

HOW—AND WHY—PAUL PREACHED CHRIST

Take your Bibles and turn once again to Colossians 1. Just think, next week—Lord willing—I'll be saying, "Take your Bibles and turn to Colossians **2** 😊! To recap what we looked at *last* week—and to lay the context for *this* week—notice again what it says in vs 25.

--God made Paul a minister—and commissioned him—to "fulfill the Word of God." **Fulfill** in this verse doesn't mean "to bring to pass" God's Word because **Paul couldn't do** that—only God could! **Fulfill** in this context means to **fully proclaim** God's Word; to make it known everywhere.

--According to verse 26, there was a **mystery**—a hidden truth that had been revealed to Paul—that he was to proclaim to a **specific** group.

Who was the group? The **saints**, meaning God's children.

What was the previously hidden truth—**the mystery**—that Paul was to proclaim?

Christ dwelling in them—which was their hope—meaning their expectation—of their future glory!

What are some of the riches—the blessings—that are ours **because** Christ dwells in us?

There are many, but here are **the five** that I gave you last week, all in the form of promises.

1) The promise of His presence. Mt 28:20b "...and, lo, I am **with you always**, even unto the end of the world.

2) The promise of His power. II Cor 12:9 "And He said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: **for my strength** is made perfect in weakness." (Also Eph 3:20; Phil 4:13)

3) The promise of His protection. John 10:28 "And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall **never perish**, neither shall any man **pluck them out of my hand.**"

4) The promise of being a partaker of His nature. II Peter 1:4 "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these **ye might be partakers of the divine nature....**"

5) The promise of perfection. Revelation 21:4 "And God shall wipe away **all tears** from their eyes; and there shall be **no more** death, **neither** sorrow, **nor** crying, **neither** shall there be any more pain: for the **former things are passed away.**"

And that brings us to verses 28 and 29. Here we have what I'm referring to as... "*How—and Why—Paul Preached Christ.*"

1. The message Paul—and others—preached

What **was the message** Paul preached? **What** did he proclaim? No guesswork here, is there? Paul preached—he announced/declared/made known/proclaimed publicly—**Christ!** We know that is his message because verse 27 **ends** with Christ—and verse 28 **begins** with "**Whom** we preach..."

A. The priority of preaching Christ

Why was Paul so bent on preaching Christ? **Why** was Christ the focal point of his preaching? Because of **who** Christ is...and what Christ **has done** for us...and what Christ **will do** for us in the future—things Paul had already written to them about in this letter!

--In vs 14, we see it is because Christ is the One whose shed blood secured the forgiveness of our sins

--In vs 15-16, we see it is because Christ is God—the Creator and maker all things

--In vs 17, we see it is because Christ holds all things together

--In vs 18, we see it is because Christ is the head of the church...and the first One raised from the dead

--In vs 19, we see it is because in Christ all the fulness of the Father dwells

--In vs 20, we see it is because Christ is the One through whom we have peace with God—and it is through Christ that one day the world will be made new

--In vs 21-22, we see it is because Christ is the One whose death in our place allows us to be reconciled to God

--Also in vs 22, we see it is because Christ is the One who will one day present us holy and unblameable and unreprouvable in God's sight

--And in vs 27, we see that because Christ indwells us, we have the expectation of the glories of heaven!

No wonder Paul said to the Corinthians in **I Cor 2:2** “For I determined not to know any thing among you, **save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.**”

Paul’s **preaching of Christ** also set him apart from **the false teachers**. In **Col 2:16**, Paul implies that false teachers emphasized meat...and drink...and holy days...and new moons...and sabbath days. In **Col 2:18**, Paul alludes to false teachers worshipping angels. And in **Col 2:21**, Paul points out that their rules of “touch not; taste not; handle not” were the commandments and doctrines of men—not God!

So preaching the right message—Christ—was Paul’s priority.

B. The partners in preaching Christ

Look at vs 28 again: “Whom **we**...” Paul goes from “I” in vs 23...and “my” in vs 24...and “I” in vs 25 to “**we**” in vs 28. **Who** is the “we”? Fellow proclaimers of Christ! Ephaphras is referred to in Col 1:7, Tychicus is mentioned in Col 4:7, and Onesimus is mentioned in Col 4:9—along with several other individuals listed in Colossians 4.

We also know from **Col 1:6** that the gospel had come to “all the world”—and from **vs 23** we know that the gospel “was preached to every creature.” The point, of course, is simply this: Paul was not the only one who preached Christ! And—as mentioned last week—**Paul serves as an example** of how Pastors are to be, so **I am to be preaching** Christ, too!

Next, let’s consider... **2. The methods of Paul’s preaching**

In vs 28, Paul gives two methods—two components—in what his preaching of Christ involved.

A. It involved warning

Vs 28 again: “Whom we preach, **warning** every man...”

The Greek word that **warn** comes from occurs **eight** times in the NT. Four times it is translated **warn**; the other four times it is translated **admonish**. According to the “**Topical Lexicon**” in Biblehub, it “always carries the idea of **warning or corrective instruction** delivered for the **hearer’s good**.”

It can also mean “**admonish through instruction**” by supplying “doctrinal and spiritual content.”

I Thessalonians 5:12-13a “And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and **admonish** you; ¹³ And to esteem them very highly in love for their work’s sake.”

Notice what Paul is saying. He is telling the believers in Thessalonica to esteem very highly in love **the spiritual leaders** who labor among them and “admonish them.” You know what usually happens **when I** “admonish” someone? They get **mad** at me—which is the **exact opposite** of what they are supposed to do!

But Paul goes on to say that the **brethren themselves**—fellow believers—are to admonish **one another!** We see that in **I Thessalonians 5:14** “Now we **exhort you, brethren, warn** [admonish] them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men.” And we’ll see this “**brother admonishing brother**” teaching again when we get to Colossians 3:16!

Not only did Paul’s method of proclaiming Christ involve **warning** believers, ...

B. It involved teaching

Vs 28 once again: “Whom we preach, warning every man, and **teaching** every man in all wisdom...”

The word “teaching” means what we usually think of when we hear the word—“to instruct, impart knowledge, disseminate information.” It is used 97 times in the Greek NT and—according to HELPS Word-studies in Biblehub—it “nearly always refers to teaching the written Word of God.”

Paul was certainly a teacher—and one of the characteristics **of a pastor** is that he is to be “apt [able] to teach” (I Timothy 3:2). Teaching requires more than **sharing knowledge**, though—it also involves recognizing and **refuting error**, part **of the reason Paul wrote** this letter!

But just like some people don’t appreciate **being admonished**, not everyone enjoys **being taught!** In Paul’s farewell letter to Timothy, Paul wrote in **II Timothy 4:3-4** “For the time will come **when they will not endure sound doctrine**; but after their own lusts shall they **heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears**; ⁴ And they shall turn **away their ears from the truth**, and shall **be turned unto fables** [tales, stories].”

Do all pastors **teach the same way**? No; there are different preaching and teaching **styles**, aren’t there?

Can you **prefer** one “style” of preaching over another? **Yes, you can!** We all learn in different ways and a style that “clicks” for one person may not for another.

Are some pastors **better teachers** than others? **Of course!**

But at the end of the day, the **most important aspect** of teaching is that it has to be **the Word of God!** The teaching is to be “in all wisdom” it says in the middle of the verse—and Colossians 2:3 says that **in Christ** is hid all the treasures of wisdom!

So if you’re going to fry—or broast—your Pastor over Sunday dinner, make sure you are using the right “cookbook!” (I said “recipe” last week; **cookbook** makes more sense)! And the Book says that I am to **preach Christ**—and **preach the Word** (II Timothy 4:2)!

C. It involved everyone

Paul’s warning—and teaching—was not directed to a **select few**. False teachers tend to have an “elitist” mentality—only a select few of “enlightened” people will be able to understand them and their message. Paul emphasizes the need for **every man** [person] to be warned—and that **every man** [person] be taught—so that **every man** [person] can be presented “perfect.”

And that brings us to... **3. The motivation behind Paul’s preaching**

Why did Paul preach Christ? **What motivated** him to warn and teach other believers? Once again, we don’t have to guess or wonder because God **spells it out**. The middle of vs 28 says, “...that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus!” I believe there are **two** things in this verse that would have motivated Paul.

A. The future presentation

First, let’s think about the word “present.” **Present** means “to bring to, to lead to”—like a **bride being walked down** the aisle by her father to be **presented to** her soon-to-be husband. We see that idea expressed in **II Corinthians 11:2** “For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, **that I may present you** as a chaste virgin to Christ.”

Was Paul going to **literally** escort people into the presence of Christ after they died? **No**; that’s **not** what it means. But...we do know this—every believer will someday **stand before Christ** and give an **account of themselves** to God!

Romans 14:10b “...for we **shall all stand** before the judgment seat of Christ.”

Romans 14:12 “So then **every one of us shall give account** of himself to God.”

II Corinthians 5:10 “For we **must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ**; that **every one may receive** the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.”

What **does it mean** to give account? Are believers going to be **judged for their sins** after they die? **No**; they are not! But—according to I Corinthians 3:8-15—what we do for Christ after we become a child of God will **be evaluated**. And we will be **rewarded**—or **suffer loss of rewards**—based on that evaluation.

And because Paul wanted **each of them** to hear, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant,” he warned them to **avoid that which was sinful**—and taught them to **do that which was right!**

A second truth that would have motivated Paul to warn and teach each and every believer is...

B. The present possibility of sanctification

Once again, notice what it says in the middle of vs 28 “...that we may present every man **perfect**...” Was Paul saying that people could **become sin-free** in this life—and that is why he warned and taught them?

That is **obviously not** what he meant! The word “perfect” here means “mature.” Just as a **child** matures by going through the process of **physical** growth, **believers** become **spiritually mature** by going through the process of **spiritual** growth. And the process of **spiritual** growth is often referred to as **sanctification**.

You’ve heard this before, but here it is again: **the event** (not process) that takes place when we are born-again is called **justification**. The **future event** (not process) whereby our **current body is transformed** into a body like Christ’s body is called **glorification**. But the stage **we are in now**—as mentioned just a moment ago—is called **sanctification—the process** whereby we **grow spiritually**.

Why did Paul warn and teach? Because he believed **every one of them** could grow and stand before Christ as a **mature believer** some day! **How do we know** Paul believed that?

--Because he **didn't write**, "that we may present every **pastor**" mature in Christ Jesus!

--And because he **didn't write**, "that we may present **a few of you**" mature in Christ Jesus!

--What **did God** have Paul write? "...that we may present **every man** perfect [mature] in Christ Jesus."

Let that sink in! God through Paul is saying that **every** true, born-again child of God "**may be** presented"—has **the potential** to be presented—as a mature, Christ-like believer—**with no exceptions!**

--'But Pastor, you don't know **how I was raised** and **all the bad examples** that I grew up watching!'

'You're right, I don't—but it says, "**every man!**"

--'But Pastor, you don't know how **strong some of my sinful habits are**—and how **weak my will power** is!'

'You're right, I don't—but it says, "**every man!**"

So how can Paul—and others, **myself included**—believe that every true child of God can grow and become a mature believer? Because **God is the One** that changes us and grows us!

II Corinthians 3:18 "But **we all**, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, **are changed** into the same image from glory to glory, even as **by the Spirit** of the Lord."

Ephesians 4:13 "**Till we all** come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, **unto a perfect [mature] man**, unto the measure of the stature of the **fulness of Christ:**"

Philippians 1:6 "**Being confident** of this very thing, that **He which hath begun** a good work in you **will perform it** until the day of Jesus Christ:"

I can't change you—and **you can't** change you—but **God** can change you! And some of you need to stop making excuses for not growing and **do what God says** in order to grow: read God's Word to **know** God and His will—then **pray for God's** help to obey His will!

Lastly, let's consider... **4. The manner of Paul's preaching**

What was Paul's **approach**—what was his **attitude**—what kind of **mindset** did Paul bring to preaching and the ministry God called him to do? Notice what it says in verse 29. "Whereunto"—to this end, for the purpose of warning and teaching believers so they can become mature—"I also labour, striving according to His working, which worketh in me mightily."

A. He worked hard

The word "labour" doesn't mean **just work**—it means to work **hard**. It describes **strenuous exertion** that leaves a person tired and worn out. Jesus used it in **Matthew 11:28** "Come unto me, all ye that labour [toil, are wearied from working] and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

The same word is found in **I Timothy 5:17** "Let the elders [pastors] that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, **especially they who labour** in the word and doctrine."

Some of you might be thinking, 'Pastor, do you mean to tell me that "**laboring in the word**"—studying the Bible and preparing messages—can leave a person **tired and worn out?**' To which I reply, "**I didn't say it—God** through Paul did—but... I "second the motion!" **How exhausting** is studying? So much so that I actually enjoy doing **physical labor** to give my mind a rest from **mental labor!**

The word "**striving**" carries a similar idea. It comes from the Greek word "ah-go-NEE-zoh-my" and is the word we get "**agonize**" from. It means to struggle and put forth **intense exertion**—like a person does in athletic competition or on the battlefield.

In Colossians 4:12, Paul wrote that Epaphras—their pastor—**agonized in prayer** for them. So Paul worked—hard—as a preacher and teacher of God's Word—and that is what I strive to do, too!

But...Paul didn't just work hard, though... B. He depended on God working in him

Vs 29 "according to His [God's] working, which worketh in me mightily."

--Paul was able to work—for God—to the point of exhaustion because God enabled him to!

I Corinthians 15:10 "But **by the grace of God** I am what I am: and His grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I **laboured more abundantly** than they all: **yet not I**, but the grace of God which was with me."

Same idea, right? Paul says he labored—to the point of exhaustion—but it was **God's grace** enabling him to do it—not **he himself doing it** in his own strength.

No man—humanly speaking—can handle the ministry in his own strength.

--People are hurting—and you hurt with them.

--People need help—and you can't always help them.

--People need wisdom—and you often don't have the wisdom they need.

--People need to be admonished—but then they get mad at you.

--Messages need to be prepared—sometimes 4 in a week.

--VBS needs to be planned for

--Camp needs to be coordinated

--The building needs to be maintained

--Church admin work—like bulletins...and business meetings...and the church website—needs to be done

--And then there is my own house...and garden...and lawn that need attending to

--And family activities...and children...and grandchildren...and a wife!

No wonder Paul asked, "**Who is sufficient** for these things?"

Why do I bring these things up? Am I looking for sympathy—or appreciation?

Not at all!

I'm just trying to impress upon us all of this truth: The same God that worked in Paul—the same Holy Spirit that raised Christ from the dead—dwells in us and can enable us to do what God wants us to do!

So be encouraged—and hope-filled!

God has **not changed**; His strength is still **made perfect in our** weakness—and we can still **do all things through Christ** which strengthen us!

Ephesians 3:20 "Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, **according to the power that worketh in us,**"

Let's stop counting on **our** power—and start counting on **His!**

What is it that God would have us do in light of what we've heard this morning?

1. First, this message was primarily directed to those who "have the Son"; those who have personally received Jesus as their Savior and are born-again.

If you are in that group—if you are a child of God—you will **not be judged** for your sins after you die!

But if you "have not the Son" you are still in your sins—and you will go to a different judgment...and be judged for every sin—and condemned to hell because you rejected God's way to be forgiven!

So if you "have not the Son," God's desire is that you receive Him today!

2. For those of us that are God's children, here are some of the things He wants us to do.

--Stop making excuses for not growing in Christ-likeness—and start reading and obeying God's Word!

--And stop relying on your power to "navigate" life—and start relying on God!