

March 29, 2020

Portrait of a Faithful Pastor

Part 3

Colossians 1:24-29

LTS: Acts 20:17-32

Like faithful pastors, faithful Christians proclaim Christ, minister the word, and help one another grow.

As the Coronavirus pandemic continues to wreak havoc around the world, the church wrestles with how best to respond. Throughout the centuries whenever plague and pestilence emerged threatening the very existence of civilization, Christians often played a key role in offering much-needed help. We read stories of ancient Christians courageously running into plague-ravaged towns to render aid to the sick when everyone else was running for their lives in the opposite direction.

In times of war and pandemic Christian women were often first to volunteer as nurses. And out of love for Christ and suffering people many men studied medicine so they too could render aid. Others focused on the disciplines of chemistry and anatomy in an effort to understand diseases – their causes and cures.

Today, Christian people are going out of their way to make sure their neighbors are cared for and their needs met in practical ways. All of these are wonderful examples of what it means to love one's neighbor and manifest the mercies of Christ. And I suspect the Lord is pleased with such ministry.

All that being said, however, it should be noted that the highest and most necessary kind of ministry that believers should render to the fearful, the sick, the discouraged, the hopeless and the lost is the ministry of God's word. Only the words that come from God offer eternal hope, divine instruction, and wisdom needed to equip human hearts to navigate hardship and loss in a manner that pleases the Lord and brings them joy.

Yes, believers are to minister to people in all the practical ways we can devise. But the greatest need in times of suffering is to receive the ministry of the word of the Lord.

This was always Paul's priority in ministry. To be sure, there were times when he healed the sick. But there were also times when he either didn't or couldn't heal those in need. Witness the occasion of his writing to Timothy, "Trophimus I left sick at

Miletus” (2 Tim. 4:20). It’s not always possible to relieve people’s physical pain and suffering, nor is it always God’s will (witness Job). But through the ministry of the word of God we can give people the greatest, most necessary gift of all.

This will be the third time we have looked at Col. 1:24-29. And along the way we have been learning what a faithful pastor IS and what a faithful pastor Does. And as we have considered the example of Paul, we have discovered specific applications for every Christian no matter your gifting or call to ministry.

Last week we began to consider the second part of our outline; namely, What A Faithful Pastor Does. And Paul is very clear on this point. So, let’s begin as always by standing together and reading the text.

Read. Col. 1:24-29

As we consider what Paul is saying to the church of Colossae, let’s be careful to ask ourselves how God wants each of us to apply these truths in our own lives. The timeless truth here is that faithful pastors Proclaim the word of God by warning and teaching in order to present everyone complete in Christ.

For everyday Christians, however, the application sounds like this: Like faithful pastors, faithful Christians proclaim Christ, minister the word, and help one another grow.

Now let’s establish some hooks to hang our thoughts on. What does a faith pastor do?

- I. He proclaims Christ
- II. He Shepherds the Flock
- III. He Labors for their maturity

I. He Proclaims Christ:

1. You will recall that Paul’s primary goal is to exalt Christ in our hearts. He wants us to see that Christ is Preeminent over all things. Nothing and No one is greater in power, higher in authority, or deeper in Wisdom than Jesus Christ. He is the Almighty Creator God. And He is reconciling sinners to Himself through the blood of His cross. And one day He will reconcile everything in the cosmos making peace through the blood of His cross.

2. Not only that, but he is building something on earth the likes of which the world has never seen; namely, a community of people who existed for ages and generation as mortal enemies of one another. Now they love one another like no human community has ever loved. It is a community of Jews and Gentiles, men and women, slave and free; the educated with the uneducated, Rich and poor, – all of them devoted to the exaltation of Jesus and love for one another.

3. Here's how Paul says it (27) "God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in You, the hope of glory.

A. Christ in you: Behold the awesome doctrine of Union with Christ! He in us. We in Him. The most privileged relationship humans can have with God is no long just for Israel. Now EVERYONE can be reconciled to God through the blood of the cross. The thought that Messiah would take up residence in an uncircumcised pagan was absolutely unthinkable. But now it has happened! Now all of us become the joyful recipients of the greatest treasures mortals can receive from God. What are those treasures?

B. Read Eph. 1:3-14

C. So, what do Gentiles like you and I receive in Christ? We have:

- a. God's sovereign choice in Him (4)
- b. He predestined and adopted us in Him (5)
- c. We have Redemption (7) the forgiveness of all our sins
- d. We know the mystery of God's ultimate goal for the world (9-10)
- e. We have an inheritance (11)
- f. We are sealed by the H.S. (13)
- g. All of this comes to us "In Christ."

D. Paul is trying to move the Colossians - and us to - grateful adoration of Christ for what he did for us on the cross. And that with good reason, for Not only are Jews and Gentiles united with Christ theologically, but we are united to one another Practically in the church.

E. How did God make Jews and Gentiles into one? The only possible explanation is Christ In You. Christ in You! Christ in You! Which is the HOPE – the guarantee - of glory. When you realize that God has put in your heart love for a crucified Savior, and a love for those who were once your rivals and enemies, then you can have confidence that you have Christ in

You – the guarantee of heaven – the hope of glory.

4. With all of that in mind, what does a faithful pastor do? Paul says (28),

“We proclaim him!”

- A. We don't proclaim that God wants you to be healthy
- B. We don't proclaim God wants you to be rich
- C. We don't proclaim tips for a better business
- D. We don't proclaim demon exorcism
- E. We don't proclaim political agendas

We Proclaim Christ!

5. O beloved, how far the church in America has drifted from this single and ultimate mandate. God's purpose in the world has not moved one centimeter in 2000 years. From first to last, he is building His church through the proclamation of the crucified Christ.

We preach Christ crucified,
risen and coming again.

6. Now, it might be helpful to point out that the word “proclaim” here is NOT the usual word we would translate “Preach.” This word used here means to declare, to announce, or simply to tell.

“We proclaim Him” indicates simply that this is the message Paul delivered regardless of how he delivered it. He might preach it in the marketplace, or explain it in Herod's Palace, or talk about in the homes he visited. The point is that at the heart of all Paul's teaching there stands Christ. We proclaim Him.

7. SO, What does a faithful pastor do? He proclaims Christ. Second,

II. He Shepherd's the Flock

1. Notice with me (28) that Paul's purpose is to bring every believer that he serves to maturity in Christ. He says (28) “That we may present everyone mature in Christ.” In other words, he was NOT merely concerned with preaching the gospel and leading people to saving faith (though that was certainly a major focus of his ministry). But Paul was also concerned about the maturity of every individual in the church. He wasn't just into wining sheep. He was also devoted to shepherding the flock.

2. And wasn't this Jesus' concern when he gave his disciples The Great Commission? Let's refresh on Jesus' words in Matt. 28:18-20,

All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe (i.e. to obey and keep obeying) all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.

3. Now it's important to note that there is only one imperative (command) in the Great Commission. It's NOT "GO" The word "go" is a participle just like "baptizing, and teaching. So what Jesus is saying is, "As you are going (and here's the command) make disciples." And what does making disciples involve? It involves "Teaching them to obey (and keep on obeying) all that I have commanded you."

4. We might say that a disciple is a person who is striving to learn to bring every area of his/her life under the gracious rule and authority of Jesus Christ. And that's exactly what Paul is doing.

5. Notice the two terms he uses to describe how he moves men and women in the church toward maturity in Christ (28). He "teaches" and "warns." The word "Teaching" (didasko) means exactly what you might think. It means to instruct or tell someone what to believe or do. The word for "warning" is Noutheteo. It means to warn, to admonish, or to counsel. And. Notice that Paul is warning and teaching "with all wisdom." That implies the use of God's word. The word of God is wisdom for life. It warns us of danger, and it teaches us what is true. And Paul did this all the time and in various ways. Of course, he warned and taught with all wisdom when he preached. Be he also warned and taught with all wisdom whenever a need arose.

6. For example:

A. Acts 20:31 To the elders of Ephesus he said, "Be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish every one with tears." This is how Paul shepherded the flock. He brought the word of God to bear on their lives often with tears.

B. 1 Thes 5:14 "we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the

fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all. Here Paul is saying that differing needs require different kinds of ministry. He didn't admonish and the "weak" person the same way he would admonish a sinfully idol person.

7. Beloved, it is this kind of biblical teaching that drives Calvary Bible Church to the ministry of personal discipleship and Biblical Counseling. Pastors should engage in it just as Paul did. In fact, Paul even instructed the churches to expect that their pastors would do this. To the church in Thessalonica he wrote (1 Thes 5:12), "We ask you, brothers, to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you."

8. But this ministry of warning and teaching is not merely for the Pastors. It is also something the Lord calls all of us to do.

- A. Col, 3:16 "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom..."
- B. Rom. 15:14 Paul says, "I myself am satisfied about you, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able to admonish one another."
- C. Paul believed that men and women in the church who know the wisdom of God's word are equipped to engage in discipleship / counseling conversations. And as they warn and instruct according to the need of the moment, the hearts of men and women conform a little more to the likeness of Christ by the power of the Spirit.

9. Paul teaches very clearly (Eph. 4:12-13) that it is the job of church leaders to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up 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 mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."

10. So you see, faithful pastors shepherd their flocks. And part of that shepherding responsibility involves equipping the saints to engage in conversations that instruct and warn with all wisdom that we may present everyone mature in Christ.

11. BTW: (28) Notice the repetition of the word "Everyone." This privilege is for everyone! The pagan cults of the day were all about secret societies and mystery religions that were only available for the initiated few. But what God offers people through the ministry of the church is for EVERYONE! Paul says, We warn everyone and teach everyone with all wisdom so that we may present everyone complete (fully initiated – completely mature) in Christ.

12. This is how the Great Commission makes progress in the world. Every faithful pastor engages in the process and every faithful Christian finds his place in the work as well.

13. So Faithful a Pastors Proclaims Christ. He Shepherd the Flock, and finally...

III. He Labors for their Maturity

1. Notice verse 29. “For this purpose I toil, struggling with all His energy that powerfully works within me.”

2. In other words, the faithful pastor works hard at these things. He works hard preparing for the public preaching the word, and he works hard at the private ministry of the word, and he works hard at equipping the saints to join him in fulfilling the great commission through the church.

3. Where does he find the energy to do all of that? Well, it’s NOT his energy. It’s NOT his own power. It is the energy and power of the Spirit of God.

4. Nevertheless, Paul toils (to labor to the point of fatigue; or to wear himself out). And struggles (agonizomai – to agonize, to strive to do something with great intensity) to present as a love gift to Jesus everyone who has been entrusted to his care - mature in Christ.

5. Beloved, this is why at Calvary Bible Church we have always said that we are not so much concerned about how many people are here but rather how mature in Christ they are. We just think the Lord wants us to be concerned with the Depth of the church and let him worry about the breadth of the church.

6. So, “we proclaim Christ, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. ²⁹ For this we toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within us.

7. So church, as you are looking for ways to minister to people in practical ways, let’s also be faithful to minister the word of God according to the need of the moment, admonishing and teaching everyone with the very wisdom of God.

Like faithful pastors, faithful Christians proclaim Christ, minister the word, and help one another grow.