

(Colossians) 05 Paul's Ministry to the Gentiles

by Bob Utley

Paul's ministry to the Gentiles emphasizes their alienation, reconciliation, and presentation before God, highlighting the significance of servant leadership and the hope of the Gospel.

Duration: 44:44

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Matthew 22:37-39, Romans 8:28, Romans 12:2, Ephesians 2:8-9, Colossians 1:13-29

Topics: "Colossians"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of a changed life for those who have encountered God. He clarifies that salvation is not earned through good works, but rather, believers are saved unto good works. The preacher highlights the need for Christians to exhibit a transformed character, characterized by holiness, blamelessness, and being beyond reproach. He then delves into an exegesis of Ephesians 1:21, discussing the three characterizations of Gentiles before and after being presented in the blood of Christ. The preacher acknowledges the need for notes and references to effectively present the message and encourages the congregation to follow along in their Bibles.

Transcript

Well, music just speaks to me. I'm just so grateful for songs that capture the truth of the gospel. Amen? Well, I have been out of Colossians for a week and I feel like I've been out of it for a month, you know.

It's just my goal to work through books, verse by verse, because I think really it's the only way to be sure we're capturing the original, inspired author's intent. Last time I got to be in Colossians, I just had the privilege of doing this marvelous Christological passage that you know as Colossians 1, 13 through 20. I just don't know of a more wonderful piece of praise to who is Jesus than Colossians 1. Unless it's John 1, Philippians 2, or Hebrews 1. Now these are the biggies about who is Jesus.

Today we're going to continue our study in Colossians. My wife asked me lovingly, are you going to preach or teach? Croak, I don't know. I mean, I think I try to combine those two.

I think they go together. And I hope you will follow with me. It does embarrass me some that I need to use my notes more.

I do not have a photographic memory and I don't want to just rush through this for aesthetic purposes. I want to deal with this text. So you will forgive me if I look at my notes more today than normal.

I also hope, somebody mentioned to me that I need to tell you exactly what text I'm dealing with so you can follow me in your Bible. And I hope you will. You need to bring your Bible to church.

There is some question about the paragraphing through here. The paragraphing is not inspired. But the paragraphing is a way to show us what is the author talking about in a group of sentences.

Now, it's obvious we've moved from this refuting the Gnostic view about Christ in chapter 1, 13 through 20. And I'm not sure if I got completely through 20 last time I was in this. But I'm going to go to the next, I think, where the paragraph begins again and that should be in 21.

So today I'm going to try to deal with Colossians 1, 21 through 29. I was looking at the New American Standard, New International Version, that you have in the pew. And it takes the paragraph through chapter 2, verse 5. Many modern translations either take it through chapter 2, verse 3, chapter 2, verse 5. So you can see there's some fluidity here.

When you study the Bible, it's best to try to find a Bible that does not show paragraph divisions. And you need to try to say to yourself, what is the unifying theme? Now, as I look at 21 through, at least through 29, the unifying theme to me would be Paul's ministry to Gentiles. And that's going to continue in chapter 2. Paul's ministry to Gentiles.

Now, I am not surprised by a group called Jews for Jesus. I'm surprised about Goyim for Jesus. I'm surprised about Gentiles for Jesus.

Something radical has happened that the Jewish Messiah has become the savior of the world. Amen? And Paul uniquely equipped his rabbinical background. He is... How should I characterize Paul? He's a brilliant mind, not a good preacher, a little grumpy, and he's going to do it his way.

Now, folks, that's what you've got to do with Gentile gripey churches. I mean, God picked this man because he was... And I just... You know, I just am thrilled that people went to sleep during Paul's preaching. I cannot tell you how happy that is.

Now, I'll add this one small word to the choir. I don't mind when they go to sleep out there, but when you go to sleep, it is forever on the tape. And the people worldwide go, boy, that was a really exciting sermon.

The whole choir is asleep. So if we can keep the choir awake, right? Well, of course, Paul raised the brother from the dead. If you fall asleep in my service and hit your head and die, you're on your own.

So remember that, you know. Turn with me, if you would, to chapter 1, verse 21 is where I want to begin. I tried to... I have done this exegesis many years ago, and I review it before I try to present it to you.

But it's amazing to me how my spiritual gift works where quite often the Lord kind of helps me put this into a practical, illustrated outline to present to you. Now, that outline did not come as clearly as one did last Sunday. Somebody said to me, that was really a good sermon.

I said, well, if you're going to have one good one, Easter is the time to do it, amen? So maybe this is the ebb and flow of that. So if it's not as jive-y as it was last year, get over it and pray more. Remember, sermons are a two-way street, amen? If you don't like what I preach, pray more.

It'll probably get better. So there is always a two-way street in this. Now, it's obvious that Paul is shifting from this marvelous picture of Jesus and all of his cosmic, redemptive fullness, and now he's moving to

the people who heard this truth, the people who are struggling with false teachers, the people who are trapped in a world system that does not understand or see.

And so he comes and he characterizes the Gentile churches with three characteristics here. Look at verse 21. They were alienated, they were hostile in mind, and they were doing evil.

Now, this is the world. Notice that there's a play here on this alienated. Of course, I think we could almost put covenantally alienated.

This is the idea. It surprises me how much Colossians and Ephesians are alike and how much they're different. They're based almost on the same outline.

But the great Christological text in Colossians 1 is not in Ephesians. And what's not in Colossians is Paul's discussion of the alienation of the Gentiles. And if I had got to do the Ephesian passage at the same time, it would be Ephesians 2.11 through 3.13. And he uses that barrier wall in the temple as an illustration of the separation, the radical separation between Gentiles and Jews.

They had the covenant and the Gentiles did not. They had the patriarchs and the Gentiles did not. Sounds like the beginning of Romans 9, doesn't it? They had all the blessings and the Gentiles had nothing.

They were alienated, cut off, separate, without hope, lost in the world. But God in his mercy sent Jesus for all humanity. And the spear point, the point of the spear for his thrust into the Gentile world was this little Jewish convert named Saul of Tarsus.

And so he comes now. He characterizes the world that these new believers find themselves in. Cut off, hostile in mind.

Now I would say to you that I think hostile in mind may be a way of characterizing the fruit of the knowledge of the tree of good and evil. What the fall basically is is an emphasis of independence from God. An emphasis, I'll have it my way.

My mind is focused on what I want, when I want it, how I want it, and that's the end of that. Now what happens? The gospel changes that. But that's the kind of people we deal with.

Their mind has been affected by the fall. And then it's characterized then as evil deeds. I would put it this way, and I think this would be a rabbinical way of understanding this.

The mind is a garden plowed with really good dirt ready for seed. And what we choose to let in through our eyes and ears falls on that receptive soil. And the more we dwell on it, the more that seed begins to grow.

So it is in the thought life that sin begins. But sin will manifest itself in outwardly deeds that begin in the mind. So they are hostile in mind and a hostile mind resorts in hostile, evil living.

Now that is the Jewish world that Paul is addressing. And that is the same world that you and I live in. Now in verse 22 he said, Yet he has now reconciled you.

Now would you notice back in your Bible at verse 20 is where we picked up on this reconciled. This is not a new word here. He's brought together two groups that were alienated and their fellowship has been restored.

Something radical has happened. And we've been singing about it today in the cross. The sacrifice of the sinless Messiah did something radical for the fellowship between alienated sinful humanity and a holy God.

I mean something has happened. If I could put it in Pauline terms it'd be the old man and the new man. I mean something has radically changed.

You are now reconciled. Now if you notice in verse 22 it mentions his fleshly body again. Remember we're talking to Gnostic false teachers who would deny not the deity of Christ but the humanity of Christ.

And so over and over in Colossians and Ephesians his blood, his body. The true humanity of Jesus is emphasized throughout this. In order to present you before him.

Now if I was thinking about this when is this presentation? This is something like the book I kind of wanted to clap and shout too when Larry announced we finally got through Hebrews. I think it was 26 lessons on Hebrews. Paul is glad we got through Hebrews.

But Hebrews talked about that we're personally introduced to God the Father. A personal introduction. Now is this talking about that at salvation we are personally presented to God? Is this talking about at death we are presented to God? Or is this talking about judgment day? Sheep and the goats that we are presented to God.

You know I don't know but I'll take any one of the three. Amen? The trick is Jesus is going to present us if you let me add the Hebrews factor in personally introduce us. Think about that.

The holy God of the universe desires our presence through the work of his son because he wants us to be presented to him. Because we're created to know him. Because the whole purpose of creation was fellowship with him.

And finally the promise of Genesis 3.15 has been restored. The image damaged in the fall has been dealt with through the seed of the woman. It's a marvelous, marvelous presentation.

Notice now we have these characterizations. Characterizations of who? The presented one. We had three characterizations of Gentiles as they are in the world.

Now we've got three characterizations of Gentiles as they are when they are presented in the blood of Christ before God the Father. What has changed? Well I'll tell you what's changed. Alienated, hostile and evil has changed to holy, blameless and beyond reproach.

Can I get a hallelujah? What a change has happened because of our new relationship by faith in him. And these are marvelous terms. I put a sentence in my note that I want to read to you.

They are not only forgiven, they are totally changed. I hope you have picked up in my preaching. I do not believe that we are saved by what we do, but I do believe if you've met him, there ought to be a change in what we do.

I don't believe we're saved by our good works, but I believe we are saved unto good works. I believe that the world wants to see people changed by the power of God, not people judging them, condemning them and a self-righteous attitude toward them. Holy, blameless, beyond reproach.

I wish to God that characterized my life. Some of this is positional, I know that. But my prayer is, and I know it's your prayer too, that through time, through prayer, through Bible study, through fellowship, through worship, through praise, that we can move from a positional relationship to God in Christ, to a daily Christ-likeness.

It's a recurrent theme. Now in verse 23, if you're an English reader, you get a contingency. You get a bit of a jolt.

There is somewhat of a contingency in all of the clauses translated by if in English, but these are those conditional sentences again. And this one in verse 23 is a first-class conditional sentence assumed to be true for the writer's purpose. It's not true to reality, because sometimes these are used of untrue statements.

But in this context, Paul is assuming that the receivers of this Colossian letter, a church he did not start, remember? Started by Epaphras. A church he had never visited. The Lycus River Valley, Colossae, Hierapolis, Laodicea.

He had never been there personally to see them, but he'd heard about them. He knew them. He had confidence they were truly in the faith.

And by the way, if indeed you continue in the faith... Now, this thing can mean several deals. What does it mean, in faith? There's no article here. I do not think we're talking about doctrine here.

It would have the article, I think, if we were the faith once and for all delivered to the saints, Jude deal, or the acts, the faith. It would have the article. So this is either an initial trusting in Jesus Christ, or it's the Old Testament background of faithfulness.

And since we're in an if you continue, it looks like to me Paul is saying, I'm confident you're going to continue in the gospel truths. I'm confident you're going to be holy, blameless, and above reproach. I'm confident a change has occurred that your neighbors are going to see.

So it is an if, but it's an if that is assumed. And I think that changes everything about it. Now, notice where it says, firmly established.

Now, it was amazing to me that this is a perfect passive participle. There are several through here. But if you go back earlier, back in verse 21, you were formerly alienated.

That's another perfect passive participle. Now, perfect is the ideal of something happened in the past and it comes into an abiding result. The passive voice implies an outside agent.

They were and continue to be alienated. And the inference is by either of the evil one or themselves. They were apart from God.

They were separate from God. They had no hope in the world. Something happened.

Slap your mama, something happened. And they're different. They're changed.

They're radically new. And now they have been and continue to be what? Firmly established by an outside agent. Part of the triune God, which part I don't know.

Now, some have said that the Lycus River Valley was all, by the way, it's a volcanic valley, which means it had a lot of earthquakes. And this very idea of firmly established, if you'll turn your Bibles quickly to chapter 2, verse 7, you'll see another triad of descriptions that have to do with firmly established. Maybe it's an earthquake metaphor.

Maybe it's to those, this would be a good thing to send to San Francisco. Firmly established upon a foundation that will not rock or waver. And what a difference this gospel preaching has made.

The second little phrase, and not moved away from, this is the companion negative of the positive. Firmly established, here's the negative parallel, not moving away from. Now, it's interesting to me to know that there are several different English translations that translate this differently.

Some do the passive voice. Now, the passive voice would mean that God himself keeps us from being moved away. Do you believe that? Hello? Absolutely we believe.

This is the John 10 emphasis. But this may be a middle voice. Now, if it's middle voice, it emphasizes the role of the subject of the sentence for self-interest.

It may be that they are encouraged to emphasize every personal effort to not be moved away from. Now, which is true? God keeps us or we're involved in keeping ourselves? Absolutely. This is the dialectical tension of Eastern literature.

This is why it's so confusing to Western people who are such stinking, proof-texting literalists. I'm over it. The hope of the gospel.

Now, the word hope in Greek does not refer to, oh, I wish it would happen. Oh, please, please, please let it happen. No.

This is the hope of the certainty of the consummated events of our salvation, the Second Coming, the end-time events. But a ambiguous timetable. We don't hope for the Second Coming.

We're just not sure exactly how it's going to happen. Amen? The Eastern skies will open up one day. I don't know how, when, or where.

I don't know where you're going to be or I'm going to be, but Jesus is coming back. Now, that's the word hope. It's not the, oh, maybe it could... No, no, no.

And then Paul says, which we proclaimed in all creation under heaven. I didn't know Paul was on CNN. This is a hyperbole.

This is the Roman Empire and the southern part of the Roman Empire. Paul says we're preaching this all around. Everywhere the gospel's been.

This isn't Alaska, China, Chile. No. But this is the way we talk.

This is human language. He's saying we preach the same truth everywhere. Everywhere we've gone, we've preached exactly what we've preached to you.

No changes, no different from this church, that church. We don't change the message from a Jewish congregation or a Gentile congregation. We don't change it from Romans to Greeks.

This is the message. This is the gospel. And then Paul says, and this is why I've entitled this, Paul made a minister to the Gentiles, where in this verse he says this word minister.

Now, this is the general word for servant or service. Now, it came to be used... Well, in fact, this is the word used by Jesus in Mark 10, 45, where he says, I did not come to be served, but to serve and to give my life a ransom for many. This is the word that in Philippians 1, 1 is translated deacons.

Two offices in the church, pastor and deacon, Philippians 1, 1. Now, I think if I'm able to get to the rest of this text in the time allotted to me, I want to say in as purple of words as I can that leadership in the kingdom of God is always servant leadership. I mean, how many times did Jesus say, don't do it like the Gentiles do it? That's the whole point of these folks. They've had one pattern of politics, one pattern of expressing power, and Jesus came with a whole new different way to express power.

And his view of number one is not how many you control, but how many you love. Whole new view of what true power is. Now, beginning, and I think this next verse begins another paragraph.

There's no way I could get all the way to chapter 2, verse 5, so I'm going to cut it off at the end of 29, but I think it's related. And we're into Paul as a minister to the Gentiles. Now, notice what Paul said.

Every time I read about Paul rejoicing in suffering, my mind, and I was going to read it, and I thought, no, why should I cry? Every time I think about what Paul went through, my mind goes to 2 Corinthians 4, 6, 11, where Paul lays out his ministry for Gentile churches, lays out what he went through, lays out how he was betrayed, lays out how he suffered. And I preach to a group of people who have no clue about suffering or inconvenience. All they know is a Christianity that pampers them, gives them everything, focuses on them.

And these New Testament verses are focusing on a self-sacrificing faith where leadership is a model of living for Christ irregardless of the circumstance. We are a gripey, baby, off-center Christian group in America. We are non-normal.

We're so non-normal, we think that we're going to get out of suffering. We're out of suffering, all right. We're also out of power.

We don't suffer, but we don't make a click in American culture either. I rejoice in my suffering. I wanted to read Philippians 2, 17.

Philippians 2, 17. But even if I am being poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I rejoice and share my joy with you all. Only the Holy Spirit can take persecution and turn it into joy.

Only the Gospel, only the Spirit, only the good news of Jesus Christ can take what looks to the world to be absolute tragedy and turn it into absolute victory. And Paul says, I'm sitting in prison and I'm rejoicing because my imprisonment has worked out for the furtherance of the Gospel. Do you see your life every day? Are you a Gospel-captured daily servant of Christ? Are you a weekend, get your best clothes on, come to a certain parking lot Christian? I'm fussing because I didn't last week and I promised myself I wouldn't on Easter.

I'm rejoicing in my sufferings and filling up what is lacking in Christ's suffering. Holy moly, is that a tough phrase? Filling up what is lacking in Christ's suffering. I would say to you first, the word filling up is a Gnostic phrase.

Is Paul using one of their words in an unusual gotcha? He might be, but see, I don't know enough about Gnosticism and its normal vocabulary even though we have 2nd century Gnostic writings. I'm not sure. See, this sounds so strange in English.

How can our suffering fill up something about Christ's suffering? Is Christ's suffering lacking in any sense? That's the question. Is there anything left out of the cross? That's the question. Now, there have been several theories.

I want to run through 6 of them. Just the phrase. Your chicken will not burn.

Here are the theories. 1. Christ's atonement was not sufficient without the church. Now, this is Roman Catholicism's merits of the saints.

2. Believers, as the church, share Christ's suffering. Not vicariously, not for redemption, but by doing the Father's will in a fallen world. 3. Christ suffers with believers.

Now, that might... Remember when Jesus spoke to Paul on the road to Damascus and said, why are you persecuting me? Now, Paul was not persecuting Jesus per se. He was persecuting the followers of Jesus and Jesus took it personally. That's why Jesus can say, if you give a cup of water in my name, you give it to me.

You catch how he identifies with his followers? So maybe that's the sense. Christ suffers with believers. 4. Suffering is needed for maturity.

Now, that's the Hebrews 5.8. Jesus was perfected by the things that he suffered. So is it possible to be Christ-like without suffering? And I would say no. Number six.

Excuse me, number five. We must fulfill the birth pains of the new age, Mark 13.8. The Jewish concept was, a new age is coming, but it will not come without terrible cost. Now, for me, this is the one I think is probably true, that we participate in the birth pains of the new age.

It's not going to be all... People say, I want to be alive when the second coming happens. You don't know your New Testament very well. I guarantee you, you do not want to be alive when the second coming occurs.

And finally, Paul is refuting a Gnostic catchphrase. Brothers, I don't know what to do with this. I mean, you look at the commentaries through the history of the church, nobody knows what to do with this.

This is one of those you pay your nickel, you take your choice, and then you get over it. I think Jesus' suffering is sufficient. Amen? However I participate in that is a bonus to me, but not necessary for salvation or the will of God to come.

But I'm caught up in a fallen world, and I'm going to reap the consequences as well as the benefits one day. So you have to just kind of see if you buy that. It's always been interesting to me... Now the word church is in italics, which means it's not in the Greek text, but it's assumed here.

It's interesting to me that the word church in the parallel book of Ephesians is always universal because Ephesians is a cyclical letter. But the word church is always local in Colossians because Colossians is written to an individual church in a certain valley in what we would call Turkey. So it's a different way.

Of course, the reason I think that the church chose this word, they were called the Way, capital W, the Way, emphasizing a new way to life. But they came to be called the church. Now it's interesting.

This word is used in Acts for simply a town meeting, the gathering of a town meeting. So it had a secular usage. And I've said to you before, these are Hebrew thinkers writing street Greek.

So the way to find out what these words mean is not to go to a Greek dictionary, but to see how the word is used in the Septuagint. In this recurrent phrase, the congregation of Israel, the assembly of Israel, throughout the Old Testament, the Hebrew word kahal, congregation, is translated by this Greek word ekklesia, the called out ones. I would say to you, whatever the implication of that is, Paul, Peter, James, John saw themselves not as something separate or schismatic or different or brand new.

They saw themselves as the real, true fulfillment of the Old Testament people of God. They are the fulfillment of all that God promised, going back to Abraham. I was made a minister.

Where did that happen? The road to Damascus. Did Paul have to participate? No, he could have stayed blind in the road. Sure, he had to participate.

Had to get up and go to Ananias' house. Had to let himself be baptized by Ananias. Had to listen to Ananias.

Yes, he was made a minister. And I want to say again, Paul became a wonderful example of a servant minister. He could have held authority over these churches, but he said, I'm an apostle, but pray with me, grieve with me, think with me.

Servant leadership. According to the stewardship of God that I might fully carry out the preaching of the word of God. The mystery.

I wish I had time to do mystery. We get the English word mystery from this Greek word. When I see Paul, I'm going to hug him and then I'm going to slap him because my mind just thinks in Pauline categories, but he uses words in different senses in different places.

You're going, Paul, once you use a word, you should kind of keep the same definition. He does not. And mysterion is one of those words he does.

I think there are at least 11 different definitions of the word mystery. Now, in this context, because of being parallel with Ephesians, I'm assuming, and most of these kind of fit the same category, the mystery hidden from the ages, but now revealed, and by the way, hidden from all the ages, another Gnostic catchphrase. They're thinking they got secret knowledge.

John, our group will tell you the truth. We got the only real. I used to get tickled to death.

I forgot who it was. I think it was Garner Ted Armstrong. I've got the real Greek.

What have I got, chopped liver? I get a little nervous about full gospel. What do I preach, a third of gospel? Okay, okay. I lost myself.

I got so excited. The word mystery seems to mean that God's love for all people, somewhat obscured by the two covenants, has now been fully revealed. This is back to Ephesians 2, 11 through 3, 13.

The dividing wall has been removed. There's no more Jew. There's no more Greek.

There's no more male. There's no more female. There's no more slave.

There's no more free. There's no more rich. There's no more poor.

There's no more educated. There's no more uneducated. We are all one in Jesus Christ.

That's the mystery hidden from the ages, but now true, now fully revealed in the gospel, but now manifested clearly, once and for all, manifested to the saints, preaching of the gospel. I've said it before, but it penetrates me. You, you know more about the eternal plan of God, more about the characteristics of God than any Old Testament person.

You have fully seen what they long to see. You have experienced what they long to have experienced, and the question remains, what are you doing with that kind of knowledge and experience? It's been clearly manifested to the saints. By the way, saints, always plural, except once in Philipians, greet every saint.

We are a family, not an individual. That's what American Christianity is so skewed because we've overemphasized based on American individuality and totally missed the corporate, body, family nature of the kingdom of God and the gospel. We are in this for each other, not for ourselves or our family.

We serve each other, not our own personal interest. The riches of his glory. I wish I could tell you the number of times, I would if I could, I got them right here, that Paul uses the word riches to describe the gospel.

Man, I just want to read the list to you almost. I hope you'll get a concordance when you get home. Get a study Bible and look at the number of times in Colossians and Ephesians that he calls the gospel the riches of his glory, the riches.

I hope the gospel is that to you, the riches of his glory. We don't have the riches of the world, but we have the riches of the cosmos. We have the riches of eternity.

We don't need streets of gold. We got the embodied truth. I don't want heaven to be a fancy Hilton hotel.

I want heaven to be with him. Now, this little Christ in you, the hope of glory, this preposition, there are many educated people out here in Koine Greek, I understand that. This preposition, as you know, can mean several things.

It has traditionally been translated Christ in you, emphasized the indwelling aspect of the Holy Spirit. Christ in you, the hope of glory. But it is real possible from this context that it should be among you, meaning the mystery, that which is preached, the word of God, the riches of his glory, are yours in the preaching of the gospel.

Because it is somewhat strange for us to say an indwelling Christ. Usually we talk about an indwelling spirit. But John 14, 23 says, the Father, the Son, and the Spirit all indwell us.

It's a powerful text that God is always with us and for us. Just a few more minutes, then the chicken will be ready. Look at verse 27.

We come back to the riches of his glory, of this mystery among the Gentiles. I've made a little note here, and I want to just read it quickly to you. God has always had a plan to unite Jews and Gentiles in salvation.

That's the Ephesians 2 passage. And I've tried to go back and do this in such a way as to highlight that assumption. Number one, I've said to you many times over the last year and a half that Genesis 3, 15, the promise of a Savior through the seed of the woman has nothing to do with Jews.

Because there are no Jews until the call of Abraham and his family in 12. This is a promise to humans made in the image of God. Even in the call of Abraham in Genesis 12, in verse 3, it says, all the families of the earth shall be blessed through you.

It's even universal in the call of Abraham. When Israel stood before Mount Sinai, the receiving of the law in Exodus 20, in Exodus 19, 5 and 6, when they are called a special people, a peculiar people, a kingdom of priests, that wonderful text there, it says, because all the world is mine. The very moment of the giving of the Ten Commandments, God's eyes were on the world.

In Solomon's temple, as Solomon bows down and prays Yahweh for a temple, Solomon knows that this temple is a place for all the world. Why do you think Jesus was so mad when they had put stores and shops and selling in the court of the Gentiles? That wasn't supposed to be the supermarket. That was to be the place for the world to come to God.

It's always been universal. He has always had the whole world on his heart. And just going through the book of Isaiah, and there's some chapters in Isaiah that make me want to just shout.

If Isaiah hadn't have said for the nations over and over, I don't know if there ever been an apostle of the Gentiles. There's always been the heart of God on lost humanity. The gospel is for lost humanity.

Lost humanity. The hope of glory. And we proclaim Him.

Look at verse 28. I get so upset with the fights in Christianity over, did you dot that I? Did you cross that T? How did you parse that verb? How do you pronounce that word? Yuck! There's something bigger than what divides us in our understanding of doctrine, and that is a personal relationship with Him who called us out of darkness into light. I do want to understand the Bible.

I do want to have truth. I do want to correctly interpret. But when I stand before God, I pray I don't get a theological test, even a true false one, much less a fill-in-the-blank one.

No, no, no. The whole deal is not you got it right because all of us get it wrong. The point is I introduced you to my dad because you trusted me.

I presented you because you have faith in me. The key is not our creeds, our theology, our denomination, our personal experiences. It's Him.

It's Him. We proclaim Him. Admonishing every man.

Would you look at verse 28? Is the word, the phrase every man in verse 28 three times? Every man, every man, every man. Yeehaw! With all wisdom. We're back to that Gnostic deal.

That we may present every man complete. Now this is another Gnostic catchphrase. This is that word used for the angelic eons between a high God and a lesser God that can form matter.

Paul is playing on Gnostic words that you and I do not know they're Gnostic words or how they're used. That's why some of this English just doesn't flow as well for us. Complete.

Fully equipped for the assigned task. That's the way we would define the Greek word. But I think here there's something of the Gnostic claim for fullness and the Gospel's claim for fullness.

We don't need more information. We need a deeper personal relationship. Maybe let's do it aside real quick.

I don't know what time it is. It bothers me when Baptists run to this conference and that conference and this experience and that experience looking for deeper. You get in the Gospel.

You start sharing your faith. You start praying and repenting. You start loving and giving.

You start intentionality of daily Christ-likeness. There ain't nothing deeper. We don't need to go anywhere for deeper except in Him.

What is the matter with us? Join every new fad. Join every new group. Buy every new book.

This is the book that you can find deeper in. Quit reading about the Bible and start reading the Bible. It will amaze you.

I'm over it. One verse left. I labor, striving, struggling.

Paul characterized his ministry by what we would say is the Greek word agony. Now it can be an athletic contest or it can be a military contest. I guess what I've got to say to myself is, Bob, I'm going to drive to work today.

I've got a few appointments. I'm going to study this. I'm going to go here.

Do I recognize that every day is an eternal opportunity? Do I recognize that every day has eternal consequences? Do I recognize that I am a light in a fallen world? Do I recognize that I am the hands and feet and voice of Jesus? Have I got it? Is the intentionality there of availability moment by moment, day by day, not on Sunday? Do we struggle with the good news and how it applies to our life every day in every relationship? I think we do not. The way I've normally put this, and when I say it, it just embarrasses me, but Peggy said if you think it, you say it. Well, there's truth in that.

We have turned the line of the tribe of Judah into a toothless Baptist lapdog. And if you come sit, and you give a few bucks, and you don't bite anybody, everything's fine. I assure you, we need to turn the line of the tribe of Judah loose in our daily life, in our priority structure.

We need to quit talking about Christlikeness, start living Christlikeness. Then we'll add some chairs to this auditorium. I would like to pray, but God, I just don't think I can.

I just do not know what to do, Lord. I just do not know what to do. It seems so clear to me.

I do not know why it seems so foggy to so many in our day who claim to know you. God, have mercy on us, please, in the midst of our saved but selfish Christianity. I just pray whatever it takes to blow the doors off of our thought process to make us hungry for you, to make us available to you.

I don't know. What do I do, Lord? What do I do? What do I do? I do not know how to communicate it. But the truth is, unless you communicate it, unless your spirit is active, unless there is an aha moment, I don't think it's going to work anyway.

I guess I do pray for radical Christians. I'm just sick of judgmental Sunday-only Christians. Lord, help us be servant leaders.

Help us be intentional, daily, Christ-like Christians. God, forgive us for the barriers between us, the things that divide us, the arguments that take all of our time and energy and money. I know we're going to stand before you one day and I'm afraid you're not real happy with American and Western Christianity.

The world is on fire with revival and we are lost in big, empty buildings. God, have mercy on us. In Jesus' name, amen.

I don't know what the Spirit has said to you. We always provide an invitation because we think it's the thing to do. Because if He's spoken to you, it's time for you to do something.

Please don't do it for me. Please don't do it for Lakeside. If God has spoken to you, you need to respond.

You need to say, I'm available. I'm nervous, but I'm available. You need to say, Lord, where do you want me? These are truths that must be dealt with before real joy, peace, power can come.

I pray you would let the Spirit of God speak to all of us as we attempt to make ourselves available. Let's stand together in hymn.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/22/SID22525.mp3>

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