

“THE LEADER’S AUTHENTICITY”

Text: Colossians 1:23-29

Subject: Characteristics of an Authentic God Given Ministry

Introduction:

1. Colossians is one of Paul’s Roman Prison Epistles.
2. The epistle was written to the church at Colossae (a town near Laodicea and Hierapolis)
3. Paul penned this letter because two doctrinal errors threatened the church:
 - One was a form of ascetic legalism (2:14-17)
 - The other was a type of unsound mysticism (2:18-23)
4. Paul combats both errors by exalting Christ and His Supremacy (proving that the believer’s union with the person of Jesus is the answer for all time).

(In Chapter 1)

- In v. 1-8, Paul gives his apostolic greeting.
- In v. 9-14, Paul prays for the Colossians.
- In v. 15-17, Paul proclaims Christ’s Deity and creatorship.
- In v. 18, 19, Paul declares Christ’s Headship over the church.
- In v. 20-23, Paul reveals the meaning and purpose of reconciliation.

(But in v. 24-29)

- Christ’s glory is demonstrated in Paul’s ministry!

Question: What is a God-given ministry?

Question: What is authentic Christian service?

Question: What is the purpose of servant leadership?

Question: What is it that enables us to labor effectively (with joy)?

(Remember)

- The end of v. 23 ends with the word “**minister.**”
- This term triggers Paul’s thoughts (and lead in) to the next section.
- This section, (our text), describes and demonstrates what local church ministry is all about.
- It’s truth that produces healthy workers, wholesome laborers, strong hearts, balanced living, sound theology, practical service, lasting fruit, and God’s glory.

“LEADERSHIP SECRETS FROM COLOSSAE”

I. The Entrance into Ministry is a Sacred Privilege

“...And of which, I, Paul, have become a servant,” (v. 23)

“I have become it’s servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the Word of God.” (v. 25)

Question: What did Paul consider himself?

Answer: A “servant” of the Lord!

Question: What is a biblical servant?

Answer: The N.T. words for “servant” are (DIAKINOS) and (DOULOS) which mean:

- #1. Someone who advances others at the expense of **themselves**,
- #2. Cares less who gets the **credit**,
- #3. Doesn’t need to be “**thanked**” for their service, and
- #4. Takes up their cross without **complaint** in following Jesus.

Question: Who made Paul (and you) a servant in the local church?

Answer: “By the commission God gave me.” (v. 25)

- The word “commission” is the Greek word (oikonomia) which means: “To be a steward of somebody else’s possessions.” (a house-manager)
- A steward didn’t own anything; they simply managed for their master or homeowner.
- Paul is saying (emphatically) 3 things:

#1. It is God who calls us and places us in the ministry (our commission is from God and it is a sacred responsibility to serve His local church.)

#2. We are only stewards of God’s property (It’s God’s church, God’s Gospel, God’s Christ, God’s Truth, God’s Word, God’s plan, God’s idea, God’s salvation, and God’s people)

#3. Our responsibility is to “present to people the Word of God” (as a sacred trust) “for their benefit.”

(In Other Words)

- Our spiritual gifts are not intended for our own edification – they are given to us to help us minister to **people**.

(In Plain Vanilla)

- We are servants (of the Lord)
- We are stewards (of a sacred trust)
- We are sowers (of the Word that builds healthy people)

“Oh what a privilege to be a part of “His” church!”

II. The Fragrance of Ministry is Deep Joy!

“Now I rejoice” (v. 24)

Question: What kind of attitude should characterize the spirit of ministry?

Answer: An attitude of joy in the depth of our hearts!

Question: What is the joy of the Lord?

Answer: It is a deep seated confidence that God is in control at all times!

(3 Wells Fuel Our Joy)

1. **Humility** (which protects us from becoming self-centered and thinking we deserve better than what we are getting)
2. **Gratefulness** (which protects us from a complaining, grumbling, and murmuring spirit)
3. **Integrity** (which is wholeness and allows us to enjoy the power of a clear conscience)

(We Have Only 2 Choices)

- #1. Like Jonah – we can be angry, bitter, and resentful (a **sour** attitude)
#2. Like Paul – we can maintain good connections with God regardless of our circumstances (a **sweet** attitude)

(Joy is Born & Maintained by Knowing)

- God’s way is perfect (Psalm 18:30)
- God orders your steps (Psalm 37:23)
- God will finish what He started (Philippians 1:6)
- God works all things together for good (Romans 8:28)
- God’s grace is always sufficient (II Corinthians 12:9)
- God makes all things beautiful in His time (Ecc. 3:11)

III. The Cost of Ministry is Personal Sacrifice!

“And I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ’s afflictions, for the sake of His body, which is the church.” (v. 24b)

(Or)

“I am receiving in my body what is intended for Christ.” (Which means):

- Paul’s sufferings refer to his present imprisonment.
- Jesus (having ascended to heaven) was out of reach of the persecutors.
- Thus, Paul says he is receiving the persecutions that were intended for Christ.

(In Other Words)

- Paul is willing to sacrifice to build and benefit the **church**.
- Paul is willing to pay the price (and suffer **injury**) for the sake of the Body of Christ.
- Paul flat out loves the Lord and His church more than **himself**.

(So Much So That)

- Paul is willing to make any sacrifice necessary for the sake of the church moving forward.
- Paul is willing to suffer afflictions and die for the work of the Lord.

IV. The Message of Ministry is Jesus Alone!

“The mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the saints...Which is Christ in you, the hope of Glory.” (v. 26, 27)

Question: What was “hidden for ages”?

Answer: The New Testament truth of Jesus during the Old Testament Era and people.

Question: What is the “mystery” or “message” of Paul?

Answer: “Christ in you, the hope of glory” (which means):

- When Christ comes to live in a believer, His presence is the guarantee of heaven (the future eternal glory awaiting all saints).
- This indwelling presence of Jesus is the source of our “Hope of Glory” while on earth.
- This message of Jesus is now “manifested to all” (or, whoever will receive it).

Question: What’s the message of the church?

Answer: Only Jesus brings peace and joy now, and later on, eternal blessing, glory, and life everlasting!

Question: Who is the only one who gives help now and hope for eternity?

Answer: Jesus and Jesus alone!

So let’s stay focused in the local church and keep Jesus the **centerpiece** in all that takes place! (And forget all the exaggerated sensationalism and hype)

V. The Goal of Ministry is Spiritual Maturity!

“We proclaim Him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ.” (v. 28)

- To **proclaim** (KATANGELLO) means: “To publicly declare the truth.”
- To **admonish** (NOUTHETEO) means: “To warn in view of sin and coming judgment.”
- To **teach** (DIDASKO) means: “To impart the truth that builds the spiritual life of a person.”

Question: What’s the goal (or end product) of all ministry in the local church?

Answer: “To present everyone **perfect** (mature) in Christ.” (v. 28)

Fact: While the purpose of a business is to make money; the purpose of the church

is to **build people** !

Question: Why must our goal be, to bring people to spiritual maturity?

Answer: So that they can then reproduce their lives in others:

“The things which you have heard of me in the presence of many witnesses, these entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also.” (II Timothy 2:2)

(Remember)

- Entertainment touches the senses.
- Edification builds the spiritual man with substance, truth, and lasting qualities of character.

VI. The Strength of Ministry is Divine Energy !

“To this end I labor, struggling with all His energy, which so powerfully works in me.” (v. 29)

- The word “labor” (KOPIAO) means: “To work to the point of exhaustion.”
- The word “struggling” (AGONIZOMAI) means: “To agonize, strive, and give maximum effort (as in an athletic event).”

How Sad...

...To hear of a pastor looking for an easy pastorate
 ...To hear of a Christian looking for an easy ministry
 ...To hear of people who are lazy (with so much to be done)

Question: How is it possible to “labor” and “agonize” in the ministry?

Question: What enabled Paul (and enables us) to work hard and go the extra mile?

The Secret?

“With all **His energy** which so powerfully works in me.” (v. 29)

(What an incredible encouraging word here)

- The word “**energy**” (ENERGIA) means “energy.”
- The word “**working**” (ENERGEIA) means “efficiency.”

When Paul says “I labor with God’s energy which so powerfully works in me,” (v. 29) he is saying:

1. “The Lord Jesus Christ steps in and infuses **strength** into our bodies” (and)
2. “Our resources to do God’s will come from **God** and not from us!”
 - Yes, we have to work hard in the ministry!
 - But the only way we can work hard is “**Through His Energy**”!!!

(This is encouraging and humbling, that...)

#1...God will supply the power that we need! (and)

#2...When we accomplish anything of lasting value, it’s because God gives us the energy, power, and the resources to get it done!!

Conclusion

Authentic Local Church Ministry Understands Fully:

- #1. That it is a **privilege** to be a biblical servant!
- #2. That humility and gratitude produce deep **joy**!
- #3. That personal **sacrifice** is necessary to be a benefit to others!
- #4. That **Jesus** is the centerpiece in all we do!
- #5. That our goal is to **grow** (mature) people in the local church!
- #6. That God will supply all the **resource** we need to do His will!

(In Plain Vanilla)

- These 6 characteristics will allow us to serve God effectively (with joy) and never “feel cheated” or carry a “martyrs complex” (“poor me”) spirit. We will always consider it an honor to serve the local church, go the extra mile, and forever keep Jesus at the center of all we do!!!

AMEN!
Bill Kirk