

Fulfill the Call

And say to Archippus, "See that you fulfill the ministry that you received in the Lord."
Colossians 4:17 (ESV)

A couple months ago I received a jury summons for the state district court in Comal County. A few weeks later I received another summons, this time to New Braunfels Municipal Court. Like any good, red-blooded American, I tried to figure out how to get out of reporting for jury duty.

I pored over each summons to find the loopholes. Unfortunately I did not qualify for any of the statutory exemptions that would have released me from service. Furthermore, both of the documents that summoned me to report for duty contained scary, legal-sounding language describing what would happen to me if I failed to report. I decided to show up as instructed, giving myself a pat on the back for being such a good citizen after all.

Reflecting on the experience, I began to see why the letter the court sends you is called a "summons." It's not a *suggestion*, as in "It would be really special of you to come and help the court on this date." It's not an *invitation*, as in "We're conducting a neat event on this date and would love for you to be our guest." It's not a *recommendation*, as in "This will be good for you, Mr. Partain, so please do exercise this opportunity."

No, what the court sends you is called a *summons*. It is issued by one who has the authority to compel you to do something and discipline you if you don't. When a legitimate authority summons you to do something, you do it until your responsibility is completed.

The Lord Jesus is also an authority. In fact, He is *the* authority in our lives. How come, then, we often fail to complete the assignments He gives? Why would we be any less afraid of Him than we would be of a judge who compels us to report for jury duty? It makes no sense, yet we often deny the Lord's authority by not fulfilling the ministry we have received in the Lord.

I wonder why Paul, at the end of his Colossian letter, singles out Archippus for a verbal kick-in-the-pants about finishing his work? It would be startling enough for the apostle to send such a message directly to Archippus, but in this case Paul sends it through the whole church!

We know very little about Archippus and his ministry. In the companion letter to Philemon, Paul calls Archippus "our fellow soldier" (v2). Whatever his role or service, Paul is obviously concerned with the possibility that Archippus will stop short. Why does that happen among ministry leaders?

- Disappointment with the results
- Distractions from the world

- Discouragement from opponents
- Disagreeable aspects of the work
- Discord in the church
- Disarray in our personal lives
- _____ (fill in your temptation here)

Whatever the reason, it all amounts to *disobedience to the Lord*.

So here's the thing. Read Colossians 4:17 again, this time substituting your name in place of Archippus. The Lord, our Authority and Judge, has called you to do something. At this moment is anything threatening to interrupt that call? In order for you to complete the work you have received in the Lord, what needs to happen? What adjustments do you need to make? What help do you need? Is your definition of success unbiblical and setting you up for trouble?

Brothers, may the Judge say of us one day that we completed the work He gave us to do.