

Welcoming the Outsider in

On September 1 1901 a large ship docked in Shanghai Port. A young lady from Norway walked off the gangplank onto Chinese soil for the first time. Marie Monsen was one of a new wave of missionaries who, was inspired to bring Jesus to the Chinese people as she dedicated herself to full-time ministry

Marie was different from most missionaries. She didn't seem to be too concerned with making a good impression on the Chinese church leaders. She often told them , You are all hypocrites! You confess Jesus Christ with your lips while your hearts are not fully committed to him! Repent before it is too late to escape God's judgment!" Monsen told Christians it wasn't enough to study the lives of born-again believers but that they must themselves be radically born again in order to enter the kingdom of heaven. With such teaching she took the emphasis off head knowledge and showed each individual that they were personally responsible before God for their own inner spiritual life. Hearts were convicted of sin and fires of revival swept throughout the villages of central China wherever she went

Marie Monsen's life was an invitation to those outside the faith in China

Colossians 4:2-6

²Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. ³And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. ⁴Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should. ⁵Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. ⁶Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.

-devotion in verse 2 means persistence and perseverance

-As the apostle closes his address to the Colossians he stresses the importance of remaining in devoted prayer with the almighty

-People will come and lies will persist

-The Colossians must have strength and wisdom to stand against this

-thus it is their responsibility to remain in communion with God

-Notice the two things that Paul stresses in regards to prayer: watchfulness and thankfulness

-Watchfulness means staying awake and being alert

-In the gospels the word is used by Christ when he tells his disciples to remain alert while Jesus is praying prior to his arrest

-It is used in other instances in regards to being alert for Christ's second coming

-It can also be used in regards to being watchful for opportunities to witness to others

- Paul's repetition of the thankfulness has been a consistent theme throughout previous passages in Colossians
- our desire to work for God comes from a desire to not gain the Almighty's affections but to show our gratitude for the affection he has shown us
- Prayer is to have thankfulness in it
- It is a temptation to only pour out our problems and desires for God to work in our lives without being thankful because we are so overcome with our situations
- But it is important to be thankful in prayer and to not forget because thankfulness is not only what God deserves in accordance with his wonderful glory but it is also a sign of faithfulness
- Consider this, if in the midst of turmoil and in the midst of anguished prayer we can still thank God we are acknowledging that he is greater than our turmoil
 - We are maintaining a Godly perspective by seeing that there are still things to be thankful for even while we are in need
 - By being thankful we are not simply looking at God as a spiritual vending machine but rather one whom we owe our salvation to

³And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains.

⁴Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should.

- Paul's request for prayer is beautiful as he is submitting to Christians that have been infected with lies
- He is asking these people for prayer
- He is looking for their faithful support for the furthering of the gospel
- He is looking for these people to uphold him
- The apostle, the miracle worker,
- God's spokesman on earth, a man who has experienced greater insight and power than we will ever see or have this side of eternity is asking for prayer from people that have almost completely failed in their devotion to God through their false beliefs
- The apostle is humbling himself before the very people he is instructing, correcting, admonishing and disciplining
- he is humbling himself by asking that they pray for him so that he may preach well
- Heaven help the pastor or missionary or person that thinks they can serve God apart from the prayerful support of the body
- Let's consider also the risk that Paul is taking in asking for prayer
- Specifically in asking for prayer to convey the truth of the gospel
- The Gnostics in Colosse or any others that would have objection to what Paul has written would be looking for a way to invalidate the apostle's message and here it is
- they could claim that Paul is incompetent in his

teaching as he clearly indicates the need for prayer in this area

-Paul's primary concern, however, is not appearing weak or needy in the eyes of the people he is writing to

-His primary concern is that the gospel would be preached well

-For the glory of God

-And if that means losing some dignity by asking his students for prayer, so be it

-It's worth it for the sake of the gospel

⁵Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. ⁶Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.

-Notice that Paul turns from his responsibilities for evangelism in verse 3&4 to the Colossians' evangelistic duties (vv. 5, 6).

-They are to "live wisely" in their relations toward **outsiders** that is, unbelievers.

-to make the most of every opportunity they are to seize each opportunity to display wise behavior toward the unsaved and to use it as a chance for witnessing.

-as the Gnostic heresy within the general area grows Paul wants these fellow followers of Christ to be aware and to be wise in their dealing

-Wise in regards to who they would accept as brethren

-Wise in how they convey the truth

-wise in their relationships with those they don't know

-wisdom that grows from a sincere belief in the truth standards of Christianity

-That they would be watchful to share their faith story of how Jesus saved them, made them acceptable to God and brought them into the truth of his kingdom

-Graceful conversation, in verse 6 is courteous, humble, and Christ like, free from gossip, frivolity, uncleanness, and bitterness.

-The expression **seasoned with salt** means that it should be honest and without hypocrisy, never dull, flat, or insipid, but should always be worthwhile and profitable.

-in regard to the Colossians being ready to give an answer the Apostle Paul likely thinking of the Gnostics who came to the Colossians with their plausible doctrines

-Hence the Colossians should be ready to **answer** these false teachers with words of wisdom and faithfulness.

-ultimately what Paul is instructing the Colossian is their live as well as our lives...

Our Lives are an Invitation to Outsider

When we are reborn as a Christian we are reborn with Godly desires and aspirations
Marie Monsen's life exemplifies this

"As a co-worker Marie was always sympathetic and considerate, and, on the whole, easy to get along with.

Her aim was to go the way of the Lord and do His errands,

-At the end of each church service Marie took her place near the door, and few were those who managed to get by without having the question asked them, 'Are you saved?' her words felt like the thrust of a sword, with the Holy Spirit's conviction' they explained afterwards.

-some would answer no

-the next week Marie would ask them, 'Are you still on the road to destruction?' the sword thrust felt even deeper

-Marie Monsen's words and life were an invitation to receive Jesus Christ as Lord and savior

-Paul encouraged the Colossians to have lives that are an open invitation to know Christ

-Their virtuous life was to be displayed and they were called to share the wonderful hope of Jesus Christ which they would do out of love and devotion to God

-and they would speak of the glorious hope they have in Jesus to those who are outsiders

-An outsider is some one that does not know Christ
-They have neither accepted Jesus as Lord and Savior

-Because of this they are outside of the will of God

-They are under the wrath of God

-They are living in opposition to God

-They are lost

-they are without hope

-Without peace

-without security

-without freedom from Guilt

-because of this they will go into ever lasting darkness unless they repent and turn to Jesus

-the Colossians response and our response to outsider is to be the same

-graciousness

-non-Christians are not our enemies

A non-Christian will not hate you or be angry with you because you are trying to share Jesus Christ with them

They will be angry because they misunderstand Eg Jesus "forgive then father they know not what they do"

-any Christian that has ever been mistreated for his faith is out of a misunderstanding of what they are doing

-outsiders misunderstand because they are blinded by Satan

-and because they are blinded by Satan our witness to them is in gracious compassion

- natural response to being a Christian is to live a life in devotion to God
- being devoted to God is wanting the things that God wants
- God wants everyone to know about his son
- God wants everyone to know that the invitation to receive Christ is open
- notice that the apostle, although cautioning the Colossians against false teaching and warning them of the necessity to hold to the teaching of the gospel
- does not suggest that they hide
- He knows the likelihood of other Gnostics coming into the church is likely but he does not tell his people to runaway or protect themselves
- On the contrary
- He tells his people to confront outsiders
- To stand up to them
- Not in aggression or in intimidation but with grace
- With unmerited favor
- That is without prejudice
- Without anger
- Without pride
- Without fear
- But with the same love and generosity that God displayed
- Paul is unafraid of the Colossians falling from their faith because since the day that they accepted God's invitation to be his children it has been God that has held onto them
- And it is God that will keep them safe
- They need not run away from outsiders

- Or keep the truth hidden for fear of persecution
- Because they are secured for eternity they need to reach out to the lost and potentially saved

In Fear We Hide the Invitation

- We keep outsiders out by hiding our Faith
- The world is changing we are seen as intolerant and arrogant
- Eg winter days instead of Christmas concert
- There is growing antagonism toward Christianity in the world and in our own country
- Eg. Stockwell Day or Steven Harper Evolution
- Virtue is laughed at
- Eg virgin
- Good behavior is mocked
- And authentic Christian belief is ridiculed
- Tomorrow it may get worse
- I am sad to see the ongoing rebellion against rational values as I know that it will mean the destruction of society as it has destroyed societies in the past
- Eg the last stage in the fall of any society is sexual immorality
- because it might can get frightening
- we may choose to hide our faith or down play it
- we may try to blend in as some of us already have
- Often we are more concerned about fitting in then professing our faith
- we must remember that other Christians had it worse

- Early Christians including the Colossians were often viewed with suspicion, distrust, and disdain.
- They were considered atheists because they would not worship the gods of Rome and Greece.
- Many labeled them as unpatriotic because they would not burn incense before the image of the emperor.
- Others harbored suspicions that Christians were really cannibals, who ate and drank the blood and the body of the Lord.
- With such misrepresentations of Christian beliefs and practices running rampant, it was very important for misunderstandings to be dispelled by the virtuous and impeccable lives of Christian believers.

- we are under less persecution and ridicule than the first century Christians
- Paul's asking for prayer to share the gospel
- not safety
- Paul knows and wants the Colossians to know that God is in control of the life he lives and when he dies
- he is asking for the Colossians to trust God like he did
- God is asking us to trust Him

- Marie Monsen arrived in China having no presumption of safety
- in fact she probably imagined the worst

- A year before Maire came to China a secret society called the Boxers instigated a nationwide attack against foreigners.

- Most missionaries were able to flee the carnage but many missionaries were located in remote rural areas of inland China far from safety of the large coastal cities

- The Boxers brutally massacred more than 150 missionaries and thousands of their Chinese converts

- some believed that the event would scare missionaries away

- They were wrong as Marie Monsen went determined to carry on the work of the gospel

- a Christian cannot live a life without a desire to share the truth

- it is a passion that cannot be satisfied exempt to tell our faith stories to others

- eg share the gospel use words if necessary

- living the Christian life is extremely important

- but not telling people about Christ is impossible for the Christian to do

- The book of Colossians is a testimony that to live in Grateful dedication to God one needs to not only live a virtuous life that exemplifies the gospel but that one needs also tell the gospel to others

- living and proclaiming work hand in hand in the Christian life

Keeping the Invitation Open

-Paul's assumption through the book of Colossians is that correct understanding of Jesus Christ and who we are in Christ will naturally compel the Colossians to a life of dedication to God
-Thus we will desire to live a virtuous life in grateful dedication
-We will desire to not be marked by sin
-We will desire to forgive and love
-We will desire to be godly in our families
-And we will desire to share the hope of Jesus Christ

And Here's how

History confirms that evangelism alone rarely produces spiritual awakening.
Rather, prayer produces spiritual awakening, and spiritual awakening inevitably produces evangelism (Col. 4:2-6).
-To be more devoted to the activities of evangelism with little more than a token commitment to prayer will not bring the fruit God wants to give.

1) Pray for courage

Perfect love casts out all fear I John 4:18 not you just be willing to be brave and God will give you the courage
be willing to not be afraid

-it's God responsibility to make you brave

2) Pray for Competence verse 4 Paul asks for prayer for this very thing II Cor 3:5-6

-we are not competent God enables empowers and provides so long as we rely on Him for our ability
-not only for us to give the message but especially for that message to be received
3) Pray for opportunity
- verse 4 make the most of every opportunity
-Can you imagine a more wonderful opportunity to be able to share this truth that we have
-or a more meaningful way to show God how much you love him

Eg Car crash

" Marie Monsen stuck to the promises, and God has never failed her. She said
'The unsaved have God's will behind them. The saved have God's will before them. Some are in God's will; others are outside of it. Sometime Christians they try to stretch God's will so as to make it conform to theirs.'