

(Colossians) True Ministry

by Brian Brodersen

The sermon emphasizes the importance of preaching Jesus Christ and warning people about the dangers of false teaching and false teachers in order to follow the biblical model for ministry.

Duration: 55:30

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Colossians 1:24-28

Topics: "Christian Ministry", "Preaching Christ"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of preaching Christ and warning and admonishing people in the ministry. He criticizes the approach of some ministers who focus on uplifting messages and avoid anything that may make people feel uncomfortable or guilty. The speaker highlights the duty of ministers to preach Christ and the manner in which Christ should be preached, which includes warning and teaching with wisdom. He also shares his personal conviction to take the ministry seriously and encourages others to do the same.

Transcript

And Father, we pray now as we open the word that you would speak to us in Jesus' name. Amen. I'd like to read to you today from Colossians chapter 1 beginning in verse 24 on through the end of the chapter.

Paul the Apostle is writing and he says, I now rejoice in my sufferings for you and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ for the sake of his body which is the church of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God which was given to me for you to fulfill the word of God. The mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations but now has been revealed to his saints. To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles which is Christ in you the hope of glory.

Him we preach warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom that we may present every man perfect in Jesus Christ. To this end I also labor striving according to his working which works in me mightily. Here in verses 28 and 29 which we'll concentrate on today we have a statement from the Apostle Paul about the ministry.

We could call this statement a declaration on true ministry. The Apostle is telling us what the ministry is all about and how he goes about doing it and it's a very important message for the church today because one of the main problems is that people are not doing the ministry the way they are supposed to. They're not

doing what the apostles were doing.

They're not doing what the bible says to do in regard to ministry. Instead they're doing their own thing. They're doing it the way that they think it ought to be done or the way that some particular expert has told them that it ought to be done.

This is my conviction and belief that if the church in America would simply return to the biblical model for ministry that the nation would be transformed overnight. That's the problem believe it or not that is the essence of the problem. There are hundreds of thousands of churches in America but quite honestly there are just a handful that are doing ministry the way the bible says to do it.

That is a tragedy of the modern church. And so here we have a picture of the ministry given to us by the great Apostle Paul and he says in verse 28, him we preach. This is where it all begins.

The duty of every man who claims to be a minister is to preach Jesus Christ. Him we preach. We're to preach Jesus Christ.

That is what the ministry is all about. That is to be the essence of it. And everything else that we cover from the scriptures is to always be connected to Christ.

You can't disconnect Christ from the scriptures. You know there are many subjects that we can address. We can address the subject of marriage and family.

We can address the subject of ethics or morality and things of that nature. We can address social issues and concerns and so forth but we must always do so with Christ at the center. Christ must be first.

Everything must be under the shadow of Christ and that's what Paul said he did. We preach Christ. Him we preach.

Ministers are not to preach politics or social reform. Ministers are not to be philosophers, speculating. Ministers are not even to preach morality and ethics primarily.

Those things are all secondary and again they must be connected to Christ because scripturally you cannot disconnect the two. Now it's possible of course to disconnect morality from Christ. There are many people that preach morality who are not interested in Christ at all.

The Jews are very religious people and at the time of Christ especially they were extremely moral in the outward sense but yet they were far from right with God. So you see the fallacy of preaching morality. You can preach morality and not preach Christ.

When we bring up the issue of morality we must make sure it always remains connected to the person of Christ. Any morality apart from Jesus Christ is worthless in the eternal scheme of things. Moral people go to hell just like immoral people do and so it's Christ not these other things.

But what about preaching Christ? What are we specifically to do and what did Paul do specifically? When he said he preached Christ what did he mean by that? Did he give sermons on the life of Christ? Not primarily. Did he give lectures on the teachings of Christ? Not primarily. The life of Christ of course is important and the teaching of Christ that we find in the gospel of course is important.

But when Paul said him we preach he was talking primarily about the death of Christ and the resurrection of Christ. See that's really the essence of the gospel. Who Christ is of course is vital to all of that but yet without the death and resurrection of Christ we have no gospel to preach.

See that's what the good news is. The good news is that Christ died for the sin of the world and rose again for our justification. And so when Paul talked about preaching he emphasized always that aspect.

He said, I determined among you, speaking to the Corinthians, to know nothing except Jesus Christ and him crucified. That was his message. He preached Christ crucified.

He said the preaching of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. So it was always the death of Christ and then of course the resurrection of Christ that was emphasized. There are those today who preach Christ but not like Paul did.

There are those who preach Christ as a good example to follow. You go to church and you'll hear a wonderful sermon about how Christ set a glorious example and of course that can be fine if the death and the resurrection of Christ are emphasized in it. But there are people who don't even believe that the death of Christ was significant or that the resurrection of Christ took place who will preach Christ as an example.

And you see those people would fall into the category of false teachers because Jesus Christ did not come primarily to set an example for us. That was more or less incidental. He did set an example for us.

He couldn't help but doing so, being the son of God. But he did not come to set an example for us. He came to die for us and he came to rise again.

So you see it's a very subtle thing. There are those that will preach, give a great sermon on the the teachings of Christ, the sayings of Christ, and over the years the Sermon on the Mount that we studied in depth a while ago has been the favorite of many liberal theologians. They deny all of the essentials of the historic Christian faith but they love to teach and preach from the Sermon on the Mount because there's a lot of ethics in it.

There's a lot of morality in it. There's a lot of just good practical teaching for how to get along with each other in the world. So as important as that is, you see it has to be in the proper context of Christ crucified.

And if you take it out of that context then you end up not preaching Christ at all. So you see it's a very subtle thing. When Paul said him we preach, he was talking about preaching the cross, preaching the death of Christ.

That's the thing that people are bothered by today. That's the essential of the faith that you cannot do without. You can't lessen that because that's where salvation is obtained, in the death of Christ, that he died for the sin and that was the primary reason for which he came.

So he said him we preach, specifically preaching the death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. And I want you to notice one final thing in regard to this. Notice he said him we preach.

We are preaching a person. Christianity is not a code of ethics. It is not merely a creed that one is to embrace, but it is actually a person.

We present a person to people. And true Christianity, biblical Christianity, is the only religion in the world that is tied to its founder in such a way that you cannot separate the teaching from the founder. You can

separate Buddhism from Buddha.

He was simply the so-called messenger. You can even separate Islam from Muhammad. You can separate Hindu teaching from the various gurus and so forth.

But you cannot separate Christianity from Christ. See, everything has to do with him as a person. He is the focal point of all the teaching.

When we call a person to become a Christian, we're not calling them to join a church or to agree with a certain creed or to agree to live according to a certain code. We are calling them into a relationship with a living being. We're calling them into a personal relationship with God, God the Son, Jesus Christ.

So you cannot disconnect Christ from Christianity. If you do, you have no Christianity. And there are, of course, people who have sought to do that.

But you can't do it. Paul said him we preach. Paul's message was the man Christ Jesus, the Savior of the world, the Son of God who had come to give up his life as a ransom so that we might be saved, who died in our stead on the cross and rose again from the dead.

That was his message, and that is to be the message of every gospel minister that's followed him. And any man today who claims to be a minister of the gospel but does not preach Christ is not a true minister of the gospel. And so Paul tells us here the duty of the minister.

Secondly, he tells us the manner in which Christ is to be preached. He says, warning and teaching every man in all wisdom. There is a place to warn, to admonish.

There is two sides to the message. The gospel is a double-edged sword. There is that need to warn and to admonish and to rebuke.

There is the need to comfort and to strengthen and to build. And both must be done. And the apostle took the ministry seriously, and he was not afraid to warn people.

He actually felt it his obligation to do so. And so, of course, the man who preaches the gospel is to warn the sinner of the wrath of God that will come upon him if he does not repent of his sin. He is also to warn the believers against false teaching, false teachers.

He's to warn the believers against indulging in the flesh and living carnally, these things that will bring about God's judgment. This is part of the ministry. It's part of the task and the duty of the minister of the gospel to do this, to warn.

But of course, we're living in a time when people don't want to be warned. They don't want to hear anything that's negative. And there's a whole movement in the evangelical church that is appealing to those very people.

It's called the seeker-friendly movement. The church has become user-friendly, seeker-friendly. And they promise you this.

These ministries promise you that they will never tell you anything that'll get you upset. They guarantee that in their brochures. They'll send them out to you.

You'll get them in the mail, those slick, four-color, glossy brochures. Show you pictures of, you know, their services and the cafeteria afterwards. It'll provide food for you and all those neat things.

And then they'll let you know that you will never hear anything condemning, anything that will cause you to feel guilty, anything that will make you feel uncomfortable. You won't hear that here. You won't be bored with any Bible thumping, they'll tell you.

And they'll let you know that 15 to 20 minutes at most is what you're going to spend on the sermon. And the sermon will be guaranteed to be uplifting. You see, those who are taking that approach to ministry are entirely missing a vital aspect of preaching, which is warning, admonishing.

And the sad thing is that the leaders are capitalizing upon it. And there's a vast movement that is dominant in the U.S. today, but it's actually gaining momentum even in other countries, these seeker-friendly kinds of ministries. And yet these are ministries that are not of the Lord.

They're failing to follow the biblical example of teaching and preaching. And they're doing a tremendous disservice to the people of God. And quite honestly, they're not taking seriously the ministry.

And those who are heading up these ministries are more interested in their own kingdom than in the kingdom of God. They're more interested in their own popularity. They're more interested in their own comfort and their own success.

And it's a very sad thing. We have a responsibility. Any man who claims to be a minister of the gospel has a responsibility to warn people about the judgment of God and about the dangers that lurk about us as God's people, the dangers of, as I said, false teaching, false teachers, the dangers of the flesh.

We must do this. We must do it because we are all vulnerable and we can all potentially be snatched away from the Lord. We can all be deceived.

We can all be led astray. And we have many, many warnings in scripture. There are many signposts in the scripture that say, warning, do not enter, do not go in this direction, do not listen, do not follow these kinds of teachings.

And we have an obligation as ministers to set that forth. So there are those times when we have to address false doctrine. We have to address false teachers.

We have to become at times very specific. We even mention names on occasion. Some people say, oh, you should never do that.

Well, why shouldn't we do that? We most certainly should do that. If we take our job seriously, if we take our calling from God seriously, then we must do that. We have examples in the Bible of that.

The apostles were not out to win a popularity contest. So they had no problem in mentioning people by name. If there was a heretic that was in danger of undermining the ministry, they would flat out name them.

Paul, the apostle, did that. He warned against Hymenaeus and Phygellum, a couple of guys that were leading people astray. John, the apostle, warned against a man named Diotrephes.

He said, he loves to have the preeminence among you. And he warned the believers, watch out for this person. He's not serving the Lord Jesus Christ.

He's serving himself. And so, again, there are those times when we have to do that. It's not all that pleasant.

And, of course, we're not doing it just to do it. We're doing it for the purpose of safeguarding God's people. But then again, we must also warn against the things of the flesh.

We must warn people that certain behaviors and lifestyles and things will bring about the judgment of God. But, you see, we're living in a time when people don't want to be told what to do, don't want to be told how to live. And to some people, a great church is a place that you can go to just feel better about yourself, even though you might be living in sin.

If you come here living in sin and feel better about yourself when you leave in your sin, then I've failed to do my job. You see, if you come here living in sin, you should be convicted about that. You should feel miserable over it, but you should also have hope and confidence that God will have mercy and forgive you and deliver you.

That's a full and complete message. But, you see, there are people who want to live in sin and they want to be comforted in it. A true minister of the gospel will not allow that to take place.

As much as in his power, he's going to communicate a message so that if you're living in sin, you're going to feel that you're living in sin and that you need to get right with God. That's right on. That's preaching.

That's what it's all about. We have to be on our guard. Today we're being sold all kinds of garbage from the secular people that rule over us.

And there are people in power in this nation that have an agenda and they're wanting to implement their agenda fully. And you see they're bringing in doctrines and teachings and they're just continuing to present it to the public through TV programs and magazine articles and newspaper articles. And they're wanting us to embrace certain lifestyles and things and say that these are okay.

And there's a very subtle but a very definite agenda that's being carried out here. And the worst thing in the world is to say anything contrary to what they're saying. They don't want anyone to contradict them.

They don't want anyone to challenge them. But yet the man who's going to preach the gospel has to be willing to do that. We have to take a stand.

We have to say there are certain things that are wrong. There are certain behaviors that are sinful. There are lifestyles that are contrary to what God says in his word.

And these things will bring the wrath of God upon people. And yet of course that's not a popular message. And what happens is men in ministry get pressured and because their motives aren't pure and because they're wanting to be popular and accepted and all, they start to conform and they start to embrace and pretty soon, you know, they're no longer warning and they're criticizing anybody that's doing that.

You know, the accepted philosophy in the world today regarding origins is evolution. But we know what the Bible says about evolution. It says that it's foolish.

It says that men professing to be wise became fools. The fool has said in his heart there is no God. That's what the Bible says.

But yet, you know, in the intellectual community, there's a lot of pressure. And so there are pastors in the ministry who, you know, they're feeling that pressure. They want to be accepted by the intellectual community.

They don't want to be looked at as some sort of a backward country bumpkin, kind of a dummy person who, you know, just takes the Bible at face value when science has disproved it. And so, you know, they start to lean toward evolution. We'll call it theistic evolution.

God's behind it all, but it's evolution. And I read a quote this past week in a publication that I get, a quote from a book printed by an evangelical printer that was talking about the glories of evolution, the wonders of evolution, and the almost certainty of it. An evangelical printer printed this.

Compromising with the philosophy of the world. And we're finding that more and more. And people are compromising with all kinds of different things.

We're living in a time when everything goes, anything goes, sexually speaking especially. And so any type of sex a person enjoys, that's legit. And there's some people in power with a lot of resources that are trying to, you know, convince us that there is no preferred sexual behavior except what you prefer.

It doesn't really matter. One thing isn't any better than the other or superior to the other or any more right than the other, heterosexual, homosexual, pedophilia, whatever you want. It's just whatever suits you.

And this kind of propaganda is coming our way constantly. And Christian people are buying into it. Oh, you shouldn't say that.

You shouldn't say that lifestyle is wrong. Now you know. Those are some good people.

And there's pressure that's being put on. And what does it come down to? It's this whole issue right here of warning. People don't want to be warned.

They don't want to hear a negative message. And men in ministry, men in pulpits are conforming to the desires of the people. And because of their own desire for popularity and things as I mentioned a moment ago, they're just going with all of this.

And it's a sad thing. It's a tragic thing. And so the church continues to flounder.

The church continues to have no real voice in society. And the amazing thing is that so often it's the very leaders in the churches that are the ones who are causing the problems. The average person in the congregation is, you know, they're sheep.

They're just out there like, well, tell us whatever you say. We'll believe it. And the people who ought to know better, the people who are supposedly in the ministry, the people who are there as the shepherds, they no longer are able to identify the predators.

And unfortunately, they have themselves become the predators. A book was written some time ago by Philip Keller called *Predators in the Pulpits*. And that's what's happened.

But here Paul preached. He warned every man. And so warning is that negative side, which is part of the ministry, that any man who's truly called and serious about the ministry, he is going to do that.

But then there is the positive side, the teaching, the building up, the taking a person from infancy in Christ and bringing them to maturity by giving them the whole counsel of God, teaching them the Word of God, being faithful, not to interject human opinion or to pull away when, you know, you come across a difficult passage or something that's not popular with today's culture, but just going right ahead and going through the Bible, showing people that the scriptures are the authority, this is what God has given us and we must be submitted to it, and teaching, beginning with the elementary principles of the doctrines of Christ and then moving on and going into maturity completely from milk to meat, taking people all the way. That's the task of the minister of the gospel. And so Paul said that he did this, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.

You see, there is a goal to be obtained, and the goal is to present the body, the people, the flock that one has been overseen, to present them to Christ complete, mature. What has happened today is that men in ministry have forgotten that the flock belongs to God and not to them. They've forgotten that.

You see, you're not my people, you're God's people. And the same is true with every congregation in the entire world, every congregation in the entire world that is assembled under the banner of Jesus Christ. These are God's people, and the pastor is merely the one who has been appointed to care for God's people.

And the pastor has a responsibility to bring God's people to maturity in the faith, because one day that pastor is going to give an account. Over in Hebrews chapter 13, verse 17, the author is admonishing the believers to be submissive to those who are in authority over them. Listen to what he says.

Obey those who rule over you and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls as those who must give account. Let them do it with joy, not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you. You see, a man who is in the position of being a minister of the gospel has to one day give an account to Christ for his oversight of God's people.

That is something that has been forgotten by many in pulpits today. They've somehow forgotten that. They've missed that.

You see, I don't have any right to come here and to give you my opinions about anything or just to decide, well, I think that I'm going to, you know, teach this or that, or we want to get off and discuss, you know, certain issues for a while and, you know, let's put the Bible aside and we'll pick it up later. I don't have any right to do that because I'm not in charge. Jesus is in charge.

He's the great shepherd of the sheep, and you belong to him. So any man who is truly a minister is to be submitted to Christ and to be doing what Christ said to do, which is feed my sheep, tend my lambs, feed my flock. And, of course, it's the word of God that God has given, and this is how we come to maturity.

And so the pastor's primary responsibility is to preach, to teach, to warn in order to bring people to maturity in the faith. An interesting thing has happened in our modern church world. There's a dichotomy that has developed between evangelism and discipleship.

And so what we have today is we have evangelism that takes place, and hopefully, if circumstances come together right now, there'll be some discipleship, there'll be some follow-up for the people that we

evangelize. But this separation of these two things really should never have taken place because they're not separated in the Bible. Paul the apostle never went anywhere and just strictly evangelized.

Wherever Paul went, if he led someone to Christ, he either stayed there to bring them to maturity in the faith or he got somebody to do that so he could move on and go lead other people to Christ. You see, the Great Commission is not to go evangelize nations but to make disciples of nations. And there are organizations that, you know, you get letters from them, appeals, send us some money so we can go evangelize the world, and they'll tell you about the great crusades they have down in South America maybe or the great crusades over in Africa, and they'll tell you about the tens of thousands of people that they preach to.

And there's some truth to what they're saying. They hold these massive crusades and tens of thousands of people come, and they get up and they preach the gospel. I don't know if they're... I can't report how accurately they're preaching it, but, you know, they're doing it.

And then they come back with their report, we led X number of people to Christ, and we prayed with many and had them come forward. But the sad thing is you go back to that very place two years later and you find just a handful of people actually walking with the Lord. Some years ago, back in 1990, in the city of Budapest, right when the whole communist thing fell apart, the Billy Graham organization went into Budapest, and of course they're a very credible ministry.

But this just will give you an example of what I'm talking about. A ministry as credible as Billy Graham's ministry, they went into Budapest and had a one-night evangelistic campaign in which something like a hundred thousand people attended it, and 35,000 people responded to the invitation to receive Christ. But three years later, you're hard-pressed to find a Christian on the streets of Budapest.

What happened? You see, it's not merely evangelizing people that we're called to do. We are called to lead people to Christ and then to take them to maturity once we lead them to Christ. That's the biblical model.

We don't find in the Bible an evangelist going from place to place and just leading people to the Lord and then leaving town without following up, you see? Now, these people have attempted to follow up and so forth, but in Budapest, for example, you have 40 years of communism and no churches. How are you possibly going to follow up with all these people? So what do you have to do? You need to go in and plant churches is what you need to do. I believe that evangelism, true evangelism in the larger sense, is planting churches, going into a community, leading people to Christ, and those people that you lead to Christ, you plan to stay there or get somebody there that can bring them to maturity in the faith.

That's what the apostles did. And so likewise, when you as an individual, when you have an opportunity to share the Lord with somebody, you lead them to Christ, you take the responsibility to get them plugged into the body of Christ, and make sure as you're evangelizing, oh, that we're talking about a lifetime commitment here. A lot of times our evangelism is, you know, say this prayer, everything will be better.

And our motives, although we maybe don't realize it, but our motives are just to get them to say the prayer. So we can say, Hey, I led someone to the Lord this week. If you lead someone to the Lord, make sure you led them to the Lord.

Make sure they understood that they're going to commit their life to Jesus Christ entirely and completely forever. And that will mean that once you say this prayer, then you will get plugged into the body of Christ and you'll begin to grow and you'll be taught and grounded and you'll come to maturity. You see, that's what we're called to do.

That's what Paul was called to do. So here in this one verse, he gives us a beautiful picture of what the ministry is all about. It's preaching Christ, it's warning and teaching and all wisdom.

And the goal is to bring people to maturity in the faith. Paul took the ministry extremely seriously. And that's something that we all need to do today.

Whatever it is that God calls us to do, we need to do it with all of our hearts and we need to take it seriously. There are too many people in the ministry who are just kind of playing around. And I must confess, I've been guilty of that at times.

And in years gone by, I think of all the goofing off I did and I'd like to shoot myself sometimes for it. But by the grace of God, He didn't shoot me but close to it, gave me a good paddling to bring me to my senses, to get me to realize how serious of an issue this is and to really concentrate, to really dedicate myself totally and completely to this work. That's what we're called to do.

Now, Paul tells us in verse 29, something vitally important. He shows us what the ministry is all about and now he tells us how to do it or the source of energy actually for doing it. He said, to this end, I also labor striving according to his working, which works in me mightily.

Now, here's an important thing. And in a moment, I'm going to bring this right down to your particular situation. Although you're not occupying a pulpit, God has a work for you to do, which is primarily proclaiming Christ.

But there are all kinds of particulars that deal with you as an individual. We'll get to that in a moment. But this is important to see right here, that what Paul did, he did through the power of Christ that was working in him.

So he says, to this end, I also labor striving according to the power, to the working. So again, here we see the importance, the seriousness that Paul placed upon the ministry. He labored.

He said, I'm striving in this. The terms that he used are terms that were used quite often in the athletic context, these Greek words. They were used to describe an athlete who would give himself entirely to being all that he or she could possibly be in the particular sport that they were involved in.

There was labor involved. There's striving involved. You know, physically, as an athlete, you have to be in shape.

There has to be a mental toughness and a physical toughness. And this is all developed through hard work. Paul is saying here, the ministry is hard work.

The ministry is indeed hard work, but the Lord is the one who does the work through us. See, that's the glorious thing. There is certainly an element of labor in it, but yet it's not labor to the extent that, you know, we fall down and say, I can't do it anymore, because Christ is the one who's laboring through us.

He's the one who's doing the work. Paul, in writing to the Corinthians, he said, concerning the other apostles, he said, I have labored more than all of them. And he was right.

He had. He said, but yet it was not I, but the grace of God working in me. You don't know what God could do through you.

Paul is proof to us that it doesn't take a great army for God to get something accomplished. All it takes is one man, one woman, one dedicated person, one serious person. That's all it takes.

Historically, when God has worked, you know, he's never looked for a multitude. God never looks for a committee. He doesn't necessarily look for a team.

You know what he looks for? He looks for a man or a woman. He looks for an individual that he might demonstrate his power through. And Paul was one of those people who was just yielded to God to the extent that God was able to work through him all that he wanted to work through him.

Now, of course, we have varying capacities, and Paul had a lot that God wanted him to do, and he did it. We won't all go out and be like the apostle Paul, travel around the world, plant churches all over the place, but there is a sphere of ministry that God has for each one of us to do, and the important thing is that we fulfill that. And we can do that if we take things seriously and understand that it's Christ who will work in us and is at work in us to complete that which he desires to do.

You see, it's Christ who will do it through you, and you would be amazed, will be amazed, at what it is that God might do through your life. I was thinking of William Carey. He was a pioneer missionary to India, just a man who was actually a shoe repair man in England, but he had a heart for the world, for the lost.

He had a gift, had a real aptitude for languages, taught himself Hebrew and Greek, began to study the Indian languages, Hindi and languages like that, became an expert in several languages, went to India and translated the Bible into 45 different languages in his lifetime. How could that happen? How could one guy do something like that? Well, the answer is this. He labored and strived according to the working which worked in him mightily.

You see, it just takes one person, committed, and letting God do in and through them all that God desires to do. You think of a man like George Muller. George Muller fed, clothed, housed, educated, and got the gospel to thousands upon thousands upon thousands of orphans in England back in the last century.

How did he do it? Just one man. How could one man do something like that? He did it just like this. He labored, striving according to his working which worked in him mightily.

It was Christ working through him, and the Lord gave him a vision, and the Lord showed him what he wanted to do, and he had faith, and he believed it, and he pursued it, and God worked that in his life. You see, there's something that God has for you to do, and I don't know what it is, and you might not even know what it is right now. Maybe you've had thoughts.

Maybe you've had little inclinations towards certain things. Maybe you've had what you might call spiritual fantasies. You've sat around, and you just kind of daydreamed about what God might do with you.

You know, I don't believe that those things are fleshly. I believe those things are divinely inspired. I believe that God will give us little taste of what he might do through our lives in order to draw us to seek after him,

but you know, so often what we do is we get these thoughts, and then we say, oh, I could never do that.

Well, you certainly could if God is calling you to, and it could be that those thoughts are placed there by the Lord to get you to begin to seek him, to move you in that direction that he might work through you, because I am absolutely convinced of this. Everyone has a ministry, and the primary focus of that ministry is to preach Christ, but the particulars vary with each one of us. See, we're all called to do the same thing, the same message we're all called to bring, and that's the message of Christ to people.

God might call you to be a missionary to another country. God might call you to start a Bible study at your place of employment. God might call you to get a good news club going in your neighborhood.

God might call you to go down and begin to reach out to the homeless people with the gospel. There are a variety of things that God would call you to do, but they all center around this one thing, getting the word of Jesus out to people, getting the gospel out to people. So, you see, there's a variety of ways that that is going to happen, but the important thing is that we take seriously this work of getting the gospel out.

The man that we had speaking in our pulpit last week, K.P. Yohanan, I mean, he shared with us a little bit about the ministry that he's involved in. He's the founder and director of Gospel for Asia, and he talked to us about the 8,000 workers on the field, the 3,600 people in training right now, the 29 different training centers, you know, all of these things. How did this guy do this? What is he, like some special guy from India who, you know, who is he? He's a man who received Christ, and God gave him a vision to reach the people of Asia with the gospel, and he's laboring, he's striving, he's working hard according to the power that's working in him, and look what God is doing through him.

You think K.P.'s any different than you, or that he's any different than I am? No, he's just like, he's just another person, but he's taken the call seriously. He's taken this task of getting the gospel to people seriously, and look what God is doing with his life. My whole point is this, God wants to do something with you, too, and this is what he wants to do.

It's clear right here. He wants you to preach Christ to people, and he wants to use you to help them come to maturity in the faith, and he's going to provide you with the power to do it. Now, the specifics, the particulars, what that's going to involve, where you're going to do it at, are you going to move, are you going to stay here, are you going to quit your job and get another one, what are you going to do? I don't know any of those things.

God knows all of those things. See, what you got to do is just tune into him, but part of tuning in is first realizing that this is it. This is reality.

This is what we're saved for. This is what we're called to do. This is what it's all about.

As we mentioned so many times before, you know, we're not here to just settle down and have a great time. We can have a great time, and we do have a great time as we grow in the Lord and love each other and grow as a body and all that, but that's really not the main reason that we're here. We're here to do the work that the Lord has for us, and he's got work for each one of us to do, and it begins with growing in our faith, getting established, getting rooted, but even as a new Christian, God has something for you to do.

Well, he'll give you just little things to do initially. You know, as you work with your children, you start to train them up. You start to teach them to be responsible and all.

You know, you don't take your three-year-old and say, okay, now I'm going to go out for a while. I want this house entirely clean by the time I get home. You know, here's the vacuum cleaner.

You plug it in over there, and here's the Windex. You get these windows clean. You know, you don't do anything like that, do you? You take them by the hand, and you take them into the room, and you say, okay, now we're going to pick up these toys right here, this little pile.

You're going to start right there with something as simple as that, and then as they grow, you're going to teach them more responsibility. You're going to give them bigger tasks, and you know, and then by the time they're teenagers, you're just going to go on vacation, and they're going to do all the work. I'm dreaming, right? My house, I'm certainly dreaming.

But you know, it's like that. That's what the Lord's not going to, you know, you got saved yesterday. Here, let me send you to China tomorrow.

I want you to be an evangelist there. I want you to plant, you know. No, God's going to train you up and raise you up, but He's going to start you.

He's going to show you little tasks, little things He wants you to perform for Him. I love Greg Laurie's story about his first ministerial task was to go buy a doorknob for one of the doors at Calvary Chapel. He took it very seriously, and you know, we all started in similar places.

I remember the first time somebody actually asked me if I would, could you, Brian, could you go talk to this person? They need some prayer. They need someone to just kind of encourage them in the Lord. I said, me? I can actually, yeah, oh, I'd love to.

I remember the first time just talking to somebody, praying with them after service. God had spoken to their heart through the message that was given, and the opportunity to follow up and help out in some way. Oh, what a great thing it was.

Or we're tearing down this thing at the church. We need some people to help. Oh, yeah, give me that sledgehammer.

I'll come over there. And just being involved. And so we start, we start there knowing that God has a call on our lives to preach Christ, to get His message out to other people.

We take that call seriously, and we realize that God is going to empower us to do what it is that He calls us to do. And so today I want to exhort you. I want to encourage you to realize God has called you to preach Christ in some capacity, to take this calling as the most serious thing in all the world, to realize that God will empower you to do it, and to begin to ask the Lord to show you specifically what He has for you, and to begin to unfold that for you, and begin to use you on whatever level He chooses, and to ultimately bring you into all that He finally has for you.

We could spend all day just telling stories about people just like you, and people just like the person next to you, people just like me, who went out and did amazing things. I was talking to a brother this past week, a good friend who just sat in our congregation for years and years, and one day said, I feel like the Lord's calling me to leave and to go to another state. And he left, and he went, and he got there for a while, and he did a little bit, and said, I feel like God's calling me to go to Illinois and go to college.

He went, went to college, graduated. We were talking the other day, and I said, well, what do you think the Lord has for you? He said, well, I just feel like the Lord has called me to evangelism. And he began to share with me how God put on his heart a vision to go door to door with evangelism.

And as we were talking, and I was saying, yeah, it sounds great, and I bore witness, he said, well, the Lord showed me that He wants us to be a worldwide ministry. And I looked at him, and I said, good, go for it. We need a worldwide ministry of getting the gospel out.

But you know, some people say, oh, come on now, you're thinking a little big there. Well, why not? I mean, I'd rather think big and fall short of that than think that, well, God probably doesn't want to do anything with me and never get anything done. But you see, that's it.

When it's all said and done, we're going to find out that all that God did throughout all the ages was with ordinary people just like us, who just believed that He wanted to use us and committed ourselves to that and went for it. So go for it. Do it.

The Lord's called you. He'll empower you. Begin to seek Him.

Ask Him what it is that He has for you. Now, of course, if you're living in sin, if you're living carnally, then you can't do anything right now. You need to get right with God.

And maybe you need to be warned that there is a price to pay for not getting right with Him, for rebelling against Him. But the positive thing is that there's mercy and there's grace. And even though maybe you've failed, maybe you've backslidden, maybe you've rebelled, maybe you haven't taken anything seriously that God has done, maybe you've made vows to Him that you would do this and that.

And the other thing, if He helped you and He's been faithful, but you've been unfaithful, well, you know what? Today God will just let you have a fresh new start if you'll truly turn to Him. And if you need to do that, then I urge you to do that. God has a plan, and He wants to work it out in your life.

Allow Him to do that. Father, we thank You for Paul's example. We thank You, Lord, for the clear scriptural guidelines for what the ministry is all about.

And, Lord, we recognize from the passage here and other places in Scripture that each one of us do indeed have a call on our lives. And, Lord, help us to discover what it is. We thank You that You supplied us with the power to fulfill it.

Give us the faith, Lord, to go for it with You, work in our lives. And, Lord, we pray for the church, not only in America, but the church worldwide, and specifically for the men who call themselves ministers of the gospel. We pray that they would be that truly.

We pray for those that have been caught up in feel-goodism and caught up in philosophy and false teaching and all the garbage. We pray that they would repent. We pray, Lord, that they would come back to the authority of the Word of God and use that as their model for ministry.

And we pray, Lord, that they would have the realization brought home to them that they are caring for Your sheep and will give an account. Lord, keep that fresh in the minds of every man who is a minister, myself included, Lord, that these are Your sheep and we will give an account to You someday. Help us to be faithful in Jesus' name.

Amen.

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