

## THE CHRISTIAN AND THE WORLD

Colossians 4:5-6

**Intro:** When we lead someone to Christ, or are dealing with someone who has recently received the Savior, it is not unusual for us, or some other person who has known the Lord for some time, to encourage that young believer to start witnessing to others. But that is where a lot of mistakes are made. This person who has just professed faith in Christ, may really be saved, but he or she knows very little about the Gospel, and obviously does not understand how God works in human hearts to bring them to see that they are sinners, and that person knows very little about the Gospel. Consequently such a person is hardly prepared to witness effectively to others.

Now I am not discouraging Christians from witnessing to others about Christ. I have often said that the Lord leaves us here after we are saved for two reasons. One is for our growth in the Lord (with all that that involves, and actually what that really means). And the other reason is to bear witness to others who do not know the Lord in the hope that they will be saved. Actually our greatest testimony is the change that the Lord makes in our lives when we are saved. There are usually some changes that take place immediately when a person is saved, but it takes growing in the Lord for others to see the major transformation that takes place when anyone is saved.

Now Paul's letter to the church at Colosse helps us to understand this. These last two verses which conclude Paul's message to the Colossians, are the first time Paul has mentioned the believer's relationship with the world. And by "the world" I mean the many people in the world who do not know the Savior. The words "them that are without" in verse 5 of Colossians 4 means people who are without Christ. He means people that are without salvation. He means people who really have no hope. He means people who are without the forgiveness of their sins. They are on the outside looking in. And I could go on and speak of many other *withouts* which are characteristic of all who do not know the Lord. Actually they have nothing that will help them in life or death if they are without Christ. They may be church members, but if they are without Christ, they really have nothing.

So when Paul said, "Walk in wisdom toward them that are without," the Apostle Paul was speaking of the Christian's relationship toward the

world. There is a lot more for us to learn about dealing with people in the world, but this is just a basic statement, a starting point, for all of us in our dealing with people who do not know the Lord. There is more for us to learn, much more, but this is a starting point.

Now I have been emphasizing with you during our study of Colossians, that the Apostle Paul was dealing with the Christian life in a progressive way in this epistle. Remember: he had not had the privilege of ministering in person in Colosse, and so he was covering the ground of their lives and relating all of this to what it really means to be a Christian. A person who has just been saved would not understand all of this until they were taught what the Apostle Paul was teaching them.

Now let me remind you again of what it was that the Apostle Paul was seeking to get them to understand.

In chapters 1 and 2 Paul was emphasizing the importance of doctrine. There are many wonderful things that we all need to know about God, about our Lord Jesus Christ, about ourselves and what God has done for us through the Gospel. The Christian life is a life of continuous learning. Don't ever let anyone tell you that doctrine is not important. One reason that a lot of churches are doing what they are doing is because they are seriously lacking in understanding the teaching of the Word of God. One lady who many of us are acquainted with told us the other day that many churches are more like night clubs. I am afraid that is true. You will never find a strong Christian who is weak in doctrine, and I am talking about the teaching of Scripture. So Paul was teaching doctrine, good doctrine, unchanging and unchangeable doctrine. A true pastor is going to be a teacher, a teacher of the Bible, and he won't be apologetic about teaching either. We need to make the teaching interesting and clear, but the church is not in the business of entertaining, and the pastor is not to be a stand-up comedian. So every new Christian needs to understand this.

The second point that follows from the first point is that the Bible tells us how we are to live. And that is the reason Paul said in his teaching, and it is true of the other writers of Scripture, "Do this, but don't do that." Or to state it another way, "Be this, but don't be that." Now a newborn babe in Christ doesn't understand that the Christian life is a completely different way of living.

Then Paul point out in dealing with the Christian life, he showed that being

a child of God is going to make our homes different because it has made us different.

It will help us in our jobs, whether we are an employer, or we are among those wonderful people who are hired to do a particular job. A Christian who is living like a Christian is going to be a worker that people are looking for.

Then we saw last Sunday that being a Christian is going to mean that we are people who pray. Living the life that is pleasing to God is going to affect our praying, and keep us praying.

And now, in the last two verses of Paul's message to the Colossians, verses 4 and 5, Paul mentions that a Christian is going to find that knowing the Lord is going to make a difference in his relationship with people who do not know the Lord, that is, with the people of the world, most of whom have no idea what a Christian is, or who a Christian is. But we are to show them in two ways: in verse 5, *by our walk*; and in verse 6, *by our talk*.

Now there is much more that the Apostle Paul could have said, but he just makes some basic points here, and he knows that the Spirit of God will teach us much more from the Word about our relationship with the world.

Now let us think for a few minutes about:

## **I. OUR WALK (Col. 4:5).**

Now just in case there is anyone here who does not understand what the Bible means by the verb *walk*, let me explain what it means. Our walk is *the way we live*. This is actually the third time that Paul used this word in this letter. He used it first in chapter 1, verse 10 (read). (Related this to verse 9.) And then he used it again in chapter 2, verse 6 (read).

Paul in Romans 6:4 said that we are to "walk in newness of life." In Romans 8:4 Paul described Christians as those who "walk not after (or, according to) the flesh, but after (or, according to) the Spirit," *i.e.*, the Holy Spirit.

Let me read a passage to you from Paul's letter to the church at Philippi, words found in Philippians 3:15-19:

15 Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in

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any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you.

16 Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing.

17 Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample.

18 (For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ:

19 Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.)

Paul made it very clear that you can identify a Christian by the way he walks, that is, by the way he lives. Many people call themselves Christians who don't live like Christians, so we have to conclude that they don't really understand what a Christian is.

Now a new Christian is not going to live as godly a life as a person who has known the Lord and who has walked with the Lord for many years, but even a new Christian is going to experience a change in his life, and changes will continue to be made.

But what did Paul say about our walk in relation to those who are "without," or on the outside, those who do not know the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord?

He said we are to "walk in wisdom toward them that are without." Now let me ask, Whose wisdom was Paul talking about – was it their wisdom, or was it the world's wisdom, or was it God's wisdom?

A few years ago there was quite a strong move among Christians, which was fostered by some leaders in the Church, that if we are going to win the people of the world to Christ, we must seek to be like them. We must talk like people in the world talk. We must dress like people in the world dress. We must go to the places they do, and do what they do. Actually there were pastors who started drinking intoxicating drinks in order to win people to Christ. I know of a pastor who encouraged drinking with his young people, and he was a well respected pastor, a real Bible teacher. I could tell one sad story that came out of that church, and there may have been other sad stories. I am sure that there were. You can't play with fire and not get burnt.

I can't understand how Christians could be caught up in such a thing, but they did. Is this what Paul meant? Are we to do what unsaved people do in order to win them to Christ? How far are we to go in that direction?

Let me tell you what Paul meant when he said that we are to "walk in wisdom toward them that are without." Turn back to Paul's prayer again in Colossians 1, and look with me at verse 9. What does it say? What did Paul pray for the Colossian Christians? Let me read the verse to you:

9 For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding (Col. 1:9).

Paul was not advising believers to do the world's will, or even their own will, but it was God's will that he was concerned about. We don't win people to Christ by seeking to be like they are. We always live by the revealed will of God, and by our obedience to the Word the light is going to shine into the world's darkness so that they will see what it means to be a Christian.

Let me read some verses to you where the Lord spoke to you where the Lord spoke to His disciples about their relationship to the world. The first is John 15:18-19:

18 If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you.

19 If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.

And then in the Lord's prayer, John 17, the Lord said these words to God the Father about His people. You will find them in John 17:6

6 I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word.

And then later in the same prayer we find these words in verses 15 through 17:

15 I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.

16 They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

17 Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.

Now before some of you may raise an objection, get this clearly in mind: we are never to compromise with the truth in order to win people to Christ. People have a natural hatred for Christ and the Gospel, but we must never

compromise even to meet the world half way. We are sent to the world with a message that they don't want, and can't understand until the Lord enables them to understand it, but under no conditions are we to depart from the truth in our walk in order to win them to Christ. We are to "walk in wisdom toward them that are without."

Then Paul adds concerning our walk, "redeeming the time." This has often been translated as *buying up the opportunity*. It means in connection with the Gospel, we are to make full use, the best use, of every opportunity to witness, by refusing to compromise with the truth of God. To state it another way, if we aren't walking according to the wisdom of God as it is revealed in the Bible, we may be wasting our time instead of making the best use of it.

But now, so we can see the whole picture, let me go on to verse 6 because 5 and 6 really go together.

## II. OUR TALK (Col. 4:6).

Note that Paul mentioned our walk first, and then our talk. Obviously if we are going to reach people in the world we do it first with our walk, and back it up with our talk.

Now I don't want to give the impression to any of you that these two verses only have to do with a witnessing situation. They apply equally in our relationships with each other. But it seems to me that Paul's main emphasis is upon our relationship with the world because we are seeking to win people out of a world of sin into the glorious liberty of those who are the children of God.

Now we often spoil our opportunities to talk to people about the Lord because we give them the impression that we are standing on a pedestal above them, and looking down at them. That must never be! The only reason we are where we are with God and with Christ is because of "grace." "For by grace are ye saved through faith." We can say with the Apostle Paul, "By the grace of God I am what I am." "Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man," that is, *every person to whom we have the opportunity to speak to about Christ*. You see, we tell them what God by His grace has done for us through Christ, and we can make that even more desirable and tasty by letting them know that God's grace which opened the door of

salvation for us, will open the door of salvation for them too. You see, if your speech to people in the world is that of a humbled sinner saved by grace, and they can see in our lives what Christ has done for us, if anything is going to move their hearts, this is God's plan for reaching them. We can tell them that the reason we don't live any longer like they live, is because we have found a greater and more satisfying life in Christ. We don't have to worry about the judgment of God because Christ has taken our penalty on Himself, and we by His grace have passed out of spiritual death into eternal life.

**Concl:** Now let me emphasize that this is God's way for us to deal with the world. This is the basic way. We stand on the ground of obedience to God and His Word, but with the tenderness which ought to characterize all of us, we spread the message of God's grace out of hearts and mouths who can never express enough how thankful we are that God has saved us.

Let me mention two additional things before I close.

One is that this is not the way you and I would advise each other to win people to turn to Christ. We naturally feel that we might bend the truth so as not to offend people. Let's remember that they are already offended with the Gospel. But the Lord has revealed His way. If His people will live doing His will, and remember the amazing grace of God in their own lives, there undoubtedly will be more people who would be willing to listen to the ageless message of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ, the crucified, buried, risen, and glorified Savior. Remember what God said long ago through Isaiah the prophet in comparing our ways with His ways:

6 Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near:

7 Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

8 For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord.

9 For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.

10 For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater:

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11 So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it (Isa. 55:6-11).

And to those words of God, let me add these words which the Spirit of God directed the Apostle Peter to write in seeking to win people to faith in Christ. Here is that word:

15 But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:

16 Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation [conduct]in Christ (1 Peter 3:15-16).

If our purpose in life is to please the Lord by obeying Him from our hearts, the Lord will cause people to ask us about our hope rather than always having us seek opportunities to talk to others about Christ.