

6/2/19 - Col. 4:7-18 - "We are His Church"

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[0 : 00] Please pray with me. Lord God, we are grateful for a space to gather under your word, a place that we can do life together, a place that we can sing to one another, a place where we can teach one another, that we can bear with one another, we forgive one another. Father, you established this, and the purpose of this establishment is far beyond anything that we can comprehend in our material, the material realm of what exists, but Father, this is supernatural, that Father, we are in the business of saving souls, of using you as our method of proclaiming the good news to those who desperately need it, especially in the north side of Youngstown here.

And Father, we pray at this time, as we enter your word, that we acknowledge that this word is not just a bunch of words scattered on a page, it's not just a letter that Paul wrote to the book, to the Church of Colossae. But Father, you use this as a transcendent method to speak and communicate and reveal your will to your people. And Father, with that, challenge us today. Let us look at your word and let us be encouraged, but let us also be challenged. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. I didn't hear that. Amen? Okay. Colossians 4, verse 7 reads, They will tell you of everything that has taken place here. Aristarchus, in verse 10, my fellow prisoner, greets you. And Mark, the cousin of Barnabas, concerning whom you have received instructions, if he comes to you, welcome him. And Jesus, who is called Justice, these are the only men of the circumcision among my fellow workers for the kingdom of God, and they have been a comfort to me. Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ Jesus, greets you, always struggling on your behalf in his prayers, that you may stand mature and fully assured in all the will of God. For I bear him witness that he has worked hard for you and for those in Laodicea and Heriopolis. Luke, the beloved physician, greets you, as does Demas. Give my greetings to the brothers of Laodicea and to Nympha and the church in her house. And when this letter has been read among you, have it also read to the church of the Laodiceans, and see that you also read the letter to Laodicea.

And say to Archippus, see that you fulfilled the ministry that you have received in the Lord. I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. Remember my chains. Grace be with you.

In this passage in Colossians, as he makes his final greetings to this church, we meet actually a lot of different individuals. And these different individuals, we're going to be talking about, just hitting them briefly, I'm not going to spend a lot of time in the sermon. We're going to continue with our pause praying and proceeding this morning. But what I want to hit is two vital things in this passage that we have to draw out. But we see his two messengers here in this verse. In verse 7 through 9, we see Tychicus. He says, Tychicus will tell you in verse 7 about all my activities. He is a beloved brother and faithful minister and a fellow servant in the Lord. And then we also meet Onesimus.

[4 : 16] So we meet Tychicus and Onesimus. And the purpose of him drawing out, why do we meet these two men? Well, because he's sending them for encouragement. They were two men that were used as sort of like errand runners for Paul to send encouragement to other churches. We see in verse 10 and 14, we see in verse 10, Aristarchus, my fellow prisoner, greets you and Mark, the cousin of Barnabas, concerning whom you have received instructions. If he comes to you, welcome him and Jesus, who is called Justice. We meet Aristarchus and Jesus, not Jesus Christ, but Jesus, a different Jesus, who is also called Justice. And look specifically in verse 11. It says, these are the only men of the circumcision among my fellow workers for the kingdom of God, and they have been a comfort to me. And obviously, when we started the book of Colossians, we met Epaphras, who is one of you. He was the minister of the church of Colossae, and he is a servant of Christ Jesus. So Epaphras greets you, and it says in verse 12, always struggling on your behalf in his prayers that you may stand mature and fully assured in all the will of God.

And then we also see in verse 14, we meet Luke, the beloved physician, the author of Luke, the gospel of Luke. The beloved physician greets you, as does Demas. So Aristarchus, Mark, Jesus,

Epaphras, Luke, Demas.

Paul writes about these men to say, look at these men, because he's asking the Colossians to greet them. And then finally, in verse 15 through 16, we see Paul's directives, specific directives in regions around Colossae. In verse 15, give my greetings to the brothers of Laodicea and to Nympha in the church in her house. And when this letter has been read among you, have it also read in the church of the Laodiceans, and see to it that you read the letter from Laodicea. We see a directive in these two verses of Paul giving clear directions to the Colossian church to spread this word.

In verse 17, as you read God's word and some things stand out, as seem like odd, like they don't fit. This is something that definitely doesn't fit, I would say. We meet a man called Archippus with a specific directive from Paul. All along, he was building up these men saying, these are my faithful brothers, these are my beloved brothers, and these are the guys who you need to greet. But then there's Archippus. He says in verse 17, see to it, and say to Archippus, see to it that you fulfill the ministry that you have received in the Lord. There's a special directive and a special reminder to this one individual who is definitely standing out from the other pack. And then finally in verse 18, it concludes, I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. Remember my chains. Grace be with you. And then Paul's final reminders in this passage, indicating his authorship and his deep concern for them, which highlights his authority and the motives that the Colossian church should model. I know, that's a, that's an earful. I understand.

[8 : 00] Paul just basically highlighted all these specific men who had specific roles, specific purpose, and specific relationship in Paul's life. Eight men all together. When we think of Paul's ministry, what often comes to mind is probably Paul sitting in a prison cell, possibly, writing on a piece of papyrus, making a manuscript. But however, we see in this passage and in these collection of verses to the end of this book that Paul opens up a whole new realm of his ministry, which is actually rooted in the partnership of others. That, in fact, Paul's ministry was not about him. It was, he was highlighting that it was actually about all these other individuals. So he, he introduces all throughout this book, we didn't know these men existed until the, the last, last couple passages in this book.

Mark, Tychicus, Onesimus, Aristarchus, Mark, Jesus, Epaphras, Luke, and Demas, all of whom Paul speaks highly about and reinforces their integrity and missional efforts of working alongside of Paul in some way or another, whether distant or near. And Paul was not one man, he was not a one-man show.

If there was any credit to give to Paul, it was the credit of his fellow co-workers for the gospel. Their participation mattered extremely in that, and it was actually vital within the laboring of which Paul was commissioned to pursue. And then he mentioned Archippus. Why this man? Why did, why does Paul mention this man? Why does he specifically direct this man? He needed a unique reminder, archipus. This is a man who reminds me of, uh, the person who just kind of plays it safe, possibly.

Kind of, um, doesn't get too deeply involved in gospel efforts. Kind of, maybe doesn't, uh, doesn't get involved. Like, if we could mention Archippus in today's day and age, somebody who just maybe attends church or, um, or once in a while attends, gets involved once in a while, but, you know, doesn't get, get too, too risky in their, their gospel efforts. I think it's important to know that if we are in partnership with the gospel in today's day and age, we would want Paul to address us as the other faithful brothers and beloved brothers that he mentions, that we don't want to be Archippus. There is urgency and participation. It is vital for this ministry of this church.

Remember, we do not labor for any man, but we labor for the Lord, that all of our efforts are not for, for any specific person on this earth. But we mentioned it in, in chapter 3, verse 22 and 25, that's, you know, the slave and the master relationship, that's, our laboring efforts are for the Lord and the Lord alone. So again, Paul was not a one-man show. If there was any credit to be given, it was the credit of his fellow co-workers, of who he highlights very clearly in this passage.

[11 : 19] Our participation mattered extremely, and this was vital within the laboring of which Paul was commissioned to pursue. He didn't do it alone, and he couldn't do it alone. And the same rings true within our midst today, the fundamental problem in churches is the failure to realize the actual meaning of church. This literally means, in the passage, it literally means an assembly of people, ecclesia, an assembly of gathered believers. We fail to realize this, what this actually means for us today. Now, like I mentioned a couple weeks ago about sometimes the impression of churches like

a ecclesiological buffet of like, oh, I wonder what amenities this church has, or what programs they have, they have to, to have for me to get plugged in. If, if that is what church is to us today, as, as it is common in this day and age, we are missing something vital. The church is defined by its gathered people.

The church is literally the collaborative efforts of, of the assembly of people who are united in mission and in purpose. But this is the church. And the church is, if, if there's any success in the ministry of the church, it is obviously due to God, but however, it is also completely dependent upon the efforts of his people working together, being united, bearing with one another, forgiving one another, and always, always being united in, in mission and in purpose. And the church is a gathering of people who utilizes their spiritual gifts that God has given to them for a purpose. When he transferred you from darkness to light, he has instilled with you, he has, he has given you a new identity, a new nature, and bestowed upon you spiritual gifts to be used to glorify him within our gathering, to build up the body. And specifically in Paul's ministry, some labored along Paul as hands-on co-workers. They were faithful and beloved. We met them, Tychicus and Onesimus, in verse 7 and 9. But there were also those who labored by way of encouragement, comforts. So there were distant relationships, there were near relationships. Literally, Paul's talking about Tychicus and Onesimus. They were glorified errand runners.

Go and, I have sent these men on my behalf. When I survey specifically Youngstown Metro Church, and specifically our gathering, I see fellow partners in this church's mission and purpose.

I see Dom back on the computer, and I look and identify him as a partner in the gospel. I see Stu back on the soundboard as simple as it might sound, but he is a partner in the gospel.

We have Matthew Bushling's son, and usually Zach Brode, back on the coffee, gospel partners. If you go downstairs right now, you'll see, hopefully, six adults serving the little ones downstairs.

[14:42] I see them as faithful and beloved partners in the gospel. I see Matt, who's a faithful brother and an elder of this church. I see Sarah, who does so much for us behind the scenes with our finances and accounting, that not a lot of people see, but these are all behind the scenes. Some are directly contact gospel partners. Some are behind the scenes.

I see PJ, who is in here with us today, who is a gospel partner. Rick, who couldn't make it with us today, who is a gospel partner. Even the cleaner. We get this building cleaned. I think every Friday or something like that.

She doesn't even attend this church, but she's a gospel partner, and I make it known to her that she is part of this mission of the church when we meet her. You see, church, we are his church.

We are the local establishment of this assembly body. We are to be actively partnered in this mission and purpose of this church, and it's not about me.

It's not about, it's all about him. It's about him working through you, church. God is calling you to get in the same game, and I am here specifically to equip you with that, that I labor and I toil to present you as mature, to equip you, to give you opportunity to serve along with me.

[16:16] I'm here to support you and to work together with you as the Lord uses us throughout this summer to glorify him. So the last part of this passage is actually interesting because it reveals something extremely important.

important. We see Paul's heart. We see a concerned suffering as we wrap up today.

Paul's concluding words are seen here. We understand something vitally important of which Paul has been constantly reminding the church of Colossae about. He says, remember his chains.

Interesting, Paul.

Well, way to end the slam dunk here. You know, I thought you were going to mention a couple more guys and a couple more partners, but he said, remember my chains, which should indicate to the Colossians, that should indicate to us today, to remember his suffering, that it was not easy, that this partnership is not easy at all. If you're looking for something easy, and if it actually is easy, I wonder if you're actually doing the will of the Lord because there is suffering that is involved in this. Paul uses this circumstance to highlight and to model what true gospel concern looks like in this partnership, what it looks like and how we should be used as a model to reflect to others.

Looking back and surveying through the book of Colossians, we see that Paul had the best interest of the Colossians in mind. We see in Colossians 1, 3 through 5, it says, we always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints because of the hope laid for you in heaven, of this you have heard before in the word of truth, the gospel. We see his concern for the Colossians, we

see in chapter 1, verse 24, now I rejoice in my suffering for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is the church, of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God that was given to me for you. It's not about Paul. And also in verses 29, he says, him we proclaim, the church, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom that we may present everyone mature in [18:46] Christ, for this I toil struggling with his energy, that he may, he powerfully works within me. And then finally in Colossians 2, 1, he says, for I know how great a struggle I have for you and for those in Laodicea and for all those who have not seen me face to face, that their hearts may be encouraged.

Paul's concern for the Colossian church was extremely deeply rooted in his own concern that this entails suffering, that this entails his own laboring and toiling. It's the very thing that put him behind bars. Now in this passage, as he highlights and models what true gospel concern looks like, he emphasizes his specific concern for his co-workers as well. This motivates the readers, this equips the readers, but it also challenges the readers. It motivates his readers to sympathetically listen to all of what he's previously exhorted the church throughout this entire letter. It equips them to get in the game, to not be Archippus sitting on the sideline and needing a reminder to be faithful brother and gospel partner in this work, to get in the game and encourage those who are actively already participating in that. But it also challenges people like Archippus to get back in. Because our time is actually not ours, it is God's. Every minute that we have on this earth, every breath in our lungs is because God has given it to us. And we are not promised tomorrow, we're not promised another minute in this service. Time is of the essence for those in sin. So as I close today, as we continue, let's praise God for those who are in the game here at Young Sun Metro Church. The ones who are visibly seen, who are mostly invisibly seen behind the scenes, and seize every moment together for his glory through our church. If this is not you, if you're not in the game here at this church, what are you waiting for? Because opportunity awaits. His mission is here and now. I pray that we do this together as we continue this service, that you reflect on the testimonies of what God is doing, because we are his church. Please pray with me.