

New Desires of the New Man – Colossians 4:2-6

● *Introduction, Outline*

- Scripture reading: Colossians 4:2-6; Ephesians 5:15-17; 6:18-20.
- Introduction: Years ago, there was a popular TV show called *Desires*. Critics said it “revealed people’s desires for love, family, friendship, and good lives.” Indeed, the hearts of most people desire no more than these things – love, family, friendship, and a good life. Brothers and Sisters, are these all your desires too? As a new man in Christ, do you have some new and deeper desires? If so, how are these desires manifested in your life?

- Outline

Topic: New Desires of the New Man

A. Desire for Fellowship with God (vv 2-4)

1. Pray with Persistence
2. Pray with Alertness
3. Pray with Thanksgiving
4. Pray for Evangelism

B. Desire for Evangelism to the Lost (vv 5-6)

1. Start with Prayer
2. Walk with Wisdom
3. Seize the Opportunities
4. Speak with Grace

A. Desire for Fellowship with God (vv2-4)

1. *Pray with Persistence*

- “**Devote yourselves to prayer**”: The verb is “devote yourself to”, or “persist”, in prayer, emphasizing the devotion to and intensity of prayer, not just the kind of prayerful attitude that relies on and submits to God continually. The original meaning of “devote” is to stay in a certain place and not leave. To start praying is not hard, what is difficult is to stay in prayers, and to stay in the fellowship with God with all your heart and mind without any distraction. Paul is asking for this kind of commitment in our prayers!

Example: Jacob wrestled with God all night and would not let go. “I will not let you go unless you bless me” (Genesis 32:22-32). When we pray, we should have the kind of determination with which Jacob wrestled with God. Praying persistently is hard work and can be exhausting at times, but it also rewards us with the most blessed moments of fellowship with God.

Jesus’s own teaching: In Luke 11:5-8, the request was fulfilled because of “persistence”; Luke 18:1-8 When the widow pleaded for justice before the unrighteous judge, she pleaded so persistently that it “bothers” him and “wear [s him] out”, and the point of that parable was that “at all times... (they) ought to pray and not become discouraged. “(Luke 18:1)

Note: Praying persistently does not mean we don't accept or submit to God's will. Do not let submission to God's will become an excuse for not praying persistently, as if too much prayer means not submitting to God or insisting on one's own will. Persistent prayer does not contradict submission to God's will. For example, David fasted and prayed for his illegitimate child for seven days. But when the child died, David immediately accepted God's will without any grumbling (2 Samuel 12:15-23). Another example is Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane, where he prayed to God three times for the cup to be passed. When he was clear that God's will was for him to go to the cross, he obeyed right away with no hesitation (Matthew 26:36-46).

2. *Pray with Alertness*

- **“keeping alert”:** Awaken, not asleep (Have you ever fallen asleep while praying?) In the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus asked his disciples to be alert and pray with him, but they fell asleep. Jesus said, “the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.” (Matthew 26:41). Praying with alertness requires us to fight against our weak flesh. We are not to follow our feelings, but to train ourselves to have a self-disciplined prayer life.

What we need is not only alertness of the flesh, but also alertness of the spirit, because of Satan's damaging work. Consider the following verses:

1 Peter 5:8 “Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.”

Matthew 26:41 “Keep watching and praying that you may not enter into temptation.”

Acts 20:29-31 “I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore, be on the alert...”

Therefore, praying with alertness is not just praying while awake, but also setting biblical truths before our mind so as to examine our hearts and see if we're praying in accordance with the truth and not just pouring out random thoughts to God according to our own will.

3. *Pray with Thanksgiving*

- **“with ... thanksgiving”:** Persistence is the intensity of prayer; alertness is to pray under the guidance of truth; and thanksgiving is the basic attitude of prayer. The very reason we can pray is because Jesus' precious redeeming blood has granted access for us to approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so prayer itself is a grace to give thanks for. If you do not pray intentionally with thanksgiving, you'll lose the motivation to pray sooner or later. A prayer life that consists only of asking for things and complaining about things is simply joyless, and will eventually cease.

If you lack thanksgiving, you should remind yourself of the following biblical truth. Meditate upon these reasons to give thanks.

1. Give thanks that God gives you the breath of life (Lamentations 3:22). As long as we are still breathing, we should be thankful;

2. Give thanks that God forgives you of your sins. Every day there are new sins forgiven, so we should be increasingly thankful with every passing day;
3. Give thanks for God's faithful promises. God's will never changes, that He causes all things to work together to sanctify believers and that He will keep them to the end;
4. Give thanks that God gives trials and difficulties. These are common reasons for lack of thanksgiving, but God uses them to help us trust him more and rely on his grace, so we should give thanks for them. Under no circumstances should we be unthankful.

4. *Pray for Evangelism*

- **“Pray ... that God will open up to us a door for the word”**: It is God that opens the door for evangelism. Paul frequently saw God opening and closing doors in his missionary journey.
- **“Pray ... for us”**: The object of prayer is specific. When God brings individual gospel workers into our lives, we ought to pray for them specifically, for pastors, evangelists, missionaries by their names... Everyone needs to participate in the great commission through prayer.
- **“speak forth the mystery of Christ”**: The whole truth of Christ's salvation— who He is, what He has done, what He will do in the future.
- **“make it clear”**: Literally “reveal it”. In 1:26, The mystery has been “manifested to His saints,” Such a precious mystery that Paul could not hide it, but to reveal it by way of proclamation to all who did not yet know it.
- **“in the way I ought to speak”**: Two senses: 1. God has entrusted this gospel ministry to Paul. It's his duty. He ought to preach it (1 Corinthians 9:17); 2. In proclaiming the gospel, proper language and manner must be used, lest we mislead people and hinder them from knowing the gospel. In Ephesians 6:19 Paul asked God that “utterance may be given to me” so he can preach the gospel with proper words.
- **“for which I have also been imprisoned”**: The latter half of the Acts records how Paul preached the gospel all the way into prison. Starting from chapter 20, Paul knew he would be chained for the gospel (Acts 20:22-24, cf 21:4, 10-12). However, Paul was “ready not only to be bound, but even to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.” (Acts 21:13). After he was captured, Paul still preached openly and boldly whenever there's opportunity (Acts 22, 24, 26 etc.). Then he was house arrested in Rome for two years (Acts 28:30). This letter was written during those two years. The prayer Paul asks for here has been clearly answered.
Acts 28:30-31 “he ... was welcoming all who came to him, preaching the kingdom of God and teaching concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all openness, unhindered.”

B. Desire for Evangelism to the Lost (vv 5-6)

1. *Start with Prayer*

- Not only do missionaries and pastors fighting on the front line need the kind of prayer in verse 3-4, but we all need it too. Those who are saved by God desire to be used by God so that more souls can be saved. But salvation is the Holy Spirit's work, and we are just vessels. Not to pray means you're not

relying on the Holy Spirit but on your flesh. When evangelism is successful, we become boastful; when it is not fruitful, we blame it on ourselves. We need to start with prayer, asking God for opportunities and for words of wisdom.

2. *Walk with Wisdom*

- “**Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders**”: outsiders mean unbelievers. Believers are *in* Christ, so *outsiders* are those who are not in Christ. “Conduct” here is the same word as “Walk” in 2:6. It means to “walk around, walk about,” figuratively referring to every step and every turn in our lives, that is, all our words and deeds. Here, it refers to our behavior before unbelievers, which should not reflect the wisdom of the world, but wisdom from the Bible.

How to receive wisdom? Here are some biblical principles:

1. Fear God (Proverbs 9:10)
2. Study God’s Word (Psalm 119:97-98)
3. Ask with Faith (James 1:5-6)
4. Have an eternal perspective (Psalm 90:12)

Application:

- What would you do when colleagues invite you to watch movies that your consciousness does not permit you to watch?
- When schoolwork gets heavy, would you grumble and complain together with your unbelieving classmates?
- When an unbelieving family or friend tells you their problems, would you happily share some worldly advice to comfort them superficially, or would you take the time to help them realize their most fundamental problem in life?
- When people ask you about your weekend, what do you say? Do you mention Sunday worship at all? Do you mention it in a sheepish voice as if you’re ashamed? Or do you seize the opportunity to testify “Sunday is the highlight of my week! I get to go to church and worship my God with all my brothers and sisters!”?

3. *Seize the Opportunities*

- “**making the most of the opportunity**” : The Greek word for “making the most of” is “to redeem”, implying we need to pay a price for these special evangelistic opportunities to make them count. When God puts these opportunities in front of you, you don’t go, “Lord, I’m busy now. Give me another opportunity when I’m free.” God asks you to pay a price to redeem these opportunities for the Lord.

4. *Speak with Grace*

- “**Let your speech always be with grace**”. Grace not only refers to freely bestowed benefits (such as salvation), but also good manners in words and deeds that are gentle and gracious. Christian’s speech should always be with grace.

Ephesians 4:29 “Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear.”

Proverbs 22:11 “He who loves purity of heart And whose speech is gracious, the king is his friend.”

Ecclesiastes 10:12: Words from the mouth of a wise man are gracious, while the lips of a fool consume him.

- **“as though seasoned with salt”** 1. salt is a seasoning to make food tasty, gracious words make people want to listen to you; 2. salt is a preservative to prevent food from going bad, so believers should get rid of all filthy language; 3. salt makes a man thirsty so he wants to drink water. Believers with gracious words make outsiders’ souls thirsty, wondering how you could live such a life. Then you have a great opportunity to testify to him that it is not I who live, but Christ lives in me.
- **“so that you will know how you should respond to each person”** The purpose of gracious speech is to create opportunities for evangelism. The word “respond” presupposes that people will come to you with questions! “... always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you ...” (1 Peter 3:15). If you have been a believer for many years and nobody has ever been curious about your life, you should really think about whether your life is any different from the world.

Summary

If you have the new life of Christ in you, then you have these new desires: desire to fellowship with God, and desire to evangelize the lost. These desires will manifest themselves in your life by prayer, by living a testimony-bearing life, and by sharing the gospel whenever you get an opportunity.