

The New Determination Found in Jesus Christ
Colossians 4:2-6

Introduction

1. As we come to our passage today, Colossians 4:2-6, we see Paul's final charge to the Colossians
2. In just these five verses we have references to prayer, alertness, thanksgiving, preaching the mystery of Christ, walking in wisdom toward outsiders and using grace when we respond to them
3. Everything Paul shares in these five verses, like everything we've seen throughout this letter, revolves around the sufficiency of Jesus Christ and faith in Him alone
4. As I spent time working through these verses, and thought of a way to boil everything down to a single concept, the concept of determination kept surfacing, so I've titled this teaching session, "The New Determination Found in Jesus Christ"
5. Outline:
 - a. In v. 2 we see the determination to stand firm in Jesus Christ (2)
 - b. In vs. 3-4 we see the determination to pray for those who preach Jesus Christ (3-4)
 - c. In vs. 5-6 we see the determination to live as a testimony of Jesus Christ (5-6)

A. Paul called on the Colossians to be determined to stand firm in their faith in Jesus Christ (READ 4:2)

1. Paul begins with a simple imperative: **"Devote yourselves to prayer"**:
 - a. To devote ourselves to something means we give ourselves to it, we commit to it, we persist in it
 - b. So, to devote oneself to prayer means to not only be committed to it but to persist in it, much like Paul commanded in 1 Thessalonians 5:17 when he said we are to **"pray without ceasing."**
2. But, the focus of Paul's command here isn't so much prayer as it was **"keeping alert in it with thanksgiving"**:
 - a. Paul wasn't referring to staying alert while praying so they wouldn't fall asleep
 - b. Notice he says, **"keeping alert IN"** prayer
 - c. So, the question is, keeping alert regarding what?
 - 1) The call to remain alert occurs in 10 different passages in the NT and revolves around three different categories:
 - a) The most common is to be on alert for the return of Jesus and the Day of the Lord
 - Five times by Jesus: READ Matthew 24:42-44 (also Matthew 25:13; Mark 13:33-37; Luke 12:37; 21:36)
 - Once by Paul (READ 1 Thessalonians 5:4-6)
 - b) A second category is to be on alert for the attacks of our adversary, the devil (1 Peter 5:8): **"Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour."**
 - c) A third and final category is to be on alert to stand firm in our faith:

- Jesus also used it in this way when He warned His disciples, **“Keep watching and praying that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak”** (Matthew 26:41)
 - 1 Corinthians 16:13: **“Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong.”**
 - Paul uses it this way in Ephesians 6 when he calls on the Ephesians to “be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might” in v. 10 and then follows it a few verses later with this: **“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.”**
- 2) I believe it’s this third category Paul has in mind here: keeping alert in prayer so that they would continue to stand firm and not abandon their faith in Christ alone:
- a. There’s no mention of Jesus’ return in the letter
 - b. While there may be a reference to spiritual principalities in a couple of verses, Paul doesn’t discuss spiritual warfare or the adversary directly
 - c. However, Paul wrote the letter because he was concerned that they would not stand firm and that they were being tempted to abandon their faith alone in Jesus Christ
 - d. He spends the entire letter trying to convince them to stand firm in Christ by faith alone, and not works of the flesh and man-made religion
 - e. One of the ways to do this was to remain alert through prayer and thankfulness for what had been accomplished for them IN CHRIST
3. Takeaway: we need to be determined to stand firm in our faith, and one of the ways we do this is by being devoted to prayer so that we can stay alert:
- a. We need to stay alert for Jesus’ return
 - b. We need to stay alert to the enemy’s attacks and schemes
 - c. But we also need to be alert in regard to standing firm and remaining steadfast
 - d. I know you pray for others; I know you pray for your own needs
 - e. However, how often do you pray for God to help you remain steadfast in your faith?

B. Paul called on the Colossians to be determined to pray for those who preach Jesus Christ (READ 4:3-4)

1. It’s clear in these two verses that Paul saw the prayers of others being crucial to the success of his ministry of preaching the Gospel:
 - a. He called on the Colossians to be determined to pray for God to **“open a door for the word”** so that he and Timothy could **“speak the mystery of Christ”**
 - b. We see this in a new light when we realize that Paul was writing these words from prison while bound in chains!
 - 1) This is what he means when he says, **“for which I have also been bound”**
 - 2) In the parallel passages in Ephesians 6:20 he refers to himself as **“an ambassador in chains”** for having preached the mystery of the Gospel
 - c. This may be why he asked the Colossians to pray that he **“may make it [the mystery of Christ] manifest in the way I ought to speak”**—what He was asking for here was God not

only giving him the actual words to speak but the boldness to speak them (READ Ephesians 6:19)

2. We see this same request for prayer by Paul in three other passages:
 - a. One is in Romans:
 - According to Romans 1:15, Paul was eager to preach the Gospel in Rome (READ 1:15)
 - However, he had been prevented from doing so which is why he wrote his letter to the Romans
 - However, he still sought their prayers in finally getting there (Romans 15:20-32)
 - b. The other two instances are found in his letters to the Thessalonians:
 - 1 Thessalonians 5:25: **“Brethren, pray for us.”**
 - 2 Thessalonians 3:1-2 (READ)
3. Takeaway: we should be determined to pray for the preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ:
 - a. We should be praying for God to send out workers into the harvest as Jesus commanded in Matthew 9:37-38 (READ)
 - b. We should be praying for pastors, missionaries, and evangelists, who have devoted their lives to preaching Christ, both here and abroad, asking God to open doors for them to speak the mystery of Christ
 - c. We should be praying for those who continue to be persecuted for the sake of the Gospel, asking God to give them the words and the boldness they need
 - d. Why would we not be devoted and determined to do this consider all that we have in Christ?

C. Paul called on the Colossians to be determined to live as a testimony of Jesus Christ (READ 4:5-6)

1. Paul moves on from praying for those who preach the Gospel, to the Colossians being determined to live as a testimony of Jesus Christ:
 - a. He calls on the Colossians to **“Conduct yourselves in wisdom toward outsiders”**
 - 1) Paul’s emphasis on wisdom so far:
 - a) Paul had prayed for them to be filled with wisdom: (READ 1:9)
 - b) He admonished and taught them with all wisdom (READ 1:28)
 - c) He reminded them that all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge were found in Christ (READ 2:3)
 - d) He called on them to let the Word of Christ dwell within them so they could admonish and teach one another with all wisdom (READ 3:16):
 - 2) And now, he called on them to put all this wisdom into practice and conduct themselves with wisdom not just toward one another, but the unsaved—those **“outside”** the Church; we get a detailed picture of what this looks like in Ephesians 5:1-21:
 - a) To conduct ourselves in wisdom begins with being imitators of God and walking in love (5:1)
 - b) To conduct ourselves in wisdom means that we don’t engage in sin like the world around us—Paul wrote, **“do not be partakers with them”** in such things (5:3-7)
 - c) To conduct ourselves in wisdom means that we recognize we are no longer children of darkness but children of light, AND we should conduct ourselves accordingly by learning to please the Lord (5:8-10)

- d) To conduct ourselves in wisdom means that we understand that when the light of Christ shines through us by our good behavior, it exposes the works of darkness (5:11-14)
 - e) To conduct ourselves in wisdom means that we take advantage of opportunities to walk as light while they exist (we'll expand on this in a minute; 5:15-16)
 - f) Finally, to conduct ourselves in wisdom means that we aren't foolish and understand that all of this—everything we've just covered—is God's will for us (5:17)
- b. Paul refers to walking in wisdom toward outsiders as **“making the most of the opportunity”** (5b):
 - 1) He used this same phrase back in the Ephesians 5 passage we just reviewed
 - 2) You may have a Bible version that renders it **“redeeming the time”** which is a more literal translation; another way to phrase it would be **“buying back or purchasing the time”**
 - 3) If you remember back in Ephesians 5:16 Paul wrote to **“redeem the time because the days are evil”**
 - 4) In essence what Paul is saying is this:
 - a) Prior to placing our faith in Christ we formerly walked in darkness, living by the flesh and engaging in sin
 - b) That time was wasted (if you will) and is now gone
 - c) However, now that we are saved, we have the opportunity to walk as children of light and reveal Christ to those outside the Church by how we live
 - d) We need to make the most of that time—redeem it, buy it back—because the days are evil and we may not always have the opportunity we do now
- c. One of the areas Paul focused on specifically in this regard was how they spoke to and responded to unbelievers; he highlighted three traits that should characterize their speech (READ 5:6):
 - 1) Their words were to always be filled with grace:
 - a) Grace is unmerited favor so this means that we should speak and respond to others (even the unsaved) with a kindness and goodness they may not deserve
 - b) Ephesians 4:29: **“Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear”**
 - 2) Their words were to always be **“seasoned with salt”**:
 - a) In our modern world, salty speech is slang for using words that bite back at someone, words that are filled with anger, frustration, and hostility, and words that sting like rubbing salt in an open wound
 - b) However, in Paul's day the Greeks used the metaphor of salt in speech to refer to being witty or winsome
 - c) The Hebrews used the metaphor of salt in speech to refer to speech filled with wisdom
 - d) So, in Paul's day to season your speech with salt meant that it was attractive and appealing; it was intended to draw someone in rather than push them away, to win them over or persuade, rather than agitate and stir up

- 3) Finally, their words were to be appropriate for each individual and situation; this is essentially what Paul means by “**so that you will know how you should answer each person**”
 - a) Not every response is appropriate for every individual in every situation
 - b) We may speak softer with those who are contrite, but bolder with those who are confident or even arrogant and proud
 - c) Being wise means we know what kind of response to give depending on the individual and circumstance
2. Takeaway: we should be determined to live as a witness to Jesus Christ:
 - a. Many of us have had plenty of time to walk in darkness, but now that we’re saved we should make the most of the time we have left to walk as children of light
 - b. In Matthew 5:14-16 Jesus said “**You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; 15 nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. 16 Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.**”
 - c. One of the ways we can do with is in how we talk to and respond to unbelievers—always remembering to make sure our words are filled with grace, seasoned with salt, and appropriate

Emailing back and forth with Jim over budget and holding back what I REALLY wanted to say to him
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