

***GOD-HONORING MINISTRY MOTIVES***

Paul has taken a personal interest in this local church of Colossae, even though he had never been there, and the question we want to know is: What are his motives? What was he all about? What was he after?

In these verses, I personally think Paul chose to lay the cards flat on the table - to keep no secrets - to say very clearly what his motives were. He knew these people hadn't met him face to face before, so naturally, he wanted to explain his motives.

As he tells his motives, Paul outlines what a God-honoring minister and a God-honoring ministry actually is. He gives us a pattern. He gives a ministry philosophy. He helps us know what is God-honoring and what is not. As Paul explains his motives, I think we have a lesson to learn.

**GOD'S WORD TELLS US WHAT A GOD-HONORING MINISTRY IS.**

What is a God-honoring ministry? What does a God-honoring ministry look like? I see 10 features of a God-honoring ministry.

**Feature #1 - A God-honoring minister is made a minister. 1:23, 25**

He is not self made; he is Christ made. He doesn't call himself; Christ calls him. It's not a job. It's not a career. It's a calling. It's something that God gifts a person for.

A minister is a servant - one who has a master, and executes the commands of his master. The word is used of someone who serves food and cleans tables - one who runs errands for his master - one who is an attendant. It's a lowly position - a servant of a someone greater. Paul was made a minister of the gospel and a minister of the church by Jesus - and it was the greatest honor of Paul's life. He served the King of kings and Lord of lords.

**Feature #2 - A God-honoring minister suffers for Christ and the body of Christ with joy. 1:24**

When Paul says this, it's as if he is saying, "do people really question my motives? Haven't they seen my suffering?"

Paul was the example of a God-honoring minister. No matter what he faced in trials and sufferings, he faced it with joy knowing his work was not in vain.

What does "filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions" mean? On the cross, Jesus suffered the wrath of God for our sins fully and completely, nothing was lacking in His suffering. He said Himself, "it is finished" (John 19:30). A believer in Jesus escapes the wrath of God for his sins (1 Thes. 5:9). A Christian does not face God's wrath for his sins. Jesus suffered God's wrath for us, but when we serve Him and end up facing persecutions, afflictions, pain, ridicule, and rejection on account of Him, we are experiencing the hatred this world has toward the God of grace - the God of love - toward Jesus Himself. Jesus took the beating of God against our sin on that cross for us, and in turn, we take the beatings of this world for Him.

**Feature #3 - A God-honoring minister responds to God's call to make fully known the Word of God. 1:25**

What is the primary calling of a true God-honoring minister of the church and minister of the gospel? To make the Word of God fully known. Paul said to the Ephesian elders, *for I did not shrink from declaring the whole council of God* (Acts 20:27).

This is the stewardship today of a pastor/teacher in a local church. A steward is a manager of a household. While the owner of the house away, the steward is left responsible to keep the house in order. How do

stewards manage God's household well (1 Tim. 3:15)? They respond to God's call to make fully known the Word of God - preach the Word (2 Tim 4:2). The Word of God is our nutrition for life, and the more we fully know it the better.

**Feature #4** - A God-honoring minister helps people understand a mysterious message of hope. **1:26-27**

These two verses are a special assignment given directly by God to Paul, and since then, every minister after Paul simply gets the joy of re-teaching a new generation what Paul got to teach first. For Paul to fully make known the word of God, he was given the assignment of announcing to the world through his writings and his missionary journeys various mysteries that God had never told the world before, and rather than go into a list of all the mysteries, let's focus on this one from Colossians 1.

What is the mystery revealed in Colossians 1? That Christ lives in His people - Christ in you. The mystery that was not known in the Old Testament is that the Messiah would live in his redeemed people that would mostly be made up of Gentiles instead of Jews. The Old Testament anticipated the day when the Messiah would live with His people, but the New Testament reveals that the Messiah lives in His people, and not just in Jews, but in Gentiles also. Paul got to be the messenger to the Gentile world.

You can read excitement in Paul's mind as he gets to write this down. He says to believers, Christ is in you - you are rich with his glory - and because He is in you - you have hope of glory. You can be confident that your future is glorious in heaven, because Christ is in you right now. If you have Christ, you have hope. If you have Christ, you have confidence - you have a glorious future.

And how does Christ enter into someone? Galatians 2:20 - By faith.

**Feature #5** - A God-honoring minister preaches a Person - The Lord Jesus Christ. **1:28**

Paul now changes the personal pronoun. No longer is it "I", it's "we". It wasn't just Paul, but every God-honoring minister proclaims Him. "There are many messengers preaching, but there's only one message to preach." The message is Jesus.

Warren Weirss wrote, "The false teachers exalted themselves and their great "spiritual" attainments. They preached a system of teaching, but Paul preached a Person. The gnostics preached philosophy and the empty traditions of men, but Paul proclaimed Jesus Christ. The false teachers had lists of rules and regulations, but Paul presented Christ. What a difference in ministries!"

What was Paul's motive? To Make much of Jesus - to make Him known - to make it all about Him - to preach Jesus. Today, anyone who is a God-honoring minister will have nothing but a pure motive to preach Christ.

**Feature #6** - A God-honoring minister warns everyone of coming judgement. **1:28**

In order to represent Jesus, you have to warn of coming judgment, because Jesus came to save the world from judgment. Warning means to put on someone's mind the truth of God. A minister is to warn unbelievers that if they do not come to God through faith in Jesus, they will go to hell. He is also to warn believers of the dangers of sin. God does not want saints to persist in sin.

A God-honoring minister is willing to tell the truth to people - to put on their minds the truth of the Word of God. He isn't afraid to tell it like it is.

**Feature #7** - A God-honoring minister teaches everyone with wisdom. (knowledge + application) **1:28**

He will warn with the negative truth of God, and at the same time, he will teach the positive things of God. Teaching means he explains with clarity the wonderful things of the Word of God. He explains who God is and what God has done.

He also tells the Christian how to live. When a God-honoring minister teaches the Word of God, he brings with it more than knowledge. He brings wisdom. He makes it practical. He explains things in a way that are helpful to people so they know what to do with it.

**Feature #8** - A God-honoring minister aims to bring everyone into maturity in the things of Christ. **1:28**

A minister of Christ is not content with people learning about salvation and coming to faith in Jesus. His aim is further than that. He wants everyone to grow up into maturity in the things of Christ. Paul's focus was to present everyone mature in Christ. That's why he took a personal interest in the Colossians. He wanted to help them grow to maturity - to have a solid foundation on true doctrine - to have an unwavering confidence in Christ, their hope of glory - to live a godly life through and through, not just on Sundays but every breath they take.

**Feature #9** - A God-honoring minister labors with agony to accomplish his task. **1:29**

God-honoring ministers are not lazy. They aren't in ministry to have it easy. They work hard. Toil means working to grow weary - exhausted. It's hard effort. Struggling has the idea of fighting for it. We get the English word agonize from this word in Greek. You have to keep at it with intensity. There's a spiritual war at play. The enemy is trying to distract and derail a minister, but he's got to fight to keep at it.

**Feature #10** - A God-honoring minister draws his strength from Christ. **1:29**

Paul essentially said, "if it was up to me, I'd fail, but it's Christ who energizes me." It's Christ who gives power. He is the one working in a minister. Charles Spurgeon often worked 18 hours a day. Famous explorer and missionary David Livingstone once asked him, "How do you manage to do two men's work in a single day?" Spurgeon replied, "You have forgotten that there are two of us."

Our power to be effective for God comes from Christ, not our wit, our plans, our strategies, or our techniques. Effectiveness and power in ministry is a gift of God working in a faithful minister.

God's word tells us what a God-honoring ministry is, and today, we looked at 10 features of God-honoring ministry. Paul laid it all out, and I think Paul had pure motives.

Now I believe this list is not just for pastors, church planters, teachers, and vocational ministry people. I believe this list is a standard for every Christian within his or her own sphere of influence.

Within your own sphere of influence, does this list describe you? Are you the God-honoring minister in your family? With your friends? At your work? Among your community? As you go about your daily life?