

# “COUNSELING FOR PERFECTION”

## COLOSSIANS 1:28-29

Pastor Keith E. Gephart

### INTRODUCTION

- Paul focused on the main thing—person. **Paul’s one theme was Christ—Christ alone, first, last, and in the middle.** Yes, he preached the Christ who lived in them.
- Paul’s methods were compatible with his message. He worked hard at his teaching and counseling ministry. He tried to reach every person—far and wide and each individual. He used divine wisdom to be as effective as possible. And, His goal was lofty—nothing less than presenting each person **PERFECT/COMPLETE/FULLY MATURE** in Jesus Christ. Such persons Paul would one day present to His Savior at the Judgment Seat of Christ.
- What an awesome task! Who was sufficient for such a ministry? Not Paul, not anyone. However, Paul was able to accomplish this task only according to the divine power that effectively worked in him—the power of the indwelling Christ who is the object of Paul’s proclamation.

### BEREAN BAPTIST CHURCH MUST PROCLAIM CHRIST AND COUNSEL FOR PERFECTION—TO PRESENT HIM TROPHIES OF GRACE.

#### I. THE MESSAGE OF PROCLAMATION (28a)

##### A. The Person of the Proclamation.

- At the deepest level, therefore, the apostle conceived of his message not as a system or as a collection of rules and regulations, but **as a living and glorious Person who is the fulfillment of the deepest hopes of mankind and the source of new life for all is people”.**

##### B. The Importance of the Proclamation. An official proclamation with some solemnity and with authority.

#### II. THE METHODS OF MINISTRY (28b; 29a)—The two following verbs show the **manner** of the proclamation.

##### A. Work and Striving (29a)

1. Hard work to the point of exhaustion: Acts 20:35; Phil. 2:16; Rom. 16:6, 12; I Tim. 5:17; **I Tim. 4:10**

2. Striving like an athlete—agonizing. From the noun *agon* meaning “contest” as in 2:1.

- See I Cor. 9:25; II Tim. 4:7. Col. 4:12 evidences the hard labors of Epaphras.
- Any minister who “is worth his salt” will strive in this way, and will work as hard as he can in order to enable Christians under their watch-care to attain such maturity in Christ.
- Paul’s labors included striving in prayer **careful planning, letter-writing, giving direction to the missionary program—even from prison, bidding defiance to Satan, official gospel-proclamation (whenever possible), personal witness-bearing, and living an exemplary Christian life even in the midst of great pressure and affliction, and dealing with opponents**

##### B. Admonition (28b)

This verb has the meaning “admonish, warn, instruct”. The verb in its NT usage indicates that one is attempting to warn someone about some wrong attitude or activity or else to correct him.

- Acts 20:31; Rom. 15:14; **Col. 3:16**; I Cor. 10:11; Eph. 6:4.

Jay Adams has built his entire counseling ministry around the principles found in the use of this word group, and calls the counseling method he endorses “nouthetic counseling.” In his classic text Competent to Counsel, written in 1970 he lays down three primary principles of biblical counseling that may be gleaned from the use of this word (pp44ff):

- a) A problem exists or an obstacle to be overcome concerning which the person doing the admonition needs to help effect personality and behavioral change.
- b) The admonition is through word of mouth, not discipline. It is applied in order to help the person lay it to heart.
- c) The goal is the spiritual benefit of the counselee—I Cor. 4:14; Eph. 6:4; II Thes. 3:15; in the latter passage, even the disobedient believer is to be treated as a brother. Adams adds discussion of II Tim. 3:16 and II Tim. 4:2.

In addition, at times the counsellor is expected to even become emotionally involved with the counselee as we can see in Acts 20:31 with the “tears” shed by Paul in his admonitions to the Ephesian believers.

- C. Instruction: The admonition deals with practice, and the teaching with doctrine—concerned for all men.
  - The two primary functions of “admonishing” and “teaching” are interconnected; there was no wide gulf between Paul’s *admonishing* and his *teaching*.
  - Paul knew nothing of “abstract doctrine” that had no practical application, nor of Christian ethical behavior that was “suspended in mid-air” with no connection to sound teaching. Instead, “teaching was done with a view to admonishing” and “admonishing was rooted in teaching.”
- D. Application—every man, **3 times—very emphatic!**
  1. Universal application—for all persons, regardless.
  2. Individual application—for each person.
- E. Assimilation—“all wisdom”; the character of the teaching is as free from restriction.
  1. The **wisdom** of course has to do with the appropriate application to life of Biblical truth and training—practical application. Wisdom is gained through the study of Scripture and with the empowerment and enabling of the indwelling Holy Spirit.
  2. Col. 3:16 clarifies this point by the use of the same two verbs “**teaching and admonishing**” along with “all wisdom” and joins all with the indwelling of “the Word of Christ”—in a passage that is parallel with Eph. 5:18 where the indwelling is of the Holy Spirit.
  3. “Christ crucified” is the theme of each message, yet the application of the argument varies. “The truth, though old, is ever new.”

### III. THE MOTIVE OF MINISTRY (29a)

- A. Perfection—the one and only object of the gospel; full salvation and nothing short of it.
  1. The Scope of it: “full grown, mature, complete.”
    - The idea of “blamelessness” may be a better idea of the term. When a believer has such “wholehearted devotion” to God, he may be said to be blameless—and thus “perfect.”
    - Nothing short of this will satisfy the Father’s purpose, the Son’s work of redemption, and the Spirit’s sanctification work.
    - **Paul was not only interested in rescuing souls from hell; he wanted to bring each man to blamelessness or “perfection.”** No sin excused, no weakness catered to.
  2. The sphere of it—“In Christ”; fully **imputed** now; completely **imparted** then.
- B. Presentation
  1. Sometimes by the Father or by the Son; here by the apostle.
  2. Sanctification begins at salvation, continues throughout life, but is finalized at the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming.

### IV. THE MIGHT OF MINISTRY (29b)

- A. According to His **energizing work**; the preposition may express the instrument or else, the measure. Which is **continually working energetically**. Paul here stacks up words referring to power.
- B. The sphere is in Paul—the Christian worker.
- C. The degree is “**in power**.” See Phil. 2:13; I Cor. 15:10.

**Paul places a great emphasis upon the power and effective energy and working of God by the use of all three of these words in such close proximity.**

Paul here gives a good balance between his human effort and the divine enablement—cf. “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” We must never forget who really enables and accomplishes the work.

Paul’s sufficiency was of God (II Cor. 3:5-6).

### CONCLUSION

Here we see the magnificence of the theme, the simplicity of the purpose, the thoroughness of the method, and the empowerment of the life.

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