

**“Membership Matters”**  
**Colossians 4:15-18**

**Introduction:**

1. What Does It Mean
    - To Be A Member:
      - Of A Church? Of **This** Church?
    - The More You Learn About The Church:
      - In The New Testament:
        - The More You Come To Realize:
          - That Church Membership:
            - Really Does Matter!
    - Membership Matters:
      - To The Lord - The Head Of The Church:
        - And So - Membership **Should** Matter:
          - To His Body! To You & To Me!
  2. Well - In The Last Few Verses:
    - Of Paul’s Letter To The Colossian Church:
      - Paul Gives Some Final Instructions:
        - To The Individual Members:
          - Of That Church!
    - So - Please Turn There In Your Bibles With Me:
      - As We Look At Those Instructions Together:
        - From Colossians 4:15-18 - “Salute the brethren which are in Laodicea, and Nymphas, and the church which is in his house. / 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. / And say to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it. / The salutation by the hand of me Paul. Remember my bonds. Grace be with you. Amen!” (Pray)
  3. In Each Verse We Just Read:
    - Paul Reveals An Expectation He Had:
      - Of The Members Of That Colossian Church!
        - Because - In Each Verse:
          - There Is A Special Instruction In The Form Of A Command!
            - 4:15 - Salute!
            - 4:16 - Cause / See To It!
            - 4:17 - Say!
            - 4:18 - Remember!
    - And These Expectations By The Apostle Paul:
      - Mean That The Members Of That Church:
        - And Of Every Church - Including Ours:
          - Have Some Important Responsibilities:
            - To Attend To!
  4. And So - This Morning:
    - We Are Going To Explore Together:
      - Some Of Those Responsibilities:
        - And See How **Membership Matters**:
          - To The Lord & His People!
- \* Because - The First Thing We Come To In 4:15 - Is The Responsibility:
1. **To Foster Greater Fellowship!**
    - To Foster A Greater Fellowship:
      - Within The Body Of Christ!
        - In This Verse - Paul Continues The Theme Of Greeting - Which We Found In 4:10-14 - And Adds:
          - “Salute the brethren which are in Laodicea, and Nymphas, and the church which is in his house!”
    - **“Greet”** - Paul Tells Us!
      - But This Is Not Just Paul:

- Sending His Own Greeting!
  - He Does That Later In 4:18!
- Rather, It Is Paul Telling The Members Of The *Colossian* Church:
  - To Greet Members Of *Another* Church!
    - The Church In Laodicea, Which Was About 10 Miles Away Down The Valley Of The Lycus River!
- And Because That Church Was So Close To Theirs:
  - They Likely Had Much In Common!
    - A Common Culture & Opportunity As Well As Common Problems & Threats!
- And So - This “Greeting” Was To Be The Same Kind Of Greeting:
  - Sent By Him & The Other Men Mentioned In This Chapter!
    - It Was To Display A Heart:
      - Of Tenderness!
      - Of Thoughtfulness!
      - And Of Togetherness!
- And This Remains One Of The Responsibilities:
  - That You Have As A Member:
    - Of A Church!
      - To Foster & Develop Greater Fellowship! And To Do So:
        - With A Common Partnership!
          - The Colossians Were To Send Their Greetings:
            - To The “*Brethren* Which Are In Laodicea!”
          - So - Not Only Were The Members Of The Colossian Church:
            - Responsible For Each Other - They Also Had *Some* Responsibility:
              - For Other Believers In Another Church!
          - They Were Not To Consider The Other Church:
            - As Competitors - But As:
              - *Partners* - To Reach Their Region:
                - For Christ!
          - And This Should Apply:
            - To Any True Church:
              - That Is Of “Like Precious Faith”:
              - And Seeking To Be Faithful To The Word Of God & As A Witness For Jesus Christ!
          - It Is The Responsibility Of Each Member:
            - To Foster This Kind Of Fellowship!
              - And This Fellowship Is Also To Be:
  - With A Common Purpose!
    - In The Rest Of 4:15 - Paul Instructs The Church To Greet:
      - “Nymphas, and the church which is in his house!”
        - Now - Some Translations & Manuscripts Suggest That Nymphas Was A Christian Lady Who Hosted One Of The Laodicean Congregations In Her Home!
    - But, Whether Nymphas Was A Man Or A Woman, Paul Singled Out This Person & That Congregation:
      - To Encourage Them!
        - This Is The Common Purpose For All Churches & All Believers!
          - To Encourage & To Edify One Another!
  - And This Is Still The Responsibility:
    - Of Each Member Of A Local Church!
      - To Foster Greater Fellowship:
        - With Other Christians & Other Churches Of “Like Precious Faith!”
    - **IE**: I Remember Working In Anderson - And Discovered That One Of My Colleagues - Nancy - Was A Sister In Christ! Though We Attended Different Churches - We Could Still Fellowship With Each Other & Pray For Each Other & Encourage Each Other - Which We Did!
      - When God Brings Another Christian Into Your Path, You Have A Responsibility To Them!
        - You Ought To Help Each Other & Encourage Each Other & Disciple Each Other In Your Walk With The Lord!

\* Another Responsibility We Find In These Verses Is:

## 2. **To Foster Greater Feeding!**

- To Foster A Greater Feeding:
  - On The Word Of God!
    - Which We See In 4:16 - “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!”
  - “Cause” - Paul Tells Us - Or - “**See To It!**”
    - “See To It” That You:
      - Desire Greater Health & Nourishment Through The Reading Of God’s Word!
  - In This Verse:
    - Paul Talks About Two Epistles / Two Letters!
      - The One They Had Just Received:
        - Which Is The Book Of Colossians!
      - And Another One That The Church In Laodicea Just Received!
        - Which Some Think Is The Book Of Ephesians - Which May Have Been A Circular Letter - And Ended Up In Laodicea!
  - But - Even Though We Only Know The Identity Of:
    - One Of These Letters With Certainty:
      - We Do Know That The Content Of Both Letters Would Have Been Spiritual & Profitable For Both Churches:
        - And Would Have Been Full Of Teaching About The Lord & His Will!
  - And So Paul Instructs Them:
    - And Us - To Have A Love & Desire For:
      - Instruction In The Word & Truth Of God:
        - That Is Infectious!
          - Do You Have A Desire:
- To Secure God’s Word:
  - For Your Own Health & Growth?
    - Paul Tells The Colossians - 4:16 - “And **When** This Epistle Is Read Among You!”
      - It Was Assumed That The Members Of That Church Would Come Together To Hear The Words Of This Letter!
        - Which Is Not Just The Words Of The Apostle Paul - But The Inspired Word Of God Himself!
  - And So - It Is Your Responsibility:
    - To Be Present For The Reading & Teaching & Preaching Ministries Of The Church!
      - And To Receive The Word As The Thessalonians Did - 1 Thess. 2:13 - “When ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe!”
  - But Then - You Have The Responsibility:
- To Share God’s Word:
  - For The Health & Growth Of Others!
    - Paul Goes On In 4:16 - And Tells Them To - “Cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans!”
      - That Is - Do All That Is Necessary To Get This Letter Into The Hands Of That Other Church! Copy It! Transport It! Call The Church To Hear It! And Share It!
  - Because It Is Valuable & Important:
    - To **All** Of Them!
      - Is This What You Do With What You Hear & What You Read & What You Learn:
        - From God’s Word? It’s Meant To Be Shared! And It Is Your Responsibility To Share It! Also:
- To Seek God’s Word!
  - The Colossians Needed Also To:
    - “See To It” - That - “Ye likewise read the epistle from Laodicea!”
      - Whatever Letter They Had:
        - The Colossians Needed To Get!
          - To Read & To Hear Themselves!
  - One Letter Was Not Enough For Them!
    - One Reading Was Not Enough!
      - One Message Was Not Enough!

- They Needed More!
- And This Is Still Your Personal Responsibility:
  - As A Member Of This Church!
    - You Need To Help Foster:
      - A “Feeding Frenzy” For God’s Word!
        - To Encourage It’s Reading & Teaching & Preaching & Study!
  - **IE:** Like Throwing Bread Into A Flock Of Pigeons, Like They Would Do In Venice - When The Word Of God Is Available - You Should Flock To It! Is This The Kind Of Desire You Have For God’s Word?
    - Even As Job - Job 23:12 - “I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food!”

\* Paul Reveals Another Responsibility Members Have - In 4:17 - Which Is:

### 3. **To Foster Greater Faithfulness!**

- To Foster A Greater Faithfulness:
  - In The Servants Of God!
    - And That Is Why Paul Introduces Us To Another Man - And Says - 4:17 - “And say to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it!”
      - This Man - Archippus - Is Mentioned Also In Paul’s Letter To Philemon - Where He Is Further Described As - “Our Fellow-Soldier!”
  - Now - Even Though We Don’t Know Very Much:
    - About This Man - It Seems That:
      - He Had A Position Of Responsibility Within The Colossian Church!
        - He May Have Been An Associate Pastor Or Even An Interim Pastor - Since Epaphras Was In Rome With Paul For Awhile!
    - Some Even Suggest That He Was:
      - The Son Of Philemon - And Was The Leader Of The Church:
        - In Philemon’s House! And If This Is True - He May Have Also Been A Young Pastor - Even As Timothy!
  - But - For Some Reason - Paul Singles Out Archippus:
    - And Tells The Members Of His Church:
      - To **Tell Him - “Say To Him” - “Take Heed To The Ministry!”**
        - Now - Some Take This To Be A Warning!
    - But - I Believe It Was Meant To Be More Of An Encouragement To Archippus!
      - As Paul Told The Members Of The Church To Come Alongside Their Young Pastor & And Support Him In The Ministry!
  - Isn’t This What Paul Did For Timothy:
    - 1 Timothy 4:12 - “Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity!”
  - And So - Here - The Members Of The Church:
    - Have The Responsibility To:
      - Encourage & Remind Their Leaders / And Especially Their Pastors Of:
- The Purpose Of Ministry!
  - “Ministry” Here Simply Means “Service!”
    - Now - Even Though All Christians Are To Serve:
      - The Role Of Pastor & Elder Is A Special Gift To The Church!
    - Ephesians 4:11-12 - “And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; / For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ!”
  - Sometimes - Your Pastor Needs You To Remind Him:
    - Of The Purpose Of His Ministry!
      - To Perfect You & To Edify You!
    - As Well As To - As Acts 6:4 Explains - To “Give [Himself] Continually To Prayer And To The Ministry Of The Word!”
      - Of Course - As Your Pastor - I See The Need For This In My Own Life & Ministry!
      - And So - I Also Need You To Encourage & To Remind Me Of:
- The Privilege Of Ministry!
  - *And It Is A Privilege!*
    - Because Paul Adds In 4:17 - “And say to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry which thou hast

- received in the Lord!”
- Most Ministers Of The Gospel:
  - Will Remember The Time When:
    - They Received & Responded To The Lord’s Special Call Into His Service!
      - It’s A Subjective Experience, But It Is Nonetheless Real And Memorable! And Later, That Call Is Confirmed By The Church!
    - **IE**: I Remember The Time Of My Own Call Into The Ministry & Full-Time Service To The Lord!
      - When I “Received” It - God Prompted Me To It By His Grace & I Responded To It In His Love! And I Knew It To Be One Of The Greatest Privileges In All The World!
  - But - Sometimes - Ministers Of The Gospel:
    - Can Grow “Weary In Well Doing!”
      - Just Like The Rest Of The Church!
        - But - Ministers & Pastors Are Often The Prime Target Of Satan’s Wiles & Devices!
      - And So - Since Your Pastor At Times May Get:
        - Discouraged Or Drained Or Distracted Or Even Derelict:
          - You Have The Responsibility To Remind Him - To Remind **Me** - That It Is Still A Great Privilege To Be In The Ministry!
      - It May Even Revive & Rejuvenate Him:
        - As He Remembers The Time When He:
          - “Received” His Ministry “In The Lord!”
    - This Is Why Paul Would Say Later:
      - In 1 Timothy 1:12 - “And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry!”
        - But - You Also Need To Encourage & Remind Me Of:
  - The Potential Of Ministry!
    - The Members Of The Colossian Church Were Also To “Say To Archippus” - 4:17 - “To Fulfill It!”
      - The Word Translated “Fulfill” Can Simply Mean To Complete Something!
        - Which - If Archippus Was An Interim Pastor Or Had A Specific Ministry - Could Be What Paul Meant!
      - But - It Also Can Convey The Meaning:
        - To Fill Something Up!
          - **IE**: Like The Filling Up Of A Cup!
    - Young Ministers Are Just Like Any Other Young Person!
      - They Have Dreams Of What The Ministry Will Be Like - And Are Looking Forward To Serving The Lord!
        - But Sometimes - Those Dreams Can Become Dull - And Even Almost Forgotten!
          - Haven’t Some Of Your Dreams?
    - But - Pastors Need To Be Reminded Sometimes:
      - Of The Great Potential Of The Ministry & Of The Gospel Itself!
        - As A Church - You Should Desire A “Full” Ministry - And Should Encourage & Equip Your Ministers To Do So!
          - And - In Many Ways - You Have! You Have Supported Me Financially! You Have Prayed For Me! You Have Sent Me to Conferences! Etc!
    - But - I Still Need Your Help:
      - To Remember The Great Potential There Is:
        - In The Ministry Of The Lord & His Church!
          - So That I Will & We Will Together “Fill Up” The Cup Of Opportunities Given To Us By The Lord!
  - Please Do Not Forsake Your Responsibility:
    - As A Member Of This Church:
      - To Foster Greater Faithfulness:
        - In The Life & Service Of Your Ministers!

\* But Then - In The Last Verse Of This Letter - Paul Wants You Also:

**4. To Foster Greater Feeling!**

- To Foster A Greater Feeling:

- For Those Who Are Struggling In Their Walk With The Lord!
  - Because - In 4:18 - Paul Writes - “The salutation by the hand of me Paul!”
- Here - Paul Adds His Own “Greeting & Salutation” To The Colossian Church!
  - More Than Likely - He Had Someone Writing This Letter For Him - While He Dictated The Words!
    - But Here - He Grabs The Pen With His Own Hand To Write These Final Words In His Own Handwriting!
      - And This Is Even More Special When You Think That - Though He Had A Pen In One Hand - He Had A Chain On The Other!
- And In This Way - He Offers One Final Instruction:
  - 4:18b - “Remember my bonds!” (2x)
    - Now - Paul Is Not Complaining Here!
  - No - He Remains Content:
    - Because Of The Promises & The Power Of The Lord & His Word!
  - But - He Gives This Instruction:
    - For Their Sake As Well!
      - Because - When They Remember Him & His Bonds - It Would Yield:
- Enhanced Prayer!
  - Even As It Did For Peter:
    - When He Was Imprisoned Back In:
      - Acts 12:5 - “Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him!”
  - For Sure - Paul Wanted & Needed Their Prayers!
    - But - He Knew That They Needed Prayer:
      - Themselves! And His Bonds:
        - Would Provide Them Even More Opportunity For Prayer!
  - “Remember My Bonds!”
    - He Also Knew It Would Yield:
- Enhanced Provision!
  - In Hebrews 10:34 - We Read - “For ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance!”
    - If Hebrews Was Written By Paul - He Is Expressing His Gratitude For Those Fellow Believers:
      - Providing For His Needs:
        - While He Was In Bonds!
    - When Other Believers Are In Need:
      - It Is An Opportunity For The Members Of The Church:
        - To Help Provide For Those Needs!
  - “Remember My Bonds!”
    - This Too Is Your Responsibility:
      - As A Member Of The Church!
        - To Foster A Greater Feeling & Sympathy!
    - As Peter Puts It In:
      - 1 Peter 3:8 - “Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous!”
  - What Bonds & What Chains:
    - Are Your Brothers & Sisters In Christ:
      - Struggling With Today?
        - Physical Bonds!
        - Emotional Bonds!
        - Spiritual Bonds!
    - **IE:** At The Height Of The Cold War Between The United States & The Former Soviet Union - There Was A Former Russian Pastor Who Was Exiled Here After Being In Imprisoned For His Faith & Ministry In The Gospel! Through His Connections With The Suffering Believers Back Home, He Published “The Prisoner Bulletin” - Which Helped Christians Here “Remember Their Bonds!” This Is Something We *Still* Must Do As Members Of The Body Of Christ!
      - Remember Them!
        - Pray For Them!
        - And Help Provide For Them!

## Conclusion:

1. When You Realize The Great Responsibility:
  - That You Have As A Member Of A Church:
    - It Should Cause You To:
      - Wonder - How Can I Do All These Things?
      - Or - “Who Is Sufficient For These Things?” (2 Corinthians 2:16)
    - Well - This Is Why:
      - Paul Ends His Letter:
        - In His Typical Fashion:
          - With This Benediction - In 4:18 - “Grace Be With You! Amen!”
2. The Truth Is - You Are **Not** Sufficient For These Things!
  - You **Need**:
    - The Grace Of The Lord Jesus Christ:
      - To Be With You!
      - To Be A Member Of His Church!
    - You Need His Grace:
      - To **Join** His Church!
        - Ephesians 2:8 Tells Us:
          - “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God!”
      - Have You Received:
        - The Gift Of God’s Grace?
          - Jesus Came To This World:
            - To Die On The Cross For Your Sins & Rose Again To Secure The Salvation Of Your Soul!
        - All You Must Do - By God’s Grace:
          - Is To Turn From Yourself:
            - And Trust In Jesus:
              - To Be Your Savior!
              - And Then You Become A Member Of His Church!
    - You Need His Grace:
      - To **Function** As His Church!
        - And To Fulfill All Of These Responsibilities:
          - As A Church!
      - Won’t You Go To The Lord Today:
        - For His Grace & Strength & Help:
          - To Be The Kind Of Member:
            - That Matters? That Will Encourage & Foster:
              - Greater Fellowship!
              - Greater Feeding!
              - Greater Faithfulness!
              - And Greater Feeling!
    - You Can - Because:
      - “God’s Grace [Is] With You!”

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