

保罗的事工理念——歌罗西书 1:28-29

Paul's ministry philosophy -- Colossians 1:28-29

Introduction, context, outline

- Scripture: Colossians 1:24-2:5, 1 Timothy 3:14-16.
- Context: Colossians 1:24-2:5 is Paul's heartfelt expression. We see what kind of heart Paul had when serving as the Lord's servant.
- Key point: In 1:28-29, Paul made a concise summary of the entire gospel ministry, which helps us to understand what God's will is for the church.
- Story: A dying church in Bakersfield, California, used this verse as its ministry philosophy to re-evaluate and improve the church's various ministries and experienced a great revival.
- Outline:
 - Paul's ministry philosophy:
 - A. Worker of ministry— “We”
 - B. Core of ministry— “proclaim Him”
 - C. Expansion of ministry— “admonishing,” “teaching”
 - D. Recipient of ministry— “every man”
 - E. Manner of ministry— “with all wisdom”
 - F. Goal of ministry— “complete in Christ”
 - G. Intensity of ministry— “labor, striving”
 - H. Power of ministry— “according to His power, which mightily works within me”

Worker of ministry— “We”

- "We": The whole paragraph (1:24-2:5) uses the singular "I", except only here where the plural "we" is used to include the readers. Last time we mentioned that believers are called to serve the Lord, so even if a plural isn't used here, Paul's personal description should be an example for us to follow. The plural "we" is used here to emphasize that the ministry described here is the responsibility of all believers, and everyone has a part to play.

Core of ministry— “proclaim Him”

- "Proclaim": *kata* "down" + *angello* "to tell, declare". Many words in the New Testament derive from the root *angello* to express some kind of telling a message, with distinct emphases:
 - ana* "up" + *angello* "to tell, declare": emphasizes to report to a superior or to report back (John 5:15);
 - apo* "from" + *angello* "to tell, declare": emphasizes the source of the message and the content itself (Acts 26:20);
 - dia* "through" + *angello* "to tell, declare": emphasizes that the message is spreaded throughout an entire region (Romans 9:17);
 - eu* "good" + *angelizo* "to tell, declare": emphasizes that what is being preached is good news, that is, the gospel (Acts 8:12);

exo "outward" + *angelo* "to tell, declare": emphasizes that the message is going out from within (1 Peter 2:10);

Here is *kata* "down" + *angelo* "to convey information", always used in temples, synagogues, and other public places to publicly preach the Word of God (Acts 4:2; 13:5; 17:3, 22). It is never used for private one-on-one evangelism. "Downward" also carries a concept of authority. The message we proclaim does not come from man, but from up above, with divine authority. This kind of top-down, authoritative preaching is the core of Paul's ministry philosophy.

This is why we have a pulpit ministry, why everyone spends an hour a week sitting here and listening, and why I spend 30 hours a week preparing for this hour. In order to achieve the goal of making believers completely sanctified, Paul says, there must be regular public preaching of the whole truth of God. Please pray for the pulpit ministry of our church!

- "He": Not "it" but "he". What we preach is not an abstract truth, but a person, Christ himself. He is the mystery of the gospel that was hidden and now revealed (v. 26), the beloved Son who dwells in us, the hope of glory (v. 27), and the Savior who reconciles man to God (vv. 21-22). The core of the gospel is a person—not an abstract ideology, nor a set of philosophy, nor a code of conduct—but a person.

Expansion of ministry— “admonishing,” “teaching”

- "Admonishing": It is a combination of "mind" and "to put", "to put something into the mind", meaning to change the mind of another so he can "be transformed by renewing of your mind" (Romans 12:2). In the New Testament, this word always carries the meaning of warning and correction. In 1 Thessalonians 5:14, it means to point out where someone's behavior is not in accordance with the Bible, to gently remind him of the consequence of unrepentant sin, and to restore him. This kind of admonishing is an act of brotherly love (2 Thessalonians 3:15).
- "Teaching": To impart knowledge, including theoretical knowledge and practical knowledge. The pulpit ministry itself is also part of the teaching, but not all believers can do public and formal teaching (James 3:1; 1 Timothy 3:1-7). Here it is a broader sense similar to 3:16 where all believers are to teach and admonish one another. This is the responsibility of every member. The two terms come with a positive aspect and a negative one, where teaching is to positively impart knowledge, and admonishing is aimed at correction from the negative side.

Recipient of ministry— “every man”

- "Every man": This kind of terminology in the New Testament letters mainly refers to church members. But there is no need to limit its scope here. Sometimes the faith of others is not clear, and what we do is still to teach and admonish, helping them to see their problem with the truth of Christ, so that he may repent and be saved or that his spiritual life may grow.

Application: This is why fellowship is important! To teach and admonish one another, we must first know them well. Only on the basis of mutual trust and mutual love can teaching and admonishing take place naturally. "I have a problem right now, would you pray for me?" "I have encountered a problem. Is there any biblical principle that can help me deal with it in a way that glorifies God the most?" "I

want to pursue this sister. Since you've done that before, is there any teaching and admonishment you can give me on that?"

Manner of ministry— “with all wisdom”

- "With all wisdom": Wisdom is the practical application of knowledge. "All" means that the method of application is not simple and rigid, but flexible. Church ministry is not a bunch of rigid mechanisms. It's not like that there must be this department and that activity, and we just need to find some names to fill in each ministry role.

Application: In the growing process of all healthy churches, due to the need of the congregation and the endowment of various gifts from God, there're always some new ministry mechanisms to be adopted and some old mechanisms to be dropped which have become dysfunctional. Therefore, leaders of various ministries must always pray for wisdom.

Example: The wisdom of evangelism: street evangelism, setting up a booth, handing out tracts, open-air preaching, airport pickup evangelism...

Caution: This is not to give us a green light to do whatever we want. "Wisdom" is used to preach Christ and is Christ-centered (cf. 2:3; 3:16). A counter-example: giving red envelopes gifts to increase church attendance is NOT an example of "all wisdom", because it is not Christ-centered, but consumer-centered. Christ is a Savior, a King, not a Mammon.

Goal of ministry— “complete in Christ”

- "Present": Romans 12:1 uses it as a metaphor for sacrifice, to "present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God". Holy and acceptable to God is the focus here.
- "Complete": The term can have an absolute or relative sense. Relative completeness refers to a strong faith, that is, spiritual maturity, but not perfection (1 Corinthians 2:6; Philippians 3:15). But in this state, we cannot yet be presented to God. Jesus said "Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." (Matthew 5:48). The Father is perfect in the absolute sense, and he cannot accept any blemish. So the completeness here is absolute perfection which is our state of complete sanctification in the future!

Colossians 1:22 “yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him *holy and blameless and beyond reproach.*”

Application: How to achieve this goal? The context is very clear, only through continuous preaching, teaching, and admonishing. This goal, in 1:22, is Christ's goal in accomplishing reconciliation, and here it is our goal in ministry; the former is God's sovereign will, and here it's His commanded will for us. How to live in God's will? To conform our will to His. Make sure to participate regularly in the ministry of preaching, teaching, and admonishing.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 “All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.”

Intensity of ministry— “labor, striving”

- "Labor": Describes high-intensity work to the point of exhaustion. Often used to describe farmers (2 Timothy 2:6) or athletes, both of which conjure up images of people sweating. The word "striving" is similar in meaning, yet emphasizes the pain that this kind of high-intensity work brings to the body. Not only all the sweat, but also a sore back.

Application: Some non-believers worry that faith in the Lord will make people lazy and not work hard. Since God is sovereign and has ordained everything, they say, why bother working hard? What difference can I ever make? Those who say this must have never seen those who serve the Lord faithfully. Look at Paul! Look at the faithful coworkers in our church! Jesus has taken away the burden of sin that weighs down on our soul and has empowered us to do what is truly worthwhile with joy, so why don't we strive with all our might?

Power of ministry— “according to His power, which mightily works within me”

- "power ... mightily works": Two synonyms used together, one emphasizing the power itself, and the other the working of that power. The same usage also appears in the prayer in Ephesians:

Ephesians 1:19-20 "...what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead..."

Application: Our power to serve comes from the mighty power that raised the Lord Jesus from the dead! Some people complain they never experienced the power of God, well, it may be because they never exerted themselves in ministry. There're always those who are all about miracles and wonders, well, Paul says, if you want to see miraculous power, just look at those diligent and faithful laborers in the church—that is where the resurrection power of God is now at work! The Lord has risen, our power to serve is testimony! Let us make good use of this power! Let us devote ourselves to serve the Lord! Let us give our best to his ministry!