

"To the Ends: I Have Many"
Pastor Wally Contreras
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"After this Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. And he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome. And he went to see them, and because he was of the same trade he stayed with them and worked, for they were tentmakers by trade. And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and tried to persuade Jews and Greeks. When Silas and Timothy arrived from Macedonia, Paul was occupied with the word, testifying to the Jews that the Christ was Jesus. And when they opposed and reviled him, he shook out his garments and said to them, "Your blood be on your own heads! I am innocent. From now on I will go to the Gentiles. And he left there and went to the house of a man named Titius Justus, a worshiper of God. His house was next door to the synagogue. Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed in the Lord, together with his entire household. And many of the Corinthians hearing Paul believed and were baptized. And the Lord said to Paul one night in a vision, "Do not be afraid, but go on speaking and do not be silent, for I am with you, and no one will attack you to harm you, for I have many in this city who are my people." And he stayed a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them." (Acts 18:1-11)

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Pastor Wally pointed out that Paul left Athens (Acts 17) and went to Corinth after declaring that the times of ignorance has passed ("The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead." (Acts 17:30-31)) What's the implication of this reality to my "Who's Your One"? Explain.

We see in Acts 13:5, Acts 13:14 and Acts 17:17 that Paul went to the synagogue "every Sabbath" to share the Gospel message with people – to reason with them. Why? Because that's what Jesus did time and time again. In fact, it was his "custom" to go to church ("So He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read" (Luke 4:16). We are warned in Hebrews 10:24-25 to "...consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near." There is a difference between the Jewish Sabbath and the Christian's Lord's Day. John MacArthur pointed out that "Jesus makes two miraculous post-resurrection appearances to the disciples, both of them on a Sunday; both of them on a Sunday. It is on a Sunday that they know He is alive from the dead. It is on a Sunday that they know the Old Testament is being fulfilled. It is on a Sunday that they know the Father has affirmed His redemptive work on the cross. It is on a Sunday that He pledges to them that they will receive the Holy Spirit to be empowered for ministry in the future...The resurrection was the dawning of a new day, and so the new covenant has a new day. The Sabbath is gone, and the new day has come, and it is the day of celebration of the work of

Christ.” It was also on a Sunday that the disciples received the Holy Spirit (Pentecost). In Revelation 1:9, John writing in 96 A.D. says that “[he] was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day”, not meaning “the day of the Lord”, but simply “the Lord’s day”. Is it truly possible to routinely assemble as God’s people “virtually” to worship Him? If so, how so? If not, why not?

Perhaps the most revealing verse is this: “When Silas and Timothy arrived from Macedonia, Paul was occupied with the word, testifying to the Jews that the Christ was Jesus” (18:5). He was occupied with the Word. In another version it says: “Paul was completely engrossed with preaching, earnestly arguing and testifying to the Jews that Jesus [is] the Christ.” He was constrained. He was pressed. Paul HAD to preach the Word. He simply HAD to, because it “occupied” him completely. How about me? Is it easier for me to quote things like song lyrics, batting averages, and movie dialogue than Scripture? Explain.

Am I being led on a day-to-day basis more by talk show hosts, the internet and the opinion of friends than the authority of the Bible? Am I “occupied with the Word”? If so, how so? If not, why not?

Jesus told Paul to not be afraid and to go on sharing the Gospel. C.H. Spurgeon, preaching on October 28, 1880, said: “Some are afraid to speak for Jesus because of the defects of their education. They fancy that, when educated persons are present, if they say anything for Christ they will make a mistake in grammar or mispronounce a word, and the very learned folks will discover their ignorance, and set them down for dunces... Has not pride been at the bottom of it? Should we not be willing to be called blunderers? We should endeavor to do our Lord’s work in the best possible manner, but if our education be deficient, and we cannot overcome early disadvantages, ought we therefore to hold back? Should we not be willing to save a soul anyhow? If we can declare the gospel in a masterly manner, by all means let us do it, but if we are slow of speech and uncouth in utterance let not these things silence us. Was not Moses slow of utterance? Was he silent? Did not Isaiah own that his lips were unfit to deliver the message? Was he therefore idle? If a man is learned and educated, let him reckon that his learning should help him to simplicity; and if he is not educated let him talk about Jesus Christ in his own way, with the words that come freshest from his own heart, and let him never be afraid.” What, if anything, hinders me in sharing the Gospel with others and why?

Spurgeon went on to speak of sharing my testimony to the “uneducated”: “I have known others fearful, on the other hand, because they have not gathered educated people to listen to them, but are surrounded by a rough lot, whose manners and habits distress them. Sensitive Christians have shrunk from speaking to such characters, for they said, “Ah, they will turn it all to ridicule, and we must not throw pearls before swine.” Brother, are you quite sure that you have any pearls and are you quite sure that the people are swine? I generally feel as if what I had to say was not so pearly that I need be alarmed about the swine treading on it; and, also, I have felt concerning my congregation that, as they have immortal souls, there is a somewhat about them which differences them from swine; and who am I to be so particular about the reception which men give to my words? Christ spoke even to those who refused him, and shall not I do the same?” And???

Pastor Wally asked that, if I’ve not led anyone to Jesus, how many times have I actually shared the Gospel message with others. Spurgeon went on to clarify: “Faith lives on the word, and then gives a voice to that word. A dumb [silent] faith is a questionable grace. Faith first speaks to Christ, and then speaks for Christ. It hears his voice, and then acts as an echo by repeating it. Why ought those that believe in Christ to speak for him? How are we to expect the gospel to be kept alive in the world if we do not hand it on to the next generation as the former generation handed it down to us. It is from one lip to another that the word of God is passed, with a kind of living flame which books are not likely to communicate. Oh, shall it ever be said a century hence, ‘The people of 1880 never thought of us of 1980? They let the gospel go: they allowed the doctrines to be denied one after the other, and here are we without it to perish in the darkness’?” What will the people of 2121 say about the Christians of 2021? Will we have “allowed the doctrines to be denied one after the other”? Explain.

Pastor Wally said that “sometimes we are given seasons of rest from the trials/struggles but they are not vacations from God’s calling”. For whatever reason, have I been on the beach too long being physically and/or spiritually absent from like-minded believers and need to get back in the game of “stir[ring] up one another to love and good works” within the church and “gospelizing” to those around me in general and to my “Who’s Your One” specifically? If so, why so? If not, why not?

Paul stayed in Corinth for a year and a half longer because Jesus had told him that there were “many in this city who are my people.” Am I still lifting up my “Who’s Your One” in prayer? Have I built a relationship with this person such that sharing the Gospel with her or him is possible? Am I “earnestly arguing and testifying to [my Who’s Your One] that Jesus [is] the Christ”? Explain.