

## Colossians 4:7-18 September 21, 2008 - Skip MacMillan

### The Church

Wide variety of people, needs, and issues in the church.

#### **Diverse but One Body of Christ**

##### **1. Diverse:**

Men and women, Jews and Gentiles, a doctor, slaves, masters, husbands, children, wives, missionaries, etc.

All knowing Christ, all carrying on the mission of Christ, all having a part in the body of Christ.

##### **2. Not one person or pastor; no cult of personality:**

"What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe – as the Lord has assigned to each his task. I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow" (1 Cor. 3:5-7).

##### **3. One Body of Christ, Romans 12:5-8:**

"So in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching let him teach; if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully."

##### **4. What binds them together?**

### Needs in the Church:

#### **Communicate:**

Sending two to Colossae to inform them of what is going on in the world and to "encourage your hearts."

We need to be informed about what is going on around the world so we don't lose sight of God's bigger picture, reminding them they are not alone. There is a web stretching around the world - there is a bigger picture - you are a part of it and we care for each other.

#### **Challenged to finish well:**

**Archippus** - "See to it that you complete (continually fulfill) the work you have received from the Lord."

He must have begun to wane in enthusiasm or commitment.

1. The Lord called Archippus to a specific role.
2. He is to stay committed, follow through, do what God called him to do.
3. Paul is challenging him to stay focused, keep the purpose before him and finish well.

#### **The Church needs to hear this:**

We start with excitement and in time things dissipate into the mundane and we lose interest. We lose sight of the significance and purpose of what we are doing (teachers, set-up, Habitat, etc.).

1. God has graciously called you into His kingdom.
2. God has gifted you; you are a member of His Church. All members have a role in His mission

(worship, evangelism, community, discipleship). You must use those gifts; no one sits on the bench.

3. We are called; stay focused, remember why, finish well (marriages, children, ministries, etc.).

### **Questioning our Significance:**

What difference does it make, Archippus may have asked?

How significant do you think those who met at Nympha's house felt in the world? Romans 16:5, Philemon 2.

How big of a church? Who knew them, their commitment level, their sacrifice, their God?

In 312 the Roman Empire Constantine called himself a Christian and Rome would convert.

So "see to it that you complete the work you have received from the Lord." No matter how insignificant you may think it is. Our work, commitment, and love is not in vain.

## **Issues in the Church: At first glance everything looks like Mayberry**

### **Mark**

Mark deserts Paul, fractures, confession, repentance, forgiveness and he rejoined the mission; Acts 15:36-41, Col. 4:10, 2 Tim. 4:11.

**Onesimus** is Philemon's slave.

Onesimus runs away or takes an extended trip to Rome, becomes a believer.

Philemon has been wronged.

Paul appeals on the basis of love, "as a man and brother".

Government is saying one thing but the Christians are to rise far above the base standards.

### **Point:**

1. Issues will always be with us and they travel in packs.

2. God can and will overcome: God in us, obeying His ways of handling issues, humility / forgiveness.

3. How will you handle them? Allow them to separate and isolate you or deal with it?

Deal with it, humble yourself, confess, forgive and move on.

Don't get dragged down; trust God and obey God.

4. What would have happened to the early church had they not trusted and obeyed God?

## **The Church's Foundation**

### **Prayer:**

Praying for each other and for God to open doors.

Epaphras, who "is always wrestling in prayer for you, that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured" (v. 12).

### **Scripture:**

"After this letter has been read to you, see that it is also read in the church of Laodiceans and that you in turn read the letter from Laodicea" (v. 16).

### **Tone and words used:**

Encourage you, send greetings, comfort you, pray for you, working hard for you, grace be with you, challenging each other to live for Christ and fulfill the mission, remembering each other (Col. 4:7-18).

## **"Remember my chains"**

**Chains represent:** restricted, limited, not able to give your full potential, less than, stifled.

- Paul, ambitious, running, wanting to get out in the world to spread God's word but chained in prison.
- Questioning God: Why? How can this be the will of God? Why is this happening when I could be out there spreading the gospel? How could this possibly be good, significant, put to good use? Suffering but for what reason?
- I must trust that God is sovereign.
- So we ask the same questions during these times and must trust that God is sovereign.

### **But God**

It is in prison, chained and questioning, that God had Paul write the Galatians, Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians and Philemon of the New Testament.

Paul wrote the inspired words of God - 2 Peter 3:2, 14-16.

What appears to be limiting, restraining, restrictive, confining, is God using us for a much bigger picture.

### **"Remember my chains"**

Remember me, Paul, in prison for this gospel message, for the God/Man Jesus Christ.

This is real, I am willing to give my life for Jesus Christ, so you be willing to give yours.

Remember, what you may think is restrictive is God's way of using you exponentially in the Kingdom.

What Paul could never have done by running around the Mediterranean, God accomplished through his letters, speaking to millions throughout the centuries.

What Paul thought was wasted time God was using beyond his imagination.

You may feel like you are chained but God is using you for his kingdom.