

THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

COLOSSIANS 3-4

I want to begin this morning with a warning... *Fall in love with Jesus, take joy in His mercies, commit your life to Him, get excited about living for Christ...* and at some point a supposed brother or sister, a fellow church-goer, will put their arm around your shoulder and whisper in your ear, “Now, let’s settle down and not get TOO spiritual. We all need to remember you can be **so heavenly minded** that you’re **no earthly good.**”

And when that happens to you, just say, “**No!**” For Colossians 3-4 refutes this idea. It proves that a true, heavenly mindset elevates every area of life on earth.

I like what CS Lewis once wrote, “If you read history you will find that the Christians who did most for the present world were precisely those who thought most of the next. It is since Christians have largely ceased to think of the other world that they have become so ineffective in this one.” The truth is, the more heavenly-minded you really are the more earthly good you’ll do.

Paul continues in 3:1, *Colossians 3:1* “If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. *3:2* Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.” On the Christian’s compass true north are the ways and will of God. Paul says don’t be shallow and earth-bound. Set your mind. Direct your thoughts and desires Godward.

If Jesus brought you from spiritual death to life; then keep looking upwards. You have access to the right hand of God. His blessings are available to you. Don’t let worldly pleasures and temporal pursuits cheat you out of the highest, and holiest, and heaviest joys.

Here’s another great Lewis quote, “We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like the ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he can’t imagine what is meant by a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased... Our Lord finds our desires, not too strong, but too weak.”

Why are you settling for fancies that tickle your flesh when Jesus can bring satisfaction to your very soul.

Verse 3, *3:3* “For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.” Realize, **the Christian life is a hidden life.** This is a profound truth that Christians themselves often overlook. “The Christian life is a hidden life.” The world looks at a believer’s life, and doesn’t get us. We don’t make sense. They scratch their head and scoff, “She’s

committed herself completely to Christ, and sacrificed for His sake, *yet has nothing to show for it!*"

And to a degree the world is right... Our God is invisible... Our home is over the horizon, out-of-sight, off-the-map... Our greatest rewards are future... Our Savior is seen only with eyes of faith... Our Helper, the Holy Spirit, is like the wind, He's ethereal rather than tangible, He's sensed rather than seen... Our treasure is buried in our hearts... Our source of joy, love, power, and peace is accessed from the inside rather than from the outside... Our ^{3:3} *"life is hidden with Christ in God."*

One day the Pharisees approached Jesus, "You talk so much about the Kingdom of God, where is it?" Jesus answered them, ^{Luke 17:20} "The kingdom does not come with observation; ^{17:21} "nor will they say, 'See here!' or 'See there!' For indeed, the kingdom of God is **within you.**"

A Christian is like an iceberg - the largest part of *who we are* and *what we have* is out-of-sight, below the surface. All the current world sees of our life is the tip of the iceberg. Thus, we're *laughed at, ridiculed, misinterpreted.* We've given our all to a Kingdom other folks can't see. Our ^{3:3} *"life is hidden with Christ in God."*

But verse 4, ^{Colossians 3:4} *"When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory."* The world may be mocking you now, but one day the follower of Jesus will get *the last laugh!* When Jesus comes again He'll do so visibly and tangibly - the whole world will stand in awe! With jaws dropped and tongues tied, everyone will bow in fear of His majesty and might.

And suddenly it'll all come into focus: *your life, what people thought was strange devotion, will be clearly explained.* You'll stand with Christ, clothed in His glory. In that moment, *the hidden life will be the envied life.*

I once read of an avid duck hunter named, Dean Gooden. When Dean died his friend placed his ashes inside a pair of two-foot long, mallard decoys. His buddy stated, *"He has a good place here. He goes hunting with me. I even put bows on him at Christmas."*

Well that's pretty pathetic. And it proves folks who live only for this life end up a *quack!* Christians live for eternity! It's only after you become heavenly minded, that you begin to grasp what's of value here below.

Verse 5, ^{3:5} *"Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth..."* After his conversion to Christ, Paul was like a club under new leadership. And it was time he cleaned up his membership rolls. So he goes down the list that was his life - *every ungodly attitude, or habit, or activity* that had defined him, and he denies it enrollment in the life he now lives in Christ.

And this is what we need to do. *Have you purged your character roll, of the members Jesus frowns on?*

And first on the list is ^{3:5} “**fornication**” - or **sex outside of marriage**. The Greek term is “**pornea**,” from which we get the word “**pornography**.” It was a catch-all phrase for all kinds of illicit sex: not only *pornography*, but *incest, adultery, homosexuality, shacking up, hooking up, friends-with-benefits, polyamorous arrangements*. All sex outside heterosexual marriage is ^{3:5} “**fornication**.”

The buzz word in today’s society is **safe sex** - *if it’s safe sex it’s okay, but God’s Word says **save sex***. God designed human sexuality for a husband and a wife. Sex before or outside marriage isn’t blessed by God. It might seem right to you, but God disapproves.

Often I hear couples justify living together by saying they just want to take a test drive before they buy. *Yet who wants to be somebody’s test drive?* The secret sauce of marriage is love - unreserved, committed, life-long love. The idea that I’m with you *despite our problems, to work out our problems*, rather than just *discover our problems* changes everything. You can’t test drive commitment. You’re committed or not. Too many test drives end up demolition derbies. To have a solid marriage; get your instructions from above!

And God says put to death ^{3:5} “**fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness which is idolatry**.” Did you know that craving somebody else’s stuff is considered by God a form of idolatry? We’re all worshippers at heart. And if we don’t worship God we’ll worship **something** else. We can turn *items* into *idols*.

He continues, ^{3:6} “**Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, ^{3:7} in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them.**”

We were on a death march to hell. But in Christ we broke ranks. We now march to a different drummer. While on earth, we’re now getting in step with heaven.

We’re to *put to death* our sinful members, and *put off* certain attitudes. Verse 8, ^{3:8} “**But now you yourselves are to put off all these...**” And in the next verses Paul teaches us to dress for success, *spiritually speaking...*

I’m sure you’ve noticed, I’m not much of a clothes horse. I still have shirts I bought when Ronald Reagan was President. And every so often, one of those shirts just disappears from my closet. Some of my favorite, most comfortable shirts, just vanish. It’s a mystery!

Well, **unlike the Kathy Spirit**, the Holy Spirit doesn’t just clean out your closet on His own, He expects you to play a part. *The Spirit makes us a new person in Christ,*

but then we make choices and develop a new wardrobe. There're attitudes we should 3:8 "put off" and 3:10 "put on." And he starts with what we need to discard...

First, 3:8 "anger." The Greek word implies a simmering, stewing, festering kind of anger that leads to further sin... Paul wrote to the Ephesians, Ephesians 4:26 "Be angry, and do not sin: do not let the sun go down on your wrath..."

Second, on the list of off-attitudes is Colossians 3:8 "wrath." The word is "thumos" - it's "a hot, volcanic anger." If you have an *explosive temper* learn to diffuse it - 3:8 "put it off."

As well as, 3:8 "malice" or taking pleasure in someone else's misfortune... Then 3:8 'Blasphemy" - contempt for God or the things of God... And 3:8 "filthy language out of your mouth" - any demeaning or defiling verbiage...

Then in verse 9, 3:9 "Do not lie to one another..." Recall the couple in Acts 5 that dropped dead when they lied to Peter and the Holy Spirit. They tried to appear more spiritual than they really were. God dealt with hypocrisy so severely in the early church because He knew there could be no meaningful fellowship without honesty. The same kind of atmosphere is needed among us today.

3:9 "Do not lie... since you have put off the old man with his deeds..." But "putting off" is only half the challenge.

Verse 10 tells us we should also 3:10 "put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him..." Again, here's how you live the Christian life - you 3:8 "put off" and 3:10 "put on."

Colossians 2 taught us that spiritually - in the inner person - we're complete in Christ. We have all we need from God in Christ! *But the outer man still has issues...*

Residual habits, lingering tendencies, formerly learned reactions - can betray our identity in Christ.

Thus, it's our job to 3:8 "put off" and 3:10 "put on." We need to reprogram our thoughts, and develop new patterns. I've got to see myself in Christ and live accordingly.

One year, my son Mack, played soccer, and on his team were two children with the same name, "Casey." One Casey was male and the other Casey was female.

In their first game the coach barked instructions to Casey - but there was confusion. *Which Casey did he mean?* It didn't take long for the coach to solve the problem. He started shouting, "Pass it, Casey boy," or "Clear it, Casey girl" The smart coach differentiated the two Caseys by calling out "Casey boy" or "Casey girl."

And this is how we win in the Christian life. I've got to differentiate between **the new me** and **the old me**.

When temptation raises its ugly head, and the world calls for the old me, I've got to remember I'm not "Sandy Old," I'm "Sandy New." *Sandy Old* was crucified with Christ. *Sandy New* is now transformed. And it's when I officialize that identity in my mind, that I continually forsake the old, and sync up with the new.

For we're told in verse 11, in Christ, ^{3:11} "there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all." Remember, the false teachers in Colosse saw themselves as spiritual elites. Supposedly, they had a special knowledge or **gnosis**, that common-folk lacked.

But Paul assures the Colossians that ^{3:11} "in Christ" there is no such thing as spiritual exclusivity. ^{3:11} *In Christ* all distinctions - racial, cultural, social - are abolished. As Christians we are one in Christ. There's level ground at the foot of the cross. We're all of equal value in Christ.

^{3:12} "Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved..." Notice, Paul refers to **all** believers as ^{3:12} "elect of God." ^{3:12} "Elect" means "chosen or picked out." You don't rise to an elite level with God. *There's no knowledge to learn, or wisdom to develop, or deed to do, or secret-society to join...* If you're in Christ God considers you special - ^{3:12} "holy and beloved." God has no **elite**, only ^{3:12} "elect."

And again, since you're the ^{3:12} "elect of God" dress like it, ^{3:12} "put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering." We discussed what attitudes to ^{3:8} "put off" - now, here are the attitudes to ^{3:9} "put on."

Did you know that Christianity has a dress code? God cares about what you wear to church! *Don't think Calvary Chapel SM is a come-as-you-are place!*

As a child my parents told me God deserves my very best... so when I went to church they put me in a white dress shirt *you didn't dare get dirty* - a stiff collar *that felt like a hangman's noose* - a choking tie - itchy dress pants - and rigid shoes *designed by the devil himself*. It all made a young boy NOT want to go to church!

Well, I still believe a Christian should wear your *best* to church, but what God considers "best" has nothing to do with our clothes. God cares about our attitudes. When we come to church He wants us to dress up in our very best disposition, and character, and conduct.

So ^{3:12} "Put on tender mercies.." - compassion, empathy.

And ^{3:12} "kindness..." I love Mark Twain's quote. He said of an acquaintance, "he was a good man, in the worst sort of a way." In other words, a person can be moral

and religious, and at the same time hypocritical and harsh. *Let's be both good and loving at the same time.*

3:12 *“Put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness...”* which is, *“strength under control.”*

This is what makes a gracious winner. Meekness doesn't rub it in. This isn't a player who gets penalized 15 yards for excessive celebration. Meekness never taunts. Its goal is to *win the person not just the game.*

And 3:12 *“put on longsuffering”* - or **patience**. It's been said, *“Patience is the virtue you admire in the driver behind you, and despise in the driver ahead of you.*

For us, patience is the ability to wait on God to move.

Verse 13, 3:13 *“bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do.”* We should treat others, just as Jesus treats us.

3:14 *“But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection.”* When a Christian dresses in love, he becomes *“a good man, in the best sort of way.”*

Verse 15, 3:15 *“And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful.”* The Greek word translated *“rule”* related to the judge at an athletic competition - *the umpire.*

Paul is saying when a life decision is too close to call, and it's a bang-bang choice - let the peace of God make the call... If it's biblical and seems godly to you; then you're safe. But if you're uneasy about it - even if you can't quite put your finger on - then punch it out!

The problem though with the peace approach to learning God's will is its subjectivity. At times, our own hearts can be deceived. So along with God's peace umpiring, we also need the advice in verse 16, 3:16 *“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom...”*

Say a guy comes up to me and says, *“Sandy, I've been praying about it for some time now, and God has finally given me a peace about divorcing my wife.”*

Wait a minute! Your peace is *a piece of garbage* - it's a deception - the work of the devil. God isn't going to give you a peace to do what's forbidden in His Word.

That's why **the word of Christ should dwell in us richly**. Go through the Word, and let the Word go through you. Let God's Word dwell in you richly, fully, comprehensively - *altering attitudes, shaping values, challenging assumptions, and changing perspectives.*

Paul adds, ^{3:16} “teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.” Hey, look for the peace of God, learn from the Word of God, sing the praises of God, and you’ll live right in *the will of God!*

Verse 17, ^{3:17} “And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.” Notice, ^{3:17} “*in word or deed.*”

That’s an all-encompassing ethic. We should run every thought, desire, attitude, comment, action, even reaction - through the filter, “**what would Jesus do?**”

As we said at the outset, the more heavenly minded you are, the more earthly good you’ll be. And in the next few verses Paul describes **how a heavenly perspective will effect human relationships...**

Verse 18, ^{3:18} “Wives, submit to your own husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.” Biblical marriage is **an ordered equality** - the man and woman are equal in value, but distinct in the roles that God has assigned to each.

God calls the woman to ^{3:18} “*submit*” or arrange her life around the man - and the man to be her loving leader. This is wisdom from above. It’s a heavenly mindset.

Of course, never does this mean a husband should dominate his wife. Married couples should complement each other. Marriage is a dance, a tango... A husband takes the lead, but he doesn’t step on his wife’s toes and do her harm. They move together as one!

And notice two exceptions to a wife’s submission...

First, a wife submits to her ^{3:18} “*own husband*” - *not to husbands in general*. Biblical submission is a role she plays in the context of marriage and the church, not in her interactions with society at large. In government or business a woman is free to take positions of authority.

And **second**, she’s to submit ^{3:18} “*as is fitting in the Lord.*” She’s under no obligation to obey her husband if his demand is immoral, illegal, or unbiblical. A wife’s primary obligation is to obey God. And if she’s forced to choose between God and her hub; she sides with God.

Verse 19, ^{3:19} “Husbands, love your wives and do not be bitter toward them.” A husband’s job is to take initiative. He leads and loves like Jesus. Our Lord loved us by dying in our place, and a husband does likewise. He takes responsibility for what’s not His fault and covers for his wife and kids. This means he can’t get bitter. For if he focuses on *how he’s been harmed*, or *what’s not his fault*, it grinds the initiative of love

to a stop. “I’m not apologizing until she apologizes” - that’s bitterness. And bitterness will turn wedlock into deadlock.

As the leader the husband’s job is to prevent deadlocks. The man should be the adult in the room. Men, you’ve got to look past her faults. Keep your eye on her healing, not on your one-up-ance. Keep open the lines of communication. Jesus showed grace and so should you. **Men are about initiative not bitterness.**

Verse 20, ^{3:20} “Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing to the Lord. ^{3:21} Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged.”

Notice here the reciprocal responsibility of the Christian ethic. In the Jewish and Roman worlds a child’s obedience was nothing new, but for parents to avoid needlessly frustrating and discouraging their children, was revolutionary! Parents too, had a duty.

Roman domestic law was based on the principle of **Patria Potestas**, or “the power of the father.” A Roman dad could do whatever he wanted with his kids - *sell’m, kill’m, enslave’m*. They were considered his property. *Some of you who were rebellious teenagers should be thankful you grew up in the Christian era, rather than in ancient Rome - no telling where you’d be today.* **In Christianity parents are to love their children.**

And kids are to obey their parents. Hey, your parents are smarter than you think, and they most likely care about you. Christian kids need to obey their parents, and Christian parents need to love their kids.

And this reciprocal responsibility carries over into the workplace. Verse 22, ^{3:22} “**Bondservants** (or **employees**) **obey in all things your masters** (or **employers**) **according to the flesh, not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but in sincerity of heart, fearing God.**” We’ve all seen an employee sluff off until the boss walks in; **then** he gets busy. It’s ^{3:22} “**eyeservice, as men-pleasers.**”

Yet as a Christian our boss is always watching!

When we go to work we aren’t working for the company, *but the Lord*. How we do our job is a big part of our witness. Paul writes for ^{3:23} “**whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men,** ^{3:24} **knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ.**” Right now an earthly boss signs your check. But the paycheck that counts, *your eternal reward*, will be signed by God!

Once, a businessman saw Mother Teresa washing the open sores, and bandaging the puss-filled wounds of Calcutta’s sick. He shook his head, “**I wouldn’t do that for a**

million dollars.” Teresa replied, “Neither would I.” She too, wasn’t looking for an *earthly reward* - as much as she was after an *eternal reward* from God!

3:25 “But he who does wrong will be repaid for what he has done, and there is no partiality.” God is just! He’ll be fair with both *His paychecks* and *His punishments*.

Chapter 4, Colossians 4:1 “Masters, give your bondservants what is just and fair, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven.” Every boss on earth has a boss in heaven. And remember bosses, **your** boss wasn’t bossy!

Jesus was a servant. He lived humbly. He refused to throw His weight around or bully others. He respected people. And this is how a Christian employer should behave. He should love and serve his employees.

If you’re a boss and complain about a lack of loyalty from your employees, ask yourself if you’ve given them reasons to be loyal? *Treat them as you would want to be treated - and see if they don’t work harder for you!*

Verse 2, 4:2 “Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving...” Don’t just pray once and give up on it. Persevere! Continue passionately in prayer...

And Paul says while you’re praying, verse 3, 4:3 “pray also for us, that God would open to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in chains...” Recall Paul is in prison, and as you might expect he requests prayer, but rather than pray *for him to get out* he asks the Colossians to pray that *the Word of God will get out!* Paul isn’t concerned about himself, but about the advance of the Gospel.

He adds in verse 4, and 4:4 “that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak.” Paul doesn’t desire *charity*, as much as *clarity*. He wants to be effective in His witness.

In verse 5 he says, 4:5 “Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time.” Do you know that somewhere right now there’s a clock ticking... It’s posting the days, hours, minutes, seconds left until you die and meet God. How sobering it would be if we got a glimpse of that clock and the time we had left.

How would it change the way we live our lives? Surely, we’d want to gather up every stray second, and redeem the time. We’d make every minute count.

Verse 6, 4:6 “Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.” Before you became a Christian, did you ever belly up to the bar and notice the bowls of free peanuts and pretzels. *You thought the bartender was being nice.* But not so, bars know that salt makes you thirsty, so they keep you munching peanuts just so you’ll keep buying drinks, and spending your money.

And its this thirst-producing quality of salt that should characterize our speech. As a Christian I can sprinkle into any conversation *biblical truths, spiritual insights, thought-provoking statements, even praises to God...*

In natural ways I can let the person I'm speaking with know that Jesus is active in life today. I can use casual conversations to make folks thirsty for Christ!

Paul closes his letter to the Colossians with some personal correspondence. Realize, Paul was not only a great *soul-winner*, he was also a great *friend-maker*.

It's been said, "I went out to find a friend, but could not find one there. I went out to be a friend, and friends were everywhere!" Paul had friends because he was a good friend to have. He took time to communicate.

And beginning in verse 7 Paul addresses his pals...

4:7 "Tychicus, a beloved brother, faithful minister, and fellow servant in the Lord, will tell you all the news about me. 4:8 I am sending him to you for this very purpose, that he may know your circumstances and comfort your hearts..." A friend of Paul, named, Tychicus, delivered this letter to the Colossians. He minister to the church and was to report back to Paul.

And he came 4:9 "with Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you. They will make known to you all things which are happening here." We'll learn more about Onesimus in Paul's letter to Philemon.

4:10 "Aristarchus my fellow prisoner greets you, with Mark the cousin of Barnabas (about whom you received instructions: if he comes to you, welcome him)..."

This is a wonderful gesture. In Acts 15, after their missionary endeavor to Galatia, Paul and Barnabas parted company. It was an apostolic split, caused by a disagreement over Barnabas' cousin Mark. For some reason, on their missionary venture Mark abandoned them midstream. So when they started planning a second tour, Paul balked at bringing Mark again.

As it turned out Paul replaced Barnabas with Silas, and Barnabas teamed up with Mark. *It wasn't the last time hard feelings have broken up church leaders.*

Yet here, years later, as Paul writes to the Colossians he mentions Mark is with him. Whatever ill feelings existed, had now been resolved. Mark and Paul were reunited in Rome. Mark sends his greetings.

In fact, Paul will later write to Timothy in 2 Timothy 4:11, and say of Mark, 2 Timothy 4:11 "he is useful to me for ministry."

It's comforting to me to know that Paul and Mark were *not so spiritual* that they never had a blow-up or fall-out. And it's equally comforting to know they were *spiritual enough* to get over it, forgive, and be reunited.

Also with Paul was [Colossians 4:11](#) "Jesus who is called Justus." The surname [4:11](#) "Jesus" was actually a common Jewish name in the first century. This is why the Gospels refer to the Messiah as [John 18:5](#) "Jesus of Nazareth." It differentiated God's Son from other Jesus's, like this one called Justus.

Also interesting, is that Paul, a Jewish rabbi, had just three Jewish friends stand by him to the end. He says of Aristarchas, Mark, and Jesus: [Colossians 4:11](#) "These are my only fellow workers for the kingdom of God who are of the circumcision; they have proved to be a comfort to me."

Verse 12, [4:12](#) "Epaphras, who is one of you (he was a Colossian), a bondservant of Christ, greets you, always laboring fervently for you in prayers, that you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God. [4:13](#) For I bear him witness that he has a great zeal for you..."

Remember, Epaphras was the leader of the church at Colosse. He was the caring pastor who had rushed to Paul with news of the heresy brewing in the church.

And he had been praying for the Colossians. Notice how Paul describes his prayer life, [4:12](#) "always laboring fervently." When was the last time we labored in prayer? Really worked at it? Have you ever prayed yourself into a lather - passionately interceding for someone? Epaphras did! He prayed for the Colossians and two sister churches in the neighboring cities... [4:13](#) "and those who are in Laodicea, and those in Hierapolis."

[4:14](#) "Luke the beloved physician and Demas greet you." Here we learn that Luke was not only a historian, the author of the third Gospel and Acts, but he was also a medical doctor... *perhaps Paul's personal physician.*

In Paul's letter to the Galatians he spoke of a reoccurring eye problem. Luke may've traveled with Paul to treat him whenever his illness became active.

Paul also mentions a man named Demas. Sadly, we'll learn later, that when the going got rough - Demas got going! He abandoned Paul and the cause of Christ. In [2 Timothy 4:10](#) Paul explains his sad end, [2 Timothy 4:10](#) "Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world..."

Verse 15, [Colossians 4:15](#) "Greet the brethren who are in Laodicea, and Nymphas and the church that is in his house."

Note, the church in Laodicea met in a house. In fact, this church began in a house. In our living room.

Did you know it wasn't until the third century AD that churches started meeting in designated buildings. For the first 300 years of Church history, Christians fellowshiped in homes, *and expanded exponentially*.

Nymphas was either the pastor, or host - or perhaps both - of the church in Laodicea. Later, in Revelation 3, Jesus Himself has a stern warning for the Laodiceans. They were the church that conformed to the world. Neither hot or cold, Laodicea was room temperature.

4:16 “Now when this epistle is read among you, see that it is read also in the church of the Laodiceans, and that you likewise read the epistle from Laodicea.”

Paul wanted his letters shared among the churches. And today, 2000 years later, the sharing continues. Today the church in Lilburn is reading and applying Paul's letter to the Colossians. The NT was meant to apply universally - to all churches at all times.

Here the Laodiceans are encouraged to read the letter to Colosse - and the Colossians are to read the letter to the Laodiceans - *which brings up a question: “Where is Paul's letter to Laodicea?”* Answer: *“Buried under the sands of time.”* We no longer possess it.

Verse 17, 4:17 “And say to Archippus, “Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it.” We'll also meet Archippus again, with Onesimus, when we study Paul's letter to Philemon.

4:18 “This salutation by my own hand - Paul.” It was Paul's custom to dictate his letters to a stenographer; then authenticate the finished letter with his signature.

But this time, as he reaches for the quill to sign his name the metal restraints attached to his wrists clang, he feels their weight and encumbrance, and it reminds him of his imprisonment for the cause of Christ.

So Paul closes his letter with a heartfelt request, 4:18 “Remember my chains. Grace be with you. Amen.”