

The Gospel Ministry

Colossians 1:24-29

Open your Bibles with me this morning to Colossians 1 as we continue the first chapter of Colossians. We will start in verse 24. I tried to conclude the chapter this morning, but as I was preparing the message, I realized that it was way too much to cover in one 25 minute sermon.

All Stand and Read Scripture

Colossians 1:24-29 (NASB)

²⁴ Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I do my share on behalf of His body, which is the church, in filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions. ²⁵ Of *this church* I was made a minister according to the stewardship from God bestowed on me for your benefit, so that I might fully carry out the *preaching of the word of God*, ²⁶ *that is*, the mystery which has been hidden from the *past ages and generations*, but has now been manifested to His saints, ²⁷ to whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. ²⁸ We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ. ²⁹ For this purpose also I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me.

Prayer

INTRODUCTION:

The theme of the first chapter of Colossians is the preeminence and sufficiency of Christ.

We defined preeminence last week as something that has **first place**.

From a behavioral standpoint, the activity that is preeminent in your life is something that will occupy the most of your time. But, it goes beyond the amount of time that you spend, it will also be something you will enjoy doing. Even if you have to physically suffer in order to do it, you will not turn away from it because you realize that it is only through suffering that you can achieve your goal.

ILLUSTRATION:

If you are an avid deer hunter, your ultimate goal would be to shoot a trophy deer. Think of all the things that you are willing to do in order to have a successful hunt. You have to spend many hours working to earn money to purchase a good deer rifle with scope, maybe a crossbow or bow and arrows, a deer stand, deer scent, hunting clothes, and ammunition. You may have to make arrangements with

some landowner to hunt on his property. You may have to spend hours off season trying to locate where that perfect deer is staying and searching for the perfect place to put your deer stand. Then you have to use vacation time or personal time away from everything else that you need to do. You may also have to sit outside in below zero weather in a bad storm, waiting for that trophy deer to walk by. You spend all of this time and money in order that you can hopefully spend about **one minute** of your life to be in the right place at the right time to shoot that trophy deer. You enjoy willingly sacrificing that time, money, and discomfort because you know that it is the only way that you can realize your goal of attaining that perfect trophy buck.

Imagine if we could go back in time and ask Paul who or what is **preeminent** in his life. I have no doubt that he would look in our eyes and answer the question with two words...**Jesus Christ!**

The apostle Paul was absolutely convinced that the Lord Jesus Christ was preeminent and he wanted the Colossians to know it also so they could combat the heresies that was prevalent in their day.

In order to understand what Paul was trying to tell the Colossians and us today, let's review Colossians 1 starting back in verse 13.

Colossians 1:13-23 (NASB)

¹³ For He (God) rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, ¹⁴ in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

As Paul thinks about the beloved Son, the preeminent Christ, he focuses on the superior ranking of Christ starting in verse 15.

¹⁶ For by **Him** (Jesus Christ) all things were created, *both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities*—all things have been created through **Him** and for **Him**. ¹⁷ **He** is before all things, and in **Him** all things hold together. ¹⁸ **He** is also head of the body, the church; and **He** is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, (Why? Paul concludes) so that **He Himself** (Jesus Christ) will come to have **first place** (The place of preeminence) in everything.

Then having thought of the wonderful preeminence of Christ in everything, Paul then thinks of the preeminent reconciliation (the restoration of our righteousness before God).

¹⁹ For it was the *Father's* good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in **Him**, (that's Christ) ²⁰ and through **Him** to reconcile all things to **Himself**, having made peace through the blood of **His** cross; through **Him**, *I say*, whether things on earth or things in heaven.

²¹ And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, *engaged in evil deeds*, ²² yet **He** has now reconciled you in **His** fleshly body through death, in order

to present you before **Him** (God) **holy and blameless and beyond reproach** (made righteous in the eyes of God)—(But, there is a condition:) ²³ **if indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast** (You must keep Christ preeminent in your life), **and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard**, (Continue to trust that Christ will keep His promises and that you will be found righteous before God at judgment and get to spend eternity with Him in heaven) **which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, was made a minister.**

As Paul thinks of the **HOPE OF THE GOSPEL**, he thinks back to the path that led him to this conclusion. First he encountered the preeminent Christ on the road to Damascus, secondly he experienced a preeminent reconciliation through Christ, and third he was called by God to spend his life in a preeminent ministry of the gospel. You will notice that Paul did not select the ministry, God "**made**" him a minister.

May I suggest that this same condition will be true for every single person today! **That to truly encounter the preeminent Christ and be gripped by His permanent work of reconciliation WILL CHANGE YOUR LIFE.**

All of the things that used to be SO IMPORTANT in our lives may not be totally disengaged in our lives, but they will "slip down" in the list of importance and CHRIST AND CHRIST ALONE will be elevated to His rightful position of preeminence in our life. That is what gripped the heart of the apostle Paul.

We see in Paul a pattern for the ministry of the local church, both for the leaders of the church and for the individual believer.. For it is not just Paul that was called for the Gospel ministry. It is not just ministers and elders that are called for the Gospel ministry, but every Christian is called to the work of the Gospel ministry.

This morning I would like to discuss **our source and power** of the ministry.

BODY:

I. God Assigns Your Role

You will notice once again at the end of verse 23 that Paul was "**made a minister**". Also in verse 25, it says "**I was made a minister according to the stewardship from God**". Paul did not on his own decide that he was going to be an apostle and be a minister. He was chosen by God to do those things.

God appoints you into a role of ministry as well.

Ephesians 4:11-13 (NASB)

¹¹ **And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers,** ¹² **for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ;** ¹³ **until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.**

God will not only assign a role for you to serve and minister, He will also supply the gifts that will need to perform that role.

II. God Supplies Your Gifts

It is God that actually divinely supplies the very **gifts** that He asks **you** to use. It involves studying God's word and having an understanding of the scripture accurately so you can live your life by His plan and be able to use your gifts to the glory of God through the power of the Holy Spirit within you.

1 Corinthians 12:7-18 (NASB) (I could use the whole chapter, but I have chosen parts of it)

7 But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

11 But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as **He** wills.

12 For even as the body is one and *yet* has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ.

18 But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired.

Paul says that every Christian has been given a spiritual gifting for the common good. You have been given a spiritual gifting to serve or minister to the church.

You did not wake up one day and choose your gifting, the Holy Spirit sovereignly gave it to you as He willed. He gave you a gift to minister with.

Not only will God supply a role for you and the gifting to accomplish it, but He will also supply the desire to do want to do it.

III. God Supplies a Burden to Minister

Colossians 1:29 (NASB)

29 For this purpose also I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me.

But not only will He supply you with gifts, if you are allowing Christ to be preeminent in your life, he will supply a burden within you to do His work.

As you mature in your faith, the Holy Spirit will increasingly put a burden on your heart to serve Him by ministering to His people.

I would warn you that if you have no burden to serve Christ, there is something vitally wrong with your relationship with Him.

As God has given you a gift, He has also given you a particular burden.

Remember the deer hunter? He was eagerly willing to endure discomfort and spend his time and money on equipment for the hope of killing a trophy buck.

Our relationship and hope with Christ should cause us to have that same eagerness of serve Him.

Not only does God give us a role, the gifts to fulfill that role, and the burden to perform that role, He will also provide opportunities for us minister in that role.

IV. God Provides Opportunites

Colossians 1:25a (NASB)

²⁵ *Of this church I was made a minister according to the stewardship from God bestowed on me for your benefit,*

God will open doors for you to exercise your gift and your burden for the ministry. If you have made Christ preeminent in your life, you will be seeking ways that you can serve Him.

The gift was not given to use as you please, but it was given to you to for His GLORY.

Paul referred to his opportunities in this way: "**I was made a minister according to the stewardship from God**". The Gospel ministry is from God. Because it is from God, it is a stewardship. The word stewardship could be translated "House Manager".

Jesus spoke of the importance of our stewardship to God in the Parable of the Talents.

Matthew 25:14-29 (NASB)

¹⁴ *“For it is just like a man about to go on a journey, who called his own slaves and entrusted his possessions to them. ¹⁵ To one he gave five talents, to another, two, and to another, one, each according to his own ability; and he went on his journey. ¹⁶ Immediately the one who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and gained five more talents. ¹⁷ In the same manner the one who had received the two talents gained two more. ¹⁸ But he who received the one talent went away, and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master’s money.*

Then Jesus tells us that the ones who received the five talents and two talents and doubled them were told *‘Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.’*

The one who received the one talent and buried it, had his talent taken away from him and it was given to the one with ten talents.

²⁹ *“For to everyone who has, more shall be given, and he will have an abundance; but from the one who does not have, even what he does have shall be taken away.*

You will be accountable for the spiritual gifting that God gave you. It is a responsibility to use for the building up of the church and the preaching of the Gospel.

1 Peter 4:10 (NASB)

¹⁰ *As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.*

Notice that Peter also says that God has given each of us gifts. You are to use that gift to minister and serve others. He calls that ministry a "Stewardship". Just like the slaves in the parable of the talents, you will have to give an account for the gifts and opportunities that He has given you.

Notice in verses 25-27 that the stewardship is not only for the gifts that we have been given, but the stewardship of the Gospel itself.

Colossians 1:25b-27 (NASB)

²⁵ so that I might fully carry out the *preaching of the word of God*, ²⁶ *that is, the mystery which has been hidden from the past ages and generations, but has now been manifested to His saints*, ²⁷ *to whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.*

Paul says that our ultimate stewardship is a stewardship of the Gospel. Paul says our stewardship is to make the Gospel fully known. He refers to the Gospel as a "mystery".

We think of a mystery as something that is unsolvable or unexplainable. That is not the biblical definition of "mystery". In fact Paul uses a pretty good definition of mystery in these verses. He says that a mystery is something "**which has been hidden from the past ages and generations, but has now been manifested to His saints**".

A mystery in the Bible is something that was vague or unknown in the Old Testament that has now been more fully revealed to us in the New Testament. This mystery is ultimately the mystery of Jesus Christ.

This mystery was Christ coming to earth in human form and dying on the cross for the atonement of sin for both the Jews and Gentiles alike.

Ephesians 3:4-6 (NASB)

⁴ *By referring to this, when you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ*, ⁵ *which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit*; ⁶ *to be specific, that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel,*

This is a concept that the Jews would never have expected. That the Gentiles would be an equal part of the body of Christ, the church.

This is the Gospel message that God has prepared each of us in our specific way to serve Him. **Are you being a good steward of your gifts?**

CONCLUSION:

Are you allowing Christ to be Lord of your life? It is only by giving Him **first place** in your life and serving Him that you can inherit His promises.

If you have not accepted Christ as your Lord and Savior, do it today. He died for you, because you loves you and wants you for His own.

He is Lord, He is Lord. He has risen from the dead and He is Lord.
Every knee shall bow, every tongue confess, That Jesus Christ is Lord.