

Colossians
Takeaways
Colossians 4:2-6

December 11, 2022

HDBC

In 2 Corinthians 5:17 Paul wrote *Therefore, if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.*

When a person becomes a Christian there is an exchange that takes place. The old dies and is left behind and everything becomes brand new.

No longer are we under the bondage of sin. We have been set free from that. No longer are we living in spiritual darkness and death. We are spiritually alive. No longer are we on our way to Hell, but on our way to Heaven. When you come to Christ, things change.

In His letter to the Colossians, Paul wrote of this newness. In the first two chapters he dealt mostly with theological issues. He was writing about spiritual truth. Doctrinal matters. In those chapters he lays out for us our position with God, our standing with God. He describes our relationship with God.

But in the latter half of the book, he wrote about practical things. He wrote about the difference that our relationship with God makes in everyday living. This seems to have been the pattern for almost all of Paul's letters. Clearly in Paul's mind there is a direct correlation between spiritual truth (theology) and real living. Spiritual truth will impact real life. That is easily seen in this passage.

More times than not when I wrap up a sermon, I share what I call **takeaways**. These are statements of practical application of the spiritual truth that we have faced in the text. In a similar way that is what Paul is doing in this passage. There are three areas of application.

1. Prayer (2-4)

Four things to note about prayer.

1) It is worthy of our devotion

This word carries **the picture of an army** that just continues to attack again and again. It literally means "to be courageously persistent."

The idea is of continual, persistent prayer. Paul wrote that we are to pray without ceasing. That's pretty continual! I know you can't always be praying in the sense of speaking words to God. Paul has more in mind here a commitment to **perpetual awareness of God's presence** and a continual yielding to His will. Deferring to Him. Being aware that He is always with us and is always ready to hear and to speak.

Never give up in your praying. Keep at it. If you are praying for some lost person, don't quit until God tells you that it is okay to quit.

A visitor was being shown around the Metropolitan Tabernacle in London by pastor Charles Spurgeon. Spurgeon asked if he would like to see the powerhouse of this ministry. He said yes. He showed the man into a basement room underneath the main auditorium. He said while he was preaching there were hundreds of people in that room praying. That was the key.

2) It requires spiritual alertness

Real prayer that is effective requires mental toughness. It requires mental and spiritual effort. Have you noticed how Satan does not want you to pray? He will do everything to distract you from beginning to pray and he will distract you after you are in the midst of praying.

The moment you wake up each morning, all your wishes and hopes for the day rush at you like wild animals. And the first job each morning consists in shoving it all back; in listening to that other voice, taking that other point of view, letting that other, larger, stronger, quieter life come flowing in. C.S. Lewis

C. It includes thanksgiving

Thankfulness is to be a routine part of our praying. Anytime we are communicating with God we are to be aware of the blessings that are ours from God. That naturally leads to thanksgiving. The very privilege of praying to him is an act for which we are thankful.

We are not thankful because it somehow adds something to Him. He doesn't need our thankfulness, we need it. Same with our children. We

teach young children to say “thank-you” not because we are somehow lacking something that their words of thanksgiving can add to us. No. We teach them to say “thank-you” for their benefit.

Erma Bombeck wrote about an 8-year-old girl with cancer. She was asked what she wanted for her birthday. She thought long and hard and finally said, "I don't know. I have two sticker books and a Cabbage Patch doll. I have everything!" The kid is right. Our lack of thankfulness is often an indication of our discontent.

D. It should be kingdom-driven

Finally, our praying should be kingdom-driven. Do you notice what Paul asked them to pray for? He was in prison, but he did not ask that they pray for his release or good treatment. He wanted them to pray about the spreading of the Gospel. They were to pray that doors of opportunity be opened, and that Paul would know how to respond to the opportunities.

I have a question for you! How much of your praying deals with the souls of men? How much of your praying is about the lost coming to Christ? Never underestimate the power of praying. There is a great story that came from Hudson Taylor, the great missionary to China.

There was a mission station that was particularly blessed far above others. There seemed to be no reason for this. The others seemed to be equally devoted to the task, etc. Taylor was traveling and speaking in England. After one meeting a man came up to Taylor and asked about a particular station. Then he began to ask personal questions. It turned out that the man had been the college roommate of the missionary at that station. Many years earlier he had committed to praying for the work there. Hudson Taylor then said, “he knew the answer to the question.”

Prayer is not overcoming God's reluctance; it is laying hold of His willingness. Richard Trench

Swindoll summarizes Paul's call to prayer by reminding us that our prayer should be **active, not passive; bold, not weak; specific, not general, attentive, not lazy; continuous, not sporadic.**

2. Conduct (5)

Our conduct is important because it is one of the primary ways we communicate with those around us, including unbelievers.

1) Manner of our Conduct

The manner of our conduct is that it is to be in wisdom. It means that our lives are to be managed according to the principles of God's word.

Walking in wisdom also means living in integrity, keeping our word, etc.

Where do you get wisdom?

a. Fear of the Lord. Prov. 9:10

b. Prayer. If anyone lacks wisdom . . . James 1:5

c. Bible Study. Let the word of Christ richly dwell in you with all wisdom . . . Col 3:16

d. Godly Instruction. And we proclaim him . . . Col. 1:28

It is only through walking in wisdom that our words will mean anything.

2) Focus of our Conduct

Refers to those who are outside the family of faith. Lost people. Those who are born again are spiritually inside. Those not saved are on the outside.

As believers our job is to help those who are on the outside join with us. We want to help them see that they too can be a part of this wonderful family. One of the ways we do that is to live Godly lives. Unbelievers are watching us. They want to know if our way of living is any different from theirs. If it is, then they will be attracted to Christ. If our lives are not different, then they will have no desire to know the Lord.

Notice that phrase, "making the most of opportunity." In other words, our lives can make a difference in the opportunities for witnessing that we have. And it's not just in the obvious opportunities of living. It is in the obscurity of our conduct that we best demonstrate our character.

A university professor tells of being invited to speak at a military base one December and there meeting an unforgettable soldier named Ralph.

Ralph had been sent to meet him at the airport. After they had introduced themselves, they headed toward the baggage claim.

As they walked down the concourse, Ralph kept disappearing. Once to help an older woman whose suitcase had fallen open. Once to lift two toddlers up to where they could see Santa Claus, again to give directions to someone who was lost. Each time he came back with a smile on his face.

"Where did you learn that?" the professor asked.

"What?" Ralph said.

"Where did you learn to live like that?"

"Oh," Ralph said, "during the war, I guess."

He then told the professor about his tour of duty in Vietnam, how it was his job to clear mine fields, how he watched his friends blow up before his eyes, one after another.

"I learned to live between steps," he said. "I never knew whether the next one would be my last, so I learned to get everything I could out of the moment between when I picked up my foot and when I put it down again. Every step I took was a whole new world, and I guess I've been that way ever since."

3. Speech (6)

Never underestimate the power of words. A judge can say a few words and a man's life is saved or condemned. A doctor says a few words and the patient rejoices or is worried. Whether the communication is oral or written, words have a lot of power.

The power of speech is a gift from God. James speaks of the tongue as that

which needs to be bridled. Also as a rudder that turns a ship or a fire that cannot be contained. The tongue is a little member of the body but it has great power to do evil or good.

Russian spies are scattered throughout Ukraine. We would expect no less. But Ukrainians have figured out how to ferret out many of the Russian spies wandering around their country.

While the languages spoken in Russia and Ukraine are similar, there are significant differences. For example, the phonetic spelling of the first names of the respective leaders of both countries. They share the same name, yet they spell their names and pronounce their names with nuanced differences. In transliteration, it's Vladimir for Putin and Volodymyr for Zelensky. Sounds are automatic giveaways because of the different emphasis of certain vowel and consonant collections in Ukrainian versus Russian.

And so, Ukrainians use a shibboleth involving the name of a popular bakery item. It is the name of a bread called palianytsia. Russians cannot properly pronounce the name of the bread. Try as they might, palianytsia does not come tripping off their tongues. Even if they can say it once, they trip up when saying it three times in a row. And they've been outed, caught, and uncovered. The fluffy loaf of bread catches spies in Ukraine like a lie detector.

1) Should be seasoned with grace

As salt seasons our food, so grace seasons our speech. As salt adds flavor and delight to our food, so grace adds sweetness to our speech. Our Lord was the master of speaking with grace. He always spoke the truth, and he always spoke it in love.

We should avoid crude talk. We should avoid harmful talk. We should think about how our words may affect those who will hear. We should choose our words wisely, especially when sharing the gospel. Our words should be positive and winsome, not rude, arrogant, or caustic. How say what you say can often cloud what you say. The manner of your speech can positively or negatively impact your message.

2) Should be suitable to the situation

Not only that, but our words should be appropriate to the situation.

Sometimes you can say something that is not wrong, but the timing might be wrong. There are better times to share the Gospel than others. Be considerate and tactful. We must learn how to say the right thing at the right time.

William Barclay rightly comments on these words of Paul.

It is all too true that Christianity in the minds of many is connected with a kind of sanctimonious dullness and an outlook in which laughter is almost a heresy . . . Christians must commend their message with the charm and the wit which were in Jesus himself. There is too much Christianity which stodgily depresses people and too little of Christianity that sparkles with life.

So, we are called to renew our commitment to . . .

Effective, strategic, kingdom-driven prayer

Conduct that draws people toward Christ rather than driving them away from Christ.

Speech that is winsome, positive, and helpful in leading people to Christ.