

“² Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving; ³ Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds: ⁴ That I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak. ⁵ Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time. ⁶ Let your speech *be* always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.” (Col 4:2-6)

I will speak of Grace next week; I had to cut this message in two to keep from going too long.

Paul is now giving final exhortations of a general nature, which will make them fruitful and abundant in their Christian lives if they are faithful.

- I. vs. 2-4: A general exhortation to pray. Prayer is the most important manifestation of new life in Jesus Christ. The child of God seeks His Father. The Holy Spirit rises to God. We find this throughout this epistle. There are several important things here.
 - A. Continue: Men ought always to pray and not to faint. Don't give up. Keep on praying. Pray always.
 - B. Watch: Fever and energy in prayer--not in coldness or listlessness, as Calvin says.
 - C. Thanksgiving: He has said this over and over in all of his epistles. The root of the notion that men can live without God is thanklessness.
 - Result of thanksgiving: Contentment with the will of God for our lives.
 - Gratitude for past blessings must be a part of all our prayers.
 - Confidence that He will provide for our present necessities.
 - D. Specific prayers for Paul:
 1. Humility of Paul. His work would become their work also if they prayed for him. Love and communication in the Gospel.
 2. Asks not prayers for safety or prosperity: That the work be effective:
 - It is God's work: the ministry of the Gospel. You should pray every day for your minister, that God would open his mouth. Door: also might mean opportunity.
 3. "As I ought" Paul knew that the ministry is beyond human power. Only the Holy Spirit can enable weak and flawed ministers to be able to do the work of the Gospel.

II. vs. 5. Walk in Wisdom.

- A. Walk: "Walk around" Signifies the whole range of the activities of life. Every thing the Christian does is bound to Jesus Christ. Col. 3:17 "Whatsoever you do in word or deed, to all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him."

Here the specific emphasis is upon "those that are without." I put a quotation from Calvin in the bulletin. (SEE) After defining those that are without, he gives three reasons why we are to walk wisely concerning them.

1. We are forbidden to cast a stumblingblock in the way of the blind. Lev. 19:14.
2. We must not do anything that takes away from the honor of the Gospel--to make Christ a laughingstock or His truth to be defamed. Could become a cause for persecutions. Make friends for the Gospel--not enemies.
3. Beware of defilement: (not of meats and drinks, etc. but in profane and sinful behavior and speech.)
- B. "in wisdom" Christians are called today: bigotted, unloving, unlearned, moralistic. The best defense against these slanders is to not be so. Few unbelievers will read the Bible; all of them will read you and me.

In the long run, the reputation of the Gospel depends upon the conduct of those who profess it. You cannot make too many friends. You cannot have too many people think well of you. "As much as lieth within you, live peaceably with all men." "When a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him."

- C. "Redeeming the time." "Buying up the opportunity. Parable of unjust steward: He was commended for making friends on this earth; Christ applied it to heavenly.

Look at Luke 16:8 Please Note:

1. The man was a steward of his lord's goods, and complete control over them for a time.
2. His desperation: to be turned out of his job.

3. His remedy: made friends for himself by the use of his master's goods.

Application (Calvin on this.)

1. Main teaching: we ought to deal kindly and generously with our neighbors. They are stewards just as we are. They owe to God just as we do. We are all in debt to God.
2. He dealt kindly and generously with them. Parable of Lazarus follows this.
3. He knew his time was short; he did not have abundant time. He took advantage of his opportunity.
4. "Mammon of Unrighteousness." "True Riches"
Mammon: Earthly things.
True Riches: The treasures of heaven.
 - a. All you have power over are earthly things. That's all you have.
 - b. Your tongue; your body; your goods;
 - c. They do not belong to you. They belong to God.
 - d. They are called "mammon" because God would taint them, in a sense, so that we would know they are not the real deal. They can be thorns and thistles that choke the word of God.
5. Faithfulness in the one is necessary for you can receive the other. Who will give to you the true riches?
Will God give eternal life to those who despise and misuse the life they have?
Will God give the gold of heaven to those who despise and waste and make idols of the gold of this earth?
Will God give the blessings of eternal fellowship and communion with Him, to those who do not seek Him now, neglect His word, live prayerless lives, and neglect the kingdom of God.
Will God give the eternal fellowship of the saints in heaven to those who despise the church now, live in selfish isolation, speak evil of the people of God, and love the world?
Will God
6. No man can serve two masters. You cannot serve God and this world too. You should be at least as smart as this crooked steward, who was industrious and diligently took advantage of the time he had to prepare for the future. You should be as diligent in preparing for heaven as this man was in preparing for his doubtful future. God does not commend the unjust steward because he misused his goods, but for his sagacity and his use of opportunities. What a great steward he would have been, had he been honest!!!!

You do not have to be rich to be a fool over the things of this world. The most greedy man I ever knew was the father of a friend I had in high school back in Oakland Oregon. He held three full time jobs and fought gamecocks on the side. And owed everyone in the country. You need to work hard, but prosperity does not come from your hard work, but by the blessing of God. Many work very hard, but because they do not seek the Lord for blessing, they labor in vain. The Lord blows upon their efforts and they are scattered like the wind.
7. Make friends: You can use your opportunities now: to do good to all men will be as bread cast upon the waters. "If you have not done it unto the least of these my brethren...." "Do good to all men" Notice: the doing good was the lessening of their debt. Not treating them as they deserve; etc.
8. Pharisees. vs. 14. Vain and selfish people will always deride the mercy of the Gospel. The idea of using your opportunities to do good to all men will always be derided by those who do not understand. Jesus gives the story of the rich man in hell as an example of the mind set of the Pharisees. Christ is NOT teaching social communism and community of goods, but again emphasizing the same truth. The rich man did not use his opportunities to prepare for eternity. Lazarus was saved, not because he was poor, but because he believed and repented his sins. The rich man was lost, not because he was rich, but because he did not believe and repent. And when his time was up, there was no time.
9. Ephesians 5:16 "for the days are evil." There are many incentives for you to waste opportunity. To let the days drift by. To let time pass you by.
 - a. Illustration: boy learning his math tables.
 - b. Illustration: girl learning to make friends. Think of all the friends you don't have because

- you haven't gone out of yourself to make them.
- c. Illustration: learning a skill.
 - d. Illustration: learning to pray; to be effective with God.
 - e. Illustration: praying for wisdom. "What should I do?" I don't know. I can only find that for me; I do not know your spiritual condition or the circumstances of your life, and I do not want to know them, because I cannot run your life for you. I have enough trouble running my own. But I do know this: there is wisdom for you if you will avail yourself of it. Prov. 8.
10. The means are available: God has given them to you. If an unjust steward who was just about to get fired, could find a way to survive, then you can be a blessing and abundant in your service for Christ. The only thing that will hold you back will be the misuse of your opportunities and means. It is not your circumstances; it is your lack of wisdom.

Conclusion: Absalom and David. See 2Samuel 14:14. Wisdom can find a way. Love can find a way.

LESSON: Buy up the time. What you are going to do someday, do it now. It is stupid not to.