



THE EPISTLE TO THE COLOSSIANS

Lesson Number 20



TRANSLATION LEGEND: ASV=American Standard Version (1901), BBE=Bible in Basic English (1949), DRA=Douay-Rheims (1899), ESV=English Standard Version (2001), KJV=King James Version (1611), NKJV=New King James Version (1982), NAB=New American Bible, NASB=New American Standard Bible (1977), NAU=New American Standard Bible (1995), NIB=New International Bible, NIV=New International Version (1984), NJB=New Jerusalem Bible, NLT=New Living Translation, NRSV=New Revised Standard Version (1989), RSV=Revised Standard Version (1952), TNK=JPS Tanakj (1985), YLT=Young's Literal Translation (1862).

----- Bible Translation Codes with Identification -----

WALKING AND SPEAKING

“ 4:5 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.”
KJV
(Col 4:5-6)

INTRODUCTION

The **“newness of life”** in which we walk is actually the context in which Divine fellowship is realized. It is critical that this be seen. In our baptism, newness of life is equated with us being raised with Christ. While this is a technical point, it is worthy of much consideration. Romans 6:4 states the circumstance in these words: *“Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.”* Note, the text does NOT say we were raised to walk in newness of life. Walking in newness of life is not the purpose of being raised with

Christ Jesus. Rather, **it is the evidence** that we have *“risen with Him through faith in the operation of God”* (Col 2:12). **I want to be clear about this. Where there is no walk in newness of life, the individual is not “risen with Christ.”** The professed church has too long contended with spiritually dead people among them.

The condition that is realized in Christ Jesus is stated in this fact - a fact upon which we are to reckon, or consider to have taken place: *“Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be **dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord**”* (Rom 6:11). In

a real baptism, a death to sin and a connection with the living God through Jesus Christ took place. It was not a relationship by proxy, but a personal one. It was not a merely formal one, but an effective one. This is not how people **ought** to be saved, it is how they **ARE** saved. There is no such thing as a salvation that allows a person to remain alive to sin and dead to God. Reconciliation to God makes no such allowance. Sanctification does not provide for such a condition. **If men do not “walk” in newness of life, it is because they have no newness to walk in.** Those are the facts in the case, whether they are received or not.

OUTLINE

- ▶ WALK IN WISDOM (4:5a)
- ▶ THEM THAT ARE WITHOUT (4:5b)
- ▶ REDEEMING THE TIME (4:5c)
- ▶ SPEECH WITH GRACE (4:6a)
- ▶ SEASONED WITH SALT (4:6b)
- ▶ THAT YE MAY KNOW HOW (4:6c)
- ▶ EVERY MAN(4:6d)

While it is important that we do not set ourselves up as judges, to determine whether other people are really saved or not, it is absolutely essential that we examine our own selves with these things in mind (2 Cor 13:5).

One of the condemning traits of the modern church is that it is not providing an environment in which the need for being dead to sin and alive to God is stamped upon the human conscience. Sin is too easily explained and tolerated, with a hatred of it rarely surfacing.

If we can see it, Epistles like Colossians are challenging the saints to be godly in their thinking about life in Christ Jesus. They are not to allow themselves the luxury of thinking differently about being saved than the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit think.

DIVINE FELLOWSHIP

As I have already said, “*newness of life*” is the only proper environment in which fellowship with Jesus can be enjoyed – and fellowship with Christ is integral to salvation. **There is no such thing as salvation without it!** God has, after all, called us “*into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord*” (1 Cor 1:9). John also referred to having fellowship “*with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ,*” affirming that he wrote in order that we might be also participate in that fellowship: “*That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ*” (1 John 1:3). There is, then, no question about what God is doing in salvation, and of the necessity of the involvement of the saved with the Savior. We are **not** speaking about some merely

legal transaction in which the mind, will, affection, and purpose are **not** involved.

A HOLY LOGIC

There is a holy logic behind God calling us into the fellowship of His Son. In salvation, **God is giving us to His Son**, in order that He might “*bring*” us “*to glory*” (Heb 2:10), or bring us to Himself (1 Pet 3:18). No one can come to God on his own. He must be “*brought*” to God by the Lord Jesus Christ. In order for that to happen, they must be “*given*” to Christ by someone transcendent to themselves – and God is that “*Someone.*” It is He, and He alone, who has put us “*in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption*” (1 Cor 1:30). That equates to being “*given*” to the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus said it this way, “*No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him*” (John 6:44). And again, “*Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto Me, except it were given unto him of my Father*” (John 6:65).

In the day when the people of God are recognized for who they really are, the Son will say to the Father, “*Behold I and the children which God hath given Me*” (Heb 2:13).

Given to Jesus

Frequently Jesus referred to the saved as those who were **given to Him** by the Father.

- ✦ “*All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me; and him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out*” (John 6:37).
- ✦ “*And this is the Father’s will which hath sent Me, that of all which He hath given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day*” (John 6:39).
- ✦ “*As thou hast given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal*

life to as many as Thou hast given Him” (John 17:2)

- ✦ “*I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which Thou hast given Me; for they are Thine*” (John 17:9).
- ✦ “*And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through Thine own name those whom Thou hast given Me, that they may be one, as We are*” (John 17:11).
- ✦ “*Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given Me: for Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world*” (John 17:24).

Alluding to this kind of thing, the Father spoke through the Psalmist, referring to giving people to the Son. “*Ask of me, and I shall give Thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for Thy possession*” (Psa 2:8). The magnitude of this is seen in Isaiah’s prophecy concerning the greatness of salvation. Through Isaiah the Father declared it was not enough to simply give the Savior the “*tribes of Jacob.*” That was too small to justify the kind of investment He asked the Son to make. “***It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant To raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also make You a light of the nations So that My salvation may reach to the end of the earth***”^{NASB} (Isa 49:6). **This is an exalted view of the Father giving people to the Son.** That gift was in order to the salvation of the people. That is the genius behind the statement, “*This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we*

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must be saved” (Acts 4:12).

THE POINT

The point is that the fellowship into which we have been called is not sporadic, only in times of crisis, or only within an official Christian setting. It is not **confined** to periods of praise, prayer, or Bible reading – although it is surely and emphatically realized in all of them. **It is in life itself, that the fellowship takes place** – the entirety of it.

Fellowship

The meaning of the word “fellowship” is greatly obscured in an institutional setting. It is not uncommon to find the average church viewing

Jerusalem.”

- ✚ 1 CORINTHIANS 1:9: “*fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord.*”
- ✚ 2 CORINTHIANS 8:4: “*fellowship of the ministering to the saints.*”
- ✚ PHILIPPIANS 3:10: “*fellowship of His sufferings.*”
- ✚ 1 JOHN 1:3: “*fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.*”
- ✚ 1 JOHN 1:6-7: “*If we say that we have fellowship with Him . . . we have fellowship one with another.*”

✚ 1 JOHN 1:3: “*that ye also may have fellowship with us.*”

It is evident from the Spirit’s use of this word that it does not refer to something casual or incidental. This is also reflected in the technical meaning of the Word: “fellowship, association, community, communion, joint participation; the share which one has in anything.” THAYER “As a relationship characterized by sharing in communion.” FRIBERG “A close mutual relationship; participation, sharing in, partnership, contribution.” UBS “An association involving close mutual relations and involvement.” LOUW-NIDA

Even in the English language the word means, “1. Friendliness and companionship based on shared interests. 2. A group of people meeting to pursue a shared interest or aim.” OXFORD DICTIONARY

As you can see, the point in all of these definitions is **common interest and sharing**. Where either of these are missing, there is no genuine fellowship.

FELLOWSHIP WITH THE SON

In view of this, and considering the manner in which the word is used in Scripture, “*fellowship with His Son*” speaks of involvement with Him, participation with Him, experiential association with Him, a mutual sharing with Him, a close and intimate relationship, and sharing or partnering in which He is doing. It presumes the heart of the saved one is in synch with the heart of Jesus – i.e. that the saved have an intense and vested interest in what Jesus is doing. They have been “*joined to the Lord*” (1 Cor 6:17) in their objectives, loves, hates, and will. Where these results have not taken place, there is no evidence of being “*in Christ.*” These are admittedly strong words. However, the time has come for men to break through the crust of hackneyed religious traditions, and get to the heart of the “*salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory*” (2 Tim 2:10).

We have been called into holy involvement with the Lord Jesus Christ. Now the question arises as to when and how this involvement takes place. Is it confined to when we “worship,” sing, pray, attend church, etc. Is this “*fellowship*” ever represented as being realized in that manner? Whatever

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“fellowship” from a purely fleshly point of view. Some refer it to their own particular sect – “our fellowship.” Others see it as a sort of religious camaraderie that is realized in informal gatherings like meals and outings. **In Scripture, however the word “fellowship” reflects the very nature of our salvation.**

The word, “fellowship” is translated from the Greek word **κοινωνία** (koin-o-ni-an), which is a form of the word **κοινωνία** (koin-o-nia). This word (**κοινωνία**) is used seven times in Scripture and, with a single exception (Rom 15:26), is translated “fellowship.” The parent word (**κοινωνία**) is used nine times, and is translated “fellowship,” “communion,” and “communication.” A brief outline of these uses is provided below. On a lower level, this will serve to confirm the nature of fellowship. The manner in which the Holy Spirit uses this word will be evident.

κοινωνία

✚ ROMANS 15:26: “*contribution for the poor saints which are at*

κοινωνία

- ✚ ACTS 2:42: “*And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship.*”
- ✚ 1 CORINTHIANS 10:16: “*The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?*”
- ✚ 2 CORINTHIANS 6:14: “*what communion hath light with darkness?*”
- ✚ 2 CORINTHIANS 3:13: “*the communion of the Holy Spirit.*”
- ✚ PHILIPPIANS 1:5: “*your fellowship in the gospel.*”
- ✚ PHILIPPIANS 2:1: “*fellowship of the Spirit.*”
- ✚ PHILEMON 1:6: “*the communication of thy faith.*”

may be said of those indispensable activities, they are not the appointed arena in which the intended Divine fellowship is realized.

Paul referred to this higher relationship when he said *“walk in newness of life”* (Rom 6:4). John referred to it when he wrote, *“if we walk in the light as He is in the light”* (1 John 1:7). Paul spoke of it when he said, *“For in Him we live, and move, and have our being”* (Acts 17:28). Fellowship with Christ is the sphere of valid activity.

We experience Divine fellowship as we live unto the Lord, doing everything – even down to eating and drinking – as unto Him (1 Cor 10:31). That is what makes focused times of assembly productive. That is what gives meaning to the Lord’s Supper, singing, praying, etc. When our lives are centered in Christ, the Scriptures come alive, as it were, and the Lord – in fellowship with us – opens the eyes of our understanding.

The exhortation that follows is not

a mere law – a sort of discipline of life that is being bound upon us. Be clear in your mind about this. **Jesus did not die, rise from the dead, and return to heaven in order for us to obtain a new “way of life.”** The Lord Jesus Himself said He came that we might *“have life, and have it more abundantly”* (John 10:10) – **not** have a “way of life.”

That life is realized as we walk with Him through all of the aspects of living. Now we will see how that walk touches relating to sinners.

WALK IN WISDOM

^{4:5a} **Walk in wisdom . . .**

The Spirit will now speak to us of ACTIVITY – holy activity. **The life of faith is one of action, not mere philosophizing and speculation.** It is not found in talking, but in the power of God – which has to do with doing. That is why it is written, *“For the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power”* (1 Cor 4:20).

WALK

“Walk . . .” Other versions read, *“conduct yourselves,”* ^{NASB} *“in the way you act,”* ^{NIV} *“your behavior,”* ^{BBE} and *“live.”* ^{NLT}

As used here, walking is not aimless, like roaming about with no particular destiny in mind. Walking is like Abraham leaving Ur of the Chaldees and heading for Canaan (Gen 12:1; 15:7). It is like Jacob and his household leaving the land of famine and heading to Egypt for sustenance (Ex 1:1-5). The significance of “walk” is confirmed in the trek of the Israelites through the wilderness, as they “walked” to the promised land (Josh 5:6).

A Specific Destiny

A “walk” presumes a specific destiny – a determined goal. With Abraham it was Canaan. For Jacob, it was Egypt. For Israel, it was the promised land. Paul referred to this as *“the mark.”* *“I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus”* (Phil 3:14).

For the people of God, it is His Kingdom and glory (1 Thess 2:12), the New Jerusalem (Rev 3:12; 21:2), and being forever with the Lord (1 Thess 4:17). The aim of the saints is to get through this world “undefiled” and “unspotted” by it (James 1:27) – i.e. without being contaminated by it. This is WHY we are walking – moving toward those appointed objectives.

LORD, and to inquire in his temple” (Psa 27:4). Paul spoke of it as obtaining *“a incorruptible crown”* (1 Cor 9:27). **The saints of God have a reason for being godly – for living by faith and walking in the Spirit.** It involves infinitely more than simply doing what they are supposed to do. They do not live by rules, but by faith, which is far more exacting than rules.

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A Specific Purpose

Our “walk” postulates that we are living with a specific objective – driven by a purpose. Paul stated that purpose in these words, *“For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain”* (Phil 1:21). Again he stated it in this way: *“Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus”* (Phil 3:12). David stated it this way, *“One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the*

Deliberate

Our “walk” is deliberate. It is the result of considering the Lord Jesus, what He has accomplished, and what He is completing. Abraham left Ur because he wanted to. Jacob went down into Egypt for food because he wanted to. Israel left Egypt for Canaan because they wanted to. **The truth of the matter is that no one can “WALK by faith” who does not want to.** God can make Nebuchadnezzar eat grass like a wild animal for seven years. He can make Pharaoh let His people go. He can even make the weak to stand (Rom 14:4). **But He will not make a person walk by**

There is a sense in which every child of God is unique, with a unique role in the body of Christ – by Given O. Blakely

faith or in the Spirit who does not want to! Through the Gospel He provides a message that will stir the will if it is received. But the “walk” from earth to glory requires that willingness. Spiritual life can only be lived deliberately.

Progress

In Christ, “walking” presumes progress toward the appointed goal. In the wilderness, a great number of Israel, because of their disobedience, only “wandered,” finally dying in that place of desolation (Num 14:23). Others “walked,” making progress until they finally reached the land of promise (Josh 5:6).

When Peter “walked on the

pilgrim and a stranger (1 Pet 2:11; Heb 11:13). Walking covers the distance between “*this present evil world*” (Gal 1:4) and “*the glory that shall be revealed*” (1 Pet 5:1). It is the activity that covers the time between our entrance into Christ and our exit from the world.

Many a professing Christian is not noted for “walking” – for heading for a specific destiny, living with purpose, conducting his life deliberately, and making spiritual progress. It is with great sorrow that I must admit such people appear to make up the majority of “churchdom.” However, this is not the way it is “*in Christ Jesus!*” For the saved, it is not a matter of

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water,” it was to “*go to Jesus*” (Matt 14:29). That progress was interrupted when he doubted (Matt 14:31). Cleopas and his companion walked “*from Jerusalem*” to Emmaus (Mk 16:12; Lk 24:13), and again from Emmaus to Jerusalem (Lk 24:33).

In each of these cases, there was progress. They moved toward the goal of their journey. In this case, walking is to be contrasted with sleeping or being idle. The child of God is moving forward, advancing toward glory and away from this present evil world. During difficult trials, that advancement may appear slow and minuscule. At other times, the grace of God may enable us to mount up with the wings of an eagle, and make much progress in a short time. **But in every case, and at all times, walking involves progress** – moving forward and not backward.

In This World

The word “walk” is applied to our lives in **this** world. It is the posture of a

whether or not they are walking, but HOW they are walking.

IN WISDOM

“ . . . *in wisdom* . . . ” Other versions read, “*with wisdom*,” ^{NASB} “*Be wise*,” ^{NIV} and “*wisely*.” ^{NRSV}

In this world, those who are not endowed with wisdom can find an acceptable place. Wisdom is not a requirement for living in this world, and many, for reasons over which they have no power, are not able to be wise in this world. However, in Christ Jesus, this is not the case. Even those who are not wise after the flesh can obtain the kind of wisdom this text mentions. According to measure, God makes Jesus to be “*wisdom*” to all whom He puts into Him. As it is written, “*But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption*” ^{NASB} (1 Cor 1:30).

The phrase “*in wisdom*”

postulates its preexistence. Solomon said “*get wisdom*” (Prov 16:15; 23:23). Our text says, “*walk in wisdom*.” What is the difference between the two? Under the New Covenant, wisdom is of a higher and more consistent order. It is supplied in Christ Jesus, and appropriated by faith.

Those who “*lack wisdom*” are exhorted to ask God for it, who “*giveth liberally, and upbraideth not*” (James 1:5). However, this is a different “*wisdom*” than is mentioned in our text – not different in kind, but different in scope. It does “*come down from above*,” yet it has more to do with particular matters – such as Solomon asking for wisdom to rule the people in a proper manner (2 Chron 1:10).

Solomonic Wisdom

As seen in Solomon himself, such wisdom has more to do with things in the world than with eternal matters. It is said of him, “*And he spake three thousand proverbs: and his songs were a thousand and five. And he spake of trees, from the cedar tree that is in Lebanon even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall: he spake also of beasts, and of fowl, and of creeping things, and of fishes*” (1 Kgs 4:32-33). All of that wisdom was given to him by God. He did not obtain one whit of it through education. It caused Solomon’s fame to be spread abroad. As it is written, “*And there came of all people to hear the wisdom of Solomon, from all kings of the earth, which had heard of his wisdom*” (1 Kgs 4:34). Yet, this was a lower order of wisdom, as compared to the “*treasures of wisdom and knowledge*” that are hidden in Christ Jesus.

Solomon never mentioned the word “*eternal*.” He used the word “*eternity*” once, affirming God had placed it in the heart of man (Eccl 3:11, the KJV uses the word “*world*”). Solomon’s meaning was that God gave mankind a sort of intuition that there is more than the present – there is the past and the future as well. He referred to “*everlasting*” twice: once in the personification of wisdom (Prov 8:23), and once to the stability of the righteous (Prov 10:25). He mentioned “*heaven*” seven times (Prov 23:5; 25:3; 30:4; Eccl 1:13; 2:3; 3:1; 5:2). Most of those references had to do with the natural heavens, with two exceptions: one refers to the fact that no

man has ascended into heaven, or descended from it (Prov 30:4). The other declares that *“God is in heaven”* (Eccl 5:2). He delivered no prophecies, or speak with clarity concerning the need of a Savior. He did not expound any of the Prophets or speak of Moses – although He did refer to *“the law”* (Prov 6:23; 28:4,7,9; 29:18; 31:5). Some of those references appear to refer to the *“law”* of parents and the land rather than the law of God.

The point here is not to denigrate Solomon. Rather, it is to see that **the wisdom he received was not the same as that which is received in Christ Jesus**. It primarily had to do with expertise in matters relating **exclusively** to this world. That wisdom was not able to keep Solomon from marrying a multiplicity of heathen women in contradiction of the Law of God (Deut 17:17; 1 Kgs 11:3). It could not turn him away from indulging his fleshly appetites in extravagant manners (Eccl 2:10). His wisdom, as extensive as it was, could not keep him from being turned away to other gods by his wives (1 Kgs 11:3-4). He loved many *“strange women”* including *“the daughter of Pharaoh, women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Zidonians, and Hittites”* (1 Kgs 11:1). It is even said of him, *“Then did Solomon build an high place for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, in the hill that is before Jerusalem, and for Molech, the abomination of the children of Ammon. And likewise did he for all his strange wives, which burnt incense and sacrificed*

Psychiatric knowledge, for example, provides not a single particle of understanding that is relevant to the “newness of life.” Neither, indeed, does it better equip a person to deal with the people of this world in a manner that is acceptable to God.

unto their gods. And the LORD was angry with Solomon, because his heart was turned from the LORD God of Israel, which had appeared unto him twice” (1 Kgs 11:9).

I am very careful to say this is not intended to be a diatribe against Solomon. Rather, **it is to show that wisdom revolving around this world is not sufficient to keep the soul or constrain consistent godly conduct**. That, of course, is the whole point in the record of Solomon. It is not to show that he was weak, but that his wisdom was not adequate in matters pertaining to life and godliness.

HOW DOES THIS APPLY TO OUR TEXT?

Here is something that must be seen, particularly during a time when academic pursuits are being inordinately embraced, and unduly honored. **The child of God cannot approach life in Christ with expertise in earthly wisdom**. Psychiatric knowledge, for example, provides not a single particle of understanding that is relevant to the

“newness of life.” Neither, indeed, does it better equip a person to deal with the people of this world in a manner that is acceptable to God. The same may be said of historical knowledge, statistical analyses, and philosophical opinions. Whatever place any of these things possess, it is certainly not one of preeminence. Nor, indeed, is a place made for such wisdom in the text before us.

The “wisdom” in which we are to walk is fundamentally spiritual: “all wisdom and spiritual understanding” (Col 1:9). Because it is hidden in Christ, it centers in both God and Christ, not men and their ways (Col 2:3). This is the kind of wisdom Paul sought for the churches: *“That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him”* (Eph 1:17). This is a wisdom having primarily to do with God and His purpose. That is the wisdom that sheds light on everything else. **It superintends all lesser wisdom like the light of the sun determines the extent of the light of the moon.**

THEM THAT ARE WITHOUT

“^{5b} . . . toward them that are without . . . ”

Our *“walk”* depicts the **activity** of spiritual life. That *“walk”* eventually leads to the presence of the Lord. **However, along the way, we confront a variety of personalities – and not all of them are kindred spirits**. Our fellowship with Christ bears upon this aspect of life. It is not to be divorced from our association with Him, or treated as though it was a strictly extraneous aspect of life with no eternal consequences.

There simply is no facet of life that allows us to sever fellowship with Christ in order to deal with it.

TOWARD THEM

“. . . toward them . . . ” Other versions read, *“to those,”*^{BBE} *“with,”*^{NJB} and *“among.”*^{NLT}

The truth of the matter is this: *“For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself”* (Rom 14:7). **No person is an island unto himself, and woe to that person who lives as**

though he was. Further, Jesus died in order that those who are alive with Him *“should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again”* (2 Cor 5:15). Our lives, therefore, are not driven by purely selfish interests – a manner of life that is especially and vigorously promoted by the *“generation”* we are serving (Acts 13:36).

While our lives are to be consistent, **there are people among whom we must be especially wise**. The Spirit will now address that manner

There is a sense in which every child of God is unique, with a unique role in the body of Christ – by Given O. Blakely

with characteristic pungency.

THAT ARE WITHOUT

“... that are without...” Other versions read, “who are outside,”^{NKJV} “outsiders,”^{NASB} “who are not Christians,”^{NLT} “outside the church.”^{RWB} and “those of the outside world (the none Christians).”^{AMPLIFIED BIBLE}

The Concept of an Outside

The very concept of someone that is “without,” or an “outsider,” affirms that we have been called into a special community or fellowship. It is an exclusive association that is not based upon earthly distinctions or attainments. What is more, being in this special communion is not our

✚ “And hath raised us up together, and **made us sit together** in heavenly places in Christ Jesus” (Eph 2:6).

✚ “And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath **He quickened together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses**” (Col 2:13).

✚ “But as many as received him, to them **gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God**” (John 1:13).

Those to whom this has not

✚ “That ye may walk honestly toward **them that are without**, and that ye may have lack of nothing” (1 Thess 4:12).

✚ “Moreover he must have a good report of **them which are without**; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil” (1 Tim 3:7).

Some of these people may appear quite good. They may be good neighbors, considerate people, excellent helpers, and possessing high morals. However, they are still “without,” outside the walls of “Jerusalem that is above” (Gal 4:26), and “alienated and enemies” in their “mind by wicked works” (Col 1:21). **Those who are “without” are in the circumstance in which we ourselves were once found.** “That at that time ye were without Christ, being **aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world**” (Eph 2:12). They fall into the category that is delineated in the third chapter of Titus. “For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another” (Titus 3:3).

Such people are not “without” merely because of their conduct – although that is surely involved. **Ultimately, it is their lack of identity with the Lord Jesus Christ that puts them outside.** They are not “in the Son” (1 John 2:24), have not been “joined to the Lord” (1 Cor 6:17), and are “dead in trespasses and sins” (Eph 2:1). That is why they are “without.”

What Those “Without” Are Not

Because much is made of this in Scripture, we must be able to see it clearly. Because they are “without,” there are certain benefits these people **do not** possess. All of these conditions are found exclusively “within,” and none of them are found “without.”

Those who are “without” are **not** “washed,” “sanctified,” or “justified” (1 Cor 6:11). **They are “without.”** They are not “purified” (1 Pet 1:22), “raised” (Eph 2:6), or “reconciled” (Col 1:21). **They are “without.”** They have not

Some of these people may appear quite good. They may be good neighbors, considerate people, excellent helpers, and possessing high morals. However, they are still “without,” outside the walls of “Jerusalem that is above,” and “alienated and enemies” in their “mind by wicked works”

own doing, but is the work of God Himself. This is declared again and again, and with focused emphasis.

✚ “But by **His doing** you are in Christ Jesus”^{NASB} (1 Cor 1:30).

✚ “But now hath God **set the members** every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased Him” (1 Cor 12:18).

✚ “For by one Spirit are we all **baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit**” (1 Cor 12:13).

✚ “Giving thanks unto the Father . . . Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath **translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son**” (Col 1:13).

occurred are “without.” They are outside the haven of safety, disassociated from the Living God, apart from Christ, and without the Holy Spirit. However, if the Divine activity involved in saving us is **not** perceived, those who remain alienated from God will **not** be seen as “without.”

This is not the only place in Scripture where the Spirit refers to those who are “without.” This kind of language is repeatedly employed in spiritual expressions.

✚ “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).

✚ “But **them that are without** God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person” (1 Cor 5:13).

been “delivered” (Col 1:13a), “translated” (Col 1:13b), or “made heirs” (Tit 3:7). **They are “without.”** They are not “born again” (John 3:3,5), “in the Spirit” (Rom 8:9), or “in heavenly places” (Eph 2:6). **They are “without.”** They have not “put on Christ” (Gal 3:27), “put on the whole armor of God” (Eph 6:11), or “put on the new man” (Col 3:10). **They are “without.”** They are not a “new creation” (2 Cor 5:17), have not been “added to the church” (Acts 2:47), and their names are not “written in heaven” (Heb 12:23). **They are “without.”** They have not been “buried with Christ” (Rom 6:4), are not “risen with Christ” (Col 3:1), and are not “delivered from the Law” (Rom 7:4). **They are “without.”** They do not have “peace with God” (Rom 5:1), “access” to God and His grace (Rom 5:2; Eph 3:12), or “hope in Christ” (1 Cor 15:19). **They are “without.”** They do not have “a new heart” (Ezek 36:26), a “new spirit” (Ezek 11:19), or “renewed” minds (Eph 4:23). **They are “without.”** God has not “put” His laws into their “mind,” or “written” it upon their “heart” (Heb 8:10). **They are “without.”** They have not been “enlightened,” “tasted of the heavenly gift,” or been made “partakers of the Holy Spirit” (Heb 6:4). **They are “without.”** They have not “tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come” (Heb 6:5). **They are “without.”**

O, there is a lot that can be said about being “without!” It is anything but an enviable position. **To be “without” means to be ineligible for all of the blessings that are in Christ Jesus** (Eph 1:3). It is to be unqualified to come to the throne of grace to obtain mercy and find grace to help in the time of need (Heb 4:16).

Only Two Categories

So far as heaven is concerned – and “the heavens do rule” (Dan 4:26) – **there are only two categories of people.** They are NOT male and female. They are NOT bond or free. They are NOT Jew and Gentile. From an even lower point of view, they are NOT clergy and laity, professional and unprofessional, or educated and uneducated. None of those categories are valid in the Lord Jesus Christ where “*There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female*” Gal

3:28).

The two categories are referred to in different ways, each emphasizing their opposition to each another.

- ✚ **Without** and **within** and (1 Cor 5:12).
- ✚ **Darkness** and **light** (Eph 5:8).
- ✚ **Lost** and **found** (Luke 15:32).
- ✚ **Unrighteous** (1 Cor 6:9) and **righteous** (1 Pet 4:18).

6:11).

- ✚ **In bondage** (Gal 4:9) and **made free** (Rom 8:2).
- ✚ **Deceived** (Tit 3:3) and **illuminated** (Heb 10:32).
- ✚ **Disobedient** (Tit 3:3) and **obedient** 1 Pet 1:14).
- ✚ **Aliens** (Eph 2:12) and **citizens** (Eph 2:19; Phil 3:20).
- ✚ **Strangers** (Eph 2:19) and **friends**

Our knowledge of God and acquaintance with His purpose is to dictate how we live when among those “who are without.” We are not to be governed by human perceptions and “fleshly wisdom,” but by the wisdom that is “from above

- ✚ **Children of the wicked one** (Matt 13:38) and **children of the kingdom.**
- ✚ **Unholy** (1 Tim 1:9) and **holy** (1 Pet 2:5).
- ✚ **Ungodly** (1 Pet 4:18) and **godly** (2 Pet 2:9).
- ✚ **Infidels** and **believers** (2 Cor 6:15).
- ✚ **Unbelievers** (1 Cor 6:6) and **believers** (1 Tim 4:12).
- ✚ **Reprobate** (2 Cor 13:5) and **Accepted** (Eph 1:6).
- ✚ **Carnal** and **Spiritual** (1 Cor 3:1).
- ✚ **Of the world** (1 John 4:6) and **of God** (1 John 4:4).
- ✚ **Far from God** (Eph 2:17) and **near to God** (Eph 2:13).
- ✚ **Without God** (Eph 2:12) and **with God** (1 Cor 7:24).
- ✚ **Having no hope** (Eph 2:12; 1 Thess 4:13) and **having hope** (Heb 6:19).
- ✚ **Dead** (Eph 2:1) and **alive** (Rom

(3 John 1:14).

Now the Spirit shows us **how** to walk toward these people – or live toward them. How are we to conduct ourselves toward “*them that are without?*” It is to be “*in wisdom*” – knowing not only what they are now, but what they can be in Christ as well. **Our knowledge of God and acquaintance with His purpose is to dictate how we live when among those “who are without.”** We are not to be governed by human perceptions and “*fleshly wisdom,*” but by the wisdom that is “*from above,*” that is “*first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy*” (James 3:17).

The Law provided an introduction to living among those not enjoying the privileges vouchsafed to the people of God. “*Thou shalt not curse the deaf, nor put a stumblingblock before the blind, but shalt fear thy God: I am the LORD*” (Lev 19:14). The Israelites were not to give anything unclean to the “*stranger*” within their gates (Deut 14:21). **They were not to be a distracting influence to them.**

The Spirit does not provide us with a routine that can be followed by rote, or apart from fellowship with Jesus. This is a matter having to do with wisdom – wisdom that is appropriated in Christ Jesus alone, and that can be utilized only while abiding in Him.

Walking in wisdom toward those who are without involves similar conduct on our part. We are to live prudently and with propriety. In the words of the Spirit, *“Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God”* (1 Cor 10:32). We are not to depart from a godly manner of speaking when we are with them. We are not to adopt their views, or speak as though we do. **In their presence, we are to be more aware of the living God than we are of them.**

NOT STEREOTYPED

There is not a fixed manner of speech and conduct that is to be adopted when walking *“toward them that are without.”* **The Spirit does not provide us with a routine that can be followed by rote, or apart from fellowship with Jesus.** This is a matter having to do with wisdom – wisdom that

is appropriated in Christ Jesus alone, and that can be utilized **only while abiding in Him.** This kind of wisdom is seen in the life of our Lord.

Jesus

Jesus did not conduct Himself before Herod in the same way as He did before Pilate. He did not answer Herod (Luke 23:9). He did answer Pilate (Mark 15:2; John 18:34-37). He spoke differently to Nicodemus the Pharisee than He did to the rest of the Pharisees (John 3:1-21; Matt 23:13-36). The first words he said to the Gentile centurion who sought mercy for his servant were, *“I will come and heal him”* (Matt 8:6-7). The first words he said to the Gentile Syrophenician woman were, *“Let the children first be filled: for it is not meet to take the children’s bread, and to cast it unto the dogs”* (Mark 7:27).

Ponder His approach to the Gentile woman at the well – how He asked her for a drink (John 4:7). All of these people were *“without.”* Yet, our Lord did not approach them all in the same way. **He walked in wisdom toward those who were without** – a wisdom marked by perception and discretion.

We are to do the same, being motivated by our understanding of the Lord’s desire, *“Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth”* (1 Tim 2:4). We are to *“give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully”* 1 Tim 5:14). The name of the Lord has been much maligned because professing “Christians” have conducted themselves unwisely before those who are *“without.”* They have not duly considered the impact they can have for either good or evil.

Believers are not to conduct themselves like chameleons, blending in with every environment so as to disguise who they are in Christ Jesus. They are not to be naive, and even foolish before the heathen, but walk *“in wisdom,”* fully aware of both the circumstance and opportunities that are before them. They must be able to distinguish between an inquiring Ethiopian eunuch, and a pretentious miracle-seeker like Herod.

REDEEMING THE TIME

“^{5b} . . . redeeming the time.”

The Spirit now expounds more fully what He means by walking in wisdom toward those who are without. **He is going to suggest that our contact with them is not coincidental or happenstance.** He will, in fact, put before us that such occasions are properly seen as opportunities!

REDEEMING

“ . . . redeeming . . . ” Other versions read, *“making the most,”* ^{NASB} *“make the most,”* ^{NIV} *“making good use,”* ^{BBE} *“making the best use,”* ^{ESV} and

“forestalling.” ^{YLT}

The word translated *“redeeming”* is filled with significance. It means “to buy up, to buy up for oneself, for one’s use, and to make a wise and sacred use of every opportunity for doing good, so that zeal and well-doing are as it were the purchase money by which we make the time our own.” ^{THAYER} *“Making the most of an opportunity, make the best use of, take advantage of.”* ^{FRIBERG} *“Make the most of, make good use of.”* ^{UBS}

This postulates that an opportunity has been placed before us that can be procured for the glory of God and godly advantage. It presupposes that certain possibilities

confront us that can **only** be appropriated by living and walking with Jesus. Also, it presumes that life is not lived by happenstance. **Additionally, it suggests there are windows of opportunity opened to us in which the ripened wheat of humanity can be harvested.**

Real spiritual life is lived under the management of the Holy Spirit – a management to which faith joyfully consents, and of which it can be keenly aware. Remember, *“newness of life”* is a life of being co-partners with the Lord Jesus. It is not merely lived in concert or harmony with the Lord, but in fellowship,

or participation, with Him. **Just as surely as Cleopas and his companion walked with Jesus, profiting from His presence, and sharing their own hearts, so the believer walks with Him.** This is a point that must be especially emphasized in our day – a day that is characterized by the promotion of routine, life-disciplines, and habits.

Redeeming Under the Law

The proper concept of “redeeming” was introduced under the Law. There men were taught concerning moving things from one category to another – **from unacceptable to acceptable.** Redeeming was generally associated with a cost. It was not accomplished by a mere decision, or by human will alone.

- ✦ In offering a sacrifice associated with making a vow, if the beast was unclean, it had to be “redeemed” (Lev 27:11-13).
- ✦ If a man sanctified his house to be “holy unto the Lord,” it first had to be “redeemed” (Lev 27:14-15).
- ✦ If an individual sanctified a field after the year of Jubilee, it had to first be “redeemed” (Lev 27:18-19).
- ✦ If a firstborn beast, declared to be the Lord’s, was “unclean,” it has to first be “redeemed” (Lev 27:27).

In each of these case, the **thing redeemed was to be for** the Lord – dedicated to Him.

Redeeming Under Christ

Under Christ, redemption most generally relates to the sanctifying of humanity to God – setting them apart from enslavement to sin and the consequent curse of the Law.

- ✦ The means through which we have been justified is identified as “*the redemption that is in Christ Jesus*” (Rom 3:24).
- ✦ The resurrection of the dead is referred to as “*the redemption of our body*” (Rom 8:23; Eph 1:14).
- ✦ God has made Christ to be “*redemption*” unto us (1 Cor 1:30).

- ✦ Christ has “*redeemed us from the curse of the Law*” (Gal 3:13).
- ✦ Jesus came to “*redeem them that were under the, that we might receive the adoption of sons*” (Gal 4:5).
- ✦ “*Redemption through His blood*” is associated with “*the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace*” (Eph 1:7; Col 1:14).

speaks of a redemption that is to be accomplished **by us.**

THE TIME

“... *the time.*” Other versions read, “*the opportunity,*” ^{NASB} “*every opportunity,*” ^{NIV} “*opportunities,*” ^{DARBY} “*the season,*” ^{GENEVA} and “*the present time.*” ^{NJB}

The word “*time*” comes from a word that means “a measure of time; larger or smaller portion of time; a fixed measure of time . . . a

When, therefore, we speak of redeeming something, we are referring to an act that moves something or someone from mundane use to the service of God.

- ✦ The day of Christ’s return, and the consequent removal of all impediments for the elect, is called “*the day of redemption*” (Eph 4:30).
- ✦ Jesus “*gave Himself to redeem us from all iniquity*” (Tit 2:14).
- ✦ Through His own blood, Jesus entered into the true holy place, “*having obtained eternal redemption for us*” (Heb 9:12).
- ✦ We “*were redeemed*” from our vain manner of life “*with the precious blood of Christ*” 1 Pet 1:18-19).

Thus, by means of the payment of Christ’s life, or the shedding of His blood, we were redeemed **from** sin and vanity. This was in order that we might live toward God, becoming His sons through a satisfactory and righteous means. The point is that we now **belong to the Lord** in a way that brings glory to Him, and eternal advantages to us.

When, therefore, we speak of redeeming something, we are referring to an act that moves something or someone from mundane use to the service of God. Generally this movement is accomplished by Deity – God the Father in the sense of purpose, and Jesus Christ in the sense of the sanctified means. However, our text

season . . . a certain time . . . an opportune or seasonal time.” ^{THAYER} “A seasonal or favorable time, opportunity . . . often a Divinely allotted time, season.” ^{FRIBERG} “Appointed or proper time, season . . . the right time . . . opportunity.” ^{UBS}

As used in this text, “*time*” does not refer to “*time*” in general – i.e. the period between “*the beginning*” when God “*created and heavens and the earth,*” and “*the end of all things.*” **Time is narrowed down from several differing perspectives.**

- ✦ From the standpoint of God’s covenantal workings: Before the Law, or “*from Adam to Moses*” (Rom 5:13-14); during the Law (Rom 5:20); and during the “*day of salvation*” (2 Cor 6:2).
- ✦ From the viewpoint of the particular generation in which we live – a generation that is to be “*served*” (Acts 13:36).
- ✦ Considered as the period between our new birth and the time of our departure from this present evil world (2 Tim 4:7; 1 Pet 4:2).
- ✦ A particular appointment – like “*a time to be born, and a time to die*” (Eccl 3:1-8).
- ✦ An opportunity that is set before us, during which certain advantages are offered – such as Jesus’ ministry

being Jerusalem's time of "visitation" (Luke 19:44).

Here "time" has to do with our manner of life before those "that are without" – alienated from the life of God. Two things may be deduced from this circumstance.

✦ **First**, there are specific opportunities during which those who are "without" may be influenced. These are **windows of opportunity when holy influences can be productive** – like Philip confronting

6).

✦ **Fifth**, there are occasions when, in the very midst of opposition, an opportunity is granted to **give a defense of the faith**, as when the chief captain of a Roman guard rescued Paul from a beating (Acts 21:37-22:1).

✦ **Sixth**, there are times when **those who are without ask us a reason for the hope that is within us**, as affirmed in First Peter 3:15. "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts:

Make the Most of It

The above are a sampling of occasions that are to be purchased for the glory of God. **Such time is to be recovered from waste and squander, for they may never come again.** We "redeem the time," buying it up by employing the bartering principle. We exchange fleshly interests in order to make these opportunities our own. We forfeit times of pleasure and relaxation in order to invest in eternity. Thus, time is not "consumed" on our own lusts (James 4:3), but in interest of the glory of God.

Another Perspective: The Days Are Evil

In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul adds yet another perspective to the matter of redeeming the time. "See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil" (Eph 5:16). The context of this admonition also has to do with "the world of the ungodly" (2 Pet 2:5). There the approach differs slightly to that of the Colossians text, but is measurably the same. The Ephesian brethren are warned to "have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove [expose NKJV] them" (Eph 5:11). This assumes we are in the presence of the ungodly, and that they are the ones who are being "reproved" – that is, it is their works that are being "exposed."

The life of circumspection, or careful diligence and caution, has to do with being among the ungodly. The idea is that all involvement with the wicked is dangerous, even though it is sometimes necessary. We are to walk wisely before them with a mind to avoiding contamination and defilement. If, unlike righteous Lot, we are **not vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked** (2 Pet 2:7), we will be infected and debased by them. That condition mandates that we "walk in wisdom toward them that are without."

Also, this is to be done in knowledge of the fact that "the days are evil." Other versions read, "it is a wicked age,"^{NJB} and "these are evil times."^{CEV} Here, the word "evil" means "depravity, iniquity, wickedness, evil purposes and desires."^{THAYER} "Intentionally practiced ill-will, wicked ways, evil doings, malicious deeds."^{FRIBERG} "Wickedness, evil intention."^{UBS} "Pertaining to being morally corrupt and evil."^{LOUW}

The life of circumspection, or careful diligence and caution, has to do with being among the ungodly. The idea is that all involvement with the wicked is dangerous, even though it is sometimes necessary.

the Ethiopian eunuch in the wilderness. Another is when a shipwreck brought Paul into contact with the heathen of the Island of Melia (Acts 28:1-10).

✦ **Second**, there are times when **the wicked are to be apprised of their real situation, and the Spirit will strive with their hearts** – like Paul reasoning with Felix concerning "righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come" (Acts 24:25). Another is when Paul expounded the prophets to Agrippa (Acts 26:28).

✦ **Third**, there are occasions when **the wicked must be informed of their real situation**, being soundly rebuked, as when Peter upbraided Simon the sorcerer (Acts 8:20-23). Another occasion was when Paul confronted Elymas the Sorcerer (Acts 13:8-11).

✦ **Fourth**, there are times when **the wicked behold how we conduct ourselves in the hour of trial**, as when Paul was bitten by a serpent, and the heathen of Melia beheld him to see what would happen (Acts 28:3-

and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear" (1 Pet 3:15). Paul was confronted with such occasions in Athens (Acts 17:19), and before Agrippa as well (Acts 24:24-25).

✦ **Seventh**, there are times when we are given **the opportunity to "do good,"** as when the good Samaritan confronted a man who was beaten and left "half dead" (Luke 10:30-33).

✦ **Eighth**, there are times when we are especially observed by the holy angels, who look for opportunities to minister to us, for we are their stewardship (Heb 1:13-14). Once when faithful Paul was on a vessel that was about to be shipwrecked, surrounded by those who were "without," the "angel of God" stood by him saying, "Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Caesar: and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee" (Acts 27:24). Thus he was made adequate for the occasion. Even though he was a prisoner, he was made the captain of the vessel that night.

NIDA "In a bad state or condition, badness." LIDDELL-SCOTT

At the root of the meaning of "evil" is the idea of being worthless, pointless, vain, and without any good purpose of affect. **What is "in the world" tends to corruption, fading, diminishing, and losing its value.** This is because the entire realm of nature, together with everything associated with it, has been consigned to "the bondage of corruption" (Rom 8:21). Therefore, "all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world" (1 John 2:16).

While this has been the case since the fall of man, there are times, or "days," when it is particularly true. These are times when the forces of darkness have a more unfettered rule, and the "light of the knowledge of the glory of God" is more sparse. The day in which we live falls into this category – "the evil day" (Amos 6:3; Eph 6:13).

Under Attack

Presently, the body of Christ is under a fierce attack; an onslaught of subtle iniquity. **The manners of the world are so aggressive that they have even been adopted by the professed church.** There is scarcely a different in the appearance, words, and manner of life of professing Christians and those who "know not God." Too often they speak the same, conduct their lives the same, go the same places, and entertain the same values. Today religion cavorts about on the surface of life with no real depth. Professing believers are not generally grounded, confident, consistent, or zealous for the Lord. **It is the result of failing to recognize that "the days are evil."** Of such occasions Jesus said, "And because iniquity shall abound, the

love of many shall wax cold" (Mat 24:12).

It is not uncommon to find Christians changing their entire manner of life simply because of the pressure of the ungodly: "the days are evil." Some whose lives once had a degree of spiritual consistency in them, are suddenly characterized by instability and erratic spiritual manners: "the days are evil."

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Many local congregations have adopted a program that appeals more to the ungodly than the godly: "the days are evil." There is a pervading dominance of immature people in positions of church leadership: "the days are evil." Academic approaches are superceding spiritual ones: "the days are evil." An entire generation is being lost to a concept of Christian life that emphasizes entertainment: "the days are evil." The knowledge of the Word of the Living God has been exchanged for expertise in psychological principles, language, history, statistics, and the likes: "the days are evil." Personal interests have been vaunted above the revealed and appointed interests of the Savior of the world: "the days are evil."

These conditions, and many more like them, are the direct result

of not walking wisely and redeeming the time, knowing that the days are evil. As "the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Tim 3:15), the church must abandon the posture of being influenced by the world, and regain the role of being an undeniable influence upon the world. **It must resume the role of leadership in both spiritual and moral matters.** It must shed light upon

the situation rather than being covered with darkness, like a light hidden under a bushel.

Pay the right price

In order to do this, there is a price that must be paid: time must be "redeemed." **Nothing that is essentially good can be forfeited, and we must not fight to obtain or maintain anything that is temporal: "the days are evil."**

No advantage must be given to the flesh or the devil. **Whatever awakens the carnal mind, or moves a person to become fundamentally selfish, is to be opposed and "mortified"** (Col 3:5). The time is to be "redeemed" in interest of the appointed end of the world, our appearance before the judgment seat of Christ, and an entrance into glory.

SPEECH WITH GRACE

^{6a} **Let your speech be always with grace . . . "**

The totality of life is impacted by the new birth. That is why we are exhorted to bring our full lives into

harmony with the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. **Beginning with our induction into Christ, life is no longer to be lived primarily for self** (Lk 1:74; Rom 6:13; 12:1; 14:7-9; 1 Cor 6:20; 2 Cor 5:15; Gal 2:19; Phil 1:21; 1

Thess 5:10; Tit 2:14). Now the Spirit will expand another critical aspect of "newness of life."

LET

"Let . . ." Some versions omit this

There is a sense in which every child of God is unique, with a unique role in the body of Christ – by Given O. Blakely

word. ^{NJB, YLT} The vast majority of English versions, whether word-for-word translations or paraphrased versions, do employ this word.

The word **“let”** emphasizes the very nature of spiritual life – a nature that is reflected in out text, even though it is not represented by a specific Greek word. Spiritual life is described by Jesus in these words: *“He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, **out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water**”* (John 7:38). Again He revealed, *“But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water **springing up into everlasting life**”* (John 4:14).

Elihu told Job he was *“full of matter”* – the spirit within him was moving him, and his inward parts was like *“wine which hath no vent,”* and *“is ready*

4:30). If we, in fact, *“walk in the light,”* spiritual life will express itself through us.

YOUR SPEECH

“ . . . your speech . . . ” Other versions read, *“your conversation,”* ^{NIV} *“your talk,”* ^{BBE} and *“your word.”* ^{DARBY}

The word *“speech”* means more than sounds, or mere words. **It includes the idea or conception that is being communicated by what is said.** Your *“speech”* involves the communication of an idea. It reflects and articulates your perception. It reveals your heart, values, and motivations. Jesus said, *“out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh”* (Mat 12:34; Luke 6:45).

“Newness of life” bears upon the way we walk, what we communicate, and how we speak. As we will find, this particular text has to do with the way we speak before those who are *“without,”*

Paul took care to admonish the younger about the way they talked. They were to employ *“words of faith,”* use *“wholesome words,”* and utilize *“sound words”* (1 Tim 4:6; 6:3; 2 Tim 1:13). Their words were not to be *“without profit,”* but *“become the sound doctrine,”* and be *“sound speech that cannot be condemned”* (2 Tim 2:14; Tit 2:1,8).

There is a noticeable absence of this kind of emphasis in the Christian community. It is not unusual to find whole generations adopting a vocabulary in which the things of God cannot be clearly and concisely expressed. The text before us soundly refutes the notion that such speaking is in any way acceptable.

BE ALWAYS

“ . . . be always . . . ” Other versions read, *“always be.”* ^{NKJV}

Spiritual life must be consistent to be effective and satisfactory: *“always.”* Jesus said, *“men ought ALWAYS to pray, and not to faint”* (Lk 18:1). To those who heard Him declare the end of heaven and earth and being caught unawares by it He said, *“Watch ye therefore, and pray ALWAYS, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man”* (Luke 21:36). Setting the example for us all He said, *“I do ALWAYS those things that please him”* (John 8:29).

Believers are exhorted to be consistent in the manner of their spiritual lives.

- ✚ Be *“unmoveable, ALWAYS abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord”* (1 Cor 15:58).
- ✚ Paul spoke of be *“ALWAYS confident”* (2 Cor 5:6).
- ✚ We are admonished to be *“ALWAYS rejoicing”* (2 Cor 6:10).
- ✚ There is such a state as *“ALWAYS having all sufficiency in all things”* (2 Cor 9:8).
- ✚ It is good to be *“zealously affected ALWAYS in a good thing”* (Gal 4:18).

It would be well if all who wear the name of Jesus were more conscious about their speech. It appears as though this is a particularly weak point among professing Christians.

to burst like new bottles” (Job 32:18-19). Solomon said the mouth of a righteous man *“is a well of life”* – a well that bubbles up (Prov 10:1). He also said a wise man’s mouth was like a *“wellspring of wisdom”* and a *“flowing brook”* (Prov 18:4).

It is the nature of spiritual life to express itself, and to be most difficult to contain. Jeremiah confessed, *“Then I said, ‘I will not make mention of Him, nor speak anymore in His name.’ But His word was in my heart like a burning fire shut up in my bones; I was weary of holding it back, and I could not”* ^{NKJV} (Jer 20:9). That is the nature of true life.

The word *“let”* speaks to us of allowing the living water to flow out of us. This is done by not quenching (1 Thess 5:19) or grieving the Holy Spirit (Eph

although it is certainly not limited to them.

Paul said his *“speech”* was *“not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power”* (1 Cor 2:4). He also admonished Titus to use *“sound speech that cannot be condemned”* (Tit 2:8).

It would be well if all who wear the name of Jesus were more conscious about their speech. It appears as though this is a particularly weak point among professing Christians. Many who wear the name of Jesus seem to abandon all restraint when they speak before those who *“are without.”* It is not unusual to find them adapting the jargon of those who are not reconciled to God, and remain yet in their sins. Such things are wholly inappropriate!

- ✚ Believers are admonished to give “thanks **ALWAYS**” (Eph 6:20).
- ✚ There is such a thing as “**ALWAYS**” obeying (Phil 2:12).
- ✚ We are also urged to be rejoicing “in the Lord **ALWAY**” (Phil 4:4).
- ✚ Consider “**ALWAYS** laboring fervently” (Col 4:12).
- ✚ We are even admonished to “**ALWAYS**” be “ready to give an answer to every man that asketh a reason for the hope that is in you” (1 Pet 3:15).

God is not glorified by sporadic and inconsistent spiritual lives. It is neither right nor acceptable to live unto the Lord seasonally, with spiritual lives rising and waning like the troubled sea. While this may be common among men, it is not satisfactory in the eyes of the Lord. **Vacillation is a sign of instability, and instability confirms the individual is lacking in faith**, for we stand by faith (2 Cor 1:24).

Nor, indeed, is it right for our speech to be spiritually erratic, as though our minds were running footloose in an uncertain field. It is time for the professing church to get some stability into its speech. **Whether it is a message to the sanctified, an answer to the unsaved interrogator, or speaking among those who are “without,” saints must have both language and a message that is consistent: “always.”**

If you were to be privy to the sundry conversations that take place in and around church assemblies, you would find that precious few of them have anything to do with “the things of the Spirit of God,” which those “who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on”^{NIV} (Rom 8:5). This is a most serious condition, for it reveals an aloofness from God that can in no way be justified. **If Christ has “reconciled us to God” (Col 1:21), brought us “nigh” to Him (Eph 2:13), and we have been called into His “fellowship” (1 Cor 1:9), what possible reason can be adduced for our speaking not being**

in harmony with those circumstances?

WITH GRACE

“ . . . with grace . . . ” Other versions read, “full of grace,”^{NIV} “gracious,”^{NRSV} “in grace,”^{DOUAY} and “pleasantly.”^{NJB}

And how is our speech “always” to be? It is to be “with grace” – filled with grace, thus becoming a proper vehicle of grace. **Our speech is to be profitable,**

intent of this admonition.

Some translations suggest this lower meaning of the text: “Let your speech always be gracious,”^{NRSV} “Always talk pleasantly and with a flavor of wit,”^{NJB} and “Let your conversation be gracious and effective.”^{NLT} Such translations assume the text is saying the same thing as Solomon: “The words of a wise man’s mouth are gracious” (Eccl 10:12).

An Example

Our text is more in keeping with a

And how is our speech “always” to be? It is to be “with grace” – filled with grace, thus becoming a proper vehicle of grace. Our speech is to be profitable, lending itself to the proper culturing of the soul.

lending itself to the proper culturing of the soul. Speech that is damaging, promoting wickedness and vice, is strictly forbidden for the child of God – including “filthiness . . . foolish talking . . . jesting, which are not convenient” (Eph 5:4). Now the Spirit admonishes us concerning the profitability of speaking. **Our words must have some value, and be able to contribute to the welfare of the saints.** It must be “with grace.”

Grace can shape our vocabulary. **Even when we speak about things pertaining to this life, we speak from a godly perspective**, and not as those who “know not God.” Worldly assessments and values are not to penetrate our thoughts and words. The world thinks and speaks with the wrong perspective – a perspective we are not to adopt.

Some commentators are of the opinion that “with grace” means courteous and agreeable, not morose and melancholy. Although that may be involved, it is certainly not the focus of this text, as though the Holy Spirit is merely telling us to be polite and mannerly. Mind you, **grace will produce those qualities**, but they are only wrappings and do not reflect the full

Psalmic expression that articulated **how and what** grace caused the psalmist to speak. “My heart is inditing a **good matter**: I speak of the things which I have made touching the king: my tongue is the pen of a ready writer. Thou art fairer than the children of men: **grace is poured into thy lips**: therefore God hath blessed thee for ever” (Psa 45:1-2).

Notice, the speaking was preceded by the consideration of a “good matter,” or “a noble theme.”^{NIV} The Psalmist was thus enabled to speak in the same manner as a skillful writer wrote. Grace was thus poured out upon his lips so he could articulate what his heart had been “inditing.”

The Psalms are examples of speaking “with grace.” Most of them are testimonies, praise, and personal expressions, versus doctrinal dissertations. In them we read testimonies of being assaulted by the enemy (Psa 6:7) and being inundated with blessings from above (Psa 68:19). We read of the consideration of the prosperity of the wicked, and a ray of light that illuminated their real condition (Psa 73:1-18). There are expressions of being overcome with grief (Psa 18:4-5), and the glorious relief of abounding joy (Psa 21:1). There are expressions of personal determination

(Psa 7:17; ; 16:7), and words of insightful exhortation (Psa 117:1). These are all words spoken *“with grace.”* They are characterized by insight, concern, and fervency.

A person who speaks *“with grace”* is dominated by a love for the Lord Jesus, who has redeemed him.

Such a person has a heart in which the love of God has been shed abroad, so that he cannot view life in any of its facets without relating it to the One who has delivered him from the power of darkness, and translated him into the kingdom of His dear Son.

Speech that is *“with grace”* is

uttered within the framework of sound spiritual perspective, and with a mind to give eternal advantages to those to whom it is addressed. It is in harmony with the truth, and in no way detracts from it. It is speech that can be employed by the Spirit of God for eternal advantage.

SEASONED WITH SALT

“^{6b} . . . seasoned with salt . . . ”

We are living in an American generation in which speaking has been “dumbed down.” **Slang has taken the place of precision, and simplistic expression has supplanted thoughtful and beneficial locution.** In religion, this is the day of paraphrased Bibles, the Cotton Patch Bible, and other sundry versions that affirm they are making the Word more clear – especially for those who have no sound conception of spiritual things. One can only imagine what would happen in society if the same approach was taken to medical references, engineering textbooks, and automobile repair manuals.

One of the sure marks of an unprofitable generation is a deterioration in the manner and content of its speech. **When the language of the street is dignified, humanity has been degraded.**

I know of no person of sound mind who would conclude from the First and Second Epistles of Peter that Cephas was an unlearned fisherman. Nor, indeed, would a purposeful perusal of the Gospel of John, First, Second, and Third John, and the Book of the Revelation bring one to the conclusion that John had a background in the commerce of fishing. For that matter, the speaking of our blessed Lord was confusing to the pretentious because they could not match it with their social perception of Him (John 7:15).

The truth of the matter is that spiritual mindedness impacts upon both the content and manner of our

speech. The words that follow are an exhortation for us to yield to that impact, **refusing to allow our speech to be molded by the flesh** and all that is associated with it.

SEASONED

“ . . . seasoned . . . ” Other versions read, *“mixed with,”*^{BBE} *“powdered with,”*^{GENEVA} *“as though seasoned with,”*^{NAU} and *“with a flavor.”*^{NJB}

Let all your conversation be such as may tend to exemplify and recommend Christianity; let it not only be holy, but wise, gracious, and intelligent. A harsh method of proposing or defending the doctrines of Christianity only serves to repel men from those doctrines, and from the way of salvation. Salt, from its use in preserving food from corruption, and rendering it both savory and wholesome, has always been made the emblem of wisdom. The word has been also used to express in composition or conversation what is terse, comprehensive, useful, elegant, and impressive. The term Attic salt has been used to express some of the principal beauties of the Greek tongue; of such beauties the Gospel of Christ has an endless store.

Berachoth, fol 34

Already we have been admonished to let our speaking be *“with grace.”* Now the Spirit directs us to consider the seasoning of our speaking.

The word *“seasoned”* means “to prepare, arrange, to season, make savory, pleasant and wholesome.”^{THAYER} “Season, make tasty.”^{FRIEBERG}

In speaking, merely expressing ourselves is not the primary consideration. To simply convey our view of things must never become our primary motive. **Our speech is to be prepared**

with special spiritual seasoning that tends to make it as savory as it possible under the conditions. We are to make allowances for our speaking to be remembered, and that with eternal profit.

WITH SALT

“ . . . with salt . . . ” Other versions read, *“of wit,”*^{NJB} and *“effective.”*^{NLT}

The Spirit speaks frequently to us of *“salt.”* Jesus said His disciples are *“the salt of the earth”* (Matt 5:13). He also said *“every sacrifice shall be salted with salt,”* and that *“salt is good,”* unless it has *“lost its saltness”* (Mk 9:49-50).

The word *“salt”* speaks of **acceptability and preservation – acceptable to God, and preserved in the world.** That is, speech that is *“seasoned with salt”* is more spiritually palatable, and tends to be remembered, being preserved in the mind.

The Concept Developed Under Law

As it true with most spiritual conceptions, the use of *“salt”* was introduced and developed under the Law. These men were taught that what they offered to God was not, of itself, acceptable. **Something had to be applied to it in order for it to be received by the Lord.**

When specifying the requirements for a grain offering, the Lord said, *“And every offering of your grain offering you shall season with salt; you shall not allow the salt of the covenant of your God to be lacking from your grain offering. With all your offerings you shall offer salt”*^{NKJV} (Lev 2:13). No leniency was allowed in this matter.

The Levitical law also made reference to the “*covenant of salt*” (Num 18:19; 2 Chron 13:5), together with the above reference to “*salt of the covenant*.” It is generally concluded that this language referred to a “*perpetual covenant*,” a phrase used in Exodus 31:16 and Jeremiah 30:5. **That is, this was a covenant that did not rise and fall with the inconsistencies of men.** “*Salt*,” therefore, came to be associated with incorruptibility or permanence.

The point of this exhortation is to

When our speech is “*seasoned with salt*,” our words take the form of “*sound words*” (2 Tim 1:13), comforting words (1 Thess 4:18), and “*words of faith*” that nourish the soul (1 Tim 4:6). Then words are “*wholesome*” (1 Tim 6:3), and conducive to spiritual progress.

Compared With

Speech that is “*with grace*” and “*seasoned with salt*,” is to the opposite of “*evil speaking*” (Eph 4:31), “*speaking things which they ought not*” (1 Tim 5:13), and “*excellency of speech*” (1 Cor

the manner of the kingdom will declare we cannot always be speaking about the things of God. We must be more practical, else we will be viewed in an unfavorable light. Whatever justification there may be for such an observation, it is only on the surface of our consideration, lacking any real intelligence or depth. In order for such a statement to be made, we would have to be faced with an avalanche of spiritual talk that scarcely allows for any “ordinary” [as men would say it] communication. I have never witnessed such an environment, although I have traveled extensively. Nor, indeed, have I ever witnessed such a phenomenon.

The truth of the matter is that those who champion mundane conversations, and evince a fear of being too godly or Biblical in our talk, have only betrayed their own carnality. There is no merit to their objections, and they ought not to be heard or considered.

The church would do well to have more talk that is “*with grace*” and “*seasoned with salt*.” It certainly is in no danger of overextending itself in this area. That, of course, is precisely why this exhortation is in Scripture. **There is no admonition to become more mundane and down-to-earth in our language – not so much as a single word or hint!** The reason for this condition is quite simple. By nature we have to struggle against excesses in this area, not deficiencies.

The truth of the matter is that those who champion mundane conversations, and evince a fear of being too godly or Biblical in our talk, have only betrayed their own carnality. There is no merit to their objections, and they ought not to be heard or considered.

provoke us to season our speech with things that cause our words last, not be easily forgotten, and lending themselves to further consideration. **Something must be in our speech that causes it to be preserved, more readily remembered, and eternally profitable.** The words of a believer should never be spoken into the air!

2:1). It stands in contrast to speaking “*with words of man’s wisdom*” (1 Cor 2:4), and “*foolish talking, and jesting which are not convenient*” (Eph 5:4). It is the opposite of “*idle words*” (Matt 12:36), “*grievous words*” (Prov 15:1), and “*vain words*” (Eph 5:6).

Some who are less acquainted with

THAT YE MAY KNOW HOW

“^{6c} . . . *that ye may know how ye ought to answer . . .*”

Now the Spirit gets to the heart of the matter. Our own speaking sets the stage for giving proper responses to the interrogations of those who “*are without*.” **The general trend and substance of our words provide the real context in which the ungodly will consider or discard what we say.** They are also the framework within which those who are not far from the kingdom will ponder our replies. The same

consideration applies to members of “*the household of faith*” (Gal 6:10).

THAT YE MAY KNOW

“*. . . that ye may know . . .*” Other versions read, “*so that you may be able*,” ^{BBE} “*so that you will know*,” ^{NAU} “*be sensitive to*,” ^{NJB} “*so that you will have*,” ^{NLT} and “*know how it behoveth you*.” ^{YLT}

Here is a most arresting consideration: The manner and content of our words can assist us in the acquisition of knowledge. Normally one would reason

just the opposite – that acquiring knowledge, or studying, will enable us to “*know how to . . .*”

Our own words – their subject and drift – can cause us to be snared by foolish conversations, and be caught upon the discussion of vanities. Thus you can be “*snared by the words of your mouth*” (Prov 6:2). Those, for example, who always speak accommodatingly of religious matters, jesting about Scripture, and speaking lightly about matters pertaining to life

and godliness, are easily stymied by serious spiritual talk. As soon as someone begins to ask about spiritual matters, the fountain of wisdom dries up in such people. They have to refer the inquirer to someone else, or perhaps a book – any reference point but themselves.

The reason for this condition is quite simple. **It is because their speaking has been given over to the dominance of other considerations** – considerations that are of no measurable consequence.

HOW YE OUGHT TO ANSWER

“... how ye ought to answer. . .”

Other versions read, “how you should respond,”^{NASB} “be able to give an answer,”^{BEB} “how you should respond,”^{NAB} “the kind of answer,”^{NJB} and “the right answer.”^{NLT}

There is an intriguing reality behind this word. It is that “newness of life” is provocative, eliciting inquiry from those who “are without.” **The interrogations to which the text refers have to do with life in Christ Jesus, together with its implications.** Nowhere are believers admonished to answer questions regarding politics, the various sciences, matters of diet, and the likes. **At some point, a valid question intersects with moral and spiritual issues. It is at that point that those in Christ are obliged to speak up, giving an answer.**

It is the business of every believer to recognize and address common issues of the day **in light of the truth of God.** This will require wisdom. It will also necessitate a manner of speaking that reflects “the mind of Christ.”

Jesus Answered Questions

The manner in which Jesus approached and answered the questions directed to Him will be most helpful in discerning the intent of this exhortation. This is truth incarnate speaking!

- ✦ **Jews in a synagogue.** “Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath days?” (Matt 12:10).
- ✦ **The disciples.** “Why then say the scribes that Elias must first come?” (Matt 17:10).

- ✦ **The Sadducees.** “Saying, Master, Moses said, If a man die, having no children, his brother shall marry his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother. Now there were with us seven brethren: and the first, when he had married a wife, deceased, and, having no issue, left his wife unto his brother: Likewise the second also, and the third, unto the seventh. And last of all the woman died also. Therefore in the resurrection whose wife shall she be of the seven? for they all had her” (Mat 22:24-28).
- ✦ **A Lawyer.** “Master, which is the great commandment in the law?”

be the sign when all these things shall be fulfilled?” (Mark 13:4).

- ✦ **An unbelieving high priest.** “Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?” (Mark 14:61).
- ✦ **Skeptical Pilate.** “Art thou the King of the Jews?” (Mark 15:2).
- ✦ **Spies feigning themselves as just men.** “Is it lawful for us to give tribute unto Caesar, or no?” (Luke 20:22).
- ✦ **Mocking soldiers.** “Prophesy, who is it that smote thee?” (Luke 22:64).

The nature of the questions people asked Jesus indicated the thrust of His speaking. None of these questions were answered academically. Jesus employed wisdom in responding to them all. Note the different nature of His responses.

(Matt 22:36).

- ✦ **The Pharisees and scribes, eager to maintain their traditions.** “Why walk not thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashen hands?” (Mark 7:5).
- ✦ **The disciples, upon failing to cast out a demon.** “Why could not we cast him out?” (Mark 9:28).
- ✦ **The Pharisees who were tempting Him.** “Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife?” (Mark 10:2).
- ✦ **A certain ruler who appeared to be searching.** “Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?” (Mark 10:17).
- ✦ **His disciples when hearing of the destruction of Jerusalem, the end of the world, and Christ’s coming.** “Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall

- ✦ **His disciples concerning a blind man.** “Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?” (John 9:2).

The nature of the questions people asked Jesus indicated the thrust of His speaking. None of these questions were answered academically. Jesus employed wisdom in responding to them all. Note the different nature of His responses.

- ✦ When asked if it was lawful to heal on the Sabbath day, Jesus asked what man among them would fail to lift a sheep out of a pit into which he had fallen on the Sabbath day. He then affirmed that a man was better than a sheep, and that it was lawful to “do good” on the Sabbath (Mk 12:11-12).
- ✦ When asked why the Scriptures said Elijah must come first, He replied that Elijah truly would come first and restore all things, adding that he had already come, but the people did to him whatever they wanted – referring

to John the Baptist (Mk 17:11-12).

- ✚ When asked concerning which wife a man would have *“in the resurrection”* after he had seven wives, Jesus said the inquirers erred, *“not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God.”* He then told them there is no marriage *“in the resurrection”* (Matt 22:29-31).
- ✚ When asked which commandment was the greatest *“in the Law,”* He chose one that was not listed on the tables of stone and was a summary of the commands relating to God. He then cited the second one, which was a summary of the commandments relating to men (Matt 22:37-40).
- ✚ When asked why His disciples ate bread without washing their hands, He said the questioners had laid aside and even rejected the commandment of God in order to hold to their own traditions (Mk 7:6-9).

saying that he ought to keep the commandments. When the inquirer said had kept the commandments, Jesus told him to sell everything he had, give to the poor, and follow Him (Mk 10:18-21).

- ✚ When Jesus’ disciples asked him concerning the destruction of Jerusalem, the end of the world, and His coming, Jesus replied in remarkable detail. Yet, His answer placed the accent on their preparation rather than the signs, and was given in such a way as causes confusion to this day among those who approach things from an academic point of view (Mk 13:5-37).
- ✚ When the high priest asked Jesus if He was *“the Christ, the Son of the blessed,”* Jesus replied that He was, and that the high priest would *“see the Son on man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the*

arbiter over you?”^{NASB} (Luke 12:14). He then spoke to those around them, telling them, *“Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth”* (Luke 12:15).

Behold with what wisdom our Lord answered those who questioned Him. This is the same Christ who now dwells in the hearts of His people. In the process of our fellowship with Him, we will come to know *“HOW”* to respond to those we confront. Note, the text does not say *“WHAT* to respond,” but *“HOW* to respond! *“How”* includes the manner of our response as well as its contents. **The objective is to have a response that conforms to the truth, and provides something through which the Spirit can work.** It speaks of a response that God can use, and that contributes to the development of a sound perception of God and His great salvation.

REDEEMING THE TIME

If redeeming the time involves knowing how to answer, then NOT knowing how to answer fails to redeem the time. In such a case, time has been squandered, an opportunity given to us from above has been wasted, and we have proved to be unfaithful stewards.

Does all of that seem a bit strong? If so, it is only because of the false impressions that have been left in the wake of shallow religion. The Lord has consistently underscored the importance of speech. He has told us, *“For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned”* (Matt 12:37). Jesus even went so far as to say, *“But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment”* (Mat 12:36). Believers are admonished to use *“sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you”* (Titus 2:8).

What is there in the Word of God that would lead anyone to market their own private opinion to others? What has God ever said that leaves the impression that responses are inconsequential, or that our manners before the world are not important? The

The objective is to have a response that conforms to the truth, and provides something through which the Spirit can work. It speaks of a response that God can use, and that contributes to the development of a sound perception of God and His great salvation.

- ✚ When the disciples asked Jesus why they could not cast the demon out of a young boy, He candidly told them it was because of their *“unbelief,”* and that the kind of spirit they had confronted could only come out *“by prayer and fasting”* (Mk 9:28; Matt 17:20).
- ✚ When the Pharisees asked Him about divorce, Jesus asked them what Moses said. When they told Him, Jesus said Moses spoke that because of the hardness of their hearts, going on to say that God never intended for a husband to put away His wife (Mk 10:3-9).
- ✚ When a young ruler asked Jesus what to do to inherit eternal life, Jesus asked him why he called Him good,

clouds of heaven” (Mk 14:62).

Our blessed Lord provided us excellent examples of answering wisely, versus merely referring to a text of Scripture, or providing an answer that neither instructed nor challenged.

Once when certain people told Jesus *“of the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices,”* He responded by asking if the reporters thought the Galileans who died were greater sinners than other Galileans. He then told them if they did not perish, they would also perish (Lk 13:1-3).

On another occasion, a young man asked Jesus to tell his brother to *“divide the inheritance with me.”* Jesus replied, *“Man, who appointed Me a judge or*

answer to such questions is very obvious, and requires no further comment. It is

enough to take this text seriously, and seek grace to fulfill it to the

glory of God. The Lord will assist those who engage in such an effort.

EVERY MAN

^{6d} . . . **every man.** Other versions read, *“each one,”* ^{NKJV} *“each person,”* ^{NASB} and *“everyone.”* ^{NIV}

Are we to pick and choose those to whom we respond in wisdom? **Can we conduct ourselves unwisely toward some, and wisely toward others?** Indeed not! *“Newness of life”* involves a consistent walk before those who *“are without,”* always responding wisely when confronted with other personalities. Jesus responded wisely to Herod and to His disciples, to Pilate and to a lawyer, to a young man wanting to obtain a share in an earthly inheritance, and to a young man who asked about obtaining eternal life.

All of this means that there are greater issues than the moment that confronts us. **It is possible that our response may work long-term results like beholding Stephen’s response to those who stoned him worked on Saul of Tarsus.**

Our text has admonished us to bring grace to bear upon our speaking, so we will **know how** to answer *“every man.”* We are to become accustomed to speaking with the influence of God’s grace upon us. We are to live in concert with *the “spirit of grace,”* which will finely tune **how** we speak, as well as **what** we say.

One More Word

We cannot leave this text without recalling a similar admonition given by Peter. He also spoke of responding to *“every man.”* His word also postulates that the *“newness of life”* provokes inquiry from those who *“are without.”* Here is what he said, *“But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear”* (1 Pet 3:15).

✦ **“Sanctify the Lord God in your**

hearts.” Other versions read, *“sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts,”* ^{NASB} *“in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord,”* ^{NIV} Jesus is not only the heart and core of our message, He is to dwell in the heart and core of our persons. This involves walking by faith and living in the Spirit. It involves an earnest quest to know, or be more familiar with, the Lord Jesus, experiencing the *“power of His*

Lord when He comes again (Matt 25:8-10). Being ready *“always”* equates to letting your speech be *“always with grace.”*

✦ **“To give an answer . . . ”** Other versions read, *“ready to give a defense,”* ^{NKJV} *“to make a defense,”* ^{NASB} and *“to give an explanation.”* ^{NAB} Some might say *“What I believe is my business,”* or *“What I believe is none*

If men can settle in their hearts WHO they believe, it will dramatically impact upon WHAT they believe.

resurrection” (Phil 3:10). The strength of true religion is not found in the creed we embrace, but in a strong fellowship with Christ. **If men can settle in their hearts WHO they believe, it will dramatically impact upon WHAT they believe.** Sanctifying the Lord in our hearts equates with our speech being *“with grace”* and *“seasoned with salt.”* Only a personal and effectual affiliation with Him can yield such results.

✦ **“Be ready always.”** Other versions read, *“always be ready,”* ^{NKJV} *“always be prepared,”* ^{NIV} and *“be ready at any time.”* ^{BBE} You do not know who is watching you, and what questions may be provoked by the manner in which you live and speak. It is dangerous beyond description to live in a state where you are **not** ready. Such a condition lends itself to causing you not to be ready when Jesus comes again – like the five foolish virgins. **ONLY those who are “ready” will be joined to the**

of your business.” Neither of those answers is acceptable. As a child of God, you are to be ready to provide an explanation to those who inquire concerning your faith. **This is one of the means the Lord employs to spread the truth of God, and provoke hearts to inquire into the things of God.** *“Ready given an answer”* equates to *“know how ye ought to answer.”*

✦ **“To every man that asketh a reason of the hope that is in you.”** Other versions read, *“asks you to give an account of the hope that is in you,”* ^{NASB} and *“when you are questioned about the hope that is in you.”* ^{BBE} Notice, the Spirit does **not** posit men asking about your church affiliation, or the religious movement to which you belong. He does **not** suppose men are asking you what you think about baptism, or predestination, or the working of the Spirit. All of those, and more, may surely be matters about which you

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are asked. However, the Spirit does not urge us to be ready for such inquiries. **Rather, it is the “hope” – our expectation of the future – that we must be ready to explain.** This presumes it is evident that we are not of this world, and are not living for the present time. It assumes that it is apparent we are looking to some other time for ultimate satisfaction. Men ought to sense we are strangers in this world.

✚ **“With meekness and fear.”** Other versions read, “with gentleness and fear,” ^{NASB} “with gentleness and respect,” ^{NIV} and “in the fear of the Lord and without pride.” ^{BBE} We are not to assume a “my church-your church” mentality in answering for the hope that is “in us.” Our purpose is not to explain why we do or do not belong to “this church” of “that church.” All of that may be important to men, but **what lies ahead –**

beyond the destruction of the heavens and the earth – is what matters to hope. The thing that really matters is what takes place **AFTER** we die, **AFTER** the heavens and earth pass away, **AFTER** the dead are raised, and **AFTER** we stand before the “*Judge of all the earth.*” What takes place **AFTER** the devil is cast into the lake of fire is what hope considers. We reply in “*meekness and fear*” regarding such inquiries because we have a heart for others also embracing this hope.

In a way, our response to those who are provoked by our lives to inquire concerning our motivations, is constrained by the spirit Moses expressed to Hobab the Midianite. “*We are journeying unto the place of which the LORD said, I will give it you: come thou with us, and we will do thee good: for the LORD hath spoken good concerning Israel*” (Num 10:29). What a blessed thing to ponder – that we could constrain some to go with us to glory!

CONCLUSION

We have dealt with a facet of spiritual life that is often neglected among those professing faith in Christ – **how** we walk toward those who are “*without.*” For some, the only time the unsaved are mentioned is within the context of religious recruitment, sometimes called “soul winning.” However, this text has posed those who are **unreconciled** to God as inquiring into why we are the way we are. That means they can see a marked difference in the manner in which those who are in Christ live. **If that difference is not seen, all of the “witnessing” in the world will be of no avail – at least not in the critical matter of being reconciled to God.**

This approach to life may not be conducive to the development of religious organizations – but they will **all** be instantly obsolete when Jesus returns. I will tell you that many of the modern religious movements are wholly lacking in

the subject of this passage. Whether we are talking about the “praise and worship” movement, “youth-centered” movements, movements that meet the needs of the poor and needy, or academic “ministries,” the element of walking wisely “*toward them that are without*” is all too often missing.

This is a word delivered to the whole church, not a part of it. It has been

given because it is required – **not by law, but by the nature of spiritual life.** The Word of God is to be “*adorned*” by godly conduct (Tit 2:10). Newness of life is lived out in an awareness of and fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ. There is no time or place when the expression of that life is out of order or unnecessary – even as we live “*toward them that are without.*” I encourage you to seek growth in this area.

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Our next Hungry Saints Meeting will be held on Friday, 4/30/2004. In this session, we will be covering verses 7-18 of the fourth chapter. This final lesson in Colossians is, "SUNDRY SAINTS." A number of saints are mentioned by name, with references to their distinguishing qualities and ministries. The passage assists us in learning how to speak about the people of God, while not knowing them after the flesh. Our meeting will begin at 7:00 P.M. You are invited to bring your family and friends for fellowship around the Word of God. Refreshments are served afterward, with a time of extended fellowship for everyone.

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