

Life in Christ at Work and Home

Colossians 3:22 – 4:6 – August 22, 2010

- **Life in Christ in Regards to** _____
Colossians 3:22 – 4:1

A big problem in the work-place

- **Life in Christ in Regards to** _____
Colossians 4:2-4

Characteristics of a healthy prayer life

1. It requires one's _____.

2. It requires _____.

Matthew 26:41

Nehemiah 4:9

Acts 1:14

Ephesians 6:18

I Thessalonians 5:17

3. It requires _____!

4. It should be _____.

God loves to be _____!

Proverbs 15:8

Romans 11:35-36

James 4:3

- **Life in Christ in Regards to** _____
Colossians 4:5

I Corinthians 5:9-10, 12

John 17:15, 18

- **Life in Christ in Regards to the** _____
Colossians 4:6

“*SPEECH ... WITH GRACE*” =

I Peter 3:15

Proverbs 15:23

Proverbs 16:21

Proverbs 16:24

Ecclesiastes 10:12

Wrap Up:

Put on the new self and let it change how you _____,
how you _____ and how you act and talk
around unbelievers!

My NEXT STEP for This Week:

- Write your prayer focus for this week so the pastors/elders can pray along with you.

Life in Christ at Work and Home

Colossians 3:22 – 4:6 – August 22, 2010

Intro: Now Paul leaves the home and goes to the factory, office and job site ... and explains how the Lordship of Christ applies there.

➤ Life in Christ in Regards to EMPLOYMENT

Colossians 3:22-25

Slaves, in all things obey those who are your masters on earth, not with external service, as those who merely please men, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord.

3:23 Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men,

3:24 knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve.

3:25 For he who does wrong will receive the consequences of the wrong which he has done, and that without partiality.

Principles for employees

You're probably thinking ... the text says "slaves" ... but you're calling them "employees?" The text is speaking to slaves ... for slavery was dominant in the first century. But the principles for slaves are the same for employees. I don't think there can be much argument here. I am not trying to ignore the subject of slavery ... for that is an appropriate study at another time.

What becomes clear

Slaves and employees need to remember that they work for the Lord ... and should fear Him when they do not perform adequately.

The Lord is addressing a problem that has been around for ages.

A big problem in the work-place

LAZINESS

Exhortation:

We are to consider the Lord as our boss!

Story Missionary with a glass eye

A missionary to Africa tells the story that he was responsible for getting the nationals in his area to do certain jobs. He discovered that they were all rather lazy and would only perform while he was actually watching them. When he left they would stop work and do nothing until he returned. This man had a glass eye, and one day when his eye was irritating him he took it out and put it on a stump. When he returned he found that everybody was still working because the "eye," as they thought, was watching them all the while he was away.

That is what the apostle means here: eye-service; working only when the boss is watching.

The missionary thought he had found a great way to free himself, until one day he returned to discover that one of the workers had sneaked around from behind and put his hat over the eye, and everyone was lounging around not working again, enjoying themselves. That is eye-service! (Ray Stedman)

Transition: The next group of people that need to ...

- *Put on the new self* ... (3:10)
- *Put on a heart of compassion* (3:12)
- *Put on kindness* (3:12)
- *Put on gentleness* (3:12)
- *Put on patience* (3:12)
- Forgive others (3:13)...
- *Put on love* ... Are found in chapter 4:1.

Colossians 4:1

Masters, grant to your slaves justice and fairness, knowing that you too have a Master in heaven.

Principles for employers – rules for the boss!

Taking advantage of employees is unacceptable!

Christian employers need to be fair ...

And Christian employers need to consider themselves employees as well ... who have a Boss in heaven!

THEIR MASTER IS WATCHING THEM ... IN THE SAME WAY THAT EMPLOYEES HAVE A HEAVENLY MASTER WATCHING THEM.

Transition: Now the Lord directs His attention to our prayer life ... or lack of it.

➤ **Life in Christ in Regards to PRAYER**

Colossians 4:2

Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving;

The subject of prayer is always one I need to examine in my own life. I see the importance of prayer. I know prayer changes things. But I do not pray enough! I'm not trying to be humble ... I'm being honest. Prayer continues to be an area that needs my attention. So I need this study every bit as much as you do! So let's look at this together!

Someone said

The two greatest things we can do with our mouths is pray and praise our God.

One of our most important spiritual disciplines is prayer!

Oswald Chambers

*Prayer does not **EQUIP** us for greater works— prayer **IS** the greater work.*

Characteristics of a healthy prayer life

1. It requires one's **DEVOTION**

“Devote” = to give constant attention to, to persevere in.

The point: *Don't quit! Keep it up! Be faithful in it!*

A godly man in my former church was a man of prayer ...

I visited him on his death bed, and he was barely conscious. When he recognized me as one of his pastors he said, “*I’m praying for you.*” This time with him and his statement has stuck with me for 25 years!

That which promotes a life of prayer

God-consciousness in all things and at all times

2. It requires **ALERTNESS**

“*keeping alert*” = Don’t make prayer a tag on to the day!

Leaders in my former church

Met monthly from 6:00 in the evening until whenever we finished with business. After we finished with business we would pray. And there’s one thing I know about that prayer time. I was not alert during those times.

Matthew 26:41

“Keep watching and praying that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

When Tobias and Sanballat threatened Nehemiah and the Jews rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem ... Nehemiah responded ...

Nehemiah 4:9

But we prayed to our God, and because of them we set up a guard against them day and night.

This story is the basis of Charles Spurgeon’s books and sermons.

The Sword and the Trowel

Story ... An old pastor in Georgia used to say,

“*When a farmer prays for a corn crop, God expects him to say “AMEN” with a hoe*”

If you’re praying for something ... pray and get busy!

The early church ...

Acts 1:14

These all with one mind were continually devoting themselves to prayer ...

Ephesians 6:18

With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, **be on the alert** with all perseverance and petition for all the saints,

I Thessalonians 5:17

pray without ceasing;

3. It requires **THANKFULNESS!**

“keeping alert ... with an attitude of thanksgiving”

Thankfulness cannot be emphasized enough.

When we are thankful in prayer we will not be selfish in our prayers.

We always have much for which to be thankful! Even in the midst of life’s most difficult hours!

4. It should be **SPECIFIC**

Colossians 4:3a

“praying at the same time for us as well ...

Prayers can notoriously be vague and general (i.e. *Lord, help all the missionaries all over the world*)

Paul will list *exactly* what he wanted prayer for. He was not ambiguous. He asked for very specific things!

Colossians 4:3-4

praying ... 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;
4:4 that I may make it clear in the way I ought to speak.

The specific needs for every pastor and missionary

Prayer for opportunities to share the gospel

Application

Paul is praying for divine encounters ... that the people he meet be people God has put in his path.

That opportunities to share the gospel would happen wherever he went.

My friends, there is a prayer I would ask you to offer for every one of your pastors. It is a prayer that God would open up doors into the hearts of those we come in contact with ... especially those who sit under our teaching!

I find it interesting ...

Paul asked for prayer that he would have clear speech ... speech appropriate for the moment and the listener.

“that I may make it clear in the way I ought to speak”

If Paul is asking for clear speech ... how much more would every other pastor need this prayer

J Vernon McGee said it well

Let God open the door – before you make the mistake of putting your foot in your mouth

I like what someone said ...

Don't say to a pastor ...

THE LEAST I CAN DO IS PRAY FOR YOU

It is better to say ...

THE MOST I CAN DO IS TO PRAY FOR YOU!

PRINCIPLES CONCERNING PRAYER ...

Richard Trench

*Prayer is not **overcoming** God's **reluctance**; it is laying hold of His **willingness***

****DON'T MISS THIS!****

God loves to be **ASKED!**

Proverbs 15:8

"... the prayer of the upright is His delight.

Think about this:

God has no need of anything

One pastor said

"{God} takes special steps to see to it that he is constantly badgered."

Why does God love to be asked?

It is because it is His very nature to be a GIVER!

Romans 11:35-36

Or WHO HAS FIRST GIVEN TO HIM THAT IT MIGHT BE PAID BACK TO HIM AGAIN?
11:36 For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.

Helpful to note

God gives so His glory is revealed and acknowledged!

Well said

It is more glorious to be a Giver than a getter

JP

So let me say it again ... it is the nature of God to give!

We cannot give anything to God with the exception of our 100% devotion!

But let me just give a qualifier concerning prayer.

God loves to give when our *motives* are *pure* ... but not when our motives are *impure*

James 4:3

You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures.

I marvel at a prayer by Martin Luther – 1540

Luther's great friend and assistant, Friedrich Myconius, became sick and was expected to die within a short time. On his bed he wrote a loving farewell note to Luther with a trembling hand. Luther received the letter and sent back a reply:

"I command you in the name of God to live because I still have need of you in the work of reforming the church.... The Lord will never let me hear that you are dead, but will-

permit you to survive me. For this I am praying, this is my will, and may my will be done, because I seek only to glorify the name of God.”

This pastor’s perspective

I am impressed with Luther’s prayer ... but I have never had this kind of faith. I cannot and will not criticize Luther for this ... and commend Luther for this. But these words are shocking to me.

And here’s the rest of the story ...

Although Myconius had already lost the ability to speak when Luther’s letter came, he recovered completely and lived six more years to survive Luther himself by two months.

God was glorified by Luther’s prayer and by Luther’s faith!

But let me add ...

God is not obligated to answer our prayers according to our will

A couple of things to keep in mind

God answers prayers in different ways

God may say **YES** ... and God may say **NO!** And a “NO” is an answer to prayer.

God may **DELAY** in answering and say wait ... but a delay is not necessarily a denial ... or a no!

Transition: Paul then exhorts us in an important part of our lives!

➤ **Life in Christ in Regards to UNBELIEVERS**

Colossians 4:5

Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity.

“*CONDUT YOURSELVES*” = how you behave around the unsaved.

“*WITH WISDOM*” = Guarding what you say and what you do ... requires wisdom.

“*OUTSIDERS*” = those outside the family of God ... unbelievers.

Some believers think they should have no contact with unbelievers!

I Corinthians 5:9-10, 12

I wrote you in my letter not to associate with immoral people;

5:10 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.

5:12 For what have I to do with judging outsiders?

It becomes obvious ...

- It is God’s design that we have contact with unbelievers
- We are told not to judge outsiders ... they live godless because they are godless.
- We can criticize them until the cows come home ... but this will only hinder our witness to them. They sinners in need of our Savior!

But we need to be careful ... Jesus prayed for us concerning this ...

John 17:15, 18

“I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one.
17:18 “As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world.”

“*MAKING THE MOST OF THE OPPORTUNITY*” = Looking for times when you God would have use you around unbelievers.

Application:

Look at your encounters with unbelievers as *DIVINE OPPORTUNITIES!*

And then we need wisdom in how to navigate in our dialogue with unbelievers.

This pastor’s perspective

Don’t force yourself on others ...

Let the Lord open a door of opportunity to talk with others about the Lord

Safe topics

Sports ... computers ... yard maintenance ... cars ... mechanics

This pastor’s exhortation

Don’t waste your opportunities with unbelievers ... by not praying for a chance ... or being cognizant of an opening in a conversation.

Look for windows of opportunity to talk about the Lord

Transition: I see verse 6 directly associated with verse 5.

➤ **Life in Christ in Regards to the TONGUE**

Colossians 4:6

Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person.

• The use of our tongue around UNBELIEVERS

The context leads me to believe that Paul is taking us a step further in our dealings with unbelievers ... that which was introduced in verse 5.

✓ In verse 5 we’re instructed on how to ACT around unbelievers.

✓ In verse 6 we’re instructed on how to TALK around unbelievers

“*SPEECH ... WITH GRACE*” =

I Peter 3:15

... 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;

Discipleship Evangelism training ...

I can think of no better training for this than D.E.!

Ron Ritchie's (former pastor at Peninsula Bible Church) strategy ...

When traveling on a plane ... which he did a lot of ... he developed this strategy when sitting next to someone. He'd ask them their name and what they do for a living. He was usually asked the same. And when he told them what he did for a living he'd say ...

I'M A TEACHER

People would almost always ask ... *what do you teach?*

He'd say ...

I TEACH PEOPLE ABOUT JESUS IF THEY WANT TO LISTEN

This allows people a non-threatening way to see if divine opening has been given.

In other words ...

This is graceful conversation

This is speech seasoned with grace ...

“SEASONED WITH SALT” = Salt enhances flavor ... salt acts as a purifying influence

“Grace is the salt which seasons our discourse, makes it savory, and keeps it from corrupting

John MacArthur

The speech of the new man should add charm and wit to conversation

Transition: Speech seasoned with grace is very necessary in our dialogue with believers, too!

- The use of our tongue around BELIEVERS

Proverbs 15:23

A man has joy in an apt answer, and how delightful is a timely word!

THE CHALLENGE

Wisdom to say the right thing at the right time!

Proverbs 16:21

The wise in heart will be called discerning, and sweetness of speech increases persuasiveness.

Notice what makes what we say persuasive

SWEETNESS OF SPEECH

Sarcasm does little if anything to enhance godly dialogue

Proverbs 16:24

Pleasant words are a honeycomb, Sweet to the soul and healing to the bones.

Ecclesiastes 10:12

Words from the mouth of a wise man are gracious, while the lips of a fool consume him;

Humor can be a great aid in speaking with grace ... but

Humor can **WARM** and humor can **BURN**

Humor can lift a discouraged soul ... but the wrong use of humor can damage a soul as well!

Wrap Up:

Put on the new self and let it change how you **WORK**, how you **PRAY** and how you act and talk around unbelievers!