

THE PRISON EPISTLES: NURTURE FOR OPPRESSED BELIEVERS

II. Colossians: Nurture In Living Focused On The Supremacy And All-Sufficiency Of Christ

J. Nurture In Applying Christ's Supremacy And All-Sufficiency To Our Walk

7. Nurture In Applying Christ's Supremacy And All-Sufficiency To Relate Effectively To The Unsaved (Colossians 4:5-6)

I. Introduction

- A. Paul's call for believers to focus on their positional certainties in Christ in the heavens to offset trials they face from evil pressures on earth as Colossians 3:1-4 with its Colossians 2:1-23 context teaches becomes pointedly significant when considering the believer's need to relate wisely to the unsaved world that is apart from Christ.
- B. Accordingly, Colossians 4:5-6 gives such instruction for our insight and edification (as follows):

II. Nurture In Applying Christ's Supremacy And All-Sufficiency To Relate Effectively To The Unsaved.

- A. Paul's reference to "them that are without" (Colossians 4:5 KJV) alludes to "those who are not Christians, but pagans. The division between them was sharp: the church was the community and all others were shut-out unbelievers," Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, ftn. to Colossians 4:5.
- B. Accordingly, relying on the indwelling Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:16), the believer should focus on his heavenly position in Christ (Colossians 3:1-4) Who is seated far above all humans on earth, saved and unsaved alike (Ephesians 1:20-21) to "walk" (*peripateo*, Arndt & Gingrich, A Grk.-Eng. Lex. of the N. T., 1967, p. 654-655) in the sense of "conducting themselves in life" (Ibid.) in "wisdom" (*sophia*, Ibid., p. 766-767) toward the unsaved who are outside the local church fellowship, Colossians 4:5a.
- C. Such *sophia* "wisdom" was described by the secular Greek philosopher Aristotle as "the striving after the best ends as well as the using of the best means . . . mental excellence in its highest and fullest sense," Richard C. Trench, Synonyms of the New Testament, 1973, p. 283 in citing Aristotle, *Ethic. Nic.* vi.7.3. The Apostle Paul thus urged his readers to live striving after the most excellent of means and of ends in dealing with the lost world so as to exemplify in thought, attitude and action only the loftiest of lifestyle as witnesses of Christ!
- D. While living in such excellence before the lost, believers are to "redeem *for their benefit*" (*exagorazo* in the middle voice, Ibid., Arndt & Gingrich, p. 271) the time, Col. 4:5b. The sister epistle to Colossians, that of Ephesians (Donald Guthrie, New Test. Intro., 1971, p. 483-484, 492-496) at Ephesians 5:16 uses the same "redeeming for your benefit the time" phrase in the Greek text (U. B. S. Grk. N. T., 1966, p. 675, 702) with the added clarification, "because the days are evil." Thus, a believer should "make the most of every opportunity" (NIV) to testify the Gospel's saving truth in life and lip, to be "ready 'in season and out of season' (2 Tim. 4:2) to proclaim Christ" due to the evil era that is about to be judged by God, Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 684.
- E. When the opportunity arises for the believer to speak, he must take care that his speech is marked by two very important characteristics described in Colossians 4:6a:
 - 1. First, the believer must **at all times** (*pantote*, Ibid., Arndt & Gingrich, p. 614; Ibid., U. B. S. Grk. N. T., p. 702) speak *en chariti*, from the Greek word, *charis* meaning "graciousness, attractiveness," Ibid., Arndt & Gingrich, p. 885-887. He must thus always frame his words so that he speaks in a gracious, pleasing manner typical of God's goodness in speaking before the lost to earn a right to be heard by them, Col. 4:6a.
 - 2. Second, the believer must **also at all times** (*pantote*) speak with speech that is figuratively "seasoned with salt" (Col. 4:6a NIV, KJV), that is, righteously pure as salt purifies, Zon. Pict. Ency. Bible, v. Five, p. 220.
 - 3. Accordingly, the believer is to win a hearing by always using gracious, attractive speech, but speak the righteous truth of God that penetrates and purifies so the unsaved can believe the Gospel to be saved!
- F. So, always being gracious and attractive with one's words, and always prepared to share the penetrating truth with such gracious words, the believer knows how it is necessary for him to answer every unbeliever who asks him "the reason for the hope" that is in him, Colossians 4:6b with 1 Peter 3:15; Ibid., Bible Know. Com., N. T.

Lesson: *To relate effectively with the unsaved, (1) the believer must rely on Christ's supremacy over all creation and His all-sufficiency to be effective (2) in striving after the best means and ends in thought and act to be winsome to the world, and (3) in speech with the lost at all times graciously, attractively to speak the pure truth that the unsaved may believe in Christ to be saved. (4) The believer must take advantage of every opportunity granted to him in thus relating to the lost that they might be saved, for the days are evil, and God's judgment is coming.*

Application: *May we believers in Christ rely on our Supreme, All-Sufficient Lord so to live and to speak in relating to the lost around us that they might be motivated as well as convicted to believe in Christ unto salvation.*