

COLOSSIANS
Witnessing And The World
Colossians 4:5,6

INTRODUCTION

How can we be effective witnesses? How can we communicate Christ to a world that doesn't want to listen? How can we have an impact upon this world for Christ? How can we experience the power of Christ and be obedient to Christ and yet not have a judgmental attitude towards those who are not Christians? Colossians 4:5,6 goes a long way to answer many of these questions for us.

Last message we talked about prayer and the world. Today we talk about witnessing to the unbelieving world all around us. One thing the Bible teaches us is that all the early Christians were active witnesses for Christ, and they wanted to know how they could be more effective in their evangelistic witness.

WALKING IN WISDOM 4:5

Walking Wisely (5a): ***Be wise in the way you act towards outsiders;***

Literally this verse says, "Walk in wisdom towards those who are on the outside." Our walk is that way we behave; our conduct before men. Christians are to have discreet behavior towards unbelievers. They are to deal with non-Christians with tact. The early church was often slandered by outsiders. Christians were called atheists because they served no visible gods. They were charged with being unpatriotic because they would not burn incense to or worship the Emperor as God. They were dubbed as immoral because of persecution which forced them to meet behind closed doors. They were even called cannibals because they partook of the body and blood of Christ. Christians were slandered and had to live in an unfriendly world. Pagans did everything possible to malign the reputation of the followers of Christ; therefore, they were to conduct themselves wisely and not foolishly. The Christians were to avoid any unnecessary antagonizing and alienation of their unsaved neighbors. Christians were to live in such a positive way that unbelievers would be impressed, attracted to and even convicted by the way they lived. Christians knew they were going to be persecuted for declaring the good news of Christ but there was no need to unnecessarily antagonize. ***"In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted..."*** (II Tim. 3:12).

Every Christian must be a witness for Christ, but he also must do it with tact, knowing when and when not to speak to others about Christ. As a witness for Christ, the Christian must not give an air of superiority, or have a holier-than-thou attitude or be censorious or judgmental. Few people are ever argued into Christianity. The Christian must remember that it is not so much by his

words as by his life that he will attract people to, or repel them from, Christianity. Every Christian, then, is a witness by life as well as by lips. ***“And so you became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia. The Lord’s message rang out from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia - your faith in God has become known everywhere.”*** (I Thess. 1:7,8).

The poet said it well, “The only Bible which most unbelievers will ever read; Is the Christ they will see in you and me.”

Walking Caringly (5b): ***Make the most of every opportunity.*** -- Literally this says, “Redeeming the time.” It is using or buying up every opportunity for Christ. The wise man takes advantage of every opportunity Christ gives him to witness before the world. The word “redeem” means to buy up one’s time by paying a price, so to use one’s time wisely means we must pay a price. Sometimes in order to use our time wisely, we must be willing to turn off the TV or give up some pleasure, or forsake something good in order to further the cause of Christ. We are all stewards of our monies, talents and time, and to squander any of these things is to rob ourselves of becoming the best for God. The man who learns to use time and not abuse it will be a success in whatever he does.

There is a little saying on time which goes something like this: “I have only just a minute. Only sixty seconds is in it; Forced upon me - can’t refuse it. Didn’t seek it, didn’t choose it. But it’s up to me to use it - Give account if I abuse it; Just a tiny little minute - BUT ETERNITY IS IN IT!”

Opportunity To Do Good. To make the most of every opportunity certainly means to do good to all men whenever possible. ***“Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.”*** (Gal. 6:10).

Opportunity To Speak For Christ

The thought in “time” is opportunity so the NIV has the correct translation. Time provides Christians with certain opportunities which will soon pass away. What opportunities is Paul primarily talking about? The opportunities to witness to the world about Christ. Each of us daily has opportunities to speak up for Christ. Do we take advantage of these or let them pass by?

Think about these facts in terms of opportunity:

1. Half the people who ever lived on the face of the earth are alive today. There are now over 5 billion people, and 2 1/2 billion have never heard the name of Christ.
2. Because of affluence, population and the mass media this is the greatest time to really evangelize the whole world.

3. Yet there are some sad facts as well: One hundred and twenty five years ago 25% of the world's population was Protestant but today it is less than 3%.
4. Also for every person who is converted to true Christianity, two are converted to Roman Catholicism, five to Islam, and nine to communism.
5. Communists spend 3 1/2 billion dollars every year to promote literature to propagandize for their Marxist's cause. The Vatican and Jehovah Witness spend multiple millions on literature. The Seventh Day Adventists spend 15 million a year on literature. However, of the 38 most prominent evangelical missionary societies today, all together they spend less than 5 million dollars on Christian literature.

According to Ephesians 5:16, we are to take advantage of every opportunity because the days are evil: ***“Making the most of every opportunity because the days are evil.”*** How is it that evil days are to motivate the Christian to careful living? First, we are told that the world system is controlled by the devil who works through evil men and institutions. Satan has set many traps and snares for the Christian so as to get him to fall into sin and lose his testimony before the world. Just as a soldier in battle must watch where he walks because the battlefield is filled with mines and booby traps, the Christian must be very careful in an evil world run by Satan so as not to be lured away or destroyed by the fiery darts of the evil one. The Christian life is no field day or Sunday school picnic but a life and death struggle between the forces of God and Satan, between good and evil, between light and darkness. Satan is seeking to swallow up whatever Christians he can. ***“Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him...”*** (I Pet. 5:8,9a). Satan sets before us all kinds of options as to how to use our time. Never in the history of the world has man had more leisure than he has right now. Never before have Christians had more time but are we using it to reach the world for Christ or abusing it by indulging ourselves? Are Christians spending more time reading the Bible and praying than they did a hundred years ago? Satan has devised all kinds of possibilities to lure the Christian away from using his time to glorify God. Second, on a more positive note, evil days present great opportunities for Christ. Instead of seeing evil days as an obstacle to the gospel and defeating to dynamic Christianity, they actually present wonderful opportunities to share Christ with others. Evil days cause men to have pressures, fears and frustrations about life in general. Even the evil days of materialism leaves a hollowness and emptiness in people which only Christ can fill. Evil days cause men to go into despair and they begin to look for some answers to life, and Christ is the answer. Evil days for the Christian gives opportunity for Christians to demonstrate the reality of Christianity. If we had no pressure, how could we demonstrate to the world the sufficiency of Christ in all things. If we never had tension, how could we show to the world the supernatural life of faith? God allows difficulties not to set us back but to advance us so we can prove that Christ is real. Third, evil days mean Christ's second advent is not too far distant. When Christ comes, then we will give an account at the Judgment Seat of Christ for the opportunities we used, abused or lost.

A little over a year ago now the space shuttle Challenger blew up in mid-air. Seven of Americas best were blasted into eternity. These astronauts were the finest America could offer and it was a sad day for America and for the space program. I thought to myself, "How many of these people were Christians? Did they have the opportunity to hear the gospel?" The Catholics, the Buddhists, Jessie Jackson and even President Reagan indicated they were all safely in the hands of God, but were they? The Bible says, "**Salvation is found in no one else (Christ), for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved**" (Acts 4:12). Whatever opportunity those seven brave men and women had is now passed and they face either a God of wrath or a God of love, depending on what they did with Christ in this world.

WITNESSING IN WORD 4:6

Sharing Graciously (6a): **Let your conversation be always full of grace...** - When The Christian is sharing Christ, there is to be a pleasantness, a charm, an attractiveness and a winsomeness about him. Summed up it means the Christian is to have a gracious spirit. Any judgmental attitude kills the spirit of Christ. Any negative feelings stifle God's working. Any critical spirit quenches the power of the Holy Spirit. An argumentative manner may turn off a person. It is possible to win an argument and lose a soul.

We have all had the experience of engaging a person in talk about Christ which ends up in an argument, and we have said things as a Christian to the unsaved person we wished we had never spoken. We went from that witnessing opportunity feeling miserable because we failed. We need to confess our sin, learn from the experience and work on being a more winsome witness.

Sharing Excitedly (6b): **Seasoned with salt,** - Salt is what gives zest, zing and flavor to food. When Sharing Christ, we are to be excited about it because this is the most thrilling thing we could ever tell another person. Our witness is to be lively and upbeat. The greatest crime on earth is to bore men, women, boys and girls with the gospel. If we are not excited about Christ, we can never expect the unbeliever to get excited.

Sharing Cleverly (6c): **So that you may know how to answer everyone.** - Literally this says, "So that you will now how to answer each one." We give the same gospel truth to each person but we adjust how we say it and when we say it to each individual personality. We must adapt our witness to each person. No two witnessing situations are ever alike because no two persons are alike. To some degree we adjust even the content of the gospel to the individual. With some folks we need to stress judgment, with others forgiveness, with others election, with others grace and with others love. A wise witness is a clever witness.

CONCLUSION

Saved

Christians must remember that every contact with a person is a divinely appointed situation. We are either to encourage them as brothers or sisters or talk to them about Christ, who gives forgiveness and eternal life to all who believe. As Christians we must remember: “This life will soon be past; only what is done for Christ will last.”

Unsaved

If you are without Christ, today is your day of opportunity. This is your day to become a Christian. You may never have another chance. The Bible says, “*Now is the time of God’s favor, now is the day of salvation*” (II Cor. 6:2).

How do you get salvation? The Bible says, “*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved*” (Acts 16:31).