

# “THE FAMILY AND THE LOCAL CHURCH”

COLOSSIANS 4:15-18

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## INTRODUCTION

For some believers, it's all about the local church, and family is badly neglected. For other believers, it's all about the family, and local church is low on the priority list—much participation and involvement is limited. Both extremes are wrong! Christian families in the early church were an integral part of the local church—family life and church life were blended and practically indistinguishable. **See Acts 2:42: “continually devoting themselves to:**

- 1) Apostolic teaching, 2) Fellowship, 3) Breaking of Bread, 4) Prayer

The local church must be at the heart and center of our family life, and family must be at the heart and center of the local church. Our passage today reinforces this concept. Here we see a family represented most likely by a mother, who had a church meeting in her home. We also see local churches integrated and sharing teaching and training with one another. We see a young man, part of a key family in the church, exhorted to fulfill his ministry in his local church. Finally, we see an aged apostle who reinforced all of this, even in the midst of his sufferings and chains.

Of course, what makes all of this possible is the grace of God.

**YOU MUST INTEGRATE YOUR FAMILY INTO THE LIFE OF THE LOCAL CHURCH.**

**THIS LOCAL CHURCH MUST INTEGRATE THE FAMILIES INTO THE ESSENCE OF ITS LIFE AND MINISTRY.**

- I. A MOTHER AND A LOCAL CHURCH (15)—Greet them
  - A. “The brethren in Laodicea”—all believers, the entire church
  - B. Nympha(s)—We know nothing more about this person—likely a female.  
Other churches meeting in homes of women:
    1. The home of Mary in Jerusalem where the early believers met (Acts 12).
    2. Lydia’s home where the Philippian church began meeting (Acts 16:15, 40).
    3. The home of Priscilla and Aquila where churches met (Rom. 16:5—Rome; I Cor. 16:19--Ephesus).
    4. Possibly the home of “the elect lady” in II John.
    5. Possibly Phoebe’s in Cenchrea (Rom. 16:1-2—a house church there?).
    6. Robertson notes that **churches did not meet in separate buildings until the 3<sup>rd</sup> century** (512).
  - C. The church that is in her/his house—“*Mi casa es su casa*” (my home is your home); no selfishness.
    - The church meeting there would cause much inconvenience, more work and cleaning, and much more organizing and reorganizing.
    - Personal privacy would be invaded.
    - Money would be spent.
- II. A LOCAL CHURCH SHARING GOSPEL TEACHING AND TRAINING WITH ANOTHER LOCAL CHURCH (16)
  - A. Read this letter among you. Cf. I Thes. 5:27.
  - B. Have the same letter read in the church of the Laodiceans—broader than the church of Nympha.
    1. Much of the teaching to Colossae would benefit the church of Laodicea.
    2. Such sharing of Paul’s letters helped to show that his writings had **more than mere local interest**
    3. The spread of Paul’s letters soon led them to be recognized as eligible to be regarded as Scripture.
  - C. Read my letter coming to you from Laodicea. What are some of the views?
    1. A letter written from Laodicea to Paul—**No**
    2. The Book of Philemon—**No**
    3. A letter written by Paul from Laodicea, such as I or II Thessalonians, I Timothy, Galatians—**No**
    4. Ephesians—a circular letter—**not likely**—though many hold this view.
    5. The apocryphal “Letter to the Laodiceans”—**No**.

6. Rather, this is an actual letter of Paul to the church there—a letter now lost, like the one to Corinth mentioned in I Cor. 5:9.
  - The content not deemed distinct enough, or important enough to be preserved.
  - It had apostolic authority, but was not inspired and thus preserved.

### III. A YOUNG MINISTER WHO IS PART OF A KEY FAMILY IN THE CHURCH (17)

- A. Archippus' identity and location.
  1. Son of Philemon (Philemon 2)
  2. Lived in Colossae, as seen in the fact that Onesimus was sent to Colossae and from there, (4:9, and he was the servant of Philemon, Archippus' father.
- B. Archippus' "ministry"—Likely a replacement for Epaphras—with Paul in Rome
  1. "In the Lord"
  2. "Received it"—with a commission and responsibility
- C. Archippus' duty—"Take heed"—look out at, keep your eye on.
- D. "Fulfill it—carry it out fully.
  1. The present tense indicates the continuous nature of this responsibility—"keep on filling it full. **It is a life-time job.**
    - As Eadie states, Archippus must "fill up with holy activity that sphere which the Lord had marked out for him" (296).
    - Thomas mentions the fact that ministers may frequently be praised by their members for fulfilling half of their duties while the Lord is displeased that he fails to fulfill the other half of them.
  2. Involved in such ministry is: "**Simplicity** of life"; "**Singleness** of heart"; "**Scripturalness** of preaching"; "**Strength** of sympathy"; "**Spirituality** of methods"; "**Sincerity** of motives"; "**Strenuousness** of service." (Thomas, 140).
- E. Note who gives the charge the congregation!

### IV. AN AGING APOSTLE WHO SUPPORTS ALL OF THIS IN HIS CHAINS (18)

- A. Paul authenticates the epistle by writing these words with his own hand—his normal practice (II Thes. 3:17).
- B. Paul reminds them of his chains—imprisonment
  1. Involves remembering him in their prayers.
  2. It ought also to cause them to take more seriously the teachings and commands of this epistle.
  3. They ought to be inspired to live their lives more fully for Christ—Paul the prisoner was!
  4. When thinking of their obligations to him, or even enjoying their religious freedoms that he did not have. Remember that the hand that writes this is a chained hand.
  5. The chain...clanked afresh as Paul took the pen to sign the salutation. He was not likely to forget it himself.
- C. Paul reminds them of the need for God's grace. The Christian life begins and ends with the grace/unmerited favor of God just as Colossians begins with "grace to you and peace" (1:2) and ends with "grace be with you."

### CONCLUSION

What a book is the book of Colossians! Christ is all; Christ is in you; false teaching is rubbish. The Christian life must be lived victoriously; the Christian home must manifest Christ; the world must hear our witness. And all this must be carried out in the context of the local church.

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