***Be Focused on the Lord Jesus Christ

Colossians 1:25-29

COL-217***

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2 Timothy 3:16: "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."

Matthew 4:4: "But Jesus answered and said, 'It is written: man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.'"

Matthew 13:16: "But blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear. For truly I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it; and, to hear what you hear, and did not hear it."

This morning, we direct your attention to Colossians 1:25-29. Our topic, again, is "The Mystery of the Church," segment number 32.

Primarily through the apostle Paul, God made known His centuries-long secret about the church – a new body of believers which was to be made up of Jews and gentiles, and it would be called the church, the body of Christ. It would be an assembly of saints with great knowledge of doctrine to provide them with the very mind of God in a way that believers in past dispensations never had access to divine viewpoint thinking. A great spiritual power system in the person of God the Holy Spirit, would indwell every believer for producing a life of godliness, and of divine good works, so that a person does not live his life struggling with the sin nature as a victim. He does not live his life on the basis of his human good intentions, and he does not muddle around with all kinds of compassionate, human good, which in the sight of God is evil, but instead his life is productive of the things that the Spirit of God enables him to do in God's service. People in other dispensations would've loved to have been able to have that kind of an ability built in within them.

The church body is unique, under the grace of God, and totally separate from Israel under Judaism and the Mosaic Law. Christians, by and large, do not understand that all the Old Testament has nothing to do with the church age. It is simply not even revealed. There are gaps made in the Old Testament chronology for the church period, now virtually 2000 years, but people still struggle, trying to squeeze the Law of Moses into the experience of Christianity, and the whole system is a complete flop. This is one of the devil's great ploys – to keep people confused on what their power, and honors, and resources are as Christians.

The Jewish Christians, in the early New Testament church, at first, could not conceive of gentiles being included in this new church body, and to be on an equal footing with the Jews. However, this was, in time, made clear to Peter, and especially to the apostle Paul.

The Jerusalem Council, in Acts 15, was finally called to settle the matter of whether Christians of the church had to come under the way of life of the Mosaic Law system – whether they had to follow the Mosaic code in order to be saved, and the decision was that they do not, because the church and Israel are two separate works of God. The rich glory of God, upon the gentile Christians in the church, is expressed in Christ in them, as their hope for eternal glory with God in heaven.

This morning, we direct your attention to Colossians 1:28: "And we proclaim Him, admonishing every man, and teaching every man, with all wisdom, that we may present every man complete in Christ." "And we" – Paul here is using the personal pronoun "we" in referring to himself, and to his associates. And that includes the man that Paul has taught, who is the pastor-teacher of the church in Colossae, and who has been the transmitting agent of doctrine of the church age from Paul to the Colossian Christians.

Paul, at this time, you may remember, is in a Roman prison. So, in Colossians 1:7-8, Paul is saying, "Just as you learned it (referring to church-age truth and gospel by free grace salvation – just as you learned it from Epaphras, our beloved fellow bond servant, who is a faithful servant of Christ on our behalf, and he also informed us of your love in the Spirit." Epaphras has come back. He visited Paul in prison, and he reported how the Christians in Colossae were doing, and that they were positive toward the Word of God that they had received.

So, Paul is saying, "We," including Epaphras: "We proclaim." The word "proclaim" is the Greek word that God the Holy Spirit used, and, of course, that's the word that we're interested in. We're not interested in somebody's translation except as it conveys to us what the original Holy Spirit-selected words mean: "kataggelló" (kat-ang-gel'-lo). This word means to declare something, and it connotes to preach.

So, Paul is saying, "We're preaching something." And preaching means that we're making a pronouncement. Literally it's made up of two words: "down;" and, "proclaim." So, what it is saying is literally: "To report down," and it connotes information coming from a higher authority down to man. That higher authority is God. The transmission instrument is the Bible. And the point of expression of communication is the pastor-teacher in the local church.

So, Paul is actually speaking about something that's going to be the normative pattern of the local church age. When a group of believers gathered together in church, they gathered to hear the Word of God explained. They don't want your cute stories. They don't want your funny analogies. They don't want your inspirational talks. What Christians need is the spiritual food of the Word of God.

So, "kataggelló" is a good word that Paul uses to say, "I'm reporting down from headquarters what they taught me." And he was taught by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself for three years in the Arabian Desert after he was saved: "And I'm reporting it down to you. Here are the facts."

The grammar of the Greek language here indicates that this is constantly what is being done. It's in the present tense. And it's in an active voice, which tells us that this is what's being done by Paul and his associates. They were actively engaged. They were studying the Word of God, and they were explaining it to people. And, it's a statement of fact: "And we proclaim." They were making this announcement about Him, referring to the Lord Jesus Christ.

**The Lord Jesus Christ**

The focus of Paul's life and ministry is the Lord Jesus Christ, Who indwells him as his Savior and Lord. And you notice how I said that: "as his Savior and Lord." This is not as is commonly said by the wise preachers of our day: "to make Him your Lord and Savior." He has to be your Savior first. Then, you can make Him your Lord, by having all known sins confessed, and being in fellowship with Him. When you're out of fellowship, He's no longer your Lord. So, that's an in and out situation. But once He's your Savior, He is permanently your Savior, because you cannot reverse a birth. Only an idiot thinks that you can be born again (and that's why God used that term), and then get unborn again. And it confused Nicodemus, because Nicodemus was not an idiot. He knew that you can't reverse a birth. So, he thought that Jesus was talking about a physical process. But Jesus said, "No, I'm talking about a spiritual process." But it is being born (coming alive spiritually) into the family of God. And once that happens, you can't reverse a birth. You're in.

So, here the apostle Paul says, "I focus upon my Savior and my Lord, the Lord Jesus Christ." This is the most important Person in any human being's life – the finest Man that ever lived. He was a God man, but He was pure humanity as well. And He lived under the same limitations that we do, except for one. He did not have a sin nature. He did not live by His deity. His deity gave Him a lot of information, but He operated His life entirely on the capacities of the power of God the Holy Spirit, and obedience to doctrine that He had been taught. That's how the system worked for Him, and that's how it works for you and me.

In Philippians 1:21, the apostle Paul says, "My life is Christ:" "For me to live is Christ, and to die as gain. I go to be with Him in heaven, but all of my life is Jesus Christ." That is a tough thing to say. And, of course, He is our life, in two ways: He is our life in words that we speak, but He is also our life in deeds. And we proclaim a great deal about Him by our deeds.

Anybody who should be in this auditorium this morning, and his lolly-gagging at home or someplace else, has proclaimed something to us about what they think about Jesus Christ. They're telling us very much what they think about Him, by the fact that they are absent when God says, "Don't be away when the saints gather for the assembly of instruction in the Word of God. You be there to feed upon the Word of God. I want to protect you from the wiles and the sneakiness of the devil. I don't want to see you get hurt spiritually. And I don't want you to get trapped out there in the religious world of emotional manipulation." This is no small thing: "We announce information from on high to you about the Lord Jesus Christ."

There is, of course, no way that one can be saved from the lake of fire, and be able to live forever in heaven, except through the Lord Jesus Christ. The Bible is explicitly clear about that.

John 14:6: "Jesus said, 'I am the way (that is, into the glory land of heaven), and the truth (the information about how to get there by grace, and no human works, with no human behavior patterns involved), and the life (I am eternal life). No one comes to the Father but through Me."

So, you can go ahead and look at all the religious groups in the world that approach God on some other basis than the Lord Jesus Christ; who approach God on something other than the truth of grace; and. who involve their human works (their human, well-behaved conduct to keep them saved once they saved) – the whole picture. And you can get all those people, and you suddenly realize what Jesus meant, in Matthew 7:14, that: "Few there be that find the way into eternal life," because they don't want to come through the gate into the sheepfold, into family of God, which is Jesus Christ. And they don't want to walk the way into heaven, which is the Lord Jesus Christ.

Consequently, Paul has made a great statement when he says, "We focus upon Jesus Christ. All of our ministry is to give you information about Him." And that's a clue to us about the local church ministry to this day. Everything that we are about has to be focused, relative to the person of Jesus Christ. There is nothing else of importance.

Now, you can get tangled up in a lot of things in the church programs, and in a lot of specialty groups that you try to minister to, in one way or another, but the bottom line is getting people so that they are occupied with Christ. Their eyes are on Christ. Their minds are on the person of the Lord Jesus.

Now the false teachers in Colossae, which were bombarding the Christians at this time (which is one reason Paul wrote them this letter) – they were teaching a way to God through angelic beings. And to them, the Lord Jesus Christ was just one of a special group of angels. He was not God. He was just an angel. And these people (false teachers) in Colossae, bearing great dignity and great impact, were telling them that: "Paul is okay, but he doesn't know enough." And they were giving these people false information about the person of Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul is saying, "Now, when I minister to you, when I'm through, you will understand about the person of Jesus Christ, and you will understand your great relationship to Him as a Christian of the church age. Therefore, the power system comes to you from Christ living in you (as we sang this morning): Christ living in you. He is there. He is our companion. He is our brother in the family of God. He is our Lord. There is absolutely no other basis for experiencing God's glory except Jesus Christ, the only Savior and the only go-between – man and God.

1 Timothy 2:5-6: "For there is one God, and one Mediator also between God and men: the man Christ Jesus who gave Himself as a ransom for all, the testimony born at the proper time." So, if you want to go to heaven, you do it on the basis of the Lord Jesus Christ, and you do it His way. You walk up to Him, and you stand there helpless, with nothing in your hands. You make no promises of how you're going to conduct yourself from now on. You have no good deeds to bring to Him; no merit; and, no claims of any kind. You just tell Him, "I'm completely contaminated by sin, and I cannot do, therefore, one single thing of divine good merit for salvation, and the only way I'll make it is if You cover me." And that's what He did. He paid for your moral guilt.

Now, God's justice towards you is satisfied, and God's wrath is moved away. And all you have to do is accept the gift of eternal life. So, in Act 16:31, Paul could really say, "Believe (trust) on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved. And you'll stay saved." The Greek language is so wonderful. It says it in such a way that we know it means you'll be saved, and you'll keep on being saved, because it's entirely a work of God, and not the work of man.

Now, Paul's message was good news – the good news of salvation by the grace of God, by faith in Christ, apart from any human works. The proclamation about the Lord Jesus Christ included a lot of very specific, important bits of information that only God could reveal. For example, the gospel of salvation as a gift from God – that was one of the things that Paul made clear when he talked about the Lord Jesus Christ.

**Preachers are to Make their Living from the Gospel**

In 1 Corinthians 9:14, Paul says, "So also the Lord directed those who proclaimed the gospel to get their living from the gospel." This particular verse is explaining what Paul's ministry was: proclaiming the gospel – the gospel of the grace of God. This is a salvation that one receives on the basis of faith, apart from any human works, and he keeps it, on the basis of the fact that God has done the whole job. Therefore, nothing can be contaminated by human sin, consequently. And, in the course of this, he says, "Now, those of you who are pastor-teachers, I expect you to devote yourself to studying the Bible, so that you may understand Scripture, and have the background to be able to explain to people what you have learned. You stand up, and you explain to them. And you do this week and week out. And those who attend the services will grow majestically in their spiritual lives, because they're constantly being fed the view of God, and not the view of man."

He also says, "In the process of that, you're going to have to have some money to operate yourself, and I want you to depend upon the people of God to supply you with your livelihood." And that's what he means: "You get your living from the gospel – from the ministry of the Word." You do your job, as an expository preacher, and you leave your material wellbeing and needs up to Me. I'll give you the logistical grace. I'll give you the means of carrying on the ministry, and I'll give you the means of caring for you, whatever comes up.

The apostle Paul succinctly puts this principle together as you know in Ephesians 2:8-9, where he explains: "The only way anybody ever goes to heaven is if you do it God's way, which is grace. And don't contaminate it with any human qualifications." Ephesians 2:8-9: "For by grace (favor you don't deserve) you have been saved through faith, and that (and the word 'that' refers to salvation – back to the word 'saved') saving is not of yourselves. It is the gift of God." You did nothing. Faith is non-meritorious. All you did was believe that God will give it to you if you accept Him: "not as a result of works, that no one should boast." You don't get saved by works. You don't keep your salvation after you have it by the fact that you behave yourself in your works. If you don't behave yourself, there's discipline, but you're still the child of God, no matter how much of a prodigal son you may become.

**The Proclamation was not Based upon Paul's Oratory Skills, nor the Peoples' Emotions**

Another part of the proclamation of Paul, he points out, is that his proclamation was not based upon oratory in the pulpit, in order to bestir the emotions of the people, but that he appealed to the intelligence of people. He had a simple message of information to their mind concerning Christ's death to pay the penalty of death for the sins of all mankind. And that is the way it should be.

Usually, the bigger the church and the more famous the preacher, the more of an orator he is. He becomes a pulpit personality. And one of the signs of being a real pulpit personality is that you have a personal bodyguard. All the big preachers have a personal bodyguard. I'm sorry to say I have none, and probably need one more than they do. But when you get really big-time, you have all these little accouterments.

Paul says, "I don't have any of that." In fact, Paul says, "I'm not too hot of a speaker." They made fun of him in the church at Corinth. They made fun of him, and they said, "Yeah, you're pretty good when you write, but you're not much when you stand in front of us."

Be that as it may, in 1 Corinthians 2:1-2, Paul says, "When I came to you, brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom. I wasn't a smart guy. I proclaimed to you the testimony of God, for I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified." That's what he's telling the Colossians: "I proclaim to you: Him. All I talked about was Christ." In one way or another, all the ministry was focusing back to the Lord Jesus Christ. After all, we are the church. We're His body. He is our head. After all, we are the church. We're His bride. He is our groom. Therefore, He is our life.

**Forgiveness of Sins**

Then the third thing of the proclamation was that through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as one's personal Savior comes forgiveness of sins. Paul said, "I made this very clear to people."

Acts 13:38: "Therefore, let it be known to you, brethren, that, through Him, forgiveness of sins is proclaimed." And you see the word "proclaimed" again. He's telling us, in these various places: "This is what I proclaimed. When I tell you that we proclaimed Christ, this is one of the things we told you about Him – that when you trust in Him as personal Savior, all of your sins are forgiven: past; present; and, future." That's why you can't be lost again, because after you're saved, you did another sin. You'd never stay saved on that basis. After you're saved, you continue to be saved, because forgiveness of sins is not based on you, but it's based on the act of the Lord Jesus Christ Who paid for your moral guilt, once and for all.

So, he said, "Our proclamation includes that you have had your sins forgiven. But that won't take you to heaven. Our proclamation has to tell you something else that God did, as well, when you trusted in Christ as Savior – the other side of the coin of salvation." Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, coming to you as a gift, also brings you justification. And the word "justification" means that God proclaims you to be absolutely righteous in your position. He imputes the righteousness of God to you. That's why you can't be lost again. You always are as good as Jesus Christ in the sight of God, in terms of absolute righteousness.

Romans 3:28: "For we maintain that a man is justified (the word 'justified' means 'declared absolutely righteous') by faith, apart from the works of the Law." You do not secure justification by works of any kind.

Now, the Pope has made a big hit in the country again. And you should understand that the Pope, who is good at putting his hands together in various ways. I've been standing in front of a mirror practicing myself, trying to see if I could get a little more impressive on how to do this sort of thing. But I ended up being like Sid Caesar – figuring out what to do with my hands when I become conscious of them.

However, you should be aware of the fact that, following the Protestant Reformation, the papacy at the time called the Council of Trent (https://www.britannica.com/event/Council-of-Trent). It went on for about 12 years. And it hammered out what: absolutely, forever, and eternally the bottom line is of what Roman Catholicism believes and teaches. And there was a Proposition 88, or something like that. And you should know that, to this day, the Pope who people receive with such adulation, and looking to him as their channel into eternal life, that that proposition says: "Let anyone who believes that he may be justified instantly by an act of faith be anathema." Do you know what anathema means? It means to spend eternity in the lake of fire. It's the Roman Catholic way of saying, "Anybody who believes he can be justified instantly (declared absolutely righteous before God) by trusting in Christ as Savior – an act of faith alone, without works." That's the point: "Without works, let him be condemned to the lake of fire."

The Pope is saying, "You cannot go to heaven unless you have added to that the penance of your temporal punishment (of your good works) that are assigned to you by the priest. You cannot go to heaven by an act of faith.

So, justification by this great man, that is so admired by so many Protestant leaders – this Pope is telling you that justification is gradual." You do not go immediately from a condition of lost to a condition of absolute perfection morally before God. You do not go instantly from a lost condition to being justified in the sight of God.

But when the apostle Paul preached, he said, "I want to tell you, folks, that your sins are forgiven when you trust in Christ, but you also have to have the other side. You have to be as good as Christ to go to heaven, and God impute the absolute justification of the Jesus Christ to you, so that you have both of them.

Romans 5:1-2, "Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through Whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand. And we exalt in hope of the glory of God." An act of faith has brought me absolute righteousness to my credit. And when I stand before Jesus Christ, John tells us that we will become like Him when we see Him. And when we do that, we will, in fact, have absolute righteousness. Now it is our position, but it is as good as done. It's a done deed. We have been justified by that act of faith in Christ. Now we have peace with God.

**Martin Luther**

Martin Luther discovered that justification wasn't a progressive thing, and that trusting in Christ instantly satisfies the wrath of God against you, and you are safe. And when he realized that, then for the first time, he discovered that he had peace with God, and through Him, we have received introduction by faith into this grace – the grace of salvation in which we stand: not in which we totter; and, not in which we wobble around, trying to stay in before falling out of it. Never. We stand in that grace, and we exalt in the hope of the glory of God.

**"Hope"**

We take great pleasure, and we look forward with enthusiasm in hope. And I hope you have learned this word "hope." I have taught you that the Greek word for "hope" is "elpis" (el-pece'). And "hope" not like in English, a possibility, but it's absolute. Anytime, the Bible says, "I hope for something", you're going to get it. The hope is always the reality.

So, we have a hope of being in the glory of God. The glory of God is going to shine from us, because we will someday have the absolute righteousness of God in our personal experience.

**The Resurrection of Jesus is the Firstfruits of All of the Saved**

Another thing that Paul included in his proclamation is the resurrection of Jesus as the firstfruits of all the saved. It is not only that He was raised, and thus confirmed all that He promised that He would do in paying for our sins, but He is going to be the first.

Now, the Muslims say, "He never was raised. He never did rise. Mohamed did, but not Jesus Christ." In 1 Corinthians 15:3-4, Paul says, "I delivered to you, as of first importance, what I also received – that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures. And that he was buried (because He was really dead), and that He was raised on the third day (a full 72 hours – He went in the grave on Wednesday, and came out early Sunday morning: a full 72 hours), according to Scripture, just as he said that Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so He would be, in the tomb. All this was according to Scripture. So, He comes forth now as the first of a long line of human beings who are going to be raised forever with glorified (that is, sinless) bodies.

Notice 1 Corinthians 15:20-23: "But now Christ has been raised from the dead – the firstfruits of those who are asleep. For since, by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam, all die; so also in Christ, shall all be made alive."

I usually conclude, when it falls to my lot to conduct a funeral service, with the Old Testament sacrifice of the firstfruits. This is a splendid illustration to close, for the living, that which they need to know, because they have an opportunity to make a decision, if they need to, at this sober moment, when some friend has gone on and died. And the person, if he's a Christian, is standing in heaven, and he's cheering me on, and he's yelling, "Well done. Right on. Keep going, John," because suddenly, for that person in heaven, everything has become clear to him, whatever it was before. And he knows that the thing that needs to be done is not exalting the one who has passed on, but exalting the Christ that these people need to turn to.

**The Wave Offering**

In the Old Testament, before the harvest was taken in, the farmer took a swath of the grain (a sheath of the grain), and took it to the priest, and the priest stood before God, and he waved it before Him as a sacrifice. It's called a wave offering. It was to demonstrate two things. First of all, it demonstrated that this handful (this small sheaf of grain) was a sample of much more that was to come, as Jesus Christ, a resurrected human being, is just a sample of a vast number of us who will follow Him. Also, that little sheath of grain showed that what was to come (this was just a sample) was going to be just like what was out in the field. So, as Christ was raised in total perfection of absolute righteousness and a glorified body, free of all the sin nature; so, when we are raised, we will follow our Firstfruits' example, and we too will be, with glorified bodies, free of all the old sin nature.

That's the only comfort that we have, because death is a sad thing, and sometimes it impinges upon us in a dramatic way; in a sudden way; and, in an unexpected way. And boy does that ever test your focus upon Christ – when you get hit right between the eyes with some death situation of someone close to you. That's when you are really put to the test whether you have the Christian maturity; whether you have focus upon Christ; whether your eyes understand what has happened (where these people are); and, that you can rejoice and take comfort. You're sad at their departure, but you're happy for their happiness, and you look forward to remembering that someday it'll all be reversed, and they will all be back with you again. Christ is the firstfruits.

Now, the apostle Paul, when he proclaimed the Lord Jesus Christ, he made it clear to people that this is what was a consequence of being in Christ.

**The Scriptures**

Another thing was that he proclaimed the Word of God in Scripture which taught about Jesus Christ the Savior. Paul did not go around talking about his ideas. He proclaimed. He "kataggelló." He passed down from above what had been given to him. So, when people gathered, he was an expository preacher.

I still cannot understand why Christians can't catch onto this, and why Christians sit in churches where the preacher talks about everything else except explaining a passage of Scripture. He tickles their fancies, and their ears, and moves them emotionally, but they walk out as spiritually starved as when they walked in. Yet, the suckers come back next week; sit in the same seats; and, give more money again for nothing. That's why we tell you that when you come out of this service, yes, we invite you to make an offering of your substance, in the offering box at the door. That is another one of the spiritual sacrifices that Christian priests make. But we condition that upon whether you received anything of the mind of God in the service. If you didn't, you shouldn't put anything in there.

Acts 13:5: "And when they reach Salamis (Paul and his party), they began to proclaim (again)." That's what we're looking at: what is involved in proclaiming Him? "They began to proclaim the Word of God (Scripture) in the synagogues of the Jews. And they also had John as their helper."

Acts 17:13: "And when the Jews of Thessalonica." The apostle Paul had been in Thessalonica (Paul and Silas). And they were totally rejected in their ministry at Thessalonica. And the Jews came down upon them with sledgehammers, to try to silence them, and to bring them under the authorities. So, the Christians said, "Paul and Silas, you have to get out of town."

**Berea**

So they rushed off to the next location, which was Berea. There they were refreshed. What a difference! When they got to Berea, they found the Bereans to a noble company (from which we get our church name – Berean).

Acts 17:11: "Now, these were more noble-minded (these Bereans) than those in Thessalonica. For these Jews received the word (Scripture) with great eagerness examining, the scriptures daily to see whether these things were so." Paul was, of course, preaching to them out of the Old Testament. That's all the Scripture they had then. But these Jews had the nobility to say, "We're going to listen. And we're eager for anything that comes from God. Tell us." Then they confirmed that Paul was not making these things up, because they looked in their Scriptures, and they said, "Yes, this is what it says about the Messiah Savior. Paul is right." And many of them, therefore, believed, along with a number of prominent Greek women and men.

Then Acts 17:13: "But when the Jews of Thessalonica found out that the Word of God had been proclaimed by Paul in Berea also, they came there likewise, agitating and stirring up the crowds." The Jews in Thessalonica so hated the Word of God. They hated seeing people sitting in expository preaching context, where peoples' minds were on the Word of God, and somebody who can explain it is explaining it. They hated that so much, because that undermined all of their traditions and all of their human authority as religious leaders. So they came charging into Berea to be able to silence Paul and Silas there. Well, the Berean Christians immediately sent Paul and Silas out of town. Timothy stayed behind to carry on the work, and to stabilize those new believers in Berea.

**Paul's Follow-Up Work: to see how the People Responded**

The proclamation in Christ, that Paul is engaged in, is centered upon a follow-up work. We're told that he returned to the missionary centers, that he had visited, to see how the people were responding: to what? To the Word of God again.

Acts 15:36: "After some days, Paul said to Barnabas (his associate on the first missionary journey), 'Let us return, and visit the brethren in every city in which we proclaimed the Word of the Lord, and see how they are."

So, they had proclaimed doctrine. Now he said, "Let's go back and see how these Christian churches (which we have established) are carrying on with what we proclaimed to them – the Word of God." You don't deviate into programs. You don't deviate into other activities in the local church ministry, so that you don't have time, and the preacher doesn't have time to learn and to teach. You don't find something other than the exposition of the Word. Paul said, "Let's go back and see if they're doing it right."

**Paul Rejoiced in his Converts**

Another part of the proclamation was that Paul rejoiced in his converts of proclaiming Christ. He did not rejoice in seeing them running church programs, in order that they could be relevant. This is one of the ploys of the devil – to try to get churches to run programs, and preachers to preach sermons, that are irrelevant to people. It is the Word of God which is relevant, and how it applies to your situation. That is what the Holy Spirit will do to you in your personal life.

**Preach the Gospel**

So, in Philippians 1:18, Paul says, "What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed. And in this I rejoice. Yes, and I will rejoice." Paul is referring here to the fact that some people were competing with Paul in the ministry. They were trying to get a better reputation than Paul had, for whatever reason – competing with him. Paul says, "Yes, I'm in prison. So, they're making hay out there, and making a big name for themselves. They're getting on TV and they're running big programs. They wear those preacher television haircuts – the kind of bouffant haircut they have, and all that." He said, "They're making a big impression out there," but he says, "That's okay with me. They're still preaching the gospel." And that's what Paul proclaimed. He said, "Folks, get out there, and give the word. Never leave home without a couple of evangelism brochures (Berean evangelism brochures) in your purse or in your car. Never go through the checkout line without having one handy. Plant it everywhere. Can you imagine what an impact that would have if a hundred people a week gave out just two brochures? The impact would be enormous, because that Word is God's Word. And Paul said, "I'm rejoicing when my converts are involved in that."

**Be Reconciled**

Then finally, Paul's proclamation about Jesus Christ was summed up in his appeal for sinners to be reconciled to the holy God, through Jesus Christ, and us to be saved. What was he asking people to do? He wasn't asking to walk an aisle, or to join a church, or to do anything else. He was telling them: "You have a problem. You're out of sync with the standard of God's absolute righteousness. You must get in tune with absolute righteousness. And the word for that in the Bible is "reconciled." "Reconcile" means "to be adjusted" to God's standard of holiness – absolute righteousness.

2 Corinthians 5:20: "Therefore," Paul says, "We (Christians) are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were entreating through us, we beg you, on behalf of Christ, be reconciled ('katallassó') to God. Don't go on the way you are. You're headed for the lake of fire. Do not listen to the prominent people of our society who have your ear, because they're in a public eye; in the political realm; or, in the realm of entertainment. Those people are all going to the lake of fire. Why would you want to listen to them? Why would you find them entertaining?

2 Corinthians 5:21: "He (God the Father) made Him (God the Son), Who knew no sin, to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." How am I going to be reconciled to God? How will I be adjusted to His standard? It is very simple. Jesus Christ has borne your sin. That's why He died. He paid for your moral guilt. Now, God's wrath is removed from you. You stand justified, with your sins forgiven, when you entrusted in Him as Savior. And now, with your absolute righteousness, you've been adjusted to the standard of God's righteousness. Christ took your sin, and He swapped you His righteousness. Now, that is a great and wonderful provision.

When Paul says, "We proclaim Him," that includes all these marvelous things upon about the Lord Jesus Christ – why he should indeed be the focus of our life every day. The mission of the local church, then, is simply to deliver, through expository preaching of doctrine, the mind of Christ to people – the information from grace salvation to rewards in heaven, for service to God.

1 Corinthians 2:16, "For who has known the mind of the Lord, that we should instruct Him, but we have the mind of Christ." If we have the mind of Christ (which we do through the Word of God), then let's act accordingly. We have a word of proclamation concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. And if we do not give it, who will? We're the only qualified ones to do it. And if we don't do it, you're going to have unsaved people trying to be saved through their works. They'll listen to the Pope. They'll listen to the TV evangelists. They'll listen to all the emotional orientation of the charismatics. And none of it will work. And people will discover in eternity what a fool they've been. But if you put out God's Word (as the Word of God says, in Zechariah 3:2), "You snatch them as burning embers," as burning sticks from the fire before they're gone – you snatch them from that destiny, with the gospel. How do you do that? You do it by the fact of what Paul says in Colossians 1:28: "We proclaim him." Let us do it.

God our Father, we want to thank You for this time in Your Word, and for the Word of God. It's active and powerful, working in our lives. We thank You for these Scriptures, and because they are truth, we have heard the voice of heaven. Help us now to wipe out all of our personal opinions that are handed down to us through unreliable sources, including our families, and our religions, and our denominations. And let us stick with the Word of God. It is the Word, and the Word, and the Word. That alone is the mind of Christ, and we have it. And we thank You for that in His name. Amen.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1995

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