

Opening Closed Doors

Text : Col. 4: 5-6

(Read : Col. 4:2-6 -&- Prov. 16:21-24)

INTRODUCTION :

A. Our previous lesson from Vs 2-4 observed some of God's instructions for prayer.

1. We learned the Christian's life must be characterized by an active prayer life.
 - a. "Vigilant in it" is a military term describing a soldier's conduct on guard duty.
 - b. We observed that prayer is not just for emergencies. (I Pet. 5: 6-7 -cf- Phil.4:6)
 - c. Prayer is also not an ATM card. (James 4:3-4)
2. The Christian's prayer life was seen to be an avenue of worship.
 - a. Thankfulness is a sacrifice of praise. (Heb. 13: 15)
 - b. It acknowledges God as ruling and as being the source of all blessings.
3. Those with faith and love for God desire HIS will to be done in all things.
 - a. God's supreme will is that ALL people be in fellowship with Him. (*If no = against*)
 - b. Via the gospel, He uses the faithful people to reach out to the unfaithful people.
 - c. Those who are faithful seek open doors, i.e., for opportunities to be used by Him.

B. In today's lesson we will study Vs 5-6 to see God's instruction for the minimum a Christian can do in creating opportunities to serve.

1. As we begin our study, we realize that this is a direct command to all Christians.
2. The choice one makes in response to a command of God both reflects and determines the relationship he has with God. (*Everyone responds to every*)
 - a. John 14: 15- If you love Me, you will keep My commandments. (15:14 = friends)
 - b. I John 5: 3- For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; ...
 - c. Luke 6: 46- "Why do you call Me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?"
3. Clearly, these verses are instructions for all Christians. (**direct command**)
 - a. Though some seek to do so, one can't pass off unpleasant tasks to others. ("That's just not my gift." "Others can do it better.")
 - b. When given instructions we are faced with a decision, ... obey or rebel. (*There is no way to avoid the choice. Failure to choose to obey IS rebellion.*)
4. Every Christian has both the ability and the responsibility to clearly communicate the gospel to outsiders.
 - a. Eph. 4: 11-16 ... Every member must mature in order to be able to contribute.

- b. **I Pet. 3:15-** but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence;
 - c. In chapter 3, the Apostle explained how all Christians can be an influence for Christ in any and ALL circumstances.
(wife – husband , child – father , employee – boss)
 - d. “Ought to speak” indicates a responsibility.
- * We all voluntarily enlist to serve God. We must act like volunteers.

TRANSITION :

It is the aspiration of all Christians to communicate and exhibit the gospel so as to commend it to unbelievers.

Read ... Col. 4: 5-6

What practical means can we use to make this aspiration a reality ?

I. Vs. 5a “Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, ..”

- A. (KJV) “Walk in wisdom” = The Christian’s lifestyle must be one of wisdom.
 - 1. We must realize that the world is watching us and then live accordingly.
 - a. One’s walk does not refer to what he believes.
 - b. “Walk” does not just refer to how one conducts himself in front of Christians.
 - c. It is the conduct that is observed day by day by the world. (apply Act 26: 26)
 - 2. Faith produces an identifiable “walk” which characterizes the Christian. (Matt. 5: 16)
 - a. The Christian seeks the will of the Father so he can live to please Him. (Eph 5:10)
 - b. The Christian’s “walk” encompasses every aspect of his life.
 - c. One’s “walk” flows from his heart ... not a mask to project an image. (24-7)
 - 3. When one walks by faith, his walk commends the faith to unbelievers.
- B. Walking with “wisdom” entails effort, not just doing what comes naturally.
 - 1. The Christian’s life must rise above the natural.
 - a. By nature, people live reactionary lives. (Luke 6:27ff .. love those who love)
 - b. By nature, look out for themselves above others. (Phil. 2)
 - 2. The wise person is aware of the effect of his actions on others.
 - a. *Positive* : I Pet. 3:1- .. they may be won w / o a word by the behavior of their wives,

- b. **Negative : Tit. 2: 4-5** so that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, **5** to be sensible, pure, workers at home, kind, being subject to their own husbands, so that the word of God will not be dishonored.
- c. **Deny : Tit. 1: 16-** They profess to know God, but by their deeds they deny Him, being detestable and disobedient and worthless for any good deed.

3. Therefore, the wise Christian considers how his actions will affect others.

C. To be “wise”, a Christian must realize that there are “outsiders.”

1. Religiously there are two groups :
 - a. Those in the faith.
 - b. Those outside the faith.
2. By nature, outsiders are different from believers.
 - a. They have a different world view. (**No spiritual “ears to hear” Luke 8:8**)
 - b. They are cynical about things pertaining to faith and about Christians.
3. Thus, it is unwise for Christians to attribute our values to outsiders.
 - a. They are lost. They have NO hope and are without God in the world. (**Eph 2:12**)
 - b. Believing is not their first impulse. (**Don’t have unrealistic expectations.**)
4. It is the Christians responsibility to find a way to communicate the gospel to them.

Read ... I Cor. 9: 19-23 *All things to all men = communicate on their level*

II. Vs. 5b “Making the most of the opportunity.”

- A. **Making the most (“redeeming” [KJV]) of the time.** (Stewardship of time)
 1. Spiritual laziness has always been a problem in the Lord’s church.
 - a. **Eph. 5: 15-16** **Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, 16 making the most of your time, because the days are evil.**
 - b. Evil seeks to pull Christians away from righteousness.
 2. Christians live on the doorstep of eternity. (**John 9:4**)
 - a. We do not know when our last breath will be taken.
 - b. Millions of Christians are praying day by day for the Lord to return.
 3. We will ALL give an accounting for how we used our time and our opportunities.
 - a. Everyone is given the same number of hours in every day. (**24 ; 168 ; 61, 320**)
 - b. **Busy ?** We each choose what we will spend our time on. (*physical or spiritual*)

B. We are instructed to take full advantage of each spiritual “opportunity.”

1. Paul here instructs us to view each exposure to an unbeliever as an opportunity.
 - a. In chapter 3 we are instructed to have our attention focused on spiritual things.
 - b. The focus of our life is to live to open doors.
2. Each conversation with an outsider is a treasure for which we will give and account.
 - a. It is not a treasure given to us to use for ourselves.
 - b. Each friendship with an outsider is a door that is opened into a lost heart.
3. When we stand before God, what will we have to give Him. (*Gold ? NO !!*)
 - a. Physical things are only for use in the physical realm. (*II Pet. 3:10*)
 - b. Only the souls of men will live beyond this realm. *They are what God wants.*

III. Vs. 6a “Let your speech always be with grace.”**A. God has a plan for “your” words. (*He instructs because He wants to use them.*)**

1. The Christian life is supposed to open doors for us to speak with unbelievers.
 - a. Your words will result in friendships, but that’s not His purpose for them.
 - b. Where ever they start, our conversations are supposed to lead to the gospel.
2. God calls Christians out of darkness to be proclaimers. (*I Pet. 2: 9*)
 - a. Each one of us is different, but we all exist for the same purpose.
 - b. Each of us is placed in a different place, but we all have the same destination.
3. Our choice is ... “*Will I serve or will I rebel ?*”
(*Will I speak for myself or for the One who purchased me with His blood.*)

B. “Be with grace”

1. What do sinners deserve to hear ? *Rebuke and Condemnation.*
 - a. Grace will direct the lost to the salvation of his soul. (*an underserved gift*)
 - b. Thus, the Christian must be “*wise*” in his speech. (*maintain control*)
2. The wise person uses his words to accomplish his goal, not just run of at the mouth.
 - a. Salesmen talk about all sorts of things, but it always comes back to the product.
 - b. Eventually, the Christian will bring the relationship to a discussion of salvation.
3. Gracious speech is not reactive.
 - a. Sinners can just go with the flow, *i.e.*, they react to the speaker.
 - b. The Christian gives grace, *i.e.*, he is proactive with his words.

C. “Always” be with grace.

1. We can't lock Jesus up in the church building.
 - a. We can't talk one way around the brethren and another when with outsiders.
 - b. The Christians words flow from his Christian heart.
2. There are some things we just don't talk about.

Eph. 5: 11-12 Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them; **12** for it is disgraceful even to speak of the things which are done by them in secret.

3. Christians never deal in off-color jokes.

Eph. 5: 4- and there must be no filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks.

IV. “Let your speech .. be .. as though seasoned with salt. “**A. Salt had more functions in the ancient world than it does today.**

1. Salt was sometimes used as currency. (**Part of soldier's pay**) (*Not worth his salt.*)
2. It was used to clean. (**Babies rubbed in salt at birth, wounds cleaned, etc.**)
3. It was used to preserve meat.

B. Salt's most valued use was as a flavoring for food.

1. Some foods are almost unpalatable without a little salt on them.
2. The Christian's speech must flavor as a sprinkle of salt on food. (**not flattery**)
3. Christians have the responsibility to keep their words uplifting.

Eph. 4: 29- Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear. (Cf. **Col. 3: 8**)

CONCLUSION :**A. The Christian has a purpose in this life and lives so as to accomplish his purpose.**

1. Every aspect of the Christian's life must be kept under control, but his tongue might be the most difficult thing for him to control.

James 3: 2- For we all stumble in many ways. If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body as well.
2. Difficult does not mean impossible. *God will not command what cannot be done.*

B. God has a use for you and for me. (*He didn't call you because you look good.*)

1. In order to accomplish His purpose for us we must clearly communicate the gospel.
2. In order to effectively use words we must develop wisdom.
3. Wisdom is the ability to apply knowledge in a practical way.
4. Only two things are required to develop wisdom :
 - a. Acquire knowledge.
 - b. Practice applying it.

C. More than anything, it requires the desire to please God and faith in Him.

1. Believing in God does not automatically surrender one's life to His service.
2. As faith grows it leads to surrender.
3. Thus, as we examine our own spiritual growth (**II Cor. 13:5**) how we are able to communicate the gospel is one of the criteria to measure maturity.

D. Having the ability to “know how you should respond to every man” is :

1. Is part of the Christian lifestyle.
2. Is a mark of Christian maturity.

THUS, God instructs us all :

Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity. ⁶ Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person.

Col. 4: 5-6

Pray for the door to be opened and be ready to walk through when it is.

INVITATION :