
Jesus Over Everything

Victory Life Church

Sunday, October 25, 2020 — Part 4 — Worship and Witness

Introduction

We are in a series looking at how Jesus is over everything, the major emphasis in the New Testament letter to the Colossians.

Colossians 1:18 (ESV)

And he is the head of the body, **the church**.
He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead,
that **in everything** he might be **preeminent**.

Jesus is supreme over everything. (Colossians 1:18)

Jesus is sufficient for everything we need. (Colossians 2:6-7)

If Jesus is the supreme Lord, then what do we do about it now?

1. The Church **lives** under Jesus as the supreme Lord
2. The Church **worships** Jesus as the supreme Lord

The Christian life begins with and is sustained by prayer. (Colossians 1:9-14)

Worshipping and Witnessing Church

Colossians 4:2-6 (ESV) Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving. At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison— that I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak. Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.

Worship is not necessarily music, though music aids in worship. Think of worship as **reverential devotion**. It's orienting our whole lives around something. The Church, who is called to live *under* the supreme Lordship of Jesus, also lives in relationship *with* Jesus, and worship (and prayer) is the way that relationship is nurtured. Worship is not the "warm-up act", but is to be the beating heart of the Christian life and the church. Our hearts are to remain bent toward adoration and love for Jesus.

The Christian life is sustained by prayer, and **prayer fuels our worship**.

Colossians 4:2 (ESV) Continue **steadfastly** in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving.

Paul as he begins his conclusion here is reminding the Colossians that this total commitment to Jesus is not just for some people, a few pro's, but the work of prayer and worship is for everyone. Paul is reinforcing who they are to be, not just as individuals, but as the church of Jesus Christ.

BE A WORSHIPPING CHURCH (verse 2)

Paul uses the word “Steadfastly” in reference to his instruction on prayer (and by implication, worship); not “spontaneously,” not “sporadically,” as if prayer and worship are only to be participated in when you feel like it or when it is convenient. Steadfast means to be in constant and consistent prayer through the ups and downs of life, through the varied emotions and circumstances of human existence; be *devoted* to Jesus in prayer.

Colossians 4:2 (KNT) Devote yourselves to prayer; keep alert in it, with thanksgiving.

The Jewish practice (and probably Paul's practice) was to build prayer into the rhythm of life (Praying the Hours), praying at set times a day to maintain the consistent habit of prayer, while also encouraging spontaneous times of thanksgiving and worship. Paul adds that being steadfast or devoted in prayer means being “watchful in...thanksgiving”. Prayer keeps you watchful (versus being “woke”) and thankful.

Being watchful without being prayerful will make you cynical.

In being watchful in prayer, you are looking for God at work, in the world and in each other's lives. We recognize there are many problems in our world that needs to be address. But we are citizens of the kingdom of Jesus, completely surrendered to him. We are called to be prayerful, and being prayerful should make us watchful. Paul already showed how he prays for the church (Colossians 1:9-14), and part of that prayer is for the church to be filled with the knowledge of his will with all spiritual wisdom and understanding (verse 9). God has a perspective about current events. He has a will and a plan that he is enacting through his church. Being prayerful should make us watchful to see that plan at work and being able to participate in it.

How do we see His plan? Paul explains what they are to be praying for:

Colossians 4:3-4 (ESV) At the same time, pray also for us, that God may **open to us a door** for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison— that I may **make it clear**, which is how I ought to speak.

1. (v. 3) Pray for **open doors** (for the gospel) — this is ironic, since he is in chains and in prison (closed prison door). We pray for open doors because

there will always be opposition to the true gospel. It is not always agreeable to call people to repentance and put the idols of our world on notice. Praying for open doors keeps us from being complacent or apathetic in our position in Christ. Rather, we are actively looking (being watchful in prayer) for open doors to speak the gospel to those around us.

2. (v. 4) Pray for **clear words** — Paul is making known a mystery that is revealed in Christ, he doesn't want to make it confusing. We pray for clear words because we are not trying to have canned answers. Praying for clear words is not the same thing as having the same words every time. We pray for clear words so that when God opens the door, we can communicate the gospel clearly.

1 Peter 3:15 (NLT) Instead, you must worship Christ as Lord of your life. And **if someone asks** about your hope as a believer, **always be ready** to explain it.

Colossians 4:5-6 (ESV) Walk in wisdom **toward outsiders**, making the best use of the time. Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.

BE A WITNESSING CHURCH (verses 5-6)

Paul is giving them the warning that there will be opposition in the world and he knows that the temptation will be for them to draw back into safety and retreat. It's what most of us do when we know there will be danger, we draw back. So he instructs them to walk with wisdom toward outsiders. Be **IN** the world, even without being **OF** the world. Don't cloister away from the world that needs to hear the gospel of King Jesus as supreme over everything.

How are we to "be" witnesses in the world?

Colossians 4:5 (ESV) Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time.

3. Be **wise** toward the world — this instruction draws from a long history of Jewish Wisdom tradition. Being wise means having discernment in the moment for the right thing to say and do. He says that they are to "buy up the time" ("make the best use of the time"): it's like saying everything is "on sale" and we are to buy it all up. What are the opportunities (open doors) that we have? Buy them up; all of them. Proverbs (wisdom tradition) is not "rules" (law), but requires discernment in the moment for what the moment needs.

Colossians 4:5 (KNT) Behave wisely toward outsiders; **buy up every opportunity**.

Colossians 4:6 (ESV) Let your **speech always be gracious**, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.

4. Be **gracious** with your words — “salt” here is not a reference to the sermon on the mount, inferring that we are to “sprinkle Jesus” into every single conversation. It’s an ancient idiom for “salty speech”, or being witty and winsome, not being dull or dour, but with flavor. We are tempted to focus on the “answer” part and not on the “each person” part. We are to pay more attention to the person than just our patent answers. The truth matters, but must be presented in love. We are to have discernment on the needs of the person in the right moment rather than just having the right answer. Being rude and judgmental, even if we are “right” is influencing no one, because we aren’t wise and gracious with our words.

1 Peter 3:15-16 (NLT) Instead, you must worship Christ as Lord of your life. And if **someone asks** about your hope as a believer, always be ready to explain it. But do this in a **gentle and respectful way**. Keep your conscience clear. Then if people speak against you, they will be ashamed when they see what a good life you live because you belong to Christ.

“Worship” fuels our “witness” in the world; and our witness in the world is how we embody our worship.

Conclusion

The church is to think different about how to be present in the world. We aren’t looking for the quickest escape, but being the most effective witness. We build bridges with people, we do not have to be rude or mean or judging, but our witness is to worship Christ Jesus alone as supreme, calling those to whom we are witnessing to join us in surrendering to Him. The consistent call to worship Jesus is the most loving thing we can do for people. This is why we worship: to be transformed by Jesus, and become more wise and gracious in our witness to the world, calling all to acknowledge Jesus as supreme over everything.

Colossians 4:2-6 (MSG) Pray diligently. Stay alert, with your eyes wide open in gratitude. Don’t forget to pray for us, that God will open doors for telling the mystery of Christ, even while I’m locked up in this jail. Pray that every time I open my mouth I’ll be able to make Christ plain as day to them. Use your heads as you live and work among outsiders. Don’t miss a trick. Make the most of every opportunity. Be gracious in your speech. The goal is to bring out the best in others in a conversation, not put them down, not cut them out.