

How To Proclaim

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[0:00] Colossians chapter 1, verses 24 to 29. To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

We proclaim him admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ. To this end I labor, struggling with all his energy, which so powerfully works in me.

The last couple of weeks we've been talking about ministry and evangelism, living and speaking in such a way that people are able to see the glory of Jesus Christ in the gospel.

Paul said, I am a servant of this gospel. I suffer in order that others may embrace Christ's sufferings and his afflictions. God has unveiled this great mystery after ages and generations of time.

Now he is revealing himself in a saving way to the Gentiles. And so I preach, he says, I present the word of God in its fullness.

[1:42] I, by the power of the Spirit, make Christ known. And we've asked, is this just for Paul? And we've said, Paul himself said, I'm not seeking my own good, but the good of many, so that they may be saved.

Follow my example as I follow the example of Christ. Christ. He's been talking about what he does. He's been talking about why he does it.

And tonight, in verses 28 and 29, he tells us how to do it. How to do it. And that is so important. We all want to know how to evangelize.

We want to know how to do gospel ministry. We want to be able to be a servant of the gospel. And the big question then is, how do I do it? It's not enough to know what I should be doing or why I should be doing it.

We need to know how to do it. And Paul very helpfully gives us his method, how he does it. And I think this is where we fumble and fail too often.

[2:51] We haven't worked out the how to do something, how to evangelize. And so rather than doing anything, we do nothing. But Paul won the loss, didn't he?

God blessed his efforts. He was successful at this. And so we want to see, how did he do it? How did he evangelize? How did he do gospel ministry?

And I think the applications are wider than just evangelism. We could talk about Sunday school teachers. So are you a Sunday school teacher? How do you do gospel ministry? Are you a parent? How do you give the gospel to your children? How do you parent? What about counseling or meeting people one-on-one? Well, Paul shows us four things in this passage.

And the first is we have to get the message right. If we're going to evangelize, if we're going to minister the gospel in a right way, we have to get the message right. And so what is the message?

[3:52] Verse 28. We proclaim him. Him. Christ. Christ is the message. He's the image of the invisible God.

He is the ruler and the head. The firstborn over the first creation. The firstborn over the second creation. He's the one who's reconciled everything back to God.

He is how God has reconciled sinners back to himself. He's brought peace. So Christ. Christ himself is the good news for sinners.

So Paul's theology determined his message. Paul's theology determined his message. And that's the way it always is. Theology determines the message that we convey to people.

So the health and wealth, prosperity gospel folks, they have a certain theology. And that theology determines what they say to people.

[4:49] It shapes their message. They believe. And so they speak. And Paul believed. And so he spoke. And so the question is, is what dominated Paul?

And what then has to dominate us and our thinking? Well, it's Christ. Paul's very clear. We proclaim him. Now, lest anyone think that he's just talking about formal preaching, like what I'm doing here with the church and with people in a public setting, Paul's ministry wasn't just in this setting. You know that he went to synagogues. And so he would have had a setting similar to this. But he had other ways of ministering that was besides just a preaching in a church building with worshipers.

He went from house to house. He went out and talked to people. I'm sure that as he was making his tents, he was telling other people about the gospel. He talked to families.

I think of the jailer in Philippi. Well, there he had a family in front of him. He talked to debate clubs. And so proclaiming isn't necessarily a formal thing.

[6:00] That's not the preeminent, the first idea in it. But it is a verbal expression. It is a verbal thing. It's with words that we tell others about him.

Now, it isn't just living my life. And so maybe they'll see my life and then ask for the hope that's in me.

That verse is in the context of suffering for the gospel. It's not just living a good life in general. But Paul demands and the Bible demands that we use words.

Proclamation is verbal. It's a laying bare. It's a making plain. There's an uncovering. You're putting the matter clearly before their eyes.

And so he says we portray him. We paint him. We talk about him. Him. He's the gospel. So if and I would say if you're afraid to evangelize because you're not sure of what the message is, just think the message is him.

[7:05] Him. And the facts about him. And so one good thing, one excellent stuff that you can take is just to memorize 1 Corinthians 15, 3 and 4.

For what I received, I passed on to you as a first importance that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, that he was buried and that he was raised on the third day according to the scriptures.

That's the gospel in a sentence. That's the message. It's Christ. It's not them. What they're going to do.

What they need to do. What they have to do. It's Christ. It's not me. What I've done. What I've experienced. Christ died for our sins. He was buried.

He was resurrected on the third day. According to the scriptures. The message is not the five points of Calvinism.

[8:00] Although those are true. The message is not about election or predestination. Although those are certainly part of the good news. Part of the blessing that comes to us in Jesus Christ. The message is not about what a good thing the church can be for you.

The gospel is not about how you can live a more fulfilled life. The gospel is not even listen to what this amazing thing that Jesus has done for me.

Those are all things that witness to the gospel. Those are all things that help explain the gospel. But the good news, the message is Jesus. It's Jesus who saves.

What he did for sinners. His incarnation, his life, his death, his burial, his resurrection. And what that means for sinners. And so we have to get our message right.

It's Jesus. It's Jesus Christ. And so do you want to be a good proclaimer? Then you need to get to know Christ. You need to learn how Christ applies to your life.

[9:05] How the facts of the gospel and the person of the gospel applies to your life. So evangelize yourself first and most.

Talk to yourself about Jesus. Learn to ask yourself, what do the facts of the gospel have to do with this present situation that I find myself in? So you're going to work tomorrow morning.

What is the fact that Jesus was born? He was born into this world of sin. He knew what it was to be a man and to work.

What is that fact? How does that help me? What does that tell me? How is that good news for me and my work? So I'm wrestling with disappointment. I wanted something.

I was looking forward to something and now it's fallen apart. And now it's gone. What does Christ's death say to me about that, about this situation?

[10:06] I'm struggling with sin or a distance from God. What does Christ's burial and resurrection say to me? What are the implications for my situation? See, connect the facts of the gospel.

Connect the person of the gospel to your present situation. Learn to proclaim Christ to yourself and you'll learn to proclaim him to others. We've got to get the message right.

Christ is the message. Secondly, we need to get the method right. We have to get the message and we have to get the method right. How do you reach the lost?

Paul says, here's the way I do it. Here's my method. I proclaim him. We've talked about what that means. And he says that proclamation takes two shapes. It goes in two different directions.

It's like a coin with two sides. He says it's admonition, admonishing, and teaching. Admonition.

That's a gentle rebuke. A gentle rebuke.

[11:10] A warning. It literally means to put to mind. It means to bring up something in order for someone to think about. A truth that they're not remembering or a truth that they don't know that they need to see.

To bring up something for someone to think about. Now, it wasn't necessarily adversarial. It's not in conflict. But it was definitely confrontational.

There was something confrontational about the way Paul proclaimed the gospel. Some people think gospel proclamation is like this. So we're on a nice big street.

And here comes the sinner. And he's walking. He's walking down the street. And the gospel proclamation is me coming up to him with a big smile on my face.

And I'm taking his arm and mine. And I say, okay, let's go. But that's not what it is at all. It's more like this. The sinner is walking down a narrow alley.

[12:18] A very narrow alley. And all of a sudden, there's a huge, big, burly man standing in his way. And the sinner can't go around him.

He can't get by him. If he looked up, he could see that that big, burly man has a smile on his face.

But he's not moving either. And the sinner says, can you please move?

And the man says, no. You must turn around. You're going the wrong way. You have to go the other way. Well, will you move? No, I'm staying right here. You have to go.

You have to turn around. The way you're going is not right. That's the way Paul did ministry. With a gentleness. Without harshness. He didn't do it harshly.

But he confronted sinners. He said, you can't go this way anymore. You have to turn around. He didn't do it with a fierceness. He didn't do it with a grimace.

[13:19] There was pleading. There was tears. There was love for this man. But on the other hand, he's not getting out of the way. He warned and admonished.

And then there was teaching. And that's a mental word, too. That's a verbal word, too. The gospel ministry is a word addressed to people's minds.

It's a word addressed to people's minds. Emotions and wills are involved. But the gospel message first comes to a person's mind. You teach them. You instruct them. And so you say, let me tell you about Jesus.

You must not understand him. Let me tell you about him. You don't know what you need to know.

You don't understand what you need to understand. So let me tell you. And as a father with his children or as a first grade teacher with her students, you gently lead them.

You teach them and instruct them. They might not get it the first time or the second time or the third time or the fourth time. But, you know, parents, you don't give up. You just keep you have to keep teaching them.

[14:25] And our teachers here know you don't just give up on your students. You teach them. Teach them about Jesus. You teach them about sin. That's the method.

Instruction. Warning. And then you notice that he says, I do it with all wisdom. You don't throw this stuff out willy-nilly.

You do it with wisdom and care and thought. A gospel witness is not dropping gospel atom bombs on people or chucking gospel grenades at them and saying, well, something's going to stick.

That truth, there's some truth there that's going to stick. Well, no, it's just going to blow something up. You're going to do more damage than good. Paul says, I do it with wisdom. I'm thinking about how will they best receive this?

So read Acts 13. He's talking to Jewish people. His gospel presentation is one thing. Go to Acts 17. He's talking to philosophers in Athens. And his gospel presentation looks so very different.

[15:32] Why? Because he's thinking, how can I help them embrace this? What do they need to understand? What do they need? What common ground do we have?

How can I reach them? And so he's using guided missiles, not atom bombs, not grenades, surgical strikes, saying just the right things. And so you don't go in there with the sword hacking and swinging, cutting.

You think, what do I need to say? That's why you need to pray for wisdom. You need to pray for this.

This is why you need to pray for the Holy Spirit. Spirit of wisdom. Counsel. You know, you don't need wisdom and counsel if you're doing something that you can just completely handle. But you've got a sinner in front of you and they're saying things that you don't understand.

And you don't know how. What's the best thing to say? And you're praying. Holy Spirit, teach me. Show me. Well, what aren't we doing? Well, we aren't being silent.

[16:32] We aren't just hoping they ask. We don't wait for them to hang themselves by their own sin. We don't say, you know, if their sin gets them in a bad enough spot, they will finally get around to asking why my life is all put together.

No, we gently warn them. And we teach them and we instruct them. And we do it with all wisdom. And just in passing, there's a word that's found three times in this verse, in this sentence.

The NIV, for stylistic reasons, because it is a bit repetitive, leaves one of them out. But literally, Paul says, admonishing everyone, teaching everyone, in order that I might present everyone perfect in Christ.

Paul didn't have one method for some people and another method for other people. Another method for, he said, well, this preaching thing isn't going to work here. This proclamation, this telling people about Jesus, it's not going to work here in this situation.

I have to come up with something different. Paul seemed to make it work. God seemed to bless it no matter what situation, who he was in front of. This is the method for everyone.

[17:43] And you know what? That's good. That's good for us. We don't have to learn seven different philosophies of ministry. There's one.

Now, it has infinite variety and expressions. It's going to look different. Every person that's in front of you, every relationship you have. But it's still basically the same, no matter who's in front of you. It's the same method for everyone. So we have to get our message right. We have to get our method right. And thirdly, we have to get our goal right. Following Paul as he followed Christ means we both have the same goal.

He's not driving to Milwaukee and I'm driving to Sheboygan. He's not stopping until he gets to South Bend, but I'm okay if I just make it to Wyatt.

Well, no, that's not to have the same goal, the same end. And so what's our goal? What was Christ's goal? What was Paul's goal? So that we may present everyone perfect in Christ.

[18:47] Perfect. That means complete, mature, fully grown. He's talking about a person who is fully devoted, completely oriented toward God, where he's grown up into Jesus Christ.

The word is used in the Old Testament. Solomon, remember at the dedication of the temple, he prayed for his people. And after he was done praying, he said, but your hearts, they must be fully committed to the Lord.

That's the word. Fully committed, pointed all in one direction, a whole life for God to live by his decrees and obey his commands as at this time.

Sadly, a couple of chapters later, it says Solomon's heart was not fully devoted to the Lord. Same word. So what does it mean to be perfect?

What's the goal in evangelism? What's the goal in Sunday school teaching? What's the goal in gospel ministry? What is the goal in parenting? What is the, how do we participate in this gospel ministry?

[19:55] What is the goal? It's not, it's not decisions. It's not a mere change of lifestyle where the outside is different, but the inside is still the same.

It's a fully committed, fully devoted, fully obedient disciple. Paul wasn't after a mere numbers.

Now, you know what he did talk about? He did talk about many. He cared about numbers. He wanted to see many saved. But that was not the goal. The goal was mature, fully devoted, fully committed, obedient disciples.

Now, that shows us something. This work of evangelism that Paul was primarily involved in is only the first step in a process of making disciples, of fully growing disciples.

It fits under a broader banner. So when we say making disciples, generally we equate that with evangelism. But I think in reality, making disciples is the broader category.

[20:57] Evangelism is step number one of making a disciple. And there's teaching, and there's training, and there's admonition, there's warning, there's correcting, there's building things into their lives.

But the goal is to make them mature. So evangelism is only part, the first part of disciple making. But there's more to do. We're after disciples who obey everything that Jesus says. That's what he said.

Go and make disciples, baptizing them and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded. So what does a full-grown disciple look like?

Well, he's doing everything that Jesus commanded, including going and making disciples. A full-grown disciple is a reproducing disciple.

[21:56] Maturity in humans is marked by reproduction. The ability to reproduce. Maturity in discipleship is marked by reproduction.

The ability to reproduce. If a disciple hasn't been trained and grown, and he's not pointed in the right direction where he is now somehow, in some way, making disciples, then the work of growing him up is not done yet.

The disciple isn't mature yet. There's something wrong. If every part of his life is grown up except his disability to make other disciples. If a married couple can't have children, they go to a doctor. And they say, doctor, here's the problem. We are not able to have children. And things aren't functioning like they ought to. If a disciple of Christ isn't reproducing himself in some way, maybe it's planting, maybe it's watering, maybe it's harvesting, maybe it's teaching the newly converted. But if you aren't reproducing yourself in some way into the lives of others, you have to go to the great physician and say, there's something wrong here. I'm not fully mature.

[23:13] Something's not functioning. Help me. Heal me. Show me what's going on here. That's the goal. Mature, fully grown, perfect, fully obedient, reproducing disciples.

Disciples who make disciples. So we've talked about the message, the method, the goal, and now let's talk about the resources. The resources. Because all of this could be really heavy.

And I understand that. I'm not sending you out here. And Paul doesn't send us out here. God himself never sends us out and says, well, you go make bricks without straw. He gives us what we need.

Now, there are resources here. What resources does Paul have? What does Paul use? Well, how did Paul do it?

You see a word there. To this end I labor. I work. What resource does Paul have? He has his own work. His own struggling.

[24:17] To this end I labor. I work. Disciple making is work. We talked about this. Fish. If you're going to be a fisher as a man. If you're going to be any kind of fisher. Fish. Don't jump into your boat.

They have to be reeled in. They have to be lured. They have to be one. The new and the fish. You got to reel them in.

The new converts need taught. They need trained. It takes work. That's one resource. Paul says, I work. And he says, I struggle. Agonizomai. I agonize.

It's the word for exercising and working in the gymnasium. This is what it's like. So when you think gospel ministry.

When you think about doing what Paul did. When you think about evangelism. You need to think about not a tea party. You need to think about grunting.

[25:10] And groaning. And sweating. And you need to think about people pulling on like a tug of war. Every muscle straining. Last week I told you about my girls soccer team.

About how they didn't seem to want to win very badly. They didn't play to win. The other girls wanted to get the ball. The other team wanted to get the ball. And the most frustrating and infuriating thing about so many of my girls.

Was they were happy to be running along beside the ball. And so you're like, it's right there. But they're just happy being near the ball. Paul played to win.

He agonized. He was playing. He was competitive. It was sweating. And so it takes work. Now I'm glad Paul told me that. Because that just pops the delusion that I have.

That if I'm going to do this. Then it's going to be easy. It's not going to be easy. I'm not surprised when I'm tired. And I'm not surprised when it's hard.

[26 : 17] He didn't say it was going to be easy. It's going to be work. That's one of Paul's resources. But Paul had another resource within that. Or over that.

He had Christ in him. Christ's power in him. And so do you.

This is just not. This is why we can't say. Well that's Paul. That's those people. No. The same spirit indwells you. Christ is in you.

The hope of glory. I would just. I would encourage you to read. The end of Luke. The end of Matthew. Read the beginning of Acts. Jesus comes to his disciples.

And as he's sending them out. To do their work. He says something. This is from Acts 1. You will receive power. When the Holy Spirit comes on you.

[27 : 16] And you will be my witnesses. In Jerusalem. And in all Judea and Samaria. And to the ends of the earth. Power will come upon you. And you will be my witness.

You'll receive power. And you will be my witness. That's us. Brothers and sisters. That's the church. That's our inheritance. That's for us. The same spirit lives in us.

The same spirit of Christ. Is a spirit of power. And of energy. For us. Now Paul doesn't say. I wait until I feel strong. He doesn't say.

I'll wait for some sort of. Baptism of the spirit. So. So now. Going to my neighbors. And talking to my friends. It's just. Easy. And I just float on across the street. And there's no problem.

He said. And you know. And I get these waves. And they crash on me. But I don't feel it. He says. No. It's work. I work. It's labor. It's hard. But he says. You know what I find.

[28 : 14] As I'm going. Something happens. Something happens. As I work. As I go. He goes with me. I find him.

Putting his hand on the plow. And pushing with me. I find him. Getting in the yoke with me. And together. We're pulling. And he's doing it. If we wait until we feel strong.

If we wait until we feel brave. We'll never go at all. Pray. And go. And then you'll find what Paul found.

There was grace in the going. There was courage in the going. That's how Paul did ministry. You are connected to Jesus.

Each one of you. You're connected to Jesus. We sang about it. He's the vine. We're the branches. We're loaded with his strength. And so go.

[29 : 15] And you'll find his energy. You'll find his life flowing into you. That's how Paul did ministry. So how should we minister? How should we serve? How should we evangelize?

We proclaim Christ. We warn and teach. We get the goal right. Making disciples who make disciples. We get our resources right. It's going to take work.

But in the work. I find this power. Christ's power in me. Now in the last few weeks. I've encouraged you to do a few things. I've encouraged you to cross your street.

Go to them. Don't wait for them to come to you. I've encouraged you. See them as potential disciples. Not as just dead sinners that can't be saved. We looked at this in Sunday school.

From Luke 15. What was one thing that we learned. From all those parables. About things being found. The one thing. Is just one thing.

[30 : 14] Is that lost things can be found. They can be found. So don't see them as just dead sinners. But see them as potential disciples. And so now I want to ask you a question.

What are you going to do? What are you going to do? Jesus was preaching. And he said to his hearers. Why do you call me Lord, Lord?

And do not do what I say. Don't bother calling me Lord. If you're not going to do what I say. What kind of master would I be?

If none of my servants did what I said. Everyone knows how to play the game Simon says. Simon says pat your head.

And now we all. We do it. But so often we play the game Jesus says totally differently. Jesus says go and make disciples.

[31 : 10] And we memorize it. And we get some people together. And we talk about what it would look like to make disciples. And we listen to a sermon and say yep. Amen. That's convicting.

I need to do that. That would. That's just not doing what Jesus says though. Is it? Simon says pat your head.

And you pat your head. That's like me. Going to Amon and saying. Amon go clean your room. It's a mess. And she comes back two hours later.

And she says hey dad. You know that word about cleaning my room. That was really good. My room is a mess. That was so convicting. That cut me to the heart.

I even memorized what you told me. You said go clean your room. And I'm so excited tonight. I'm getting all my friends together. And we're going to talk about what it means to clean my room.

[32:06] What it would look like if I were to do that. James said do not merely listen to the word. But do what it says.

And do not merely listen to the word. And so deceive yourselves. See something very deceptive can happen. Every time we hear the word of God. But especially when it comes to things.

That we're not naturally given to. You can listen. And you can say amen. Yes. I see. I see how to do this.

I really should do this. But the question that I have for you. Is what are you going to do? Will you strike up a conversation with your neighbor?

Will you begin praying for your neighbors by name? If you don't know their name. Step one is to find out their name. And step two is to start praying for them. Will you go to work and look at the lost.

[33:06] And say you know Joe. Is a possible disciple. He really is. Now what can I do to bring him along? What can I get him.

How can I move him down the line. Into being a disciple making disciple. Again we're not ruling out. The work of God. We're not ruling out the spirit of God.

But we have to ask ourselves. Where is he at? How can I move along? Move him along. What can I do? Will you cross your street? Will you invite an unbelieving couple.

Into your house. With their family. And maybe it's going to be a real best. But will you do that. Move towards them. And after you've done it once. Would you do it again? And will you get beside a brother or sister.

In Christ. Who is reaching out. And say. You know what. This is a team effort. This is a family effort. What help do you need? What can I do? How can I pray for you? How can I help you?

[34:03] So just the question. What will you do? We just can't walk away. And say well that was a good sermon. Or that was a bad sermon. What. What can.

What. What are you going to do? Let's pray. Heavenly Father. I do pray that you would help us. To think about.

What you want us to do next. So we do pray. Lord. Show us what. You want us to do next. Each one of us.

What. What do you want us to do? Where do you want us to go? What do you want us to say? Who do you want us to talk to? What do we need to. Get straightened up.

What do we need to figure out? Will you please. Show us these things. And will you lead us. Thank you that you've given us.

[35:00] The Holy Spirit. That he is a going. Sending. That he is a. Meeting. Inviting. Saving. Person of the Trinity.

That he is. In front of us. Revealing. Jesus Christ. Thank you that we can go with him. Will you give us confidence. In his power.

In his ability. Confidence in Jesus Christ. And his. The power of his blood. Will you please help us. Help us to. Do what you've told us to do. And not deceive ourselves. And just merely listen to it.

Pray this in Jesus name I pray. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen.