9-10 – Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour.](#) <sup>[10]</sup> For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him *that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up.*

**C. Their Commitment** (15b) – Paul spoke of [Nymphas, and the church which was in his house](#). He was a committed servant of the Lord. In a time when Christians were persecuted for their faith, Nymphas had the courage and resolve to welcome fellow believers into his home for worship. He was willing to make a personal sacrifice for the good of the church.

- I have to say we need to share that commitment. Many are unwilling to faithfully attend services at the house of God, much less inconvenience themselves by hosting services in their home. I am however thankful for those who are committed to the church and willingly give of themselves for the good of others. I had rather see commitment in one less gifted than to have the most gifted people on occasion. We ought to appreciate the faithfulness of others. We wouldn't enjoy our service as much, and it would be much more difficult, if we had to serve the Lord alone.

**II. An Acquaintance with the Word** (16) – [And when this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and that ye likewise read the epistle from Laodicea.](#) Paul now offers a challenge to become fully acquainted with the Word of God. He declares:

**A. It is to be Read** – Paul fully expected the church to read the epistle he had written. He knew it was given of the Lord and would be beneficial for the church. God had not given them a word to be placed upon the shelf to gather dust. It was to be read and embraced.

- I fear we have become a people who are basically illiterate concerning the Word of God. Many have attended church for years, but do not have a steady diet of the Word. They may be

exposed to it during weekly services, but they are not committed to reading and studying the Bible. If you expect to get all you need from Sunday school and the preaching service, you will be a weak Christian. Take time to read the Word, study it, and meditate upon it.

**B. It is to be Recommended** (16) – *And when this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans;* Paul knew this epistle would not only benefit Colossae, but other believers as well. He charged them to ensure its reading in Laodicea as well. They were to recommend the Word to others. They were expected to emphasize its importance and actively promote the reading of the Word.

- I make no apology for my stand upon the Word of God. I am convinced we have the God breathed, infallible, inerrant, eternal Word of God. I recommend the Bible be read by everyone. The importance of the Word cannot be overemphasized. It must be the central part of worship. It must be central in our lives. Each of us must spend time daily in the Word. Rather than apologize for it, as some do, we ought to be the Bible's most passionate supporters and promoters!

**C. It is to be Respected** (16) – *And when this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and that ye likewise read the epistle from Laodicea.* Paul was not being arrogant in urging the reading of this epistle by others. He knew it may have been written by his hand, but ultimately it was given of God. He knew this was to be received as God's Word. We too need that same respect for God's Word. It is not irrelevant for modern society. It is not a book that is obsolete, it is absolute! The Bible must be the final authority for all of life and practice. If God said it, that settles it, period!

- Quickly let's address the latter portion of the verse. We cannot just pretend it isn't there. Paul speaks of *the epistle from Laodicea*. Naturally we do not have that epistle in our Bible. Some believe it to be a letter written from Laodicea, others think it to be the apocryphal epistle to the Laodiceans, and some even believe it to be a genuine epistle that was lost. Some suspect Paul may have been referring to the Ephesian letter since it was widely circulated among the early church. Suffice it to say, we really don't know exactly what letter or epistle Paul is referring to. There are many apocryphal books that did not make it into the canon of Scripture. I am convinced God has given us all we need. In fact, the majority of humanity doesn't read and study the Bible we have, so it is foolish to think they would read it if it included more than it does. I have no doubt the Bible was given by inspiration of God and we must respect His Word as such. *John 1:1 – In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>[14]</sup> And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.*

**III. An Admonition to the Weary (17)** – [And say to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it.](#) Paul urged the church to admonish one of their members in particular, Archippus. We don't have any specifics concerning Archippus or the work he was engaged in. It is interesting to note that the word translated [ministry](#) here is the same word used to translate [deacon](#) in other portions of Scripture. It speaks of a "*servant, literally a table waiter.*" We don't have enough detail concerning Archippus to make an assumption. Some feel as if he had begun to waver in his faith or had become unfruitful in service. It may well have been that he had grown discouraged or weary from the struggles he was forced to endure. Paul wanted the church to remind him of whom he had received this ministry and challenge him to remain committed unto it, seeing the work fulfilled. The church needed to encourage one who had grown weary.

- We all get weary in the journey from time to time. We all have seasons of discouragement and difficulty. During those seasons we need the encouragement of others. We need to care enough for the spiritual condition of others to challenge them in the faith. None should be offended with a reminder of Whom we serve and the obligation we all have to remain committed. If I ever considered giving up, I would hope others would challenge me to reconsider.

**IV. An Association with the Apostle (18)** – [The salutation by the hand of me Paul. Remember my bonds. Grace be with you. Amen.](#) Lastly Paul challenges them to consider their association with him and remember his condition. Consider:

**A. The Confidence (18a)** – [The salutation by the hand of me Paul.](#) If there had been any doubt concerning the letter, Paul reminds them it was written of him. Often he had others pen his words for him, but he encourages them that the salutation was written of his own hand. Not only the closing thoughts, but the entire letter had been given of the Lord and sent by Paul. They should be confident in its authority and challenged by its admonition.

- This serves as a final reminder in our study of Colossians to the authority of Scripture. We must look at every passage, every verse, and every word as given from the Lord. We do not have to worry or wonder about its source or its benefit. The Word has power and we can trust its every word will full assurance!

**B. The Charge (18b)** – [Remember my bonds.](#) Paul also reminded them that he had written this letter while bound in prison. He was not seeking their sympathy, but desired and appreciated their prayers. He offers a reminder of the price that some pay for being committed to sharing the Gospel. They enjoyed freedom while others faced persecution and bondage. The least they could do was stand with Paul in prayer.

- We need reminded as well. We all face struggles and difficulties in life. None are exempt from trials. I have to admit though, we are blessed beyond measure. The trials I have faced do not compare to the struggles many have faced in other parts of the world. We must pray for the body of Christ, remembering that His body is global, not just here in the United States. We are obligated to pray for fellow believers throughout the world, many of whom risk their lives for their faith.

**C. The Comfort (18c)** – *Grace be with you. Amen.* Paul concludes the letter with a prayer that they might experience God's grace in their lives. This must've brought comfort to their hearts. Paul was bound in prison and yet he prayed for them to experience grace. He longed for them to enjoy God's unmerited favor. He wanted them have peace in the midst of trials through grace. He had been a recipient of such grace and desired the church to receive its abundance as well.

- The grace of God is wonderful and marvelous. We have received far more than we deserve. I am thankful for the grace of God that was extended, and continues to be extended, in my life. We should desire everyone to experience grace as we have. We should pray that others enjoy grace as we do. Life is difficult at best, but by God's grace we will make it!

**Conclusion:** These few verses of conclusion have offered a great challenge for us. Just as the Colossian's were challenged to carry out this final assignment, we too receive the same challenge. Are we willing to embrace the Word of God and live according to it? Are we concerned for the welfare of others? If so, does our concern compel us to give of ourselves, going out of our way to encourage others and be a help to them? Are we doing all we can for the Lord and His kingdom? If not we should.

This final chapter dealt with those who were born again, members of the body of Christ. There is no greater blessing or joy than to have the assurance of being part of the body. If you belong to Christ, you have reason to rejoice and praise Him. If you do not belong to the body, Christ desires to save you and place you within the body. There is room for you if you will receive Him by faith!