

FBC Service Sunday August 3, 2025, Colossians 1:23-29

Slide: 1 Introduction: Commissioned to Serve

Over the past few Sundays, we have heard how Paul thanked God for how the Colossians had received the Gospel and how he never stopped praying for them and their spiritual growth.

Then Paul, persecutor turned persecuted, the greatest intellect of his day to whom we owe most of the NT, reveals his commission by God to servant leadership in the Gospel and to the church.

Slide: 2 The Call to Servant Leadership - Colossians 1:23 and 25

Brothers and sisters, today we gather to reflect on a divine assignment— a sacred commission that calls each of us beyond comfort and into purpose.

In Colossians 1:25, the apostle Paul declares, *“I have become its servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness.”*

This verse is more than a personal testimony; it's an invitation to embrace a life of service that mirrors Christ Himself.

We live in a world that often associates leadership with power, prestige, and self-promotion.

But in God's kingdom, the greatest leaders **are not those** who seek to be served, but those who humble themselves to serve.

In a world chasing influence, Paul chooses the posture of a servant. **His leadership is not about rising above but kneeling below.**

Paul was not elevated because of his status—he was entrusted with a huge responsibility, a stewardship to preach the gospel and care for the spiritual well-being of others.

This calling wasn't glamorous—it was costly, challenging, and deeply transformational.

Today, we'll explore what it means to be **Commissioned to Serve**: how servant leadership redefines our role in the body of Christ, and how God's commission empowers us to lead with compassion, conviction, and sacrifice.

Let's open our hearts to the realism that leadership isn't about climbing ladders—**it's about carrying crosses.**

In the text before us the Apostle Paul reveals his principles of effective Christian Leadership.

They are principles that are the driving force in his life. But these principles are not just for pastors, deacons or committee members . . . **they're principles all of us should embrace.**

These are not principles you find in contemporary books on management. **They are uniquely Christian principles.** Paul shows us that,

Slide: 3 Effective Christian Leaders Are Willing to Pay the Price

He writes *"Now I rejoice in what was suffered for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of the church."* (1:24).

Paul rejoices in what *"was suffered for you."* What is he referring to here?

In earlier verses Paul refers to the sacrifice and afflictions of Christ for our sin.

But in this statement, he is now talking about his own.

Paul says there was a price to pay to lead. And what a costly price it was. **2 Corinthians 11.**

He was beaten and left for dead, shipwrecked, stoned, adrift at sea, danger from bandits, danger from false brothers, lack of sleep and food, and on top of this, the pressure and concern for all the churches.

All because of his boldness in the proclamation of the gospel.

This may not happen to churchgoers in our country very often, but it is happening in other countries. The world is becoming increasingly hostile to the Christian message. And as never before, we have seen people resorting to protest and violence to address their grievances.

Paul faced the subtle antagonism of non-believers. Here is something we are able to relate to. In our culture today every time you take a stand for Christ; you become a target.

If you take a leadership position; you become an even bigger target, with the woke brigade calling you a bigot and a racist.

When Paul recounts facing suffering from false brothers that really moved me. He was referring to devastating attacks that came **from not without** but within the church.

In Shakespeare's Julius Caesar, Caesar is killed by a group of assailants. **A famous line is "et tu Brutè?"** Caesar was stunned that Brutus, one he thought was a true friend, would turn on him and betray him.

Anyone who has served in the church for any length of time understands this feeling. Some of the most painful blows come from the ones we thought were our friends.

How refreshing it would be if everyone in the church applied God's commands to love, kindness and encouragement.

Paul identifies one other source of suffering in 2 Corinthians 11:28: *"I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches?"*

These moving words are an insightful glimpse into the emotional and spiritual weight of Christian leadership. This verse speaks volumes about the personal cost of ministry and the heart of a true shepherd.

"Concern" implies a deep, personal investment—not just managerial oversight.

One of the most painful aspects of Christian leadership is sharing the heartbreak of people's pain as you stand with them in moments of grief, relational breakdowns, and crises of faith, witnessing the heartache that precious loved ones are suffering.

There is a price to be paid to be an effective Christian leader.

Slide: 4 Effective Christian Leaders Have a Servant Mentality Colossians 1:25

Paul states *"I have become its (the church's) servant by the commission God gave me..."* Paul viewed himself not as a professional or an executive, **but a servant.**

His declaration in Colossians 1:25 is a powerful blueprint for believers today who are called to lead through service. He doesn't present himself as an elite figure, but as someone entrusted with a sacred task.

- His ministry was not self-centred—it was about building up others.
- He didn't boast of credentials or flash his resume—he fully embraced the identity of a servant.
- Servant leadership isn't confined to the pulpit—it's lived out in parking lots, nurseries, kitchens, and prayer rooms, and seen in small, faithful acts.
- It's showing up in moments of crisis.

This kind of leadership flips worldly ambition on its head. It challenges us to see influence not as something we wield, but as something we steward—for the good of others and the glory of God.

Jesus gave us an example of what this means. In the upper room when the disciples gathered with Jesus for the Passover meal. Before the meal we see the contrasting styles of leadership. The disciples were in a power struggle.

Peter and John debated who was most important. The disciples compared credentials, displayed their degrees, trumpeted their experience. **They sought to gain their position of importance.**

Jesus shows the disciples the nature of servant leadership. He humbles himself like a servant and washes the feet of the disciples. The disciples were aghast. This was not the way a leader was to behave.

Some leaders want to be in control with their fingers on every button.

That's why you see the rise of CEO Pastors in so many churches today. You see it when one person feels they have to be involved in every decision.

It's a desire to be in control. It makes them feel important.

Godly leaders need to remind themselves that the desire to be **"in control"** is a sure-fire way to bring division to a church body.

Jesus told them that He was giving them a model of the kind of leadership He desired: **servant leadership.** Mark 10:45 *The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many."*

Effective Christian leaders understand they are not the served but the servants.

When people in the world talk about leadership you hear words like:

Power

Influence

Leverage

They call such people the ones who "**make things happen**" or "**the movers and shakers**"

Jesus talks of leaders with words like,

Godliness

Compassion

Humility

Gentleness

Generosity

Patience

Service

Paul understands that he's a servant of God, a servant by the commission of God.

He also sees himself as a servant of the church. His job is not to build a kingdom to himself but to build God's kingdom.

And the apostle also understands that he's a servant of God's Word. His job was to proclaim the life transforming Gospel of Christ.

God's Word must dictate what we teach; not public opinion, contemporary events, personal preference. Scripture is not for us to use to prove our ideas and personal preferences. **We are here to proclaim God's ideas!**

Slide: 5 Effective Christian Leaders See the Big Picture Colossians 1:28

Paul writes, "*He is the one we proclaim, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ.*" Paul sees the big picture. He's not seeking to build organizations . . . **he's seeking to develop PEOPLE.**

Having the big picture changes the way we approach ministry,

We will be less concerned with programmes, more concerned with people

We will have more patience with those who are different from us

We will focus more on ministry and less on programming

We will keep Christ at the centre of everything.

Christian leadership that loses sight of Christ loses sight of the mission.

We see this in Paul's words. He understands that his goal is to reach people with the Gospel and then develop them in their Christian life.

Gordan MacDonald really paints a clear picture, "there are many things the world can do as well as the church (entertain, sing, counsel, draw crowds, build buildings) **but there is only one thing the church can do that the world cannot . . . we can extend the life changing grace of Christ.**

Slide: 6 Effective Christian Leaders Know the Source of Their Strength Colossians 1:29

Paul concludes this section with these words, *"That's why I strenuously contend and struggle so hard with all the energy Christ so powerfully works in me."* The word "**struggle**" is the word from which we get our word agonize.

All the energy that we can muster cannot equal what God can do through us, no matter how gifted or educated.

Allistar Begg said, "We must remember that the best of men are men at best."

There's a practical implication of this principle: we are effective only when we function in God's strength.

It's so easy to drive hard and forget to "fill the tank" by spending personal time with the Lord.

We need to take in as well as give out. Our strength is not in OUR ability but His.

Slide 7 Effective Christian Leaders Keep the Mission in Focus

Slide 8 Conclusion - Follow the Servant King

There are at least two different approaches to leadership.

The most common is the idea of leading by dictate and power.

The other, the example of Christ, is to lead by serving.

One emphasizes measurable results. The other emphasizes people.

Quote from "The Servant King" song.

So let us learn how to serve and in our lives enthrone Him

Each other's needs to prefer for it is Christ we're serving

Folks, I haven't told you anything you didn't already know today. But I do hope that Paul's words have once again helped you to see your role as servants.

And having seen, I pray you will embrace his teaching.

To those who serve here in so many ways, let me say: thank you. We really need you.

We need those who serve by example, those who see the big picture. We need those who stand on the Word of God. We thank God for you.

Never forget where our strength comes from. **Psalm 121**. Remember who we work for.

Is there someone in your sphere of influence with whom you can share their load?

Hold them up with your encouragement, involvement and enthusiasm?

Make a call, drop a note, share a meal.

It may seem like a little thing . . . but it's bigger than you think.

Slide 9 Final Reflection / Call to Action

Paul emphasizes that his ministry was a stewardship, a responsibility given to him by God.

The goal of his ministry was to fully carry out, or fulfill, the word of God, ensuring the gospel message was clearly and completely conveyed.

This is our goal also here at FBC, that as God's servants, we will with vision and determination earnestly contend for and defend the faith of Christ.

As His servants, nailing our colours to the mast – this is what we believe – here is where we stand!
Teaching and defending those things we regard as precious, whatever the cost.