

Colossians 4:15-18 | Ted Tash

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[0 : 00] We welcome you to the media ministry of Bethel Community Church, Knowing Jesus, Making Jesus Known. This morning, we continue our study on the New Testament book of Colossians.

We are in Colossians chapter 4 today. You don't have to turn here quite yet, but that's where we're going to be. Colossians chapter 4, verses 15 through the end.

15 through 18. Good to have everybody back. The Kleppel family, and the other Kleppel family, and the other Kleppel family, and the Smith Kleppel family. And Hope, we got Hope back too.

So we got everybody back in town. They were out enjoying the Rocky Mountains. So nice to have everybody back. We're going to start today kind of the opening introduction with a little bit of a conclusion.

And no, I haven't finally lost my mind. We're finishing the book of Colossians today. And so to start out, we're going to sort of summarize the book. And then we'll look kind of two main points from our passage, which is, again, verses 15 to 18.

[1 : 06] So real quick, let's pray and ask the Lord's hand on our time, and then we can rock and roll. Father God, thank you for the day. Thank you that you've given us your word. And thank you that we have just this group of believers and friends here together.

Father, and I pray that as we look at your word and study it a little bit, that we can glean a few things to grow by. And we would just ask all this in your son's name. All right, so to start out, we have finished the book of Colossians.

We are continuing through the New Testament, and Colossians is a good book. It's one of those books that's crammed full of doctrine. There's a lot of really meaty, good stuff in there.

But it's one that is easy to read. I don't know what it is about Colossians. Same thing with Philippians before it. They flow very well. They're books that, for whatever reason, for me, are real easy to read and easy to understand.

And sometimes you have a book, maybe like Ephesians, for instance. Ephesians, for me, is one that gets kind of chunky sometimes, a little hard for me to grasp. I know my wife loves Ephesians. I know Tom, he loves Ephesians.

[2 : 15] But that's one of those books that, for me, can be a little blocky. I don't always get the good flow out of it. But Philippians, Colossians, both real easy reads, real meat and potatoes topics in there.

And if you guys had to guess, no looking yet. I may need someone to double-check it for me. But if you had to guess, how many verses would you say is in the book of Colossians? If you had to guess, throw a number out there.

Kevin says 100. He's close, so I'll give it to him. 95. So 95 verses in the whole book. So if you wanted to read it and get a real easy read and get a lot out of it, 95 verses, you do that Monday through Friday.

It would be about 19 verses a day. Have a cup of coffee. It would be great. You could read it through Monday through Friday, no problem. But real good book. We see kind of from the introduction message on Colossians that Colossians, or the city of Colossae, was kind of a trade hub.

They had a lot of gold finance sort of work. You had the textiles like wool and other clothing work there. Then you had maybe some medicinal, like health care type of work there as well.

[3 : 26] It's not quite a port city, but it was really close to the sea. So you had a lot of just commerce going through there. Pretty affluent area. Pretty decent sized area.

You saw that the Colossian church was a church that Paul really loved. It was founded by either Epaphras or Philemon. I'm not really sure who founded it. The church was in Philemon's house. We know that from the book of Philemon. So you had these kind of two leaders, Epaphras, Philemon. Maybe it was in Philemon's house. But these were dear brothers to Paul. He really, really liked these guys.

Sometimes Paul's writing is more of a rebuke or an exhortation. For instance, like the Corinthian church. They weren't doing so hot. And so Paul wrote to them out of rebuke. But Colossians is more just encouragement.

He gave a few warnings along the way. But this is very much a church that was intimate with Paul. That Paul really loved. Really enjoyed. And so he wrote them this letter. Now this letter was carried by Tychicus.

[4 : 27] Jeffrey got his name wrong a few times. And I probably will too. But Tychicus, the mailman, if it were. He carried Philemon. And Colossians.

More than likely the book of Ephesians as well with him. From Paul. While Paul was in Roman prison. Tychicus carries these three letters at least over to the church here.

Also brought a letter that we'll look at today to the church in Laodicea. Which is really, really close to the church in Colossae. Probably about like 20, 25 miles.

Real, real close. Even by the old travel system standards. And so a little bit of mailman bringing the letters around. And Paul gets into some really good stuff in this book.

He warns him about Gnosticism. Which we looked at, if you remember our study on chapter 1.

Gnosticism was kind of the idea that there's a supernatural realm out there. And that there's these spiritual beings.

[5 : 29] And some of the Gnostics came in and said, Well, we need to worship some of these spiritual beings. Or we can get into contact with some of these spiritual beings. And they would say that Jesus wasn't really God.

He was sort of a pseudo-God. A demigod. And we saw that that kind of heresy, that kind of teaching, is still going on today. You've got groups like Jehovah Witness.

And other groups would say that Jesus is just an angel. Or sort of a pseudo-God. But not really God himself. And so Paul warns them about that type of teaching. In chapter 1.

I had the privilege of doing those four verses there. 15 through 18 or 19. Chapter 1 where it talks about the seven superiorities of Christ. And that's a great passage.

It's one of the best passages, in my opinion, in the New Testament. Just talking about the supremacy of Christ. And Christ preeminent. Chapter 2 kind of talks a little bit more about legalism.

[6 : 25] Some of the Colossians were maybe tempted to go back to the law. We know that the Galatians were tempted to go back to the law. And Paul warns them about that in chapter 2. And he says, you know, why do you subject yourself to these regulations?

Don't taste. Don't touch. Don't handle. That's verse 21 of chapter 2. He says, these things are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh. All they do is puff you up. It's a self-imposed religion.

It's this pride that comes about. And that's a huge, huge New Testament theme. You know, you think about the Lord Jesus talking to his disciples and to the Pharisees.

He says, it's not what goes in the mouth that defiles the man, right? And that's what these Colossians were maybe being taught or starting to believe that, well, we can't eat food sacrificed to idols. Or we can't eat certain foods around certain people.

Or there are certain drinks we should avoid. Jesus says, it's not what goes in that defiles the man. It's what comes out. Because out of the mouth is where the heart comes down. It's a heart problem.

[7 : 26] It's not a defilement problem. And so you see Paul warning about legalism there in chapter 2. Again, Jeffrey had a good message on that.

And I don't know if you guys remember, he had a PowerPoint. And the last slide was kind of a summary slide. If you have a gray area in the Christian life, how do you decide if that gray area is okay?

Should we do these things? Or should we avoid these things? And some of the highlights from that slide is whatever the topic is a sin. So one of the examples he used was eating meat on Fridays.

So some religions would say during Lent you need to stay away from meat on Fridays. And so looking at that through the lens of this, is that a sin? Well, no, it's not murder.

Murder would be a sin. But eating meat? No, not a sin. Does it hurt others? No, it doesn't really hurt others for me to eat meat then. Does it give glory to God? No, but it doesn't really take glory away from God.

[8 : 25] Matter of fact, it might give glory to God if I say that he has set me free to eat this meat. And so I don't know if you guys remember that, but that was kind of the filter that he said to put those things through. And then finally, chapter 3, the previous chapter, great chapter.

If there was a title to give to it, you could probably give it the title Christian Living 101. It's kind of the introduction to Christian living is Colossians chapter 3.

If you guys wanted to start your first 19 verses in chapter 3 tomorrow morning, there's nothing wrong with starting in chapter 3. It's great. There's not a topic of Christian living that it really doesn't cover.

It talks about our unity with Christ, how we're united with him in death. We've been united with him in resurrection. It talks about our position in Christ.

It talks about putting off the old man. It talks about putting on the new man. It talks about family relationships, fathers and sons, mothers and daughters, husbands and wives.

[9 : 29] It talks about employee to employer relations. So maybe you're the boss and you've got some rough employees. That's in there. Maybe you're the employee and you've got a rough boss.

That's in there. Family relationships, work relationships. Chapter 3, Christian Living 101. It's a great chapter. And then, of course, we've got chapter 4, which we're going to be in today.

And that's just some of the final greetings, salutation, that kind of stuff. So it's been a good book. I think we're off to Philemon next. Is that right? Is that where we're going next?

Philemon? No? Where are we going next? A couple other fine passages. About the church. Cool. Well, in the Kent Hughes book, it goes to Philemon next.

That's why I thought that. But I should have looked at the schedule a little bit more. But we're going to look today, we're going to switch gears and look at our passage itself. We've got two sort of sections of today's passage.

[10 : 28] We'll dissect those a bit. So if you want to turn to chapter 4, we're going to start in verse 15. We'll look at 15 and 16 together. This is Paul kind of closing out the book.

He says, It says, So those first two verses there.

Greet the brethren in Laodicea, in Nymphos, in the church that is in his or her house. That word there, his or her, some debate over it.

I don't think we need to look too much into it. More than likely, it's a her. The name means daughter-in-law. That's what Nymphos means. It means a son's wife. So pretty feminine sounding name.

Pronoun probably should be translated her. Most translations have that. The King James, the New King James, had it as his. Not really anything to look at. Too much in depth there.

[11 : 54] But more than likely, a her. But the church in Laodicea. So like I said, these churches were about 20, 25 miles apart. If you look in the map section in the back of the Bible, and you look at the New Testament, sometimes they'll have like Paul's missionary journeys.

Paul never went to Laodicea. He never made it there. Obviously, he knew some of the folks that were there. He knew where the church was meeting. And had obviously heard about them.

But as soon as you find Colossae, Laodicea is going to be less than a centimeter away. I mean, they're right on top of each other on those maps. It'd be sort of like having a Bethel South, maybe in like Arnold or Imperial, something like that, 20 or so miles away.

And these churches obviously were familiar with each other. Obviously, they had shared communication with each other. And that's what Paul says. He says, hey, make sure that this epistle, Colossians, make sure that it gets over to them and they read through it.

And we don't want them getting into Gnosticism or legalism. And make sure the one that I send to them gets over to you and you read through it and learn from it.

[13 : 03] But the church of Laodicea didn't end up so well. We know this from the book of Revelation. Revelation chapter 3. Christ sends out these angels to a few different churches.

And he writes a few things to the church of Laodicea. And what happened was the church there became rich. They became prosperous. You know, we talked earlier, they were into finance, textiles, health care, good industries.

And they became rich and they became prosperous. And what happened was they lost their zeal for the Lord. It makes you think of the proverb. It says, you know, let me not be too rich that I forget God and say I have no need of you.

And let me not be too poor that I beg, cheat, and steal. And that's what happened to the Laodiceans. Unfortunately, their prosperity got in the way of their zeal for the Lord.

And they forgot the Lord. And they turned from him and they became lukewarm. I think you guys are familiar with this passage in Revelation chapter 3. Beginning in verse 14.

[14:09] And this is Jesus speaking. It says, And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans. And then down to verse 15. It says, I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot.

I could wish that you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of my mouth. How would you like the Lord Jesus to say that about Bethel?

That would be a tough one to hear. Man, you guys are so lukewarm. I don't want anything to do with you. I'm going to spit you out. I can't stand you. It's so putrid to me that I can't even stand to have you in my mouth.

We're growing a new form of pepper this year. It's called a garden salsa pepper. We usually grow jalapenos. But I wanted to try these. They say they get hotter the longer you leave them on.

Our plants are still only like this tall. So I wanted to take it off to encourage plant growth. I tried it.

Figured it hasn't been on there that long. Shouldn't be that hot. It was very hot. It was very, very hot.

[15:14] And I couldn't get it down. So I had to spit that out of my mouth. And that was not the problem with the Laodiceans. They were neither hot nor cold. And so he had to spit them out because they were lukewarm. But just that thought of, Man, I want nothing to do with it.

Get this away from me as quickly as I can. That's not how I want the Lord to look at us. He goes on to say, Because you say, I am rich and I have become wealthy, I have need of nothing.

And do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked. You know, what adjectives? You know, how would you like the Lord to describe, describe us like that?

Man, wretched, poor, miserable, blind, naked. You know, every now and then at my work, I get to go over to the hospital side of things. I work at the hospital, but I'm in an outpatient building.

But maybe like once or twice a month, if I'm a little slow, or they're really busy, I'll get over there.

And you have your different floors. You know, you have your med-surg floor, and we kind of separate it into ortho floor versus general surgery.

[16:17] And those guys over in the orthopedic surgical side, it's all elective procedure. They knew they were having it. They're in good health. You get over there, they're wearing blue jeans and tennis shoes. They're fine, ready to go home.

But then you get into some of the other floors, and you get to like the PCU, or the progressive care unit, and that's like a step away from the ICU. And the ICU is like a step away from the grave.

But you get in there, and you see some people that are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked. I mean, they got tubes in their nose, tubes in their mouth, tubes in their arm, tubes below the belt, stuff around their calves to pump, the blood, so that they don't get a blood clot from laying in bed.

And they're in rough shape, real rough shape. And of course, your job is to get them out of bed, and walk them down the hall, and that's always a ton of fun. But you see people that are in tough, tough shape, and to think about that, and you normally would want nothing to do with them.

It's a wretched, miserable condition. And that's what the Lord said, and became of the Laodiceans, because they lost their zeal. They lost their drive to live for the Lord.

[17:23] But nonetheless, get this, this is his call to them. And I think that this is awesome. He says the very next verse, I advise you, buy from me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich, and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed.

And anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chase, and therefore, be zealous and repent. He's saying to these guys, man, you guys are in rough shape, I want nothing to do with you, but, but I love you.

I love you. And that, that's not the first thing that comes to your mind when you see a person that's in that rough shape. That's not the first emotion that comes to mind. It's not one of, of love, and come to me, and let me clothe you, and let me give you my wealth, and let me give you, this, this eye salve, to anoint your eyes, to, to make you better.

But that's how the Savior sees them. He sees them out of love. He says, man, be zealous, repent, have zeal for me, return to me. Verse 20, for all you storybook kids, you're familiar with this verse. It says, behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I'll come into him and dine with him, and he with me. That's the invitation of the Savior, even though this church has left them, and has left him, and gone for themselves, to be prosperous, and to be wealthy, and to live out of selfish motivation.

[18:52] That's his call is, man, I'm here knocking. Just let me in. Let me clothe you. Let me feed you. Let's have fellowship together. So I just thought that was a cool picture of our Savior and his love for the church.

These last two verses here, verses 17 and 18, back in Colossians, pretty cool verses. I think these would be a good verse, especially verse 17, to remember with kind of that meeting we just had in mind, the ministries that are going to be available here at Bethel in the upcoming weeks.

We're having a VBS in July, is that right? It's going to be kind of hosted here. There's a lot of ministry coming up, and I think these two verses apply to that really well.

So verse 17 and 18. This is Paul. It says, Say to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it.

This salutation by my own hand, Paul. Remember my chains. Grace be with you. Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it.

[20:04] Isn't that a good verse? That's just a, that's a good one. Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it. Paul kind of throws this in right at the very end.

He kind of calls out this guy, Archippus, and says, Hey, you've got a ministry. You need to focus on it. This ministry is important. I don't know why he puts it in right at the end.

I don't know. Perhaps his ministry had something to do with the church in Laodicea. Maybe he was kind of a go-between. I don't know. There's a lot of speculation out there.

No one seems to agree on why, but maybe that's why he throws it in. You know, he's talking about the Laodiceans, and oh yeah, Archippus. I need to remember him. Maybe Archippus is being a little bit lazy. Maybe he needed a little extra, you know, reminder kick in the pants to get going on the ministry.

Maybe the ministry was just something really near and dear to Paul, and that's why he put it in right at the end with some of the closing remarks. So whatever reason, he puts that in here.

[21:05] Interestingly, Archippus is mentioned also in the book of Philemon. Most people think that he is Philemon's son. He's described there, it says, greet Philemon, greet his wife, whose name I think was Aphia, and then it says, Archippus, our fellow soldier.

So a lot of people read into that and say that Archippus was maybe Philemon's son, and again Philemon was the one whose house had the Colossian church in it, and obviously Philemon was a leader in the church.

So Archippus was brought up in the church. He was described as a fellow soldier, more than likely a young man with some kind of important ministry. But Paul says, take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord that you may fulfill it.

It's interesting, he doesn't say take heed to fulfill the ministry. He says, take heed to the ministry itself. And I think that's an important note because a lot of times, especially in my mind, I'm very goals-oriented.

You go into something with a goal and scorch earth until the goal is accomplished. And so you have this idea of, hey, we're going to have a VBS. Hey, we're going to have a barbecue. Let's have the best possible barbecue.

[22:16] Let's have the best possible VBS. And who cares whose feelings get hurt in the process? We're going to do it and it's going to be great. And darn it, it's not going to be bad.

No one's going to say anything bad about this. And that's not a good, that's not a people-oriented mindset. It's very much goals-oriented. And I think that's part of the reason why he says, hey, take heed to the ministry itself.

The Lord will accomplish the growth. If it's going to succeed or it's going to fail, that's up to the Lord. But your job is just focus on the ministry, focus on the service aspect of it. You know, you think of Paul to the Corinthians, he said, you know, I planted, Apollo swattered, but it was the Lord that caused the growth.

It was the Lord that caused the increase. It wasn't because of anything that I, Paul, did or that Apollo did. It was the Lord. And so, take heed to the ministry itself. If you look at these words a little bit and kind of dissect them, break them down, that word there, take heed, most of the time in the Bible is translated as to see.

And it means to have sight, to see, to perceive, to understand. It's kind of to get the big picture, to understand what's going on. Like I said, it's usually translated to see.

[23 : 30] So he says, see to the ministry. Understand what the ministry is. Perceive it. Understand it. Get the big picture about it. Of course, ministry means service. It comes from the word for servant.

Kind of the ultimate example of that is in the book of Acts where Stephen and some of the other young men came together to wait tables. That's what it means. It means to attend to, to run errands on someone's behalf.

And you think about just kind of a waiter or a waitress. You know, you go to Denny's, order pancakes. Denny's has a company policy that your cup of coffee should never be empty. If you're in there, they should be putting coffee in the cup. And they're running, paying good attention to that, running errands for you. And that's what ministry means. It means to serve or service.

So see to the service. Understand the service which you have received in the Lord. that word received. It means it's like take by force.

[24 : 28] There's a good video that we got. My daughter Lily, Savannah. Savannah's got the pacifier. What's Lily do? Boom. It's mine now. It's mine.

Rips it right out. Of course, Savannah cries. Lily, no repentance. We're going to have to work on that down the road. But it means to bring near. It means to take it and own it.

It is mine. You can't have it. It's the word used when Jesus gets scourged by the Roman soldiers. It says that they took him out to be scourged. They took him.

They weren't going to, no one else was going to take him away. The Roman soldiers had him. It's the same word used for like taking a wife or taking a husband.

You know, in the marriage ceremony, do you so-and-so take Mr. So-and-so to be your husband? You know, I do. You don't just casually take a spouse.

[25 : 22] When you have a spouse, no one's taking him or her from you. It is yours. You are each other's. And there's no room for separation. And so, take heed to the ministry which you have taken.

You've owned. Just own it. It is yours. No one's taken it from you that you've received in the Lord that you may fulfill it. And that word fulfill, it's usually used in the sense of being full.

Like filling up a building. You know, you'd say all the pews are full in a church. It's the same word used in John at the end where they throw the nets over the other side of the boat and the nets are so full that the boat starts to sink.

It means to cram them in there so it's so full. So, understand the service or the attendance which you have taken and taken ownership of in the Lord that you may fill it so full that you can't fit any more in.

That's the gist of this verse. And I think that's a great verse. You know, thinking of summer camps that are coming up. Thinking of the ministries here that are coming up. And just thinking in your own life.

[26 : 29] What is my ministry? What is my service? We spent a lot of time this semester in youth group talking about spiritual gifts. And I think it's difficult at that age group 12 to 17 or so to really understand well, you know, I go to a church full of adults.

I look to the adults for leadership. The adults do most of the stuff. What kind of service? What kind of ministry can I do? And I think that can be a little bit hard but for us, the adults in the room, there should be some kind of service or some kind of ministry that you can get involved with.

Every Christian has some kind of spiritual gift and most of us have more than one. So find out what that is and get involved. Take heed of that. Understand what that is and take ownership of it.

Own up to it and run with it. If the musicians want to come on up, we can kind of summarize and close here.

Book of Colossians is a great book to read. It's short and sweet and there's a lot of really good good stuff in there. 19 verses a day. You could read it Monday through Friday 52 times in a year.

[27 : 38] It would take you ten minutes every morning. It wouldn't be tough at all. We've seen that the church in Laodicea became prosperous and forgot the Lord but still the Lord chose to love them, chose to invite them back to Him with a repentant heart so that they could have zeal again even though no one else would want anything to do with them.

To spit them out, to be wretched and miserable and poor. Still the Lord says, I love for you, return to me. And finally, these last verses here.

Understanding our ministry for each of us individually, whatever that may be, and understanding it and using it with all our might. You know, stuff just doesn't happen on accident in this world. Everything is very purposeful and we can organize events and say, okay, the event's going to happen and if we don't take it seriously and beware of it and take heed of it, there's not going to be growth there.

And so, we do need to rely on the Lord for those things but part of relying on the Lord is using the talents that He's given us through His Spirit. So, let's close. Father God, thank you for the day and thank you for your word.

[28 : 51] Thank you for this book of the Colossians. Thank you for the truths that are in it, Father, about your Son and His preeminence and how He was the firstborn over creation and how creation was made for Him and through Him and God, all things eventually will return to Him and we thank you that in Him we have liberty and we're no longer under the law and Lord, our righteousness doesn't come by ourselves because if it did, that would just lead to pride and Father, thank you that we can humbly come to you for salvation and for justification and God, I pray that this church would never grow lukewarm, that we would continue to have zeal for you and Lord, that we would use the gifts that you have given us for you and for your glory and we just pray all this in your Son.

for you it would never work in your salvation with God and in your son and you have done its hacer and for you and will never know a place in your Ocean