

Making the Most of Your Christian Service **Colossians 1:26-29**

Introduction:

1. Have you ever seen a person who works very hard, and there is lots of activity, but little gets accomplished? Have you ever heard the expression “working smart?”
2. Some people have a good heart, they are very sincere, and they work hard, but they simply don’t know how to work smart. The same is true in Christ’s work.
3. Once a person is saved, God’s desire is that we labor for His work. God has a job and mission that He wants accomplished on planet earth, and He accomplishes this mission through His children.
4. But there is such a need for us to “work smart” as we labor in God’s work. Too many believers serve the Lord and are sincere, but they lack understanding, and therefore they aren’t making the most of their Christian service.
5. Here in our text, the apostle Paul provides for us the answers as to how all believers can make the most of their Christian service. How can we “work smart” as we labor for the Lord?

First, you must understand the mystery. vs. 26

1. Let’s read verse 26. This sounds very important, does it not? “*Mystery*” means “something that was kept secret.” It was hidden by God. But God has **now** revealed it.
2. Paul is teaching that the basis of his entire ministry revolved around this revealed mystery. This mystery stands in contrast to a divine prophetic program that had been proclaimed from the beginning of time. Acts 3:19-21
3. The core of this prophetic program was the return of Jesus Christ to earth to establish His kingdom. It called for the conversion of Israel and their establishment as a source of divine blessing to all Gentile nations. Israel rejected the King and, therefore, the kingdom.
 - There was a divine interruption in this prophetic program by Christ making an unprophesied appearance from heaven to His enemy, Saul of Tarsus (Paul).
 - At this point, Christ began to reveal to Paul the mystery that had been kept secret.
4. Instead of God pouring out wrath on the world, God would dispense grace to a lost and rebellious world. This grace would not just be offered to Israel, but would be offered on an absolutely equal basis to every person in the world.
5. God would set aside Israel’s prophetic program temporarily and would begin forming something altogether new – the body of Christ.
6. Gentiles would no longer have to go through Israel for divine blessing and acceptance. They could go straight to God through Jesus Christ.
7. A failure to understand the difference between prophecy and the mystery results in false teaching and false doctrine. It causes people to mix law with grace

(legalism), or mix kingdom doctrine with church age doctrine (charismatic doctrine).

8. There is no way to work smart and labor effectively for the Lord if you don't understand the mystery revealed by God to Paul. It is so crucial!
1 Corinthians 4:16-17

Second, you must labor under the right mission. vs. 28

1. There are many great commissions throughout the Bible.
 - Israel had one in the Old Testament, the prophets had one during Israel's captivity, the disciples had one during Christ's earthly ministry, and Christ gave them five commissions after His resurrection. Paul received one from Christ.
2. So, we must make sure that we find the commission that applies directly to us today, the church, the body of Christ. If not, there is no way to "work smart."
3. Verse 28 summarizes very succinctly our mission today. Paul preached Christ. This was his main business (not tradition, religious rules, theological systems). Nobody preaches the gospel who doesn't preach Christ first and foremost.
1 Corinthians 1:17-18
4. How did Paul preach Christ? He preached Christ in a two-fold way:
 - "*Warning every man*" – He preached of a coming day of wrath and judgment against those who reject the gospel.
 - "*Teaching every man*" – He taught people how they could escape the coming judgment through Christ's work on the cross. He would then teach them how to live as believers in a wicked world system.
5. What was Paul's goal in all of this? "...*that we may present every man perfect...*"
 - The word "*perfect*" means "fully mature." Paul's mission was to get people saved, but then bring the saints to full maturity in Christ.
6. Notice that Paul was given an "*every man*" ministry and mission. Three times he uses this phrase in one verse. This is our mission today. 1 Timothy 2:4-6
7. We preach to every man the gospel of Christ according to the revelation of the mystery given to the apostle Paul. We don't preach the Old Testament law or the kingdom gospel. We preach the gospel of grace committed first to Paul, and now to us! Galatians 1:11-12

Third, you must be strengthened with all might. vs. 27, 29

1. What does the mystery mean to us on a very personal and practical level? It means that Christ takes up residence personally in the spirit of each true believer. We receive His very life.
2. Paul calls it "*the unsearchable riches of Christ*" (Ephesians 3:8), and a "*treasure in earthen vessels.*" 2 Corinthians 4:7
3. We are brought into an intimate union and oneness with Christ at the very moment of salvation, and this union insures our future glory. He is our hope of glory!

4. The entire foundation of Paul's work for God was Christ living in Him. vs. 29
5. Paul labored (to feel fatigue; to work hard) intensely in the Lord's work.
"Striving" means "struggling; competing for a prize."
6. But Paul labored according to Christ's working which was working in him mightily.
 - "Working" – the Greek word *energiah* which means "efficiency or energy"
 - "Mightily" – means "force; power"
7. So there was a divine energy, force, or power at work in Paul, and he was resting in Christ's power to work through him. Galatians 2:20
8. Paul was not laboring in his own fleshly effort, but was relying on the power of Christ at work within him.
 - So many times we serve the Lord according to **our** working, **our** power, and **our** strength. This is precisely why believers burn out and quit.
9. As we labor, it must be Christ in us, working in and through us. We must yield ourselves to Christ, and constantly acknowledge our need of Him and our desire for Him to live through us. If not, we aren't working smart!