

Archippus: Take Heed

Colossians 4:17

22/10/2023

Joshua Koura

Camden Valley Baptist Church

www.cvbaptist.org.au

Read together from verse 7 of chapter 4 and down to verse number 18. The Word of God reads, "Tychicus, a beloved brother, faithful minister, and fellow servant in the Lord, will tell you all the news about me. I am sending him to you for this very purpose, that he may know your circumstances and comfort your hearts with Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother who is one of you. They will make known to you all things which are happening here. Aristarchus, my fellow prisoner, greets you with Mark, the son of Barnabas, about whom you received instructions. If he comes to you, welcome him. And Jesus, who is called Justus. 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. Epaphras, who is one of you, 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. For I bear him witness that he has a great zeal for you, and those who are in Laodicea and those in Hierapolis. Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas greet you. Greet the brethren who are in Laodicea, and Nymphas and the church that is in his house. 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. And 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. Amen."

Let us pray. Lord, we are thankful for the words of this epistle that have ministered to our hearts. Lord, over the last year, and we rejoice that Your word is alive and that Your Spirit works to open our eyes to receive its truths as precious to us. And I pray, Lord God, as we approach this portion of scripture, Lord, from this epistle as our last sermon today, Lord, I pray that You would help us to receive it as it is in truth, the Word of God, and to have a heart that is ready to be engaged to do all that You command us to do. Lord, send Your Holy Spirit to quicken us, awaken us, to draw us near to Yourself and to Your word, and to help me to preach the word in the power of the Holy Spirit, that Your people's faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God. And we ask these things in Jesus' name, Amen.

We've been considering verses 7 to 18 of the last few weeks, and first, we considered Paul's companions and looked generally at Paul's companions that are revealed here in this text of scripture. And we learned about the people that Paul worked with and the things that he considered important in the work of Christian ministry. But then last week, we considered Epaphras and zoomed into one of these people that Paul worked with, and we considered the prayer life of Epaphras, that he was someone who was mighty in prayer, one who labored fervently in prayer for God's people. And we saw the importance of the power of prayer as we engage ourselves in that duty and responsibility as God's people.

But today, I want to focus our attention on the last person that is mentioned in this section and in this epistle, and his name is Archippus. And in verse number 17, the Word of God says, "And say to Archippus, 'Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it.'" And Archippus here is presented to us as someone who was ministering there in the church at Colossae.

Now, before you start thinking, "What does Archippus have to do with us? This was a man some 1900 years ago, and Paul is speaking to him, and what does that have to do with us?" I want us just to step up to verse number 16 to be reminded of what Paul himself says about his own epistles. He says in verse 16, "Now when this epistle is read among you, see that it is also read in the church of the Laodiceans, and that you likewise read the epistle from Laodicea." And Paul says here in this passage that this epistle that I'm giving and writing to you people at Colossae needs to be read not only to you but it needs to be read over in the church of Laodicea. And we know from this that he directly is not addressing the people of Laodicea but the people of Colossae, but he says that this epistle has benefits for the people of Laodicea, and I want it to be read among them as it is read among you. And the epistle that I'm sending to Laodicea, I want you to read that also among yourselves, which we don't know what epistle that is; it hasn't been—God hasn't seen fit to preserve it in His word for us. However, what this passage is teaching us is that the material outlined in the New Testament is for all of God's people, even though it's not directly addressed to the people of Colossae. Paul says this is also for you at Laodicea, and I think for us here at Camden Valley, some 1900 years later, Paul would say the same thing to us: that all scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for us for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that we may be mature, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. And whether you're in Laodicea or whether you're 1900 years removed from the biblical text, God's word is eternal and for us to be received, whether the name is Archippus or whether it's your own name, we need to receive it as the Word of God.

And so, anyhow, who was this Archippus? It's important to understand who he was and what was Paul intending for his audience at the time. Well, there's not much said about Archippus, but in Philemon chapter number two, verse number two, his name appears. And in Philemon chapter number two, if you'd like to turn there, Philemon verse two, Paul writes an epistle to not a church but to an individual, and the epistle is addressed in verse one to Philemon, our beloved friend and fellow laborer, to the beloved—which is likely to be Philemon's wife, that is believed by many commentators—and Archippus, our fellow soldier, and to the church in your house. Now, this is an epistle not written to a church but to, we could say, a family or to Philemon and his wife, and Archippus could very much well have been his son. And this epistle is written as a domestic epistle to him, and he's called in this passage a fellow soldier and is also referenced here to the fact that the church was in his house, which would have been the house of Philemon, to whom Paul was going to with Tychicus send Onesimus back to that very household of Philemon, which is most likely where the church of Colossae resided and met and gathered together on the Lord's day. And so, here we see that Archippus was most likely part of the household of Philemon, most likely he was therefore in the house where the church of Colossae gathered to meet, who was considered a fellow soldier, which would make reference to the fact that he was one who was fighting the Lord's battles in His army, which would be a term used of those servants of the Lord in the ministry. And back in Colossians chapter number four, verse number 17, we have reference to the fact that he also was a minister of the Lord. Verse 17 says, "And say to Archippus, 'Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it.'" And what we learn about Archippus is that he was most likely a servant of the Lord. What we don't know about him is why this charge was given to him, and what we also don't understand and are not told in the text of scripture is what particular ministry Archippus had. Was he a deacon in the church? Was he a pastor in the church? Was he an evangelist? Or was he someone that had been in an interim position while Epaphras was no longer there as the church planter, and was he preaching to the people there at Colossae? We are not told all those details, which, in some sense, is helpful for us because it makes the application a little broader.

Alright, and so we're going to consider Paul's charge here given to the church regarding Archippus, and the text here says, "And say to Archippus, 'Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it.'" Now, what's interesting to begin understanding is Paul is not directly speaking to Archippus, but he's speaking to the church at Colossae. He says, "And say to Archippus," and the verb here, "to say," is the second person plural pronoun, which is "and you say." We could supply the words there, "and you say to Archippus," and it's a command by Paul given to the church at Colossae regarding the ministry of Archippus. And Paul says to

the church there, "You command Archippus, you instruct Archippus, you remind Archippus, you stir up Archippus, telling him to fulfill his ministry that he has received in the Lord and to take heed to it." And so, what this shows us immediately is that Paul understood the relationship between the church and its ministers. Paul could have addressed Archippus directly, as he had been addressing the Colossian believers all this time, but Paul calls upon the church to address its minister. Paul calls upon the church to say to its own minister, "To take heed, to take accountability for what God has called him to do, to remind him and instruct him because you are among him." You see, Paul was not among the people; he was over in prison, reminding the people of their responsibilities in the church of God. And he reminds the church that you have a duty to your minister, and that is to encourage him, to exhort him, to remind him to take heed to that which the Lord has given him to do. A beautiful thing that can be seen here is essentially the middle wall of partition being broken down between clergy and laity, and Paul is essentially showing us that the responsibility that the church has to its own minister helps the church realize that its minister is one of their own, who has particular gifts, who has a particular calling, but he is one of the people, and therefore it is incumbent upon the people to hold their ministers accountable to that which God has called them to do. A minister is one of the people with a specific gift and calling, and Paul charges the church to charge their minister.

But what is the charge that Paul instructs the church to charge their minister with? And that is here in verse 17, that he should take heed to the ministry which he had received in the Lord, that he may fulfill it. A man by the name of Kenneth Wuest, who puts out an expanded version of the New Testament, helps provide us with some more meaning on this text, and he says he translates it this way: "Be ever keeping a watchful eye upon the ministry which you received in the Lord, that you may discharge it fully." And what he's simply saying here is that they were to take heed, they were encouraged to be take heed, to keep a watchful eye on that which God had given him to do so that he may fully discharge and carry out that which God had given him to do. This is a similar charge that Paul himself gives to Timothy when he says to Timothy, "But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, and do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry." And so the first part of the charge, particularly, is "take heed to fulfill it." This is a call to an awareness; this is a call to watchfulness so that Archippus will fulfill the very thing that God had given him to accomplish, to satisfy that which God had called him to do, to fulfill and bring to completion that which God had given him to do. The language here is could be illustrated like one who was a delegate or one who is on a mission that is sent by another to do a certain task, who is an ambassador perhaps, or one who has been assigned something to do, a mission that needs to be accomplished. And Paul basically gives this image of Archippus as one who was on a mis-

sion, and he had to do something and fulfill something, and Paul says to the church, "You need to encourage him to take heed that he continues to do it and finish what he's been called to do." And so the image here is that of a man on a mission.

And what we learn about a man on a mission, if we were to examine any ambassador or any person that has been sent by another or called by another or received a task and an assignment by another, is what we understand about them is that their mission that they have been called to shapes them, shapes their thinking, shapes the way that they carry out everything that they do. You send an ambassador to another country to carry out a peace treaty or a peace deal or to bring a message from another land; his whole engagement is toward that which he has been assigned to. Now, he obviously will stop and eat a few meals as he goes about his day; he doesn't give up the ordinary for the special, but it's the special that encompasses his entire work. It grips him; it shapes him; it basically gives, takes up his attention, takes up his thought, takes up his life, takes up his work. And just as there are forces that work against an ambassador in trying to accomplish that which he is doing or some person is on a special force operation, just like there are people and there are enemies that will seek to hinder that or would speak against that, so it is in the mission that God had given Archippus to do. And so the exhortation comes in such a way as to help him to realize that there are many adversaries to this open door or to this call that God has given you to fulfill, and he says to the church, "You just keep reminding Archippus that he needs to keep his eyes on the task, and then he needs to keep his eyes on the task till he fulfills the task because there are many oppositions and many enemies of those ones that are trying to hinder him in doing that which God has given him to do." The call to take heed implies that there are things that would very much take his attention away from that which he is called to do.

And I think there are examples throughout the entire scripture of men that had been given a task to do, a mission, a calling, and they failed to fulfill that which they were asked to do. We think of Judas as one of those who, by filthy lucre, turned aside, and Satan filled his heart, and he did not fulfill that what he was called to do as a disciple of Jesus when the Lord Jesus called him and sent him to make Him known. What about Demas, who, for the love of this present world, left Paul and went after the things of this life and didn't take heed to himself and to the ministry which he had received in the Lord? What about Diotrephes in 3 John, in the latter part of those verses there, who was a man who loved to have the preeminence and whatever church he was pastoring and whatever situation he found himself in, it seemed to have pride that entered into his mind, and he wouldn't receive the brethren, and he would cast out people from the church that wouldn't agree with him, and John tells Demetrius and John

tells the people there not to give up doing that which is right even though he is doing that which is wrong. What about Hymenaeus and Alexander, who, the Bible says, who concerning the faith suffered shipwreck? What about Hymenaeus and Philetus, whom Paul also says they had turned aside into false doctrine, saying that the resurrection had passed already? My friends, the Bible is replete with examples of men that were called by God to do a task by God or given a ministry which they did not fulfill or were part of a ministry which they did not fulfill, and the Bible gives us that as a warning to understand that we are to take heed to the ministry which God has given His servants that they might fulfill it. I mean, we could add some of our own experiences to the number of those in the scripture, people that we have worked with, perhaps, people that we once prayed with, served with; some are recovered from their fall, others have fallen, and they are not recovered in the Lord's work. And so Paul understood the dangers that lurked around Christian ministry and the pitfalls and the holes that were there that could easily be fallen into and the temptations that could draw ministers away from the task which God had given them to do, and he tells the church to tell their minister to take heed that he fulfills that which God has given him to do.

Now, I want us to notice the second part of this verse, not only were they to instruct him to the ministry which he has received in the Lord that he may fulfill it, but Paul describes the ministry as something which he received from the Lord or something that he received in the Lord. And I think this is really important for our understanding of Christian service and Christian ministry, that the church was not exhorted to encourage him to do things that were to their own ends and their own designs. They were not to encourage him to do things that God didn't call him to do or did not give him and equip him to do. The church was to be keenly aware of the fact that Archippus had been given a task by the Lord, which God would hold Archippus accountable for, and therefore the church should help keep him accountable in the fulfilling of that task which he received from the Lord.

And when we see that the words "received in the Lord" or "from the Lord" could be translated, it helps us understand something about Christian ministry. It helps us realize that Christian ministry is not something that is manufactured; neither is it something that is made, but it is something that is given. Something that is given. It is a gift; it is a calling. And the church's responsibility was not to make Archippus something that he was not, nor to give Archippus something to do that God had not asked him to do or nothing that he had given him to do, but rather they were to spur him on in that which God had called him to do.

I think that's a really important thing to recognize is that the church's responsibility is not to make preachers but to recognize them. They're not to

manufacture men but to recognize them. And this is something that lacks so much in our day today in the world of Christian ministry. And I want us to turn to Ephesians chapter 4 just to help us grapple with some of these realities because Archippus was one who had received their ministry from the Lord, and that's why he was to be exhorted to continue to do it and to fulfill it.

In Ephesians chapter 4, there is an important text of scripture here in verse number 7 down to verse number 11 and 12. Ephesians chapter 4, verse number 7, says, "But to each one of us, grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. Therefore, He says, 'When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive and gave gifts to men.'" And jump down to verse number 11, it says, "And He Himself, this is the risen, ascended Lord, gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." And there it goes on to the end goal, which is to become more and more matured like Jesus Christ, and He will be giving gifts until the day of that maturity. But what the Bible is teaching us here is that the gifts that were given to men by the ascended Lord have their expression in Christian ministry: apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers. Why are pastors pastors? Why are teachers teachers? Why were the apostles the apostles? Why are missionaries missionaries? Because God gives gifts to men. And what the Bible is teaching us here is that those gifts are received by men, and therefore they result in the ministration of men, and therefore men carry out the ministry received from the Lord because the Lord has gifted them to the task that God has called them to do.

And this is a very important aspect because if we don't recognize the difference between someone just liking to do something or just having a non-compulsive desire to do something, just a frivolous desire, or just because someone looks the part necessarily, it does not mean that God has given him that to do. And there's a passage that really stands out in regard to this, and I'll read it to you from 1 Corinthians 9:16-17, and I want you to hear the language of the Apostle Paul, who was called by God, gifted by God to do the work of an apostle. Look what he says here: "For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for necessity is laid upon me. Yes, woe is me if I do not preach the gospel! And then listen to what he says here: "For if I do this willingly, I have a reward; but if against my will, I have been entrusted with a stewardship." And Paul is helping the church at Corinth realize this, that I don't do the work of an apostle merely voluntarily, in this sense that I wake up one morning and I feel like, "Oh, I want to preach the gospel today," but tomorrow, if I don't wake up wanting to preach the gospel, I don't have to preach the gospel. What Paul realizes is this: there is a necessity that has been laid upon me. He goes, "If I do this willingly,

then I deserve and receive a reward, and all these things. If I get benefits from it, then good; if I don't get benefits from it, then I won't do it." But he's saying, "You know what? I don't do this willingly; I do this against my will." And what this shows, not saying that he was reluctant, he's not saying that he didn't want to do it, but what he's simply saying is, "I don't do this out of just merely because of a mere desire; I do this out of compulsion. There is a stronger sense laid upon me, a necessity laid upon me," and he goes so far as to say, "Woe is unto me if I do not preach the gospel." But he says in verse number 17, "But if against my will, what does it prove? What does it prove?" He says, "I have been entrusted with a stewardship." Paul is helping the believers at Corinth understand that if I do this out of compulsion and because of the necessity laid upon me, it proves that I have not made myself an apostle, but God has made me an apostle. God has called me to be an apostle, and the necessity then is laid upon me, and I feel a sense of woe and judgment upon me if I don't go out and preach this gospel.

You only have to think of the example of Jeremiah to understand what Paul's trying to say here. Here is Jeremiah, affected, as called as a prophet of God, set apart for the work of being a prophet. Here he's getting opposition, but he gets in the dumps, and he wants to give up, but he cannot give up. Why can't he give up? Because the Word of God is burning in his heart, and he cannot stay; he must go, and he must continue to proclaim the Word of the Lord to a rebellious house.

We don't often think of Christian ministry in this way, but it's an important way to consider it. And this does not only apply to those who are called into Christian ministry; the Bible also shows us in 1 Corinthians 12, if you'd like to turn there as well, the relationship between gifts and ministry, gifts and ministry. 1 Corinthians chapter number 12, verse 4 to verse number 6 and verse 7. I want us to comprehend this, that Archippus was to be encouraged because he had received the ministry from the Lord, and that's why he was to be exhorted to continue to do it and to fulfill it.

It says in verse number four of chapter 12, "There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities or empowerings or the energizing, as it were, of God, but it is the same God who works or empowers all in all." Verse 7, "But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all." The Bible is teaching us here, as it goes through all these gifts, you'll see the word constantly coming, "given, given, given, given, given, given," and verse 11 says, "But the one and the same Spirit who works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills." And I want to just ask you this question: How much of Christian ministry that we do as God's people do we understand as to be received from the Lord? You see, it is the gifts that have their display in ministry, and it's the Spirit that bestows gifts

for Christian ministry. And this is what the passage is showing, and when there is Christian ministry, this is the display of the Spirit's attunement to the lives of God's people.

1 Peter 4:10 says this: "And each one of us has received a gift, minister it to one another as good stewards of the grace of God." As you have received the gift, minister it to one another as good stewards. There you go, recipients of God's grace that has given us in gifts. And what I'm simply trying to emphasize here is that we must not think of Christian ministry as merely as something that we just come up with ourselves and create because we feel like doing something, but we realize that the effective nature of Christian ministry is this: that we recognize that what we have is received from the Lord.

There are many things that people desire to do for wrong reasons, and some of those reasons are not seen to the naked eye. But some people perhaps like to preach because of the praise that comes from being in a pulpit. Some people like to be a pastor because of the fact that they can have more control over things that they like to do, and they're very insecure, and they don't like to be under authority, but they rather just do things and take control of things. Some people like to serve others because they like to get a pat on the back, and that's what motivates them to go and preach the gospel, and that's what motivates them to help others. Some people want to speak and do those things because they want to look like they have lots of knowledge. And often, as God's people, we look back and look at those people and think to ourselves, "Oh, yeah, they're pretty keen." The question that we have to ask ourselves is this: What gift has God given them, and is what they're doing in terms of ministry received from the Lord? And that changes the dynamic as to how we think of Christian ministry.

I think a lot of churches today is like, "Let's just set up the church," and so we do the business model. Instead of that, we've got to be thinking this: "God, what gifts have You given to Your people, and where should those people, therefore, serve?" And we need to have the grace and humility to ask ourselves, "Lord, what gifts have You given me, and therefore, where do You want me to serve?" You see, and when we're encouraging people to take heed, whether it's the minister in the pulpit and the shepherd of the flock or whether it's the individual Christian that's serving in the body of Jesus Christ, we need to encourage people to take heed that they fulfill that which God has given them to do.

We should not be seeking to make people in the congregation something that they are not. We should be asking the right questions about gifts and service, and we should be exhorting people to continue on in doing that which God has called them to do. You see, Archippus was to be encour-

aged because he had received a ministry from the Lord, a calling, and a gifting, and the church was to tell him, "Archippus, don't give up. Archippus, don't be distracted. Archippus, stay away from sin. Archippus, don't be discouraged. Archippus, don't heed to the ridicule. Do not yield to the temptation. Archippus, keep on, whether your hands are weak or your knees are weary. Archippus, keep looking to Jesus, the Author and Finisher of your faith. Archippus, understand that when the Chief Shepherd shall appear, you shall receive a crown of glory that fades not away. Archippus, do not stop doing that which God has called you to do because there are many adversaries that will try and stop you."

The many things that can bring God's people down, and we have to think as Paul thought when he looked at those elders at Ephesus. He said, "Take heed to the ministry," he said to them, "of being a shepherd of the flock, as being overseers," but he says, "which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers." And the same applies to us, does it not? All of us received gifts from the Lord; we're serving in the Lord's house, trying to minister to one another. And we have to see to it that we examine ourselves as to our gifts, to our calling, to our task that God has given us to do, and not only that, we are to also consider that what we are to do, we are to encourage one another in that very thing that we have been given by God to do. This is how the body receives edification; this is how the body edifies itself in love when God's people are sensitive to what God has given them to do and they do it, and we all encourage one another to keep an eye on that which God has given you to do and fulfill it.

It's okay; keep at it. You may not see fruit from your evangelism, but do not put the gospel tracts down. You may not see people being encouraged by the words of exhortation that you give, but if God has given you that to do and has put you in the life of that person and has given you a word of encouragement to share, share it in faith, trusting God to do the work of blessing in that person's heart.

My friends, we are in a spiritual battle, and that spiritual battle will keep us—Satan will seek to keep us—from doing that which we have received from the Lord. He'll do one of two things: He will try to convince us that we may have received something from the Lord which God hasn't given us to do, which can cause great harm to Christian ministry, to Christian ministry, or he will try to distract us from doing that which God has called us to do. And it's important, as even men that are considering the ministry here among us and are considering the potential of preaching and teaching and the calling of God into pastoral ministry, let me encourage you that preachers, as Martyn Lloyd-Jones said, "Preachers are not born; they are made," is what Martyn Lloyd-Jones says, and I think it's very true. And that it is not a matter of filling in an empty spot; it's a matter of what has God called

me to do? What have I received from the Lord? And I am to do that with all my heart, soul, mind, and strength and to take heed to it as my mission.

If God has given you speaking gifts, then speak encouragement to God's people. If God's given you serving gifts, then serve God's people and do so unflinching and unceasingly in the face of opposition. Let me just say this to you, dear brethren: We have a great example set for us. In closing, let me just share this: The greatest example of one that received a mission from the Lord and fulfilled it was Jesus Christ, our Savior. You know what He said? "As the Father has sent Me, even so, send I you." He says, "Behold, I have come to do Thy will, O God." Jesus said these words: "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me." This is my food; this is my sustenance, "and to finish His work." The Lord Jesus Christ did not give up doing that which He was set apart to do. He came to seek and save that which was lost, and though He was ridiculed, though He was despised, though He was rejected, He kept looking to the cross; He kept His eyes upon the work that God had given Him to do, the mission to redeem sinners from sin unto God, to save that which was lost. And He unflinching took heed to that which God had given Him to do, and we now have a Savior that continues to do that which He is called to do and intercedes for us on our behalf before God, to bring many sons to glory.

Dear friend, when we are failing as God's people in the work that God has called us to do, consider Him who was not wearied and didn't faint in His mind when He's contradicted by sinners. The Bible says, "For the joy that was set before Him, He endured the cross, despising the shame, and He sat down on the right hand now of the Majesty on high because He kept at it." And, dear people of God, this is the confidence that we have in Him, that He who has begun a good work in us will perform it to the day of Jesus Christ. And so let us be encouraged, those who are weary, that our beloved Servant of the Most High God, to follow in our Savior's steps, taking heed to the ministry that we have received from the Lord, that we may fulfill it. Let us pray.