

FOR THE
KINGDOM
OF **GOD** IS NOT A
MATTER OF
TALK
BUT OF
POWER.

Colossians 1:28–29

28 He is the one we proclaim, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ. 29 To this end I strenuously contend with all the energy Christ so powerfully works in me.

Reflection

Colossians 1:24–29 offers us a rare and intimate glimpse into the ministry of the

apostle Paul. In these verses we see four things: his attitude; his charge under God; his purpose in fulfilling that charge; and his energy. Over the last couple of days we've seen that Paul's attitude towards his ministry is one of joy in suffering; and his charge or commission from God is to preach the word in all its fullness. Today, Paul reveals to us that his purpose is to present everyone fully mature in Christ; and the driving force behind his life – his energy – is not his own, but Christ's, powerfully at work within him. And so we have Paul's attitude, his charge, his purpose and his energy. But today, we're looking intently at these last two, Paul's purpose and his energy in ministry and life, from Colossians 1:28–29.

And on a personal note, these two verses

sit amongst my favourite verses in all of Scripture. I have them printed and stuck on the wall just above my office computer. In the Bible Paul urges us to imitate him as he imitates Christ. And I share a name with the apostle Paul, so as my namesake, I try and pray Paul's words in Colossians 1:28–29 as I start each day. And so it is with special delight that I read them now to you, from Colossians 1:28–29,

28 He is the one we proclaim, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ. 29 To this end I strenuously contend with all the energy Christ so powerfully works in me.

Paul's purpose in life, and the source of his

relentless energy in achieving his goals. Let's deal with each in turn. Firstly, Paul's purpose, verse 28,

28 He is the one we proclaim, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ.

In this single verse we have the driving passion of the hardest working apostle, the author of the greater part of the New Testament, and the greatest church planter and teacher of the New Testament era. Paul's driving passion and purpose in life is to proclaim Christ, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom so that he might present everyone fully mature in him. But do you notice that this verse isn't in the singular but the plural? Paul's driving

passion and purpose in life is the passion and purpose of every Christian – Paul, Peter, James and John, the other apostles, the Colossian church and every believer since, which includes you and I. Together, the driving purpose and passion of our individual and collective lives as the church is summed up in Jesus Christ:

He is the one we proclaim, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ.

He is the one we proclaim. Not ourselves, our achievements, the beauty or strength of our character or life. But the one who in everything has the supremacy. He is the one we proclaim. The one who bears the image of the invisible God. The one who

was appointed firstborn over all creation. The one who from whom and through whom and to whom are all things. The one who right now is holding all things into being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. The one whom God was pleased to use to reconcile all things to himself, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross. He is the one we proclaim.

The verse goes on, and with it our purpose in life,

admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ.

Paul's great joy and one of the greatest joys of every Christian is to see each other grow increasingly to resemble Jesus. Listen to Paul's exalted language in 1 Thessalonians 2,

For what is our hope, our joy, or the crown in which we will glory in the presence of the Lord Jesus when he comes? Is it not you? Indeed, you are our glory and joy.

And this heart-desire to see everyone grow in maturity according to verse 28 comes in three ways: proclamation, admonishment, and teaching.

Firstly, proclamation. Paul preached Christ; not himself, nor the heroes or cultural appeals of the day, but Christ. Paul preached

the gospel of Jesus Christ from first to last.
1 Cor 2:2,

I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.

As George Whitfield said, 'Other men may preach the gospel better than I, but no man can preach a better gospel.'

Three ways to maturity: firstly proclamation (which is synonymous with preaching), and secondly, admonishment, which means gentle rebuke or correction in the faith. Paul didn't shrink from the unpleasant task of admonishing brothers and sisters, because he cared too much for them. And we all know that a timely word of warning, an early corrective, even though

it might sting slightly in the moment, can save each other from wandering from the faith and being pierced by many griefs. Is there someone you need to pluck up the courage to admonish today?

Finally, Paul spent his time 'teaching everyone'. For him it was in the synagogue, on the road, in prison, and moving from house church to house church. For us it can be walking our children to school, in the way we carry ourselves at work, in our Bible study group or in the devotional time we spend with our husband.

What a great verse! It's worth memorizing, praying each day and adopting as your purpose in life, Colossians 1:28,

28 He is the one we proclaim, ad-

monishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ.

And more briefly we turn from Paul's purpose to his energy. What was the driving force behind Paul's work ethic, and his seemingly boundless energy, dedication and devotion to our Lord? Verse 29,

29 To this end I strenuously contend with all the energy Christ so powerfully works in me.

There is no escaping the fact that ministry is hard work. The Greek word here for 'strenuously contend' was used for work which left one so weary it was as if the person had taken a beating. The idea behind it is labour to exhaustion. Also mixed into

the Greek meaning of these words is the sense of struggling in agony as one might struggle in an athletic event or even in a fight. These words describe the tremendous energy of the apostle Paul's apostolic ministry. He strained his every physical and moral sinew to present everyone fully mature in Christ. As it says in 1 Thessalonians 2:9,

Surely you remember, brothers and sisters, our toil and hardship; we worked night and day in order not to be a burden to anyone while we preached the gospel of God.

Think & Pray

There is so much to meditate over in these two verses. The questions flow naturally.

What drives you as a person? Do your life goals align with those of Paul who in turn took them from Jesus? Are you deliberately seeking to grow in wisdom so that you can preach, admonish and teach your brothers and sisters in Christ? Is one of your greatest joys seeing those around you grow in Christ likeness? When was the last time you admonished someone because you love them too much to stay quiet? Or perhaps you've been challenged today by the example Paul sets in terms of hard work. Where is rest and balance in his life you might ask, or in the life of Jesus Christ for that matter? What does their urgency and willingness to use themselves up for the gospel exemplify for us? And these are just a taste of the questions we might ask and the implications we might draw from this passage!

Once you've wrestled with Paul's words for yourself, and perhaps even committed them to memory, please pray today, however you are led by the Holy Spirit.