

Place: Lurgan Baptist 24:3:2013

COMPLETE IN HIM

Reading: Colossians 4:1-6

12. TURNING OUTSIDERS INTO INSIDERS

Years ago the Salvation Army had a great convention over in the U.S.A. They were very for the old General William Booth to go out the United States and open the conference but his doctors thought that he was too frail and too old to make such a journey. Although the General himself was willing to go, he decided instead that he would write a message with which the conference might be opened. The great day drew near but no message had come. The manuscript that was expected did not arrive. The Chairman had taken his place on the platform, the proceedings had been opened and then very dramatically, a cable, a telegram was handed up to the Chairman. He tore it open. *"It's the message from the General,"* he said. But instead of a long exhortation that telegram contained but one word. The Chairman read it out to the conference. **"Others,"** signed William Booth. Is this not how D. L. Moody started? Immediately after his conversion he asked the deacons of the church to which he belonged if he might have the front pew the next Sunday night.

Knowing the fearless young Moody, they hesitated, but impressed by his earnestness, they said yes and that evening he filled that pew with a little gang of his pals.

After the service he asked for two pews and the following Sunday he filled both. That is how he commenced, and as we know he went on to bring multitudes not only into church but into Christ. Do you recall what they said of the Lord Jesus as they milled around Calvary ? *" He saved others. "* (Matt 27:42) Will you let God write that word on your heart ? He wrote it on the heart of the apostle Paul. Here is a Jew owning up to his debts. *" I am debtor both to the Greeks and to the Barbarians both to the wise and to the unwise. So as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also. "*

(Rom 1:14-15) Now here is Paul at Rome in a prison cell writing this Colossian letter and do you know what his uppermost in his mind ? **Others.** He talks about them in (4:5) *" Them that are without. "* What a descriptive term this is for those who are unsaved. You see, the Bible distinguishes between spiritual insiders and outsiders An insider is *" a person **within** a group or organization, especially someone privy to information unavailable to others. "*

Now what's the opposite of an insider ? An outsider. Someone on the outside of a group or organization. Christ Jesus said to His disciples, *" Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto **them that are without**, all these things are done in parables. "* (Mk 4:11) Paul used the same terminology writing to the Corinthians for he says, *" For what have I to do to judge **them also that are without** ? do not ye judge **them that are within** ? But **them that are without** God judgeth. "* (1 Cor 5:12-13) Do you see the difference there ? Paul talks about two groups of people. He talks about those

who are within, those who have received the Lord Jesus as their Savior, and then he talks about those who are without, those who have never received the Lord. My is that you ? Are you without Christ, without God, without hope. You see, to be outside of Christ is to be without. Now the Bible says that the Lord Jesus “ *suffered without the gate,* ” (Heb 13:12) You see, when He died on Calvary the Lord Jesus went without in order to bring those who are without within. Now you and I have a responsibility according to the Scriptures to go to those who are without and win them to Jesus Christ. The question is how ? Well, I believe that Paul lays before us here three strategic steps for “ *insiders,* ” to reach “ *outsiders.* ” Here is the first one.

(1) BE PRAYERFUL IN YOUR SPIRIT

You see, prayer and winning the lost to Christ are inseparably linked. Do you recall Paul’s burden ? “ *Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they might be saved.* ” (Rom 10:1) We’re not going to win many people to Christ until we start praying for those who need Christ. Here Paul says “ *Continue in prayer.* ” (4:2) That is, we should be constantly in fellowship with God so that prayer is as normal to us as breathing. My prayer is the most important speech that your mouth will ever utter. Prayer is the most important conversation that you will ever hold, the most important expression of the new life. You see, prayer is the divinely appointed weapon against the sinister attack of the devil and his angels. It has been well said that the purpose of prayer is not to get man’s will done in heaven but to get

God’s will done on earth. Now Paul encourages us here to,

(a) *PRAY PERSEVERINGLY:*

Now is that not where so many of us fail ? You see Paul doesn’t say pray. He says, stay at it. Continue in it. Now the thought here is perseverance. Do you recall what Paul says in Ephesians ? “ *Praying always.* ” (6:18) Do you remember what he says to the Thessalonians ? “ *Pray without ceasing.* ” (1 Thes 5:17) Of the early church it is said, they gave themselves “ *continually to prayer.* ” (Acts 6:4) It does not mean that you are verbalizing all the time. I think it means to have a general God consciousness so that you see everything that happens in reference to God. Now this does not do away with the need for persistence and earnestness in prayer. Such persistence is illustrated repeatedly in the Scriptures. Do you remember Jacob ? “ *I will not let thee go except thou bless me.* ” (Gen 32:26)

Do you recall Elijah saying to his servant, “ *Go up now, look toward the sea. And he went up and looked and said there is nothing. And he said, go again seven times.* ” (1 Kings 18:43) Do you remember Christ, “ *Men ought always to pray and not to faint.* ” (Lk 18:1) Do you know the reason we faint ? Do you know the reason we give up ? It’s because we have forgotten that prayer is a battle. No wonder Paul says, “ *Continue earnestly in prayer.* ” Because mental, emotional and physical effort is involved in prayer and you can feel exhausted by it all. My do

you realize that prayer has to do with the whole person ? You see, when we pray the mind is engaged, (1 Cor 14:15) the will is involved (Acts 12:5) and the heart is burdened. (James 5:16) The land of Wales shook one time under the Welsh revival. One night at a prayer meeting at Moriah Chapel several were gathered praying for a certain matter. In the middle of the one man's prayer, Evan Roberts went over and put his hand over the mouth of the brother who was praying and said, "*Brother, you do not need to pray on, for you are not praying at all.*" Could it be that when you pray, you are not praying at all ? For the words that you speak in prayer are spoken in the flesh and therefore are unreal and useless. My prayer is a battle. Have you discovered that ? It's not a religious interlude. It is not a spiritual luxury. It is not an emergency measure only to be used in a crisis. It is a matter which storms the throne of heaven, and shakes the gates of hell. "*Continue in prayer,*" are you continuing ? My don't give up. Don't quit praying. Who knows what God is going to do ? Who knows what may happen tomorrow in the life of that individual ? (a)

(b) PRAY WATCHFULLY:

"*Continue in prayer and watch,*" the word "*watch,*" literally means, "*to keep awake.*" You see, you can't pray in your sleep. Now is this not what the disciples did ? Do you remember the garden of Gethsemane ? "*And he cometh unto the disciples and findeth them asleep and saith unto Peter what could ye not watch with me one hour ? Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation, the spirit indeed is willing but*

the flesh is weak." (Matt 26:40-41) Do you ever go to sleep during prayer ? Its embarrassing isn't it ? When someone else is praying and you are snoring. But Paul's thought here is more than physical awareness. The idea is of being spiritually alert, or cognizant. My are you watchful in prayer ? I mean do you watch before you pray lest Satan invade ? Do you watch while you pray lest wandering thoughts cause you to go astray ? Do you watch after you pray to see the answers to prayer that the Lord brings to your life ?

(c) PRAY THANKFULLY:

"*With thanksgiving,*" (4:2) A legend is told of two angels sent to earth, each with a separate mission. The first was to gather up all the petitions of men and women. The other angel was sent to collect all of the prayers of thanksgiving. The first angel found petitions everywhere, and returned to heaven with a load on his back, and bundles in each hand. The second angel had a difficult time. He searched diligently, and when he returned to heaven, he only had but a handful of thanksgivings. Now its only a legend but it underlines an accurate truth, *we are long on demands, we are loud in our complaints, but often we are lacking in our thanksgiving.* Have you notice how often Paul has mentioned thanksgiving in this letter ? (1:3, 12, 2:7 3:15, 17 4:2) You say, "*Preacher but you don't my circumstances.*" No, but I know the circumstances of the apostle Paul, for when he wrote this letter he was a prisoner, chained 24 hours to a Roman soldier yet his heart was filled with gratitude to God. My how long has it been since you paused, in your

prayer time, and laid aside your personal wish list of everything you wanted God to do for you, in order to just say, ‘*Thank You, Lord*’” Paul prayed (a) (b) (c) But note,

(d) *PRAY SPECIFICALLY:*

Do you see how Paul puts it ? (3:3-4) My this is intercessory prayer, that is praying for another’s benefit. It is the highest form of prayer, completely unselfish. It is Abraham praying for Lot in Sodom (Gen. 18:23-33) It is Moses praying for the children of Israel when God was about to destroy them (Ex. 32:31-32) It is Samuel praying for the nation Israel (1 Sam. 7:5;) It is Job praying for his three “*friends*.” (Job 42:10) It is the Lord Jesus praying for Peter, that his faith would not fail. (Lk 22:32) It is Paul praying for Israel to be saved (Rom. 10:1) My is this type of praying not the hardest aspect of our prayer life ? Ron Dunn put it into perspective when he said, “*Intercessory prayer is not preparation for work. It is not substitution for work. It is work.*” So often we are so concerned about our own personal needs that we often forget about the needs of others. We can become so selfish, and greedy in our prayer time that we do not take the time to bring the names, and needs of others before the Lord. Now what is Paul specifically asking the believers to pray for ? Three things.

1. Paul Wants Opportunity:

A “*door*,” in the New Testament usually refers to an opportunity. (1 Cor 16:8-9 2 Cor 12:12) “*The mystery of*

Christ,” refers to the content of the gospel. (1:26-27) Paul is asking the Colossians to pray that he would have opportunities to preach the gospel. Now this is not amazing ? I mean it was for the sake of the gospel that he was imprisoned. Do you recall how we traced it all in the book of Acts ? I mean if you were in prison what would you have prayed ? Would you have prayed that prison doors would be opened so that you go free ? Or would you have prayed that preaching doors would be opened so that others could go free ? *Isn’t this man amazing ?* You see, his imprisonment did not spell the end of his ministry. It was during this period that he wrote Colossians, Ephesians, Philippians, and Philemon. He evangelized those he came into contact with Onesimus, (Phil 10) Roman soldiers, (Phil 1:13) members of Caesar’s household, (Phil 4:22) members of Rome’s Jewish community (Acts 28:17) For Paul there were no devastating circumstances only unique opportunities.

Someone has said “*A pessimist sees a problem in every opportunity, whereas an optimist sees an opportunity in every problem.*” My are you using the openings God gives you to speak of Christ ?

2. Paul Desires Clarity:

Look at (4:4) Wouldn’t it be a tragedy for people to come to a service here and not get a clear message about how to be saved ? My do you know another tragedy ? So often there are no people here to be saved. You see, Paul not only 1:2: but,

3. Paul Senses Responsibility:

He is weighed down with a burden to get the gospel out. He says “*I ought to,*” (4:4) My is that how you feel this ? Do you remember those lepers who were outside the besieged city of Samaria ? I mean if they went in, they would die, if they stayed outside they would die. But you know what happened ? God sent fear on the army of Syria. And so they all fled, they left their tents, they left their food, everything, and so the lepers, thinking they were going into the camp to their death, went in and they found all of this supply, all of this provision. Do you know what they said ? “*We do not well, this day is a day of good tidings and we hold our peace.*” (2 Kings 7:9) My don’t you think it is wrong if we know the answer to the sin problem not to tell it to those who are in sin ? Don’t you think it is wrong for those who know there is a heaven to gain and a hell to shun go to and not tell those who are not on their way to heaven ? (1)

(2) BE CAREFUL IN YOUR STEPS

Look if you will at (4:5) Now, do you see, what Paul is doing here ? He is taking us out of the prayer closet into the market place. You see, it’s not enough to just spend all the time in the prayer closet, you’ve got to get out there where people are if you’re going to win them to the Lord. In the New Testament the word “*walk,*” is frequently used for the life. The way you conduct your life, your daily behavior, and your daily lifestyle. You see, Paul is saying here,

(a) *GUARD YOUR TESTIMONY:*

“*Walk wisely,*” (4:5) Do you know that strange little word in (Prov 6: 13) ? It says, “*he speaketh with his feet.*” A small boy was told not to walk across a certain muddy field. When he arrived home his mother asked him, “*Did you go over the field ?*” “*No mum, you told me not to.*” She merely pointed to his shoes covered with mud. “*He speaketh with his feet,*” you see his walk was inconsistent with his profession. A man went into a store to make a purchase for his church. The salesman asked, “*Is so and so a member of your church ?*” The man said he was. The salesman proceeded to tell him how much money he owed that store and how difficult it was to get anything from him. How far do you think he would have got if that believer had started witnessing to that clerk ? How far do you think Peter would have got if he had started witnessing to Malchus after taking off his ear ? How effective is your witness to your boss if you are a lazy employee ? I mean does your testimony stand up before your unsaved neighbour ? Is that why we find it so difficult to win others for Christ ? We profess one thing but practice another. (a)

(b) *GUARD YOUR TIME:*

Look at what he says. “*redeeming the time,*” (4:5) or “*buying up the opportunity,*” as this phrase is often rendered. Consider this. If we had to buy time, would there be any difference in how we would spend it ? Would the days of our lives be used more wisely ? That’s what time management consultant Antonio Herrera asked the

participants in a seminar he conducted on the subject. Then Dr. Herrera became more specific. He asked, “*What if you had to pay in advance \$100 an hour for the time allotted to you ? Would you waste it ?*” The answer should be obvious. My time is non renewable resource. Time is precious. Time is brief. Oh, time is now fleeting, the moments are passing. Do you recall the words of the Lord Jesus ? “*work while it is day the night cometh when no man can work.*” (Jn 9:4) Dr. R. G. Lee the famous pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church Memphis had a burden to see a man who worked in a dry cleaning business in Memphis come to Christ. Several times he realized he ought to go and witness to the man and if possible lead the man to the Lord. So after several delays and putting it off several times Dr. Lee said he went to the dry cleaning store and when he got there the door was closed and there was a floral arrangement on the door.

There was there was a Chinese man sitting there and he said, “*Sir, could you tell me where Mr. So-and-so is ? I'd like to talk with him.*” And the Chinese man, said, “*Him go away yesterday, sundown. Him go away yesterday, sundown.*” My do you realize that life's evening sun is sinking low ? Do you recognize that you have only a few more days to win your family for Christ ? Sure, its going to cost you a little inconvenience, patience, courage, tact, prayer, energy but what is this in the light of eternity ? (1) (2)

(3) BE GRACEFUL IN YOUR SPEECH

Do you see how Paul puts it in (4:6) ? Do you realise your tongue can either alienate or attract an outsider ? Paul says,

(a) OUR SPEECH MUST BE ATTRACTIVE:

“*With grace,*” the Psalmist in Psalm 45 speaks in anticipation of the Lord Jesus when he says, “*grace is poured into thy lips.*” (Ps 45:2) Luke speaking of Christ says, “*And all bare him witness and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth.*” (Lk 4:22) Do you see that ? Grace was poured in, grace was poured out. My if God's grace has come into our lives, then when we speak there should be grace in what we say, our lips should give testimony to the fact that our lives have been changed by the grace of God. To speak with grace means to say what is spiritual, wholesome, fitting, kind, sensitive, purposeful, gentle, truthful, loving and thoughtful. Paul says, “*Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.*” (Eph 4:29)

My are you careful in what you say ? Are you ensuring that there is grace in what you say ? Evangelist Bill Stafford said he was in a town one time in a meeting and was sitting at another table, nearby there was a table of church folks. And he said they were not timid, they were not bashful, they were very loud in what they were saying. They were critical of anybody and everybody in their church, they were making fun of their pastor, they were making fun of the music, just everything was wrong.

And old Bill Stafford said when he got ready to go he walked over there to them and he said, “ *Folks, I don’t want to be ugly and I don’t want to be unkind. I’m an evangelist, but I want you to know if I’d been a lost person you’re conversation would contribute to sending me to hell.* ” Tell me are you saying something that would lead somebody to Christ ? Or are you saying something that would somebody from Christ ? (a)

(b) OUR SPEECH MUST BE EFFECTIVE:

“ *Seasoned with salt,* ” now you know what salt does ? It arrests corruption, for it’s a preservative. It can sting when rubbed into a wound. (Prov 27:6) It creates thirst, our conversation should make people thirsty for the “ *water of life.* ” (Jn 4: 14) But salt does something else. It adds flavour. Some of you go the Doctor and what does he say ? “ *No more salt.* ” You see, salt adds tang and flavour to foods that are bland. Now do you what Paul is saying ? The new man in Christ should add charm and wit to conversation. You don’t have to be dull and boring to be a witness for the Lord Jesus. You know, some Christians will just put you to sleep, they’re so dull and so insipid, no life, no tang to them. My do you need to add a little seasoning to your speech ? (a) (b)

(c) OUR SPEECH MUST BE RESPONSIVE:

“ *That ye may know,* ” the right word to the right person at the right time. Do you know how Peter puts it ? “ *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) Those who are without have the questions, those who are within have the answers, let’s get the answers to the people who are asking the questions. (1) (2) (3) *Is this not how to turn outsiders into insiders ?*

Some years ago in the mountains of West Virginia, lived an old blacksmith who was an ungodly man, who would always debate and challenge every preacher he met. In fact, he would debate, argue and challenge them to the point that every preacher would leave defeated and discouraged. One morning, he was greeted at his shop by an old, gray-haired deacon from the Baptist meeting house. The blacksmith thought that the man came to debate, but the old deacon stood there with tears coursing down his cheeks, and said, “ *I just came to tell you that my wife and I have been up all-night praying for God to save you.* ” Then, the old deacon walked away.

The blacksmith proceeded in his normal daily routine, but he found that he couldn’t work. He could not concentrate, and before long, he closed up shop and returned home. As he walked in the door he was greeted by his wife. She was convinced, by the look on his face, that he had finally been out done by one of the local preachers. But the blacksmith looked to his wife, with tears rolling down his face, and said, “ *Woman, the old deacon said that he, and his wife, have been up all night praying for me to be saved. And, in all of my years, that is one argument for which I have no answer.* ” My is this not how to win the lost for Christ ?

