

Him We Preach

by Chip Brogden

Chip Brogden emphasizes the importance of preaching Christ and spiritual maturity in the life of believers.

Topics: "Christ Centered", "Spiritual Maturity"

Description

Chip Brogden preaches about the importance of focusing on preaching Christ rather than establishing a new religion or doctrine. He emphasizes the need to warn and teach every person in all wisdom, aiming to present every individual as spiritually mature in Christ Jesus. Brogden highlights the significance of laboring and striving according to the working of Christ within us, rather than relying solely on our own willpower, to fulfill God's purpose of bringing all people into a deep relationship with Jesus.

Transcript

"Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. To this end I labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily" (Colossians 1:28,29).

Paul is writing to the Colossian Christians. He is writing to brothers and sisters in Christ whom he has never met face-to-face, and he is writing to them from jail. What will he say? How does he introduce himself? What we have in the first chapter of Colossians is very little about Paul himself. Instead, Paul takes the opportunity to introduce Another - or rather, to re-introduce Him. For we have here, in this first chapter of Colossians, that great revelation of Christ and God's Purpose: "That in all things [Christ] may have the preeminence" (Colossians 1:18b). Everything about this first chapter of Colossians is designed to take us deeply into Christ, and these depths are so deep that it takes your breath away. This is Paul's introduction, and what an introduction it is!

So when we come to the end of this first chapter, down to verses 28 and 29, we gain some insight into Paul's purpose. What drives him? What is his intention? What is he called to do? And I think we can take this one verse in particular, verse 28, and apply it to the whole reason for creating "The School of Christ," and for having the ministry of Watchman.Net, because our purpose is exactly the same as Paul's. I am amazed at how much I have in common with brother Paul, and if I believed in reincarnation, I might think that I was Paul in a previous life! I don't really believe that, of course, but I am trying to convey just how close we are; it is as if we are hand in hand working towards this singular purpose.

And what exactly is this purpose? After giving us this magnificent vision of Christ in all His glory, in all His preeminence, in verse 28 Paul finally tells us something about what he is doing: "Him we preach." HIM we preach. HIM we preach. Who? Christ. This glorious Christ Jesus of Whom he has been speaking.

Now we might pause and consider the significance of those three words. Paul, you see, was not preaching some new religion he invented as an alternative to Judaism. Perhaps you have seen those history programs on television? I watched one the other day on the origins of Christianity. The producers interviewed these professors of religion and history, those "egg-heads" and intellectuals who are supposed to be experts. Do you know what they were saying? They were saying that Paul traveled all over the Roman Empire in order to establish the Christian religion.

Well, that sounds correct. I suppose most people simply accept that and move right along. But folks, Paul did no such thing. I may not have any theological training or seminary degrees but I tell you that Paul did not go around trying to establish the Christian religion, and he did not go about preaching the "institutes of Christian faith and doctrine." What was he doing? Verse 28 tells us precisely what he was doing: "Him we preach." HIM. HIM. HIM! Do you see that? Do you get it? Not a doctrine, or a religion, or a catechism, but a Person, an exceedingly great and precious Person, this Preeminent Christ. That, friends, is far greater than any mere religious doo-dad! Paul was not occupied with Christianity per se, and he would have nothing in common with the Churchianity we are all so familiar with; he was forever and always occupied with CHRIST. "Him we preach."

Do you know that Paul did not plant churches? I know everyone today is interested in church planting, and they believe the primary purpose of an apostle is to plant churches. I disagree with that premise because I do not see it in the Scriptures. Who planted the church in Antioch? Read the last half of Acts 11 and see for yourself. I say that there is only One Church, and Jesus is building it. That wonderful church in Antioch came into being because a handful of nameless believers left Jerusalem and decided that instead of preaching Jesus to the Jews only, they would preach Jesus to the Gentiles. Just see the progression of it, beginning with Acts 11:19. Then look at verse 20. What were they doing? "Preaching the Lord Jesus." They did not go to Antioch to teach them how to have a house church. They preached the Lord Jesus. HIM WE PREACH! In verse 21 we find that a great number of them believed. By the time we get down to verse 26 we find that the believers were now called disciples, and the whole lot of them were referred to as "the church." And it was there in Antioch that they were first called Christians.

Do you see the key here? Do you see the principle? You know, the Church of Antioch was not the result of some great church planting effort sponsored by the Church of Jerusalem. It came about because someone went and preached Jesus. HIM WE PREACH. That is the point. Do you see it? That is the key. If you want a "New Testament pattern" there you have it. It has nothing to do with where you meet, how often you meet, or what you do when you meet; it has to do with Whom you preach.

Now we can trace Paul's progress from the time he met the Lord Jesus on the road to Damascus all the way to the end of his life. We can chart it from beginning, to middle, to end and find a straight line from which he never deviates. He says, "Him we preach." Where did it start? Acts 9:20 says that after Jesus revealed Himself to Paul, "Immediately [Paul] preached Jesus Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God." Immediately! Whom did he preach? Jesus Christ.

Go forward a few years and take his temperature again. How does that wonderful book of Acts conclude? Paul is in custody now, under house arrest. "Then Paul dwelt two whole years in his own rented house,

and received all who came to him, preaching the Kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no one forbidding him" (Acts 28:30,31). He is still preaching and teaching Jesus. He has not wavered or changed one iota from the path he started.

Now go all the way to the end of his life. Before Caesar cut off his head, Paul said, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith" (II Timothy 4:7). What a powerful testimony! You see how the line is carried all the way through. He preached Jesus from the beginning right through to the end.

We have taken "church planting" as a goal, or a means to a goal, when the goal is not "church planting" at all. What were they really doing? Not planting churches, but planting Christ - sowing the Word, the Living Word, so that He will find some good ground to build His Church upon. Those who believed were called disciples, and together they are referred to as the Church. That is the right order of things. Christ must have the preeminence: the first, the full, and the final place, and when He has that kind of position then we will see disciples made and ekklesias come forth spontaneously.

In addition to the Scriptures we have already referenced, consider the following:

"Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36).

"Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole" (Acts 4:10).

"And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ" (Acts 5:42).

"Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them" (Acts 8:5).

"Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus" (Acts 8:35).

"[Paul] preached unto them Jesus, and the resurrection" (Acts 17:18b).

"And when Silas and Timotheus were come from Macedonia, Paul was pressed in the spirit, and testified to the Jews that Jesus was Christ" (Acts 18:5).

"And when they had appointed him a day, there came many to [Paul] into his lodging; to whom he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets, from morning till evening" (Acts 28:23).

"From Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ" (Romans 15:19b).

"We preach Christ crucified" (I Corinthians 1:23a).

"I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified" (I Corinthians 2:2).

"For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord" (II Corinthians 4:5a).

"O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?" (Galatians 3:1).

"But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (Galatians 6:14).

"Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ" (Ephesians 3:8).

"What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice" (Philippians 1:18).

"As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him" (Colossians 2:6).

So Paul tells us the secret of his success and the key to the whole New Testament - for that matter, the key to the whole Bible and the Key to Everything. After presenting us with this glorious unveiling of Christ, Paul does not say, "This is WHAT we preach," but "This is WHOM we preach." Christianity as an institution has long been occupied with things: churches, clergy, teachings, doctrines, religious things. The "house church movement" is similarly engrossed in the dynamics of how to meet, where to meet, and what to do when meeting. The "charismatic movement" is obsessed with alleged manifestations and spiritual gifts. The "prophetic movement" is absorbed with what they think God is saying, doing, or about to do. Paul was preoccupied with a Person, and the difference between what we preach today and Whom he preached then explains how and why he was part of a small remnant of people who were able to turn the world upside down without the aid of the Internet, television programs, or international conferences and meetings.

When people touch Christianity today they are mostly touching a religious way of thinking or living or acting or talking - not Biblical Christianity, but mere Churchianity. They are touching external things such as where, when, and how church services are to be conducted, things such as which nuance of church doctrine is correct, and so on. But seldom do they touch a real Person, and seldom are we able to get at the Person Who stands above and beyond all these other things. Compared to Him it is all so much minutia, all so very petty. Well, all I can say is Paul did not get lost in minutia. Once he caught sight of Christ he never let go of Him.

So Paul preached Christ. "Him we preach." Now, he had a certain way of going about it. Let's keep reading Colossians 1, verse 28: "Him we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom." I see so much in so few words! There are two dynamics here. Warning every man and teaching every man. Warning and teaching. Here we see the ministry of a watchman. I would say, friends, that we need both the warning and the teaching. Warning, I believe, represents the prophetic ministry. That's not all there is to the prophetic ministry, but it is a major aspect of it. And of course, teaching. Prophets and teachers working together. Going back to the church in Antioch, you see prophets and teachers gathered together in Acts 13:1, ministering to the Lord. Now most of the time, prophets and teachers are in conflict. Prophets tend to rely on inspiration and revelation, while teachers tend to rely on searching out and studying the Scriptures. Very rarely do you see the two functions coming together in a single person, but when they do it is extraordinarily powerful. Paul was that kind of person. He had incredible prophetic insight and revelation, and he also had the ability to translate what he was seeing and teach it to others. We desperately need the prophetic gifts and the teaching gifts working together in one accord.

Let us keep reading verse 28: "Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom." In ALL wisdom. You know, a little bit of knowledge is a dangerous thing. Every denomination is based on a little bit of knowledge taken to an extreme, and before long that specialty becomes the thing they stand for. Free Will, Pentecostal, African Methodist Episcopal, Baptist, Holiness, Apostolic, Prophetic, Reformed, Charismatic, House Church, all of them stand for a particular "thing" and make that "thing" their distinctive. We even have denominations for different races. I spent over half my life in a denomination, and since leaving that denomination I have traveled about and seen a number of groups, some of which I would call cults (although they would not call themselves cults). There is very little difference between a cult and a denomination, the only real difference being that the first group is demonized and the second group is Christianized. You can find fault with that if you like, but my point is that it is all based on a little bit of knowledge, a little germ of truth, but it does not represent "all wisdom."

There are only two sources of wisdom: the Scriptures and the Holy Spirit, and both these are always pointing us to Christ, "in Whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Colossians 2:3). We need a good working knowledge of the Scriptures and a good working relationship with the Spirit in order to say we are truly speaking with all wisdom. The Scriptures are the objective standard by which all our subjective revelations may be measured. Let me explain what I mean. If you come to me and say, "God told me thus and so," how do I know whether to believe you or not? What if I come to you and say the same thing? You should not just take my word for it. We cannot trust ourselves. We need something outside of ourselves by which we can judge and test all things. This is what we have in the Scriptures. I can take the Scriptures and weigh what you are saying, and you can do the same thing with me. If it lines up with the Scriptures then we can accept it, but if it does not, then we can reject it. That is what it means to exercise good, sound spiritual discernment.

Or look at it the other way. Take the Scriptures without the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Just use your mind and try to figure it all out. What will be the result? Error and deception. Just see what a man like Joseph Smith or a woman like Mary Baker-Eddy can do by taking one or two passages out of context! They did not know how to rightly divide the Scriptures, and they did not submit themselves to the authority of the Holy Spirit, the One Who interprets the Scriptures for us. To take the Scriptures and try to study them the same way you would study math or history or social studies is a grave mistake. Give a Bible to someone who does not have the Spirit of God for a teacher and you end up with either a Pharisee or a false prophet. Jesus pointed out that even though the Pharisees searched the Scriptures they failed to recognize Him, refused to come to Him, and eventually got rid of him - all the while clinging to their carnal understanding of the Law, and quoting Scripture the whole time! Why, even the devil can quote Scripture, just as he did in the temptation of Christ.

What am I getting at? I am saying that the Holy Spirit confirms the truth revealed within the Scriptures, and the Scriptures confirm the truth that is revealed by the Spirit (or, disproves what is purported to be the Spirit when it is not the Spirit). We need both, and this is what I see in that one key phrase: "in all wisdom." And if you notice again, the prophetic ministry relies heavily on the Spirit, while the teaching ministry relies heavily on the Scriptures. When they are working together you have harmony and balance. So Paul preached Christ, he brought warning as well as teaching, and he used "all wisdom", both the Spirit and the Scriptures, to accomplish the mission.

We come to the end of verse 28, a very rich verse indeed, but there is more. Every word is priceless. We are about to discover the reason behind all this. Whenever we see the word "that" in Scripture we should listen carefully because we are about to be told the "why", the reason, the purpose behind what was just

stated. Now Paul writes, "Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom." Why do you do it, Paul? What makes you tick? What motivates you? What are you driving at? What is the point? What is the goal? "That we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus."

Now when we see the word "perfect" here, let us understand that the sense of the word does not mean sinless perfection, but rather, spiritual maturity. Perfection, according to Paul, is spiritual adulthood. It is the full-knowledge of Christ. We will have more to say about that later today. But for now, recall that in I Corinthians 13:10-12, Paul talks about it. He says, "When that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away." He then talks about speaking, understanding, and thinking like a child until he became a man, and then he put the childish things away. And he talks about seeing through a glass darkly versus seeing face to face. What does it all mean? Spiritual maturity, coming to the full-knowledge of Christ. As children we only see in part; that is immaturity. Perfection is seeing face to face. That is intimacy. Seeing Who face to face? Seeing Christ - and I do not take that to mean seeing the Lord after I die. That has nothing to do with spiritual maturity, that is the natural direction of life. Paul declares that the light of the knowledge of the glory of God has shone in our hearts already, and can be seen in the face of Jesus Christ (II Corinthians 4:6). We are talking about seeing Christ in the Scriptures, seeing Christ in our hearts, seeing Christ in our circumstances, seeing Christ in our brothers and sisters, seeing Christ at work in the world around us. To see all things of Him, all things through Him, and all things to Him (cf. Romans 11:36) is spiritual perfection.

What an awesome goal! And if you are keeping count, you will see that three times now Paul has said, "Every man." He says we warn every man, we teach every man, and our goal is to present every man perfect in Christ. Every man! Is this hyperbole? Does Paul really think he can do it? Well, remember he is the one who tells us that every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord (cf. Philippians 2:10,11). He is the one who tells Timothy to pray "for all men... for God will have all men to be saved and to come to the full-knowledge of the Truth" (I Timothy 2:1-4ff). Either Paul is delusional or he is pursuing a worthy goal that is truly bigger than himself, bigger than just having a little ministry or planting a few churches here and there; something that is flowing right out of the heart of God Himself. He has "every man" in view (not just the Church), and no one is excluded, because God includes all men, and Paul cannot settle for less than what God intends. "He is the Savior of all men," Paul declares, "and especially those who believe" (I Timothy 4:10). This is the Savior Whom Paul preached. What an awesome thing this is, and awesome is too weak of a word to describe it. The very idea makes your head spin. It might even drive some to despair, the enormity of it.

Paul might have buckled under the pressure. He certainly grew weary. He certainly was misunderstood, rejected, and persecuted. He suffered so much. What kept him going? Verse 29 of Colossians 1 says, "To this end I labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily." He labors, and he strives. That's the way Paul was. Laboring and striving, even when he was laboring and striving for the wrong things, he was absolutely dedicated to the mission. But there is something more extraordinary at work in Paul, something more than sheer willpower or determination. I tell you willpower will only take you so far. Willpower is overrated. We need something else, something supernatural, something that does not rely upon my limited willpower. What was it? "I strive according to HIS WORKING which works in me mightily." It was not the strength of Paul, but the strength of Christ in Paul, and through this Christ, Paul said, "I can do all things" (Philippians 4:13). All things!

So Christ was working mightily in Paul in order to accomplish His Purpose. Did Paul succeed? Yes - but Paul did not see the fulfillment of that glorious mission. Paul was finished, but God's Purpose was not.

God's Purpose would continue on beyond Paul, down through the generations, and today the torch is being handed off to this generation, and when our time has passed, if the Lord tarries, we will hand the torch off to the next generation. How could Paul have imagined that we would be here today, nearly two thousand years later, discussing those letters of his, getting captivated by that same Christ Whom he preached?

And so we have taken this small passage of Scripture for our very own, because I believe it speaks to the exact purpose for which we have come together in this School of Christ. If someone asks, "What is your goal? What is your reason for living? Why this website, and why this School of Christ? What are you getting at?" My answer is this: we preach Christ, and we warn every man and teach every man with all wisdom, that we may bring every man into a perfect, complete, mature, and fully-developed relationship with Jesus Christ. To this end we will labor and strive according to His working which works in us mightily. Amen.

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