

Colossians 4:5-6

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 06 September 2015

Preacher: Nathan Raynor

[0 : 00] Colossians chapter 4. Our text for today will be verses 5 and 6 as we are coming to the conclusion of our first by verse exposition through the book.

Look, it's been a joy to be able to preach most of the book to you. I took a bit of a break this summer and had a couple of wonderfully gifted men in our church fill in on my behalf.

And now we're coming to the end of Paul's exhortation to the church at Colossae. And then we'll glean, Lord willing, I believe next week we'll finish up the book and glean from it in his final greeting. A few lessons that we can learn from there as well. But this is kind of the end, the kind of final punches of what he's trying to say to the church at Colossae.

So I'm going to read just for a little bit of context, beginning in verse 2 down through verse 6. And our text today will be verses 5 and 6. Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving.

[1 : 04] 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. This is God's word to us. It was written for His glory and our good. And we would all do well to listen to it in order to believe its promises and obey its commands.

Now let me remind you or catch you up if you're a guest with us here today. As we've been working through chapter 3, Paul's been presenting to us the concept, the idea of the life of the new self. Having been made new in Christ, Christ having changed our hearts and set us on a different road, our life necessarily looks different.

[2 : 09] And he lays that out for us, what that difference is and how that changes who we are. And he does it in an ever narrowing way. He starts broad and he's getting more and more particular in his exhortation.

And we saw verses 5-17, these exhortations to the Christian church, the way in which we're meant to engage with one another as believers. Now in verse 18-4, 1, the Christian household.

In our context, you'll find there at the end of chapter 3, in the beginning of verse 1, the workplace. And he comes down now a little more narrow to the individual and the way in which the individual is going to interact with the world around them.

So last week we saw two exhortations from verses 2-3 and then part of 3, the second one. Firstly, the prayer of the new self. That the Christian person will pray because the road that the Christian has been put on is a road of godliness, it's a pursuit of holiness, it's living in this world in a different way, set apart.

And this is something accomplished by God in our lives, by the work of the Spirit who's continually changing us. We've been set apart, we've been sanctified, but we are also being sanctified.

[3 : 27] And therefore, as people set on that road, we recognize our great need of God's intervention and His continued work in our life. He has given us grace and we continue by grace and so we pray for that grace.

Christian people recognize that without prayer, nothing. Sine qua non. Without which, nothing happens. We can do nothing apart from God.

And God uses the prayers of His people to enact, to put in play His providential purposes in our lives. And so, the new self prays.

We saw, secondly, the opportunity of the new self. The way in which Paul sought to seize every opportunity, even his imprisonment for the sake of the gospel, for the advancement of the kingdom.

And we ought to live in the same way with new eyes. At the beginning of chapter 3, it says, with our minds set on things above. Looking for and seizing every opportunity.

[4 : 29] Today, we'll look at verse 5 and verse 6 with a bit of verse 4, since I didn't quite get to it last week. For two more exhortations.

That is the activity of the new self and the speech of the new self. The activity of the new self, verse 5, and the speech of the new self, verses 6 and 4.

Now, my closing remark from last week was this. In summary of those first two exhortations to pray and to seize opportunities was this.

Pray and seize every opportunity to experience, proclaim, and display the supremacy of Jesus Christ in all things to all peoples.

Pray and seize every opportunity to experience, proclaim, and display the supremacy of Jesus Christ in all things to all peoples. And if you are wrapping your mind around that, you don't have it in front of you like I do.

[5 : 26] I guess you do a bit here. But you'll see that these other exhortations are found in that very statement itself. We are to proclaim, this is the speech of the new self, and we are to display, this is the activity of the new self, the supremacy of Jesus Christ in all things to all peoples.

So we're missing something in that phrasing. Pray and seize every opportunity. To experience, proclaim, and display the supremacy of Jesus Christ in all things to all peoples. The word experience. Am I right? If you see it in our vision statement up here.

The experience of Jesus Christ as supreme in all things to all peoples, as a more excellent way, the way for reconciliation back to God, has not been ignored in the text.

So if you will with me to walk back up the text a bit, I just want you to see that. The beginning of chapter 3, Colossians 3, 1-3. If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.

Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. This has been a reality in your life.

[6 : 42] You are finding that Christ is better than, more supreme than. You have been raised with Christ, and your life is now in Christ.

Christ is your life. Verse 4 goes on to say. Back up a bit more. Colossians 2, 6. Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, as you have received Him, as you have experienced the saving work of Christ, so walk in Him.

Let me go back a bit further. Colossians 1, 15-23. Here's the strong supremacy statement. Jesus Christ is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.

For by Him all things were created in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities. All things were created through Him and for Him.

And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. 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 or supreme.

[7 : 55] For in Him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through Him to reconcile to Himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of His cross.

And you who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, He is now reconciled in His body of flesh by His death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before Him.

If indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister.

So do you see that the experience has been carried throughout, and then the appropriate response thereof? Verse 21 of chapter 1, you, Colossian believers, and us, those of us who have received the gospel, we once were alienated and hostile in mind.

We once were separated from God. We once were not part of God's family. Our minds were hostile towards the things of God. We were doing evil deeds. We see the evidence of that.

[9 : 04] Everything we did was a fist shake at God. Everything we did said, I am king. I am self-directing. I rule, which is a massive offense to God.

We were God's enemy. Verse 22, But He's now reconciled in His body, fleshed by His death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before Him.

Because of what Christ has done on our behalf, if we place saving faith in Him, it was our sin that He died for on the cross. It is His righteousness that we now have.

And Paul goes on to say, if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast. So we are not saved by works.

We are saved by the providential purposes of God. God the Father is sovereign in salvation from the very beginning to the very end. God saves us. We cannot save ourselves.

[10:04] God saves us. However, once we are in Christ, this work of God takes part, there must be an evidencing of it beyond. There must be a reality that our heart has been changed.

That our heart has been set on a different road. That we are no longer His enemy, but rather His friends. And this has been thematically developed throughout the book of Colossians. Gospel reconciliation leads to gospel living.

And we live in a day where I'm so fearful that there are so many that are not found in Christ that they think they are because this is not being taught to them. That there's not an appropriate response to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Many fear that this is a works-based salvation. Hear me clearly. I'm not saying we ever earned it. What I'm saying is that we have it. Therefore, we live in light of it.

There must be a healthy response. Right and proper living is the right and proper outcome of changed hearts. Paul writes in Romans 12. I appeal to you, therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

[11:19] The first 11 chapters of Romans have been a systematic gospel presentation. It's in this beautiful outlay of the doctrines of salvation.

And then he turns from there in chapter 12, verse 1, to say, now, in light of that, because of what God has done on your behalf, now live in this way.

And beloved, we have to ask ourselves a serious question as we don't see our lives lining up with the command of Scripture. And we don't. None of us do. None of us are carrying this out perfectly. We all sin still, even if in Christ.

Right? If you don't think you do, therein is your sin. Right? Be humble before God. You are not perfect. All of us still sin. All of us carry the old self.

All of these things we're meant to be putting to death and putting off. All of that is still carried with us. We do still sin. We have to ask ourselves the question, am I in Christ?

[12:19] I progress in these things. Am I in Christ? Has He saved me? Or has He not? If He hasn't, repent and believe.

I plead with you to repent and believe. Because final judgment is going to be harsh and severe and forever. If He has, repent and believe.

You're in Christ. Repent and believe. Turn from the sin and pursue holiness. Unrighteousness should not be named amongst us. We too often, I think, elevate grace to this degree.

This cheap grace idea where we can just go on being the messes that we are. And in so doing, we say that God doesn't have the power to change me.

Heresy. Heresy that is. God can and He will change you if you're in Christ. Don't belittle the power of the Spirit of God in your life to make you new.

[13:21] You must progress in holiness. Right? I've talked to you before about laying the plot lines of your life. You should be able to look back on your life and see that you once loved sin more than you do now.

Right? You're hating sin more today than you did before. And you once didn't love righteousness the way you do now. There's a progression in these things. Right? That you're moving toward the city of God.

You're moving toward Christ-likeness and not away from it. So there has to be some activity. There has to be some outward display of what's been happening in your heart or it's not happened in your heart at all.

So test yourself. Consider this as we look at these exhortations. So verse 5 says, Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time.

Put your salvation, put your faith on display in real ways to those outside the faith. Walk in wisdom.

[14:27] NASB, I like the rendering, says conduct yourselves with wisdom. It means to go about the dealings of your life wisely.

Stated in the negative, that's the positive. Walk in wisdom. Stated in the negative, do not walk in foolishness. To be the opposite of wise is to be foolish.

Don't be foolish. Be wise. Ephesians 5, 11-15. It's a parallel text to ours today. It says, Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them.

For it is shameful even to speak of the things they do in secret, but when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible. For anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore, it says, Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.

Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise, but as wise. So what Paul is saying here is that if you were to walk in wisdom, you're going to walk in the light.

[15:31] You're going to do those things that we know or we're meant to do that are righteous things, that are good things, that are right things, and you're not going to walk in the darkness as those who aren't in Christ do.

Careful. Be careful how you walk. Not as unwise, but as wise. So how do we know the difference? How do we know the difference between what is wise and what is unwise?

How are we to discover the wise way in which we should walk? And I hope the answers are popping up in your head as I ask the question. How are we supposed to discover the wise way in which we should walk?

Exhortation, walk in wisdom. How? What do we do? How do I know? I want to walk in wisdom. I want to be obedient to this exhortation. What do I do? And there are four sources of wisdom.

Four sources of wisdom. The first one is worship. And I don't mean music when I say that. We don't call that... That's worship, but it's musical worship.

[16:31] I don't mean show up at a service and sing some songs. Right? Worship. Put yourself in proper relationship with the Lord God Almighty. The Creator of heaven and earth.

The One who created ex nihilo from nothing. The One that existed before anything existed for all eternity past. He is the Creator and you are merely creation.

Worship Him as such. Humble yourself before Him. Recognize that He is the Lord and you are merely a subject.

Proverbs 9.10 says, The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight. Proverbs 3.7 says, Be not wise in your own eyes.

Fear the Lord and turn away from evil. So it begins with that. It begins with that subjection.

Understanding rightly. You come up underneath the Creator.

[17:32] Far too many people read their Scripture in judgment over it. Right? As if this is a book that's meant for us to critique and deal with. When we find error in it, the problem is not with it.

The problem is with us. Right? Our dark minds are of inability to understand. This thing is the Holy Word of God. It stands over us. We should submit ourselves to it as we submit ourselves to God.

So worship is the first. Second, prayer. We've already talked a bit about that last week from verse 2. James 1.5 says, If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God who gives generously to all without reproach and it will be given him.

You want to know how to be wise and to walk wisely in the world? Ask that God would help you to walk wisely in the world. And it's just that. Simple. I get asked so many questions.

Help me, Nathan. Help me with wisdom in this particular thing. And so often I say, Have you been in prayer about this? And the answer is no. Pray. Ask that God would show you the wise way and the more excellent way.

[18:38] Thirdly, the Scripture. Proverbs 2.6 says, For the Lord gives wisdom from His mouth come knowledge and understanding. Colossians 3.16 Not too long ago we looked at it.

Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom. God has spoken. He has written us a book.

And it's not an outdated book. It's not an irrelevant book. It's a sufficient book. It contains within it everything we need to know as a guide and rule for holiness.

You want to know how to walk wisely? As you worship God and you pray and ask for wisdom, read His Word. He's spoken to you for every situation that you're going to encounter to give you wisdom to walk as you should.

And lastly, counsel. Now by counsel, I certainly mean godly counsel. It just seems a bit redundant to say that in this setting. But I do mean, of course, godly, well-informed, biblical counsel.

[19 : 43] I don't mean pop psychology counseling. Right? Ask a brother or ask a sister. Ask a leader about a situation. Do the others first and then ask. What do you think?

What's your perception of this situation? Proverbs 27.9 says, Oil and perfume make the heart glad and the sweetness of a friend comes from his earnest counsel.

Again, in the book of Colossians 1.28 Him we proclaim, Jesus Christ. Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom that we may present everyone mature in Christ. So if you desire to, if you want to walk in wisdom, these are the sources. These are the ways in which you gather wisdom that you may walk as such. We're supposed to walk in wisdom, but specifically, Paul says, toward outsiders.

Toward outsiders. And I just want to point out two things from that two-word phrase. Firstly, Christians should interact with those who are not of the faith. Christians should interact with those who are not of the faith.

[20 : 51] We often tend to be so monastic. We pull ourselves in. We huddle together in the castle, rather than being the army that goes and advances against the purposes of the devil.

The presupposition in this phrase is that they will. There's an assumption there that Christian people will be interacting with outsiders. That there will be a normative thing happening there, not a monastic thing, a pulling away from the world.

But we are to follow the example of our Lord who ate with sinners and tax collectors. Mark 2.16. Firstly, secondly, when those who profess Christ display foolishness toward outsiders, the gospel of Jesus Christ appears to be of little worth.

Do you recognize that so many of us seem to be peddlers of a belief that doesn't really have any bearing and effect in our life at all?

In some ways it does. Maybe for you, your faith somehow is affirming to you, you have some experience that you enjoy, but it hasn't changed who you are in an outward way that people can see and observe that this person doesn't walk as a fool, this person walks in the way of wisdom.

[22 : 19] Quite a few months ago we started studying the book of Proverbs together in our community outreach groups for this very reason. We should be a people very familiar with the ways of wisdom, the way in which God has designed and built the world though corrupted by sin and disrupted there are still things at play in the world that are right and proper ways that we should live and people can see that.

Do you know a Christian person whose life seems to be fairly put together because they walk in the way of wisdom? And there's this affirming note because of who you are to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Some of you are more of a mess than the people around you. Does the gospel have power to affect and to change and to direct your life? Of course it does.

You should be living in light of that. So we are to walk in wisdom towards outsiders and make the best use of the time making the best use of the time.

Beloved, our lives are very, very short. And I know that it doesn't always feel that way. College students, your life right now seems to take an eternity because you have a plan of study and you can see everything you're going to have to do until this phase of your life is over.

[23 : 42] If you don't have a plan of study you should get one. Trying to get to that spot and get to that end. I'll tell you right now that being beyond that and not having the major thing coming next, your life accelerates.

I think if you ask the older folks in the room if this is true, it absolutely is. Where has this decade gone? We are halfway through it already. It's staggering to me that this is the case.

Our life is so incredibly fleeting. The Bible speaks of this. Psalm 103, 15 and 16, as for man, his days are like grass. He flourishes like a flower of the field for the wind passes over it and it is gone and its place knows it no more.

Not very significant in span are our lives. Our lives are incredibly short. And the opportunities to share the supremacy of Jesus Christ are limited.

so we should leverage our time for the sake of the kingdom. Every moment that we have, every possibility that we have to work for the kingdom ought to be used in that manner because our lives are so, so very fleeting.

[24 : 57] We too often live as if this life is all that there is. Christian people who should have minds set on eternity so often live like this is it. My joy and satisfaction right now in the things of this world

is all that matters because there is nothing out and beyond which is so, so very foolish.

Do not divorce making the best use of the time from walk in wisdom. The two things carry together. Remember, we're in the same sentence here. Walk in wisdom and make the best use of the time. It's foolish not to do so. Psalm 90, verse 12 says, so teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom.

The psalmist is saying, give us proper and right perspective on our life. Help us to know not the specific number of our days. That's not the prayer happening here, but to help us to know that our life is short and it is passing and it is fleeting so that we will walk wisely.

We will have hearts of wisdom. Again, the parallel text to our text in Colossians, Ephesians 5, 16 and 17 says, making the best use of the time because the days are evil.

[26 : 19] The days are evil. Verse 17, therefore, do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. Are you foolish with your time?

We should not waste it. You have a limited number of years, a limited number of days, a limited number of hours.

What do you waste your time on? I believe that in America one of our greatest vices is leisure.

Which isn't to say that we're not meant to rest.

We're designed that way as creation that's sinful. Things have been disrupted. We're falling apart. A lot of you young people are still building.

Soon, you're going to start degrading. We're not invincible. We're designed to go through cycles.

We're designed to rest. I'm not saying that we can't rest. I'm not even saying that we can't rest doing things.

[27 : 20] I'm not just saying only sleep. There's relaxing things that help us to reset our minds.

There's a good design for us to be doing this. But what are we doing with the extra free time?

The out and beyond? I want my life to be spent to the very last drop. I want to leave it all on the table when I die. You will not look back at your life on your deathbed and say, if only I had spent a little more time playing video games.

If I could have just passed that level, my life would be complete. I wish I had given more of my time to Facebook. My life would have been better spent being more versed in UGA football history and stats.

I'm not against watch football. I don't care. I'm just saying, how much of your time do you invest in these pursuits? I just wanted more time in my deer stand.

I would be happy if I could dig my toes into beach sand one more time. You will, however, if you are in Christ, have more heavenward regrets.

[28 : 38] I think we all will. I would like to be able to say that on my deathbed I will be fully satisfied with the life that I lived for the Lord. I'm sure I will have regrets, but I hope at least they're heavenward.

Like, I wish I had given more time to my lost family members. If only I had invested more gospel in my children. If only I had served my pastor more.

I said that one to make sure you're paying attention. I'm kidding, of course. I hope that our hearts can join with that of David Brainerd.

This is on the front of your bulletin. David Brainerd was an 18th century missionary to the Delaware Indians of New Jersey. Not New Jersey as it is. It was very rough. It was a wilderness at the time. And he said, Oh, how precious is time and how it pains me to see it slide away while I do so little to any good purpose. Paul writes in Romans chapter 13, verse 11 through 14, Besides this, you know the time that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep.

[29 : 44] For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed. The night is far gone, the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy, but put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh to gratify its desires.

You see that what he's saying about the importance of us putting on new self, that is putting on the Lord Jesus Christ in light of the evil days and the shortness of time. Pursue righteousness with your time.

Make the best use of it. Charles Spurgeon said, this is all in your bulletin as well, serve God by doing common actions in a heavenly spirit and then, if your daily calling only leaves you cracks and

crevices of time, fill them up with holy service.

I'm not suggesting that everybody stop working, please don't do that, stop going to school and devote 100% of their time to vocational service of the kingdom.

God has intended to work in so many varied ways in the world by giving us tasks, schooling, jobs. Those things are good and right and proper to do, but to do so with that heavenward bent, to do so in order to glorify God.

[31 : 10] Sometimes that means you're going to do things that are mundane and seem pointless and boring, but you're to do them with a right and proper heart through the glory of God. You don't have to understand completely how it is that God is working and moving in those mundane things of life.

Take the classes that aren't part of your major. Work the job. Do whatever is asked of you to do.

That's cleaning the floors or typing up a spreadsheet. Do it for the glory of God.

And what Spurgeon here is suggesting is you take the extra time and you fill it in with things that are particularly of holy service. The cracks and the crevices.

Many of you don't fill the cracks and crevices with that type of activity. Some of you have large gaps, huge schisms to fill and you should figure the best use of that time.

So display. Display the supremacy of Jesus Christ in the way you live before others and proclaim it. Let your speech always be gracious.

[32 : 12] Season with salt so that you may know how to answer. Excuse me. So that you may know how you ought to answer each person. Now before we address the specific exhortation, I'd first like to make just a few comments and point you to a few references concerning speech.

And I want to do so because the Scripture throws a great deal of weight into warnings concerning what we say and how we say it. I also want to do so because we're a small congregation of a lot of young people and news travels fast in this congregation.

You all have no idea how many things I hear throughout a week that I find it's not my business to know. There's a lot of gossiping that happens.

And I think sometimes with the best intention, with the hope of helping us all to be transparent, a lot of times that's not your place. What you end up doing is you betray trust rather than helping build it in people.

So let's look at a few places. I want you to go with me to Luke chapter 6. Verses 43, 44, and 45.

[33 : 38] This should be familiar to you if you were singing with us this morning with the kids. Jesus said, Therefore, no good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit, for each tree is known by its own fruit.

For figs are not gathered from thorn bushes, nor are grapes picked from a bramble bush or bananas from plum trees. The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.

Now, Jesus is directly speaking to, he's specifically speaking to in this text to the Pharisees, and he's pointing out their evil nature because of the words that they speak.

But the truth of this gives application to us as well. Those who are found in Christ, if we don't speak true things, if our language is not grace-filled, it says something about our heart.

Even if it's redeemed in Christ, it says something about our heart. Possibly that we still love the sin, we love the gossip, we love the no, more than we love Christ and his kingdom and his ways.

[34 : 51] It speaks about who we are. This is why I try to be very careful with my language. I know I'm not always very careful with my language. One of the great troubles of my heart when I get up to preach is that I give misunderstanding to something that's of weight and is true.

It's the reason that we're very careful about what we call, what we do up here with music. It's why we're very careful to not talk about altar calls because Jesus has once and for all paid the price.

There's no longer a need for an altar. The work has been finished. It's why we're careful about calling this building the church because it's not. It's a building. It's turning to dust someday, but we are God's holy people because out of the abundance of our hearts, our mouth speaks.

Listen to what James had to say about the way we speak. James chapter 3. Go there with me, please. James chapter 3, beginning in verse 3.

James here talks about the tongue. He's talking about the speech. What we do with our mouths is what he means. If we put bits into the mouths of horses so that they obey us, we guide their whole

body as well.

[36 : 11] A very small thing guides the entire body of a horse. Look at the ships also. Though they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs.

So also, the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great things. How great a forest is set ablaze by such a small fire. And the tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness.

The tongue is set among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the entire course of life, and set on fire by hell. Strong words about the tongue, are they not?

Verse 7. For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature can be tamed and has been tamed by mankind, but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.

With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not be so.

[37 : 16] Does a spring pour forth from the same opening both fresh and salt water? Can a fig tree, my brothers, bear olives, or a grapevine produce figs? Neither can a salt pond yield fresh water.

And this question should ring in our heads. Is it even possible to tame the tongue? Can mankind tame the tongue? And the answer to that is no, but God can. What we speak is an overflow of our heart.

And God changes our hearts. And so we have to be constantly checking what we say and why we say it because it's indicative. It's a symptom of what's going on inside of our heart.

One last quick note and we'll get back to the main exhortation. Proverbs 26, 20. I happened across this this week, which was timely and wonderful. It says, For lack of wood, the fire goes out and where there is no whisperer, quarreling ceases.

I think that needs to set in some of your minds this week. So verse 6, let your speech always be gracious. Gracious speech is what we're to have as believers.

[38 : 26] NASB renders this, Let your speech always be with grace, which I really like the translation that way. Let your speech always be with grace.

And that is, the redeemed should speak like their Redeemer. Luke 4, 22. And all spoke well of Him, Jesus Christ, and marveled at the gracious words that were coming from His mouth.

The words that we speak should be with grace. And I take that to mean that they should be both from grace and for grace. From grace, we can see verse 3.

Paul writes, 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, that God would give us opportunity to declare the gospel on account of which I am in prison.

And then verse 4, here we're picking verse 4 back up from last week and bringing it in, that I may make it clear which is how I ought to speak. And so you see what Paul is saying is, please pray for me that I have both opportunity and clarity in my speech.

[39 : 31] So it's from grace. Paul recognizes that he needs God to work in the way in which he shares. Also the last part of verse 6, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.

How are we to know? We are to speak with grace, with the grace that God provides to give us words for utterance of the gospel.

So we're to speak from grace, we're also to speak for grace. To bring it about in others. Ephesians 4.29 says, let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up as fits the occasion that it may give grace to those who hear.

So whether you're speaking to an outsider or for the sake of my language call them the insiders, those who are outside of faith or in faith, our talks should be building one another up.

Our language is to be seasoned with salt. Salt is purifying. Something is, if you have a wound, salt is a way that you can heal that wound, that you can kill the stuff in the wound that's bad for the wound.

[40 : 42] It's purifying. It's preserving. Most of us know this. In case you don't know this, a lot of your preserved food has salt in it. It helps with that process. And it's flavorful.

It's the way that our speech should be. It should be purifying, preserving, and it should be flavorful. I really tried to find you a third P there for flavorful, but pungent didn't have the white ring to it.

So it's purifying, it's preserving, and it's flavorful. And our speech should also be such. And we should know how to answer each person.

Again, verse 4, that I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak. Because God employs human means in His salvific purposes, we should give clear presentations of the gospel and appropriate responses to objections to the gospel.

We should be able to do this. If you're found in Christ, you should be able to do this. And if you can't do this, in even the basest of ways, you may feel foolish as you're doing it, you may not think you're giving clear explanation, but if you can't do this in the basest of ways, I have a concern for your soul.

[41 : 53] Hear me carefully. If you have responded in faith to the gospel of Jesus Christ, you should know the doctrines of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Not that you give them fancy terms, not that you use flowery speech to explain it, that you give up and you give a sermon and someone's interested in your faith and you stand up and you go, well, let me tell you and you thunder on with it.

But if you can't lay out the simplicity of the gospel, I try to do this for you week in and week out. It's not all that complex. But if you can't do that, then I'm concerned that you've believed in something that you don't even understand.

You can't possibly be found in Christ if you don't know the gospel. And there are too many churches that don't preach the gospel. Churches that ignore sin altogether and the just punishment of it. And that's where the gospel starts. The gospel starts with a holy God who had a standard for us. We're covering it with the kids. He had one rule and man broke it. Separated us from him eternally. Nothing we could do to get back to that place. We were then by nature sinful. Adam is our federal head. We are all sinful in Adam.

[43 : 05] Born into sin. If you don't have kids, you'll know one day. Born into that sin. Willfully committing sin. In all kinds of ways saying to God that we hate him.

I've said this to you before. We want to be king. We want to be like God. This very problem that Adam and Eve had, the very lie that they believed that Satan told them is that they would be like God and they said that sounds great.

We don't want to be creation. We want to be creator. And that's what was disrupted there. Christ sets that straight for us. Christ came and lived a perfect life. He had to.

He had to be both human and divine. He came and lived a perfect life for us. The perfect righteousness, the fulfillment of the law, God's holy standard given to his people to keep in order for him to keep his covenant promise, we couldn't do.

Christ did it for us. He came and lived a perfect life, right? So that if we believe in him, we're given righteousness. We have his righteousness. And he died a sinner's death.

[44 : 01] He took our sin and put it on himself, right? Just the death wasn't enough, right? That would have brought us back up to neutral. That would have put us at ground zero. No longer a debt to God, but we hadn't yet made the payment that was necessary, which was righteousness.

So we have this double imputation that happens, right? Our sin given to Christ, his righteousness given to us. Martin Luther called it the great exchange, right?

So that if we place believing faith in him, we are found right before God. You should be able to explain this to people. It doesn't have to use the words I use. You should be able to do it.

There are resources for you to do it with, right? You get all jumbled and nervous. There's some great tracks. I'm not against tracks. I'm just against you putting them in random places like on the back of your journals and leaving, right?

You ought to be able to share the gospel. You ought to be able to entertain objections to it, right?

You have to have all the answers. No one expects you to have all the answers. But you ought to be able to entertain and go find the answers, right?

[45 : 02] You have resources abounding at your fingertips. You have resources in this church. Many, many faithful men and women who are wonderful at sharing their faith that you can pull that information from.

Now, in the sharing of the gospel, even in the clearest of ways, right, illumination by the Spirit is required, right? For God to do a work in people's lives, our sharing has to be combined with His work to change the hearts of people that they would believe it, right?

Dark hearts don't hear the gospel. They don't want to hear the gospel. It's foolishness to them. So this won't always find success, but we ought to know how to answer each person, and we ought to make it clear and let God work.

And sometimes this is going to come out in favor of what we would think is the right outcome, that people would turn to Christ, and sometimes it won't. And that's up to God. It's our job to share and to go and to do so faithfully.

2 Corinthians 2, 14-17 says, But thanks be to God who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of Him everywhere.

[46 : 13] Is this true of our church? For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing. To one a fragrance from death to death. To the other a fragrance from life to life.

Who is sufficient for these things? For we are not like so many peddlers of God's Word, but as men of sincerity, as commissioned by God, in the sight of God, we speak in Christ.

If we go out this week with that in mind. In Thessalonica, Paul and Silas are accused of being men who have turned the world upside down.

And here Paul is just saying, I just want to make it clear. Just give me the opportunity to make it clear to preach the Gospel. In other places, in Ephesians, he talks about the way in which we're to share and to not be of offense.

1 Peter 3, 15-16 says, In your hearts, honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make an offense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you. Yet do it with gentleness and respect.

[47 : 20] Have a good conscience so that when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. These men shared the Gospel in that way, speaking it clearly, in love, and the Thessalonians said that they were turning the world upside down.

These weren't happy recipients of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. They were disrupting everything with this kind and loving, amazing message of Jesus Christ.

And so we are to display the supremacy of Jesus Christ in all things to all people. We are to proclaim it as well.

And beloved, I believe that if we would begin to pray, if we would get on our faces and we begin to ask that God would pour His Spirit out on our community and that we would be faithful in our own experience, not looking to this world, not setting our mind on it, setting our mind on things that are above, pursuing holiness in our living so that we can display that to people around us, that we say to people around us, Christ is precious and everything that I do should be a chorus to that end.

Everything that I do says Jesus Christ is better than anything else and everything else. Jesus Christ is the way back to God and He is mine and I am His.

[48 : 48] And that if we would just say that, that God would bless it. That God has a purpose for our community. God has a people to call out of it. But He wants to use us, not because He needs us, but because He loves us.

He wants to draw us in to His purposes. Do we love Him in a response to the Gospel in such a way that we will? Please join me in prayer.

of God. of God.