

HOW TO CHANGE THE WORLD

Colossians 4: 2-6

I must admit that the title of my sermon today is a bit ambitious. How to Change the World. If any man could bottle and sell that potion he would be a rich man indeed. Politicians and preachers and professors have been trying to change the world since Adam and Eve. But if you are a true believer in Jesus Christ, you should know that this is exactly what God has called His followers to do. And this is what the first century followers of Jesus were accused of doing. We read in Acts 17 the account of Paul's first visit to the city of Thessalonica. And after three short weeks Paul had stirred up such a stink by his many converts, here's what the jealous Jews were saying. They cried out, "These who have turned the world upside down have come here, too".

And this was exactly what Paul wanted to do! Paul's passion was to change every person in the world that he possibly could. In Col. 1 he declared that his mission was warning **every** man and teaching **every** man, that he might present **every** man perfect in Christ Jesus (Col. 1:28). For you see, he had experienced a change in his life that he never wanted, never expected, and never dreamed possible. But as Saul of Tarsus, God made him a completely new person on the Damascus road in a split second. He was accosted and transformed from a Christ hater to a Christ follower. He was brought out of spiritual darkness into dazzling spiritual light. He was snatched off the road to hell and securely placed on the road to heaven. And it was such a glorious experience he knew in that moment that he would be telling others about this Jesus for the rest of his life.

Friend, if you are a Christian today, if you are saved, you've had your own Damascus road experience. It may

not have been as dramatic as Paul's, but you have been just as supernaturally transformed. And God has given the challenge to turn the world upside down to you and to me just as surely as He gave it to Paul and to the Colossians. And today we are going to see how God tells us to go about it.

Turn in your Bibles, please, to Colossians 4: 2-6. In these verses we can see three clear keys to turning our world upside down for Jesus Christ. And they will work for any church anywhere that will reach out and try them. And the first key that Paul shows to us is that we must be **powerful in our prayers**. We saw last week just why we must pray, that without God we would have absolutely nothing in this world. The clothes on our back, the next meal we eat, the air we breathe – they are all gracious gifts from God. We also saw that without God we are nothing in the Kingdom of God and we can do nothing for the Kingdom's sake. We are a big, fat **0**.

Here's how Jim Cymbala, the pastor of Brooklyn Tabernacle put it. Jim said, "Unless what we do is supernatural it is not Christian ministry". That's pretty sobering, isn't it? If what you and I do for Jesus – my preaching, your teaching, your singing, your visiting, your giving, your praying, your cooking, your youth or children's work – if it is not infused with the supernatural power of God it is not Christian ministry. And supernatural power comes from powerful prayers. God's promise in James 5:16 is, "The prayer of a righteous person has great power". And we spent much time last week talking about this type of prayer - earnest, vigilant prayer, agonizing prayer.

Well, today we see what the focus of our prayers should be if we are to turn the world upside down for Jesus. First of all Paul tells us in v. 3 that we should pray for **open doors**. Beloved, you can be sure of one thing in

this world. And that is, the devil does not want to lose one of his own. Paul writes in Ephesians 2 that every person who is born is born a child of wrath. And their only hope of deliverance is to hear the Word of Christ. And in the places where the Word has not yet penetrated Satan will garner all the forces of hell to keep it out. And that's why Paul urges the Colossians to pray for God to open the door for the preaching of the gospel. And listen to God's promise when He opens the door. Jesus told the church at Philadelphia in Rev. 3:8: ".....See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it..." Friends, that's how much God wants to get the gospel out to the world. He opens doors that no one can shut. No matter how much the Muslim Jihadists try to exterminate the Christian faith from their countries, and from the world, they cannot stop the Lord Jesus when He opens up the door for the gospel to a Muslim man through a dream. And many are having dreams about Jesus, and many are being saved.

But God is opening up doors in many other ways for His children to share the gospel. This week I was talking to a lady who works for an organization called Faith Comes by Hearing, whose purpose is to get the Word of God into the hands of as many people around the world as they can. And she said that about six years ago they got a call from one of the top ranking chaplains in the US Army, asking that Faith Comes by Hearing supply them with as many MP3 players with the New Testament on it as they could. And in a day when our government is trying to silence our godly chaplains from preaching Christ, this was huge. And so they started producing and shipping those players as fast as they could afford to send them, and to date 400,000 of our troops have received one. Now, they had no idea that they would have this opportunity. But God wanted our soldiers to hear His Word, and so He opened the door to Faith Comes by

Hearing to share it, and they said “Yes, we will go through that door”.

Sometime early last summer we got a call from the football coach at Sipsey Valley. And he asked if he could bring the football team to our church for a Squad Sunday. And many of you were here the day that they came. But God graciously opened a door for us to preach the gospel, and we knew that it was His will for us to walk through it, and we did. So beloved, that is what we should be praying for first of all if we want to change the world. That God will open up a door for the Word.

Now, there are two other things that we must pray for God to open that I want you to see quickly. Look at v. 4. Paul is talking about making manifest the mystery of Christ which he spoke of in v. 3. And he is asking the Colossians to pray for him that he might boldly proclaim the mystery of Christ. Listen to how he expresses this same idea to the Ephesians in Eph. 6:18-19: “praying always.....for me...that I may **open my mouth boldly** to make known the mystery of the gospel”. So we need to pray not only for open doors for the gospel, but also for open mouths to share it.

Now, let me share with you how Satan will waylay your efforts to share the gospel. First of all, he will cause us to **delay** our witness. Do you know what the devil will tell most of us who want to share the gospel? He will whisper into our ears, “Now, don’t you rush things with him. You may drive him away. You know that he’s not ready to hear the gospel just yet. You must cultivate him a little longer”. And then the next time you have an opportunity to share with him the devil will say again, “Just a little longer”, and beloved, soon your opportunity will be gone. And I am sad to tell you that I know from experience what I’m talking about. A number of years ago I made a visit to an elderly man in our community who

lived alone. He was unchurched and from all indications he was lost. But he was a nice man and received me graciously into his home. As I remember, we had a good conversation, and I'm sure that I invited him to church. I left thinking that I sure needed to follow up with him. But I never got the chance. For I received news in less than a week that he was dead. And I've always regretted that I did not witness to him when I had the chance. Beware lest Satan cause you to delay your witness.

But there is a second way the devil diffuses our witness. And it is somewhat related to the first. He will cause us to **distort** our witness. Notice what Paul says in v. 3 again. He asks for prayers that he might speak "the mystery of Christ". And the word "mystery" simply means a spiritual truth that can only be made real by God". But God uses His children to share the truth of Jesus, and then the Holy Spirit rams home the truth in the human heart.

But beloved, our message is the message of Jesus! It is not, "Come to my church". It is, "Come to my Christ". Now, don't get me wrong. It is not wrong to invite people to church. I do it all the time. And churches everywhere plan everything in the world to try to get people to come. Pancake breakfasts and pot-luck dinners, salad luncheons and steak suppers. And let me emphasize, nobody enjoys those gatherings more than I do, except for the salad luncheons. Why, do you know what I'd like for us to do? I'd just announce that we were going to have a pot-luck lunch after church every Sunday, but I don't want to live alone the rest of my life.

But let me tell you, beloved, sometimes these events distort our witness. Because sometimes that's as far as our witness goes. We invite people to events, but we never get around to telling them about Jesus. And when we cease to tell people about Jesus we cease to be a New

Testament church and begin to be Nice Person club. And beloved, America is full of Nice Person clubs! They turn naughty sinners into nice sinners, and then those nice sinners think that they are right with God. But they are still sinners and they still go to hell.

You may be here this morning and your idea of a Christian is someone who believes in God, perhaps goes to church, and is a nice person. Friend, I tell you on the authority of God's perfect Word that nothing could be further from the truth. Let me tell you what a true Christian is. A Christian is someone who has turned away from the life that they used to live and is now trusting in Christ alone for their hope of Heaven and following Christ alone as their Master on earth. They have confessed their sins to Jesus, confessed that Jesus paid the penalty for their sins on the cross and rose from the dead, turned away from their sins as best as they know how, and they've cried out to Jesus to save them by faith alone, apart from anything else they could do. For the Bible says, "We are all sons of God through faith in Jesus Christ" (Gal. 3:26).

Put most simply, a true Christian has cried out and said, "God, give me Jesus! Give me Jesus alone to save my soul. Give me Jesus to restore peace to my marriage, or give me Jesus to lead me to the right marriage partner and the right career. Give me Jesus to guide me to make the right choices every day of my life. Give me Jesus to protect me from evil. I need nothing else and I want nothing else. Just give me Jesus!"

(Give Me Jesus solo)

And I pray that this is the heart cry of every one of us today. If you are not saved, that you may be saved today. And if you are saved, that you may radiate Christ in your life more than ever before.

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 you're 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..." Are you pleading with God for anyone's soul?

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 (read). The word "walk" simply refers to the living 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.

When you read through the book of 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 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 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 they saw the unity and love that the Christians had for one another. And the Bible says that the people esteemed the believers highly and many were added to the church.

Beloved, I could never, ever, ever, ever overstress to you the importance of walking the walk. All I can say is this, so many times the sermon that people see is the one they remember the most. 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". Can those who know

you best see that you live as godly as you pray, and that Jesus Christ is real because He is real in your life?

Let me tell you how God used the life of one man who was walking the walk every day. I was talking to someone just this week 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 God used that Christian man, just by his godly life, 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 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 the just as much of an impact on someone, somewhere,

even if you don't know it until you get to Heaven. But you will know it there! God says, "...the good works of some are clearly evident, and those that are otherwise cannot be hidden" (1 Tim. 5:25). Meaning if your good works aren't seen now, God will surely recognize them in Heaven.

Now, what is the secret to walking in wisdom? Well, first of all let me assure you, **it is possible to grow in wisdom**. 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, he doesn't know what he's talking about. 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 them down if you can.

First of all, fear the Lord. Twice the Bible says, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom". Make knowing and serving God the passion of your life. Secondly, you ask for it. "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God.....and it shall be given him" (James 1:5). Ask God for wisdom. Thirdly, learn 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 be wiser for it! God says of His Son in Col. 2:3, “in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge”. Fourthly, learn at the feet of wise men. 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. And lastly, get into God’s Word. Col. 3:16: “Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom...”

Out time is almost gone, but I must mention one more key that God says we must use to turn the world upside down for Jesus. We must be **powerful** in our prayers and **wise** in our walk, but we also must be **sound in our speech**. Look at v. 6 again (read 6a). Our speech may not always be about grace of Christ, although sometimes it needs to be. But our speech should always be with grace. It should be with kindness and love. And it should be like salt, it should make a difference for good in the lives of those we converse with. Listen to just two verses from Proverbs that tell us of the power of the tongue:

Proverbs 18:21 “Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit”.

Proverbs 12:18 – “There is one that speaks like the piercings of a sword: but the tongue of the wise *is* health”.