

HOW TO CHANGE THE WORLD (#2) Colossians 4:2-6

Last week we began a message entitled, How to Change the World. Every one of us would agree that this old world is a sinking ship. Just Friday my two girls with children were theorizing about how they were going to raise their children to be selfless in a world that is so selfish, where people are so in love with themselves. And the short answer is, you pray, pray, pray and trust the Lord. But in addition, you also try to change the world around you; and as the first century church was accused, to turn the world upside down (Acts 17:6). And we saw that we begin to do that by **powerful prayers**. Paul says in Col. 4:2 that we are to pray earnestly and with vigilance. And we also began to look at the focus of those prayers, and saw that we are to pray for open doors to spread the gospel, and then for open mouths to share the gospel.

There is a third prayer that we must pray if we are to turn the world upside down for Jesus. We are to pray for open **doors**, open **mouths**, and we must also pray for open **hearts**. Please turn quickly to Acts 16. In vs. 6-10 we read that the Holy Spirit forbade Paul and Silas to go into Asia and Bithynia to preach the gospel, but then Paul had a vision in the night of a man from Macedonia pleading with him to come and preach the gospel to the Macedonians. So he and Silas knew that it was an open door and they immediately went through it and came to the city of Philippi. Now look at v. 13-14. Beloved, we can open our mouths and preach the blessed gospel of Jesus until we are blue in the face, but unless the Holy Spirit opens the hearts of the hearers to receive the truth our preaching will be in vain. So pray for open doors, and pray for open mouths, but also pray for open hearts! Have yourself a prayer list of lost people, either in your mind

or if your memory is like mine, written down. And call those people out to God every day, that He would open their hearts. Job 16:21 says, “Oh, that one might plead for a man with God, as a man pleads for his neighbor...” So I ask you, are you pleading with God for anyone’s soul today?

But there is another key that we must use if we are to turn the world upside down for Jesus. We must be **powerful in our prayers**, and we also must be **wise in our walk**. Look again at v. 5. The word “walk” simply refers to the way we live out of our daily lives. So Paul is actually saying, “Be wise in the way you live your life before those who are not saved”. Now, in other places Paul gets very specific with this charge. He says that we should walk in love, that we should walk honestly, that we should walk carefully and not as fools. But back in Col. 1:10 he gives us the bottom line. Look at it (read). Beloved, that says it all. To live each day in a manner that is worthy of the name Christian, in a manner in which Jesus is pleased. This was absolutely Paul’s purpose in life. He said in 2 Cor. 5:9, “Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to him”. And this was Jesus’ life purpose, too. He said of His Father in John 8:29, “....for I do always those things that please Him”. So I’d say that to be well-pleasing to God would be just about the best life purpose that you and I could pursue too, wouldn’t you? But beloved, to do this takes the wisdom of God!

Here is how the believers in the book of Acts demonstrated the wisdom of God. When you read through Acts you find an interesting description of the followers of Christ. Three times (9:2; 24:14, 22) they are called followers of The Way. And that is because the Christ-followers of the first century lived in a way that was radically different from those around them. They were not idol worshippers, they were not polygamists, they were not homosexuals, they were not drunkards. But they stood out for much more than just what they didn’t do. They took care of one another and they cared for their

neighbors. Why, they even loved and cared for their enemies! And their actions were so different and commanded such great attention amidst the ungodly culture in which they lived, that one day someone said, “Oh, those are just the people of The Way”, and the moniker stuck.

And beloved, you can be sure that their lives made an impact on those around them. In Acts 5 we read the account of how two believers, Ananias and Sapphira, lost their lives for lying to the Holy Spirit. And the people all around saw that God’s people live holy lives, and when they don’t God will discipline them, sometimes severely. And then we read about the miracles that the apostles performed shortly thereafter. And the people saw that God was a gracious, loving God Who met the needs of hurting people. And then the people saw the unity and love that the Christians had for one another. And the Bible says that they esteemed the believers highly and many were added to the church.

I just wonder - what kind of difference in a community would a church, any church, make if their members lived such holy lives, such consecrated lives to loving Jesus and serving others? What kind of difference do you think that Grant’s Creek could make? I can tell you. It is the same kind of difference that the Jerusalem church made. We would turn Fosters and Ralph upside down. For you see, beloved, so many times the sermon that people remember the most is the one they see. Why do you realize that the majority of people in our community never even hear a sermon! And if they get a sermon at all, it will be the one they see in the lives of the followers of Jesus. And that’s the whole reason that Paul said, “Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside...”

A few years ago I ran across a quote from an unknown author that should be the prayer of every Christian: “Help me to walk so close to Thee that those who know me best can see, I live as godly as I pray, and Christ is real from day to day”. What a goal!

To live as godly as we pray so others will know that Christ is real. Is this the kind of walk that you have with Jesus?

Let me tell you how God used the life of one man who was walking that kind of walk. I was talking to someone recently who told me that he was sitting in a Burger King one day and a man walked by him with two small children. He had never seen the man before. But he said that when the man walked past him a strange feeling came over him about that man, that he as a holy man, a Christian man. And so he got up and went to the man and asked if he was a Christian, and the man told him that he was. And because that Christian man was the real deal, because he was walking the walk, God used him to make a lasting impression on a total stranger.

Billy Graham tells the story of an old Methodist preacher who years ago was riding down the road on his horse, and a man who was working out in a field saw him. He knew the old preacher and he knew what a godly man he was, and he got under such conviction of sin that he hit his knees, and right there between the rows, all alone, he gave his life to Christ. That man's name was H.C. Morrison, and later he was the founder of a Methodist seminary. I want you to think about that for a moment. Among many Methodists, H.C. Morrison would be a familiar name, even a great name. But very few would know the name of that old Methodist preacher whose life influenced him so much. It was not in the article that I read. But beloved, I can tell you that his name is known in the only place that matters, and that is the throne room of Heaven. And that old preacher's rewards will be just as great as H. C. Morrison's for whatever good is done through Asbury Seminary.

Now, beloved, those are unusual stories, but I promise you, when you walk with God every day God will not let your walk with Him be in vain!! Your life **will** have just as much of an impact on someone, somewhere, even if you don't know who it is until you get to

Heaven. But you can be sure that it will! Jesus says in John 15 that if you abide in Him – which is what walking in wisdom is all about – that if you abide in Him you will bear much fruit (John 15: 7-8).

Now, what is the secret to walking in wisdom? Well, first of all let me assure you, **it is possible to walk in wisdom, to grow in wisdom from where you are right now.** I am not a deer hunter. But I can tell you, the most disappointing thing for a deer hunter is to go deer hunting day after day after day and never kill a deer, especially when you think you're going to freeze to death before you get out of the woods. Well, I heard something a few years ago that would give any deer hunter great encouragement. A casual friend of mine who's written a book on deer hunting told me how he could guarantee I would kill a deer. 100% guarantee. Now, beloved, that deer hunting expert doesn't know what he's talking about. Even if I had a deer in my crosshairs standing still and only 50 feet away, I might get buck fever, or I might get doe fever if there is such a thing. Or I might just feel sorry for the poor deer and let it walk. Nobody can give you a 100% guarantee you'll kill a deer.

But beloved, I'm telling you this morning on the authority of God's Word, I can guarantee you 100% there is a way to get God's wisdom. Proverbs 4:7 says, "Wisdom is the principle thing; therefore get wisdom. And in all your getting get understanding". Now, beloved, God would never have commanded us to get wisdom if it were not possible to get it! So let me quickly give you God's five point guarantee of His wisdom. Please write the down if you can.

First of all, fear the Lord.

Pvbs. 1:7 says, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom". Make knowing and serving God the passion of your life. Secondly, ask for wisdom. "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God.....and it shall be given him" (James 1:5). Thirdly, get into

God's Word. Col. 3:16: "Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom..."

Friends, the Bible is the gateway to all of God's truth! And above all other books spend your time devouring this Book, and you will find God's wisdom.

Fourthly, learn at the feet of wise men & women. Ps. 37: 30 says, "The mouth of the righteous speaks wisdom". There are godly people around you who can speak wisdom into your life if you will seek them out. Hang out with them; pick their brain. And hang out with the spiritual giants in their books, hear them on the radio or your iphone, or watch them preach on TV or on your computer. Beloved, listen! There are two types of wisdom, God's wisdom, and the world's wisdom, which God says He has made foolish (1 Cor. 1:20). But you will reap the wisdom of those you hang out with!

So I ask you, who do you hang with in your spare time? People who lift you up spiritually or who drag you down? What kind of TV programs do you hang out with? Ones that draw you closer to Jesus or ones that occupy your mind with what the King James Version calls vain things? And two meanings of the word "vain" are "insignificant" and "worthless", things that don't matter one iota in the scope of eternity. The psalmist says, "Turn away my eyes from looking at worthless things" (Ps. 119: 37). Why does it say that? Because looking at worthless things gives you worthless wisdom. You say, "But there isn't any good Christian programming on my cable or dish network". Weeellll, maybe you shouldn't be watching as much TV then. And ditto for the internet.

But please let me wade out a little deeper. What kind of radio stations are programmed into your car radio? What kind of reading material are you into? God says that we all need a little down time, but many of us stay in the "down mode" most of the time. And we pump our minds so full of meaninglessness and nothingness there is no room for God's wisdom. Look at 5 again. Paul says that we are to redeem the time. We are to make full use of our time on Kingdom's business. We have no time to lose in

winning a lost world to Jesus. So I exhort you, please don't let the precious hours of your day and your week be gobbled up by that which is meaningless and nothing. Seek wisdom from godly men and women and then redeem the time!

But let me warn you, when you seek wisdom from godly men you must be discerning! For there are many who claim to speak for God who do not. God says in 2 Cor. 11 that Satan transforms himself into an angel of light and his ministers transform themselves into ministers of righteousness. So don't think for a second that you will get God's wisdom from the TV talk show hosts or small claims court judges. And don't think for a second that you'll get God's wisdom from some TV preachers, some of whom are big name TV preachers. Let me tell you how you can discern whether or not a TV preacher is speaking God's wisdom. Do you ever hear him preaching the gospel or not. Do you ever hear him declaring that all men are sinners worthy of eternal death, and then call men to repentance of sin and faith in Jesus Christ as their only hope of eternal life. If a TV preacher never preaches the gospel, he is doing nothing more than giving advice, but it not wisdom from God, and he is a false prophet.

So far we've seen that we gain God's wisdom by fearing the Lord, by asking for wisdom, by getting into God's Word, and by learning at the feet of godly men. But there is a final means of gaining God's wisdom which the other four will always point you to. And that is, seek God's wisdom at the feet of Jesus. Go to Him in His Word. Meditate on what He said. Meditate on what He did. And beloved, you will find the wisdom of God! God says of Jesus in Col. 2:3, "in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge". One of our men says to me all the time, "All we really need for the practice of our faith are the words in red". And I have to remind him that all of the Bible is equally inspired, but he is right about one thing. You will never have God's wisdom unless you find it in Jesus Christ. Every other means of wisdom will point you to Jesus, God

incarnate. Jesus said, “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life”. And Peter said, “...for there is none other name under given among men by which we must be saved”.

There is a final key that God says we must use to turn the world upside down for Jesus. We must be **powerful** in your prayers and **wise** in our walk, but we also must be **sound in our speech**. Look at 6 again. Friends, there are few of us who truly understand the power of tongue. But listen to two who did. Solomon wrote in Proverbs 15:23, “A man has joy by the answer of his mouth, and a word spoken in due season, how good it is”. An encouraging word at just the right time is powerful for good. But James gives us the flip side of the power of the tongue. James 3: 6, 8: “And the tongue is a fire....and it is set on fire of hell....It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison”.

Now, let me tell you just why it is so important that your speech be sound when you talk with unsaved people. Because what you say can either draw them to Jesus or drive them away. Some people are empty inside and are searching for something to believe in. And when they hear your gracious, Spirit-filled words, those words will draw them to your Jesus. But others are just trying to catch Christians in a slip of the tongue so they can condemn them, just as the Pharisees did with Jesus. And when your tongue is loose and speaks what it should not, your speech drives them further away from the claims of Christ upon their lives. Solomon, the wisest man to ever live, tells us the gravity of our words better than anyone else. He writes in Proverbs 21:18, “Death and life are in the power of the tongue...” Oh, the powerful, powerful impact of your tongue! You can use it as an instrument of life, or you can use it as an instrument of death!

Well, Paul tells us two ways that our speech should touch those who are unsaved. First of all it should impart grace. “Let your speech always be with grace..” There are certainly times when we should speak about grace of Jesus Christ in our lives. As I said last week, that’s what a gospel witness is. It is not about church, it is not about living a

moral life, it is about Jesus. And that's our mission, to tell people about Jesus. But we can't spend every waking moment sharing the gospel. We must talk to people about business and personal matters if we are to get along in this world. But no matter the topic of conversation, our speech should always be filled with God's grace. It should be filled with kindness and love and truth. That was certainly the way it was with Jesus. The psalmist said of Jesus, "Grace is poured into your lips" (Ps. 45:2). Luke 4:22 said of Jesus, "And all....wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth".

There is an interesting parallel verse to v. 6 in Eph. Turn there to Eph. 4:29 (read). Notice that word "necessary". The word means "to have need". Another meaning is "that which is absolutely necessary for life". Do you see what Paul is saying here? He is saying that we all of a need in our lives for speech that builds us up and does not tear us down. We all have need for someone to speak to us words of grace. And friends, if anyone needs grace it is the person who is lost without Christ. Write this down, in your margin or in your heart. Gracious words come from loving people.

But our speech also needs to be seasoned with salt. We all know what salt does. It seasons, it preserves, and it is also an antiseptic, it purifies. And our speech in the company of unsaved people should do all three. It should be meaningful as opposed to frivolous, bringing flavor. And it should be godly as opposed to ungodly, preserving what is good in a conversation and exterminating what is bad. In fact, our speech should be so salty that those who know us will not dare use improper language in our presence, for they know that if they do the salt shaker will be shaking out all over them.

Now, I know what you may be thinking. You are thinking, "But that kind of speech is offensive, calling people on tier gossip or foul mouth". And you are right! But when you also speak with grace as you are commanded to do, God will often take those salty

words that are offensive and turn them into conviction in the hearts of the hearers, and some will be turn from their sin and be saved.

And notice what Paul says in the last part of vs. 6. “....that you may know how you ought to answer each one.” Friends, every conversation with a lost person is different. One pat answer does not fit all! And that takes us back to the need for wisdom. Without God’s wisdom our speech will never persuade anyone to follow our Christ.

We could spend another hour talking about the tongue. But let me leave you with one final thought about this small but mighty member of your body. Jesus said, “Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks” (Luke 6:45). If your heart is right, your tongue will be right. You may not have the answer to every question an unsaved person may hurl at you, but the Holy Spirit will give you wisdom to you will speak with grace and speak with salt, and your words will make a great impact for your Lord Jesus Christ.

So that brings us to a final question today. Is your heart right?