

“ARE YOU A SOUL-WINNER?”
[With a “winsome lifestyle and speech?]
COLOSSIANS 4:5-6
Pastor Keith E. Gephart

INTRODUCTION

This section calls upon Christians to manifest discreet behavior. It is likely that some charges of misconduct had been leveled against Christians in Colossae (as well as in other places!).

1. Christians were often called *atheists* since they had no visible gods that they worshiped.
2. They were called *unpatriotic* because they would not burn incense before the emperor’s image.
3. They were called *immoral* because often they had to meet secretly and were rumored to be cannibals, eating human flesh and blood!
- The Colossian believer must therefore be careful both 1) in **lifestyle** (v. 5) and 2) in **speech** (v. 6).
- Therefore, they must live not only **virtuously**—not wickedly, but also **wisely**—not foolishly.
- Such proper lifestyle and speech will both “remove unfounded suspicions” about them and also “further the acceptance of the gospel” (V. 222).
- Then as now, “**the reputation of the gospel depends on the conduct of its devotees.**” Paul could well have implied here that “though few men read the sacred scrolls, all men read you” (H. 182).

But the **positive purpose** is also extremely important—winning these outsiders to a saving knowledge of Christ—seen especially in “redeeming the time.”

YOU MUST WIN PEOPLE TO CHRIST—WITH WINSOME AND WISE LIFE, AND GRACIOUS AND WINSOME WORDS—Buy up every opportunity; know how to respond to each person!

- 1) Christians must use caution and tact “so as to avoid needlessly antagonizing or alienating our pagan neighbors.
- 2) That is the negative side; but the positive side is just as important. We must live in such a way so as to make Christianity attractive, not repulsive, to unbelievers.
- 3) We must seek to impress and bring conviction to the hearts of observers, giving people a favorable impression of the gospel message and lifestyle.
- 4) In the early days of the Church, Christianity was called “The Way,” because they were known and identified by their beliefs and by their lifestyle.

I. WINNING PEOPLE WITH YOUR LIFE (5)

- A. Conduct your life with wisdom—found in Scripture, led by the Spirit. (cf. Col. 1:9-10)
 1. “Outsiders” are non-Christians, outside the fellowship (I Thes. 4:12; I Cor. 5:12-13)—therefore “without God, without Christ, without hope” (cf. Eph. 2:12).
 2. Our desire must be to reach them and get them into the fellowship, not turning them away.
 3. We must avoid disgraceful sins, manifest a holy consistency, maintain the purity of the gospel, **but also** manifest the amiability of Christianity, its loveliness of temper, its generosity, and its charity.
- B. Make the most of every opportunity—“redeeming the time.”
 1. The literal idea is “buy up thoroughly, totally”; intensive use of preposition “buy out of.”
 2. The idea here is not of a literal redemption. Believers must buy up all the time that is available to us.
 3. The goal is obviously to influence these non-believers for Christ and His salvation.
 4. “Time”=significant time, God’s time, or opportunity—A “divine appointment.” **We all have the same time. Paul has us go into the open market and buy it up by using it rightly.**
 5. Paul’s point here is, “Do not just sit there and wait for opportunity to fall into your lap, but go after it. Yes, buy it. Buy up the entire stock of opportunity.”

- Don't count the cost; one saved soul is worth whatever effort is required! (See Pr. 11:30; Rom. 11:14).
- Although Paul omits here what he said in Eph. 5:16—"for the days are evil," such is surely implied. Time is fleeting; opportunities are wasting. The Consummation is approaching!
- In Paul's words, "The night is far gone; the day is at hand"; salvation is nearer than when we first believed (Rom. 13:11-12); take advantage of every opportunity before it is too late. The time is short (I Cor. 7:29); in due time we will reap for good behavior, so we must take advantage of every opportunity to do good works (Gal. 6:9, 10).
- Christ is coming again and Paul has already told believers to "watch/set the mind on" things above, not on things beneath (3:2).
- We must take advantage of all the open doors God gives us (cf. v. 3).

II. WINNING PEOPLE WITH YOUR WORDS (V. 6)

- A. What "speech"?—**Both** ordinary conversation and gospel presentation!
- B. What "grace"?
 1. Must include the grace of God—Paul's consistent usage of this word.
 2. The context requires also the other use of the word as "graciousness, winsome."
- C. What "salt" for "seasoning"?
 1. "Seasoned" is perfect passive.
 - The passive voice indicates the effects of grace upon the believer's speech through the H S.
 - The perfect tense depicts a past action that manifests permanent results up to the present.
 2. Consistently and "always" (πάντοτε) manifested in the life of the Christian.
 3. Paul places emphasis here upon the "pleasantness, attractiveness, charm, and winsomeness" of the believer's speech (Vaughan, 222).
 4. With salt—to indicate the way he expects the grace of God to influence the believer's speech.
 - a. Brings out the good flavor—makes "tasteful," "never insipid."
 - b. Preserves from corruption—helps keep fresh, renders wholesome.
 - c. The speech of the Christian must be "thought-provoking and worth-while"; it must "not repel. The gospel must be given, yet with words that help "make the gospel attractive."
- D. What "answer"?
 1. We must "know" how to answer.
 - Paul's statement here reminds us of I Pet. 3:15.
 - Christ promised His disciples that He would give them "a mouth and wisdom."
 - We see the fulfillment of these promises throughout the book of Acts (Acts 6:10).
 2. Questions to the Christian might involve doctrine, ethics, evidence, church practice.
 3. The best answers need not be long ones—in fact, are usually to the point and effective.
 4. The believer seeks to stir people out of apathy and indifference to accept Christ.
- E. What "person"?
 1. The same response is not adequate for every individual. One must be led by the Spirit & grace.
 2. Thus the speech is appropriate for each one. "One kind of answer will not suffice for all.

CONCLUSION

Thomas states, "So today, our speech should be useful, never trivial, helpful, never flippant, forceful, never feeble."

Our conduct must be godly, practical, and timely.

Are your life and words taking advantage of every opportunity to share with others and win others?

YOU MUST WIN PEOPLE TO CHRIST—WITH WINSOME AND WISE LIFE, AND GRACIOUS AND WINSOME WORDS—Buy up every opportunity; know how to respond to each person!