

“Living Among the Unconverted”  
Colossians 4:5-6  
(Preached at Trinity, February 3, 2019)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

**Disclaimer:** These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. The second half of the Book of Colossians contains exhortations for the Christian life. Paul focuses upon the marvelous transforming grace of the Gospel. What effect does your Christian conversion have upon how you live? Paul exhorts us:  
**Colossians 3:17 NAU** - "Whatever you do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father."
2. With **Verse 2 of Chapter 4** Paul begins his final exhortations as he moves towards the close of this letter. First, he encourages his Colossian readers to persevere in prayer and then asks them to pray for his ministry and the success of the Gospel.
3. Now, in **Verses 5-6** Paul turns our attention to how we live among unbelievers, the unconverted. Christians are in a unique position. We are foremost citizens of a different realm. This is stressed over and over.
  - Jesus stressed our priority:  
**Matthew 6:25 NAU** - "For this reason I say to you, do not be worried about your life, *as to* what you will eat or what you will drink; nor for your body, *as to* what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?"  
**Matthew 6:33 NAU** - "But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you."
  - Paul began this section at the beginning of **Chapter 3**  
**Colossians 3:1-2 NAU** - "Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. <sup>2</sup> Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth."
  - Paul spoke of the great danger of being earthly minded.  
**Philippians 3:18-20 NAU** - "For many walk, of whom I often told you, and now tell you even weeping, *that they are* enemies of the cross of Christ, <sup>19</sup> whose end is destruction, whose god is *their* appetite, and *whose* glory is in their shame, who set their minds on earthly things. <sup>20</sup> For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ;"
  - We must be other-worldly  
**1 John 2:15-16 NAU** - "Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. <sup>16</sup> For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world."

5. Paul warned the Corinthian church of the danger of close relationships with unbelievers **2 Corinthians 6:14-15 NAU** - "Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? <sup>15</sup> Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever?"  
His solution is plain:  
**2 Corinthians 6:17 NAS** - "Therefore, come out from their midst and be separate," says the Lord."
6. In light of all of these Biblical exhortations, it would be easy to come to the conclusion that we should segregate ourselves completely from unbelievers, have no contact at all. If we are to be other-worldly shouldn't we totally segregate ourselves from this world. This was the conclusion of many during the monastic period. The word monk comes from the Greek word μόναχος which means "solitary." The Latin is monachus. It speaks of one who has chosen a solitary life
7. Paul spoke of the absurdity of such a position.  
**1 Corinthians 5:9-10 NAU** - "I wrote you in my letter not to associate with immoral people; <sup>10</sup> I *did* not at all *mean* with the immoral people of this world, or with the covetous and swindlers, or with idolaters, for then you would have to go out of the world."  
In order to completely segregate ourselves from the people of this world we would have to go out of the world, to depart from the earth. This, of course, is not the Biblical teaching.
8. There are two things equally true:  
a. As Christians, we are not of this world. We have been raised up with Christ.  
**Colossians 3:1-2 NAU** - "Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. <sup>2</sup> Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth."  
b. It is equally true, however, we are still living upon this earth. It is a world corrupted by sin. We are surrounded by those who are still dead in sin. How are we to live in such a dichotomy? To be raised above this world while are living in this world?
9. In **Verses 5-6** Paul instructs us in how we are to live among those who do not know and love Jesus. Paul calls them "Outsiders." They are outside the community of faith. They are outside the household of God. They are outside of the Body of Christ.
10. They're our neighbors, members of our own family, co-workers.  
What does Paul say to us regarding our words and behavior among the "outsiders?"  
Paul is writing these words: "so that you will know how you should respond to each person."  
Paul wants us to remember there is a huge difference between the insiders and the outsiders.

- I. We are to conduct ourselves with wisdom  
 "Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders"  
 Literally it says, "Walk in wisdom . . ."
- Ephesians 5:15 NAU** - "Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men, but as wise,"
- A. We are living in a world that demands caution. Wisdom is knowledge rightly applied. We must have a clear understanding of the condition of fallen humanity.
1. Fallen humanity are not in their right mind.  
**Romans 1:21-22 NAU** - "For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. <sup>22</sup> Professing to be wise, they became fools"
  2. They are unable to think on a spiritual level. They are unable to comprehend their Creator. They see following His demands as detrimental to their enjoyment of life. They hate His Law. They deny His right to rule.
  3. They cannot comprehend God, and they cannot comprehend us. Christians have always been misunderstood. The unconverted cannot understand our loyalty to Christ. They cannot understand our submission to the Word of God. Our actions are often completely incomprehensible to them.
  4. Tragically, they cannot comprehend their own peril. They don't see themselves as under God's condemnation. They can't imagine the nearness of eternity. They do not want to be reminded of these things.
  5. They will often respond to us with hostility. We must conduct ourselves with wisdom.  
**1 John 3:13 NAU** - "Do not be surprised, brethren, if the world hates you."  
**Matthew 10:16 NAU** - "Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; so be shrewd as serpents and innocent as doves."
  6. There have been thousands of faithful saints who have died at the hands of those who are unconverted – the outsiders.  
 Tertullian said, "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church."
  7. We should not be surprised by their hostility, but we are not allowed to compromise our commitment to Christ in order to avoid it. It demands caution around the outsiders.
- B. While they despise Christianity and the life it demands, they love the virtue it creates.
1. They love the concepts of justice and honesty, at least as it affects them. They love peace loving people.  
 A man wants to marry a virtuous woman, a woman wants to marry a good man. They want good neighbors. We must take advantage of their delight in our integrity.
  2. Let this virtue mark us as we live among them. Christians should be the best employees, the best neighbors, the most loyal, faithful, loving people to be around.

3. We should always be ready to explain wherein lies the difference.  
**1 Peter 3:14-16** - "And do not fear their intimidation, and do not be troubled, <sup>15</sup> 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; <sup>16</sup> and keep a good conscience so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame."
  4. To a large degree, our lives are the first testimony of the Gospel to the lost. They must see the reality of the Gospel in us.  
**Matthew 5:16 NAU** - "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven."  
**1 Peter 3:1-2 NAU** - "In the same way, you wives, be submissive to your own husbands so that even if any *of them* are disobedient to the word, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives, <sup>2</sup> as they observe your chaste and respectful behavior."
- C. Paul is simply reminding us that we must give careful attention to our "walk"
1. We must give careful attention to how we live in the midst of the outsiders. Each one is different. There are different levels of blindness. Some are more hardened than others. We must be wise. One may be your nextdoor neighbor, a good friend – but still in unbelief. Another may be your coworker who mocks Christ and reacts with hostility at any attempt of evangelism. Both are equally in need of Christ.
  2. Do you know how to respond to each person?  
**Colossians 4:6 NAU** - "so that you will know how you should respond to each person."

II. We are to see our interaction with outsiders as an opportunity "making the most of the opportunity."

- A. The implication is we must seek to use every moment wisely
1. The Greek text gives great clarity to Paul's charge. It is the same wording used in Ephesians 5.  
**Ephesians 5:16 KJV** - "Redeeming the time, because the days are evil."  
**Ephesians 5:16 NAU** - "making the most of your time, because the days are evil."
  2. The word means to deliver or buy up. In other words, knowing the finite nature of time we must view it as a precious commodity and in short supply. We must use each moment wisely.
  3. Each second must be seen as an opportunity that must not be wasted. This is especially true as we consider the reality of eternity that stands before all men.
    - a. For fallen humanity we have only a brief window of mercy; only a brief opportunity to repent of our sins and fall before the mercies of Christ.
    - b. For Christians, we have only a brief window of opportunity to reach them with the Gospel. We must make good use of every opportunity.

- B. Christians have been entrusted with the Gospel.
1. The Great Commission is given to us all – “Go make disciples of all the nations.” Don’t let Gospel opportunities pass you by.
  2. What about your lost family members? What about your neighbors, coworkers, fellow students? Lost people are all around us. We must give careful attention to this.
  3. We must be wise. Do you know how to respond to each person?
- C. We are to reach out to the lost
1. We need to pray for opportunities. This was Paul’s request in **verse 3 Colossians 4:3 NAU** - "praying at the same time for us as well, that God will open up to us a door for the word, so that we may speak forth the mystery of Christ, for which I have also been imprisoned;"
  2. We need to adopt a purposed life making wise use of our time. If lost people are all around us we need to be purposed in how we interact with them. How can live most effectively in the context of the Gospel?
  3. The problem with many Christians is they’ve placed their focus on the things that affect them in this world.  
If only we could get that new home. If only we could have that new car, new job. Our problem is an inward directed life – we look to ourselves and our needs.
  4. We need to live in light of eternity rapidly approaching.

### III. We are to be mindful of our words

"Let your speech always be with grace, *as though* seasoned with salt"

- A. Our words are important
1. Much is said about this in the NT  
**Ephesians 5:4 NAS** - "*there must be no* filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks."  
**James 3:2 NAU** - "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."  
**Matthew 12:36 NAU** - "But I tell you that every careless word that people speak, they shall give an accounting for it in the day of judgment."
  2. Just as we must measure our time and use it wisely, we are to measure our words and guard against words that harm.
    - a. We must guard against gossip, slander, words which tear down. Gossip isn’t necessarily speaking that which is false. It is speaking that which we should not speak. Sharing information that is not necessary for us to share and that the other person has no right to hear.
    - b. We must guard against sarcasm that hurts others.
    - c. We must guard against words spoken in anger.
    - d. We must guard against unwholesome or crude talking  
**Ephesians 5:4 NAS** - "*and there must be no* filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks."

- B. Our words must be gracious. They must build up, not tear down  
**Ephesians 4:29 NAU** - "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."  
**Colossians 4:6 NAU** - "Let your speech always be with grace, *as though* seasoned with salt"
1. Gracious words are a sweet savor to those who hear – “as though seasoned with salt.”
  2. Paul uses the word *χάρις*. The word can also refer to gratitude or thanksgiving.  
**Colossians 3:16 NAU** - "Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms *and* hymns *and* spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God."
  3. Our words should reflect our gratitude for God’s wonderful work of redemption. When Christians complain and murmur about the conditions of their life it demonstrates to the outsiders that Christ has made little difference in our lives.

#### Conclusion:

1. We are here in this life for just a brief season. James refers to our lives as a vapor—like steam that rises from a hot cup of coffee that appears for just a moment and then vanishes.  
**James 4:14 NAU** - "Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are *just* a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away."
2. While we are in this life we are to keep our minds fixed upon Christ and eternity.  
**Colossians 3:2 NAU** - "Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth."
3. At the same time, we are to set our minds upon this life – how are we to live? How are we to spend our brief sojourn upon the earth? How are we to live among those who do not know Christ? What are we to do with the opportunities that present themselves each day. What kind of attention should we give to what we speak?
4. It may be necessary to redirect your priorities to make the most of every opportunity God places before you.