**Ministers of the Gospel**

Colossians 1:23-27

**Introduction**

While the lost need to hear the gospel so they can receive it and be saved, believers need to hear the gospel because it is the basis upon which everything else is to be said and received. The Greek word for “gospel” is the word from which we have our English word “evangelize” and words related to it. It is literally “good news”; the “glad tidings of salvation through Christ.” The noun is used 77 times in the New Testament, and the verb (to bring good news; to proclaim glad tidings) is used 55 times. It is a message that generates true joy (Luke 2:10, Romans 10:15). It is a fascinating word to study. Paul mentioned twice that he was “made a minister.” He was made a servant for the sake of the gospel. There are men and women who have made the focus of their lives the proclamation of the gospel. In this lesson, we will consider from the text why Paul—or anyone who has received God’s riches through the gospel—should serve as ministers of the gospel.

1. **The Colossian believers should refuse to be moved away from the hope of the gospel. (v. 23a)** 
   1. The Colossians had received the gospel (v. 5-6). Their continuance would be proof of their salvation, not the means of their salvation.
   2. The term “moved away” means to move from a place; to shift; being led to give up one’s confidence in something; to be shaken from the hope you have. The phrase is used only one time here in the New Testament.
   3. There was the danger that they might be carried away by a philosophy that presented itself as superior to Christ. They were tempted to think they needed more than Christ.
   4. You might lose confidence in an organization, a process, or a person. But you never have to lose confidence in the gospel.
2. The gospel emphasizes the greatness of Christ.
3. The gospel properly pinpoints the true situation of man. It makes clear that which really needs to change.
4. The gospel does not lead you to find the good in yourself, or to “believe in yourself.”
5. It does not allow you to blame your circumstances. “If I had a better job …”
6. The gospel does not just focus on your behavior that needs to change. “I should be more kind to my family.” You can do that for selfish reasons.
7. It does not lead you to come to Jesus simply that He might meet your felt needs. Under these circumstances, you define what your needs are. The gospel brings you to understand Jesus as the Redeemer. It is He who defines what you need.
   1. The gospel causes you to face who you really are, proclaims the glad tidings of salvation through Christ, and extends God’s invitation for salvation by grace through faith.
   2. It is intended for the whole world.
8. **Paul was made a minister of the gospel. (v. 23b)**
   1. Minister – one who serves as a deacon, with responsibility to care for the needs of believers; a servant; a waiter; a helper; a person who renders service (Matthew 20:26); an attendant. Paul is not speaking in reference to an office; he is focused on a function.
   2. “Those who advance others' interests even at the sacrifice of their own....the thing to which service is rendered; i.e., to which one is devoted. (Thayer)” Paul is devoted to the proclamation of the gospel; he helped the gospel go further and advanced the interest of God through the gospel even to the sacrifice of his own interests.
   3. As one who serves for the sake of the propagation of the gospel, Paul was glad to suffer. (v. 24)
9. His suffering is for their sake, although he had never met them. (v. 24a).
10. His suffering is associated with the sufferings of Christ. (v. 24b). It is clearly not that there was anything lacking in the atonement of Christ. Rather, it is the suffering of those who followed Jesus in this present church age. Jesus took that which was done to the church as persecution of Himself. (Acts 9:4)
11. Paul said that he suffered on behalf of the church. He drew the fire of persecution to himself. (v. 24c)
12. **Paul was made a minister of the church (v. 25)** 
    1. “Minister” here is the same word used in verse 23.
    2. Paul served for the well-being of the church.
    3. He was made a servant of the church because God gave him the responsibility.
13. Dispensation – relating to the task of a steward in household administration; a task involving management and organization; relating to the apostolic office in God's redemptive work; a commission, responsibility, or trusteeship; relating to God's arrangements for mankind's redemption plan and purpose.
14. It was given to Paul for their sake; “for you,” he writes to the Colossians.
    1. The focus of his ministry was the distribution of the word of God.
15. Fulfill – fill, make full; to bring to completion; to finish something already begun.
16. “The idea here seems to be that the apostle wants to ‘complete the Word of God’ in that he wants to preach it to every person in the known world. (O’Brien)” (Romans 15:19)
17. He was to preach the gospel in such a way that it was to have its full effect.
    1. The Word that Paul has in mind is the mystery that had been hid for ages. (v. 26)
18. Mystery – something previously unknown but now revealed; made manifest; revealed; made known; shown.
19. See Mark 4:11; Romans 11:25; 1 Corinthians 2:7, 13:2, 15:51; Ephesians 3:3-9.
20. A hidden treasure is a mystery because it is concealed. Once discovered and opened, it is revealed. We have a treasure in the gospel that far exceeds any treasures of this world. That which has been concealed has now been revealed. They are “glorious riches” (v. 27).
21. It was made manifest to His saints, not a small select group or secret society.
22. God wants them to know the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles.
    1. The mystery is Christ in you, the hope of glory (v. 27). The gospel is not in reference to a set of principles. Rather, is about the person of Christ. Paul emphasized the indwelling of Christ.
23. **Central Idea: Paul was made a minister of the gospel that the whole world might know the glorious riches found in Christ.** 
    1. Paul’s plans for his life were the same as God’s plans.
24. He did not live for himself. He was eager for others to have the same treasure in Christ.
25. He spread the gospel personally, systematically, and energetically.
26. He helped others to spread the gospel.
    1. What are the implications for us at Hillcrest Baptist Church today?
27. If you have never trusted Christ as your Savior, you need to repent and believe the gospel.
28. If you have received the gospel, you should view yourself as a minister of the gospel. You may not be called to serve as a pastor, missionary, or fulltime Christian worker, but everyone is responsible to the lost. It will require personal sacrifice and suffering, but you must do what is good for the gospel. You should be eager to witness.
29. If you have received the gospel, you should also view yourself as a minister of the church. You are responsible to the saved; you should do what is good for the church. You should be eager to welcome guests, to sing, and to listen.

**Conclusion**

If you have received the gospel, you should realize how gloriously rich you are! Those who have received God’s riches through the gospel are glad to serve as ministers of the gospel so that the world might know.