

Colossians 1:24-29 Ministry – Part 3

1

Introduction

Paul often spoke of his ministry when he needed **to establish his authority and credibility**. That was his aim in this passage. Colossians was written to counter the teachings of the false teachers, and it was essential for Paul to defend his authority to speak for God. Otherwise, the false teachers would have dismissed what he wrote as merely his own opinion. Having begun the epistle with a statement of his apostolic authority (1:1), Paul now gives a detailed look at the divine character of his ministry. He recites eight aspects of that ministry: the source of the ministry, the spirit of the ministry, the suffering of the ministry, the scope of the ministry, the subject of the ministry, the style of the ministry, the sum of the ministry, and the strength of the ministry.

2

Colossians 1:24-29

I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church, ²⁵ of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God which was given to me for you, to fulfill the word of God, ²⁶ the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints. ²⁷ To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. ²⁸ Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. ²⁹ To this *end* I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily.

3

The Source of Ministry

Colossians 1:25a

the church, of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God which was given to me for you

In verse 23, Paul described the Gospel of which he was made a minister. He repeats the thought saying again that he was made a minister of Christ's church. The source of his ministry was God.

Paul had not set out to be a minister of Jesus Christ, he persecuted the church. Yet on the road to Damascus, Jesus revealed Himself and called Paul to Himself.

4

The Spirit of Ministry

Colossians 1:24a

I now rejoice

The call that Jesus has for our lives can be challenging and demanding but it was never intended to be an arduous and unbearable burden. Paul's attitude of joy should be the spirit of ministry for every Christian. Christian joy is internal. It is not dependent on circumstances but knowing that God is in control. Circumstances, people, and worry are the thieves that are eager to steal the joy of the ministry. Humility, devotion to Christ, and trust in God protect the joy that is Christ's legacy to every Christian.

5

The Sufferings of Ministry

Colossians 1:24

I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church

To emphasize that joy is independent of circumstances, Paul tells the Colossians that he rejoices in my sufferings for you. Sufferings refers to his present imprisonment (Acts 28:16, 30), from which he wrote Colossians. Paul could rejoice despite his imprisonment because he always viewed himself as a prisoner of Jesus Christ, not the Roman Empire (cf. Philem. 1, 9, 23).

6

The Scope of Ministry

Colossians 1:25

of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God which was given to me for you, to fulfill the word of God.

This phrase might be better understood “**to carry out the preaching of the word of God**”. Paul was driven to carry out the ministry that God had given Him. In Acts 20:24 Paul states, “But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.”

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The Scope of Ministry

Colossians 1:25

of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God which was given to me for you, to fulfill the word of God.

Paul set himself to do God’s will, nothing more or less, and stayed within that course. He desired to preach the whole counsel of God to those to whom God called him, never shirking his duty or mitigating the divine message.

God calls us to ministry also. Often, we shrink from our calling because we make it bigger than it is. We do not have to win the world, just those God calls us to. We are not called to do everything, just do our part. If you have a willing heart and step out in faith, God will direct your steps.

8

The Subject of Ministry

Colossians 1:26-27

the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints. ²⁷ To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

The message Paul proclaimed in his ministry was **the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints**. There are **some things that were hidden in the Old Testament** but have now been revealed in the New. The New Testament calls them **mysteries**. Paul's use of this word is **not to indicate a secret teaching**, rite, or ceremony revealed only to some elite initiates (as in the mystery religions), but truth **revealed to all believers in the New Testament**.

9

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This truth, that has now **been revealed to His saints**, is that **which has been hidden from the ages and generations**, namely the Old Testament era and people. **Now** refers to the time of the writing of the New Testament. Such newly revealed truth includes the mystery of the **incarnate God** (Col. 2:2–3, 9); of **Israel's unbelief** (Rom. 11:25); of the **unity of Jew and Gentile in the church** (Eph. 3:3–6); and of the **rapture** (1 Cor. 15:51). This mystery truth is available only for those who are saints—true believers (cf. 1 Cor. 2:7–16). The phrase **to them God willed to make known** clearly indicates that the mysteries are not discovered by the will of man but are revealed by the will and act of God. It is God's purpose that His people know this truth.

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Of all the mysteries God has revealed in the New Testament, the most profound is **Christ in you, the hope of glory**. The Old Testament predicted the coming of the Messiah. But the idea that He would actually live in His redeemed church, made up mostly of Gentiles, was not revealed.

That Christ indwells all believers is the source for their **hope of glory** and is the subject or theme of the gospel ministry. What makes the gospel attractive is not just that it promises present joy and help, but that it promises eternal blessing and glory. When Christ comes to live in a believer, His presence is the anchor of the promise of heaven—the guarantee of future glory.

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The Style of Ministry

Colossians 1:28a

Him we preach, **warning** every man and **teaching** every man in all wisdom,

Paul's passion was to **preach Christ**. The word "preach" means to publicly declare a completed truth or happening. It is a general term and is not restricted to formal preaching. Paul's proclamation included two aspects, one negative, one positive.

Warning is from *noutheteō* and is often translated as "**admonish**". It speaks of counsel in view of sin and coming punishment. It is the responsibility of church leaders. In Colossians 3:16 commands, "Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and **admonishing** one another."

Teaching refers to **imparting positive truth**. It, too, is the responsibility of every believer (Col. 3:16), and is part of the Great Commission (Matt. 28:20). It is especially the responsibility of church leaders. "An overseer, then, must be ... able to teach" (1 Tim. 3:2).

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The Style of Ministry

Colossians 1:28a

Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom,

Warning and teaching must be done in all wisdom. This is the larger context. Wisdom refers to practical discernment—understanding the biblical principles for holy living. The consistent pattern of Paul’s ministry was to link teaching and admonishment and bring them together in the context of the doctrinal truths of the Word. Doctrinal teaching was invariably followed by practical admonitions.

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The Sum of Ministry

Colossians 1:28b

that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.

The **goal of the ministry is the maturity of the saints**. To be perfect, or mature, is to be like Christ. Although all Christians strive for that end, no one on earth has arrived there yet (cf. Phil. 3:12). Every believer, however, will one day attain it.

“Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him as He is” (1 John 3:2). Christians move toward maturity by feeding on God’s Word: “All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the Man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work” (2 Tim. 3:16–17).

The Colossian heretics believed perfection was only for the elite. In contrast, Christ offers spiritual maturity to every man and woman.

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The Strength of Ministry

Colossians 1:29

To this *end* I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily.

The word “labor” means to work to the point of exhaustion. **Striving** refers to competing in an athletic event. Our English word *agonize* is derived from it. Success in serving the Lord, like success in sports, demands maximum effort.

To avoid misunderstanding, Paul says that he strives **according to His [Christ’s] power, which mightily works within me**. All his toil and hard labor would have been useless apart from God’s power in his life. God gave Paul the strength to work hard at his ministry.

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So What ...

These eight aspects of Paul’s ministry should characterize every believer. All Christians serve Christ in some capacity.

Paul’s message to all in this passage is, “The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things” (Phil. 4:9).

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