

Devotion on Book of Colossians (Chapter 4 v1-6) - 30 May 2014, Anno Domini (Ascensiontide)

(Anno Domini, abbreviated AD or A.D. expressly complies with Isaiah 61:2 & Luke 4:19, i.e. "To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD." (Isaiah 61:2))



¹ Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal; knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven. ² Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving; ³ Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds: ⁴ That I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak. ⁵ Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time. ⁶ Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man. (Col 4:1-6)

In our last devotion, we discussed the duties and obligations of wives, husbands, children, fathers, and servants. That devotion is actually concluded in the first verse of the next chapter (4) concerning MASTERS. Paul is referring to any earthly master who has authority or responsibility over some aspect of your life as a student, an employee, or a soldier. But in the greater sense, there is only one who is your Master, and that is the Lord. All human laws are subordinate to His Supreme Law. We are forever counseled to obey God and not man (or man's government) when it contrasts with that Supreme Law of God. An earthly master is not someone who is necessarily 'better' than another. He is simply someone who has been assigned a position of authority in government, business, education, etc. We are all, in some respect, masters and servants.

How should masters treat their subjects? They should treat them, of course, in the same way that they would wish to be treated if the roles were reversed. The golden rule is expansive and has application to every aspect of life. If a master treats EVERY subject with the same care as he would like to be treated, there can be not inequality of treatment among his charges. It requires a high level of Godly conscience to be a master and not one who discriminates. It would be wiser to avoid the role if we cannot live up to its standard: "*My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation.*" (James 3:1) A teacher (or master) has a grave responsibility to not only know well the subject, but possess the elocution of imparting that knowledge to his student.

Now we will examine a new area of Paul's counsel to the Colossians in verses 2-6. He counsels regarding 1) Prayer; 2) Watchfulness; 3) Gratitude; and 4) Bearing Fruit.

PRAYER: Paul counsels to "*Continue in prayer*" for themselves and for the Church at Colosse. "Charity begins at home" is a rule that applies personally in prayer.

Unless we have prayed for light and guidance in our own lives, of what benefit will our prayers be for others? We are to be always in an attitude of prayer. Our lives are literally walking prayers. There is a time to exhort, to preach, to teach, to engage in the labors of life – but there is also, as did Christ, a time to resort to the mountain (quiet place apart) for prayer. Prayer fortifies the soul of man and brings him into communion with God. Prayer truly opens our eyes to what God wants for us and causes us to subordinate our desires to His. It is, as well, a seeking for wisdom.

Secondly, Paul being a prisoner in Rome, seeks – and NEEDS – prayers for himself that the Word of the Lord will go out from the very headquarters of mammon. *“Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds: 4 That I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak.”* (Col 4:3-4) Preaching is as a two-edged sword that either convicts or condemns. Either way, it satisfies the justice, or mercy, of God. Making the mysteries Christ and His Gospel known in the very seat of anti-Christ is essential. Perchance, some mind and heart may be turned to Christ but, if not, those hearers can never come before the Judgment Seat declaring that “Nobody ever told us!” Christians need to hold each other up in prayer. Prayer sustains from any distance. And we especially need to hold up the ministers of God in prayer – that they will speak courageously the truth of the Gospel, that they will not be tempted to compromise with the world, that they will stand strong in the day of reckoning.

WATCHFULNESS: *“watch in the same with thanksgiving.”* This subject area follows hard on the heels of the first – PRAYER. Watchfulness must attend prayer in times of stress and danger. As Jesus said to His disciples: *“Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.”* (Matt 26:41) So we see that watchfulness complements prayer. We must keep on guard against temptation, and then pray for the Lord’s help in rejecting it. Prayer strengthens the soul while watchfulness protects both body and soul. We are not only to keep watch against threats to our own souls, but those which threaten the souls of others. A dedicated watchman may save a city and a nation. *“And I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it: but I found none.”* (Ezek 22:30) It is often the case that one solitary patriot may save thousands and millions from ruin.

GRATITUDE: Gratitude will garner more blessings than the plow will do for the farmer. Ingratitude stifles the fountain of blessings. A father loves to give wonderful gifts to his little daughter – the Apple of his Eye. But if the girl is not appreciative, she will care little for even the gift.

The first principle is to love the giver more than the gift. I read a story once about a little girl who saw some cheap, cosmetic pearls in a grocery checkout line. She begged her mother for the imitation pearls, but her mother said, “Lucy, nothing comes at without cost. You must save your allowance money to buy those gaudy pearls if you want them.” Lucy saved her allowance for the next three weeks and proudly purchased the false string of pearls. She loved that one necklace more than any other of her possessions. She never took them off except to bathe and to sleep. At night, she would lay them on the nightstand next to her bed. Her father, who came in and kissed her “goodnight” each evening felt badly about the pearls that the girl treasured so – they were too cheap for his daughter. One night, he entered and kissed her good night and asked, as he always did, “Do you love Daddy more than anything, Lucy?” Lucy responded, as she always did, “Of course, Daddy. You know I do!” He then asked, “Do you love me enough to give me your pearl necklace?” The girl’s countenance fell as she

answered, "Anything, Daddy, but my pearl necklace. I love it most of all." The father did this every night with the same results for about a month. Finally, the little girl began to feel guilty. What was a cheap pearl necklace compared to her father. So the next night, the father came in and kissed Lucy 'good night' and asked if she loved her Daddy more than anything." Lucy responded that she did. He father than asked, "Will you give me the pearl necklace?" Lucy was sad that she had placed such a higher value on the necklace than her father. "Yes, Daddy, I love you more than anything.you can have the pearl necklace." The father smiled as he took the 'treasured necklace' and said, "Well, my little darling, that is what I have been waiting to hear." He then reached in his pocket and pulled out a fine string of genuine pearls as a necklace for the girl. He needed only to know that the girl appreciated him more than a cheap necklace. God often has the genuine article waiting for us if we will only love Him and be thankful.

BEARING FRUIT: *"Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time. 6 Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man."* This is repeated throughout Holy Scripture. *"See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time, because the days are evil."* (Eph 5:15-16) We must not counter the influence of Holy living by exercising severe and unkind judgment against those who are without the Church. We are to judge WITHIN the Church but forgiven indiscretions of those who are unbelievers and know not better how to conduct themselves. *"For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within?"* (1 Cor 5:12)

Quite often, a good minister is faulted for the few people who populate the pews of a parish. The minister is the under-shepherd of the sheep. Shepherds do not give birth to sheep – sheep do give birth to other sheep. If the Word of God is preached in truth and force from the pulpits, it is the responsibility of the people of the parish to let that be known to the community. If you disparage the preacher, who would desire to come and listen to him; but, if he holds up the Lord with well-delivered sermons – not read word-for-word – then perhaps we should let others know to come and share in the blessings. We bear fruit by producing other Christians and informing the world of the great Lord who made them.