

How Then Shall We Speak? - Colossians 4:2-6 (Ephesians 6:18-20)

- **Theme:** How the speech of one who has been transformed by God should look.
- **Proposition Statement:** As Christians, our speech before God and before people should reveal a transformed life.

- **A General Outline of the First Three Chapters (leading up to Chapter 4)**
- **Chapter 1:13-14 – Rescued by God; Redeemed and forgiven of our sins through Christ**
- **Chapter 2:6 – Now that we are redeemed we must now walk in obedience to Him**

- **Chapter 3: Tells us what it means now to put on the new self. (Mind in verses 1-4 and how we are not to live as Christians in verses 5-11).**
- **Then Paul gets back to how we are to live as Christians in verse 12 and that runs through Chapter 4 verse 6.** It is in this context that we find our message for today.
- Paul breaks this section here down for us in 2 parts.

I. How Should Our Speech be Toward God? (Verses 2-4)

A. We Must Have an Unwavering Commitment to Prayer (Verses 2-4)

- We show this unwavering commitment to prayer...

1. By Being Intentional in Our Prayer Life (verse 2) – Read verse 2 again

- Fitting Paul starts with a command on prayer when it comes to how a new, transformed man speaks.
- Prayer with God is the most important conversation you can have. It's fellowship with our Lord.
- It is through prayer that we confess Jesus as Lord for salvation. (**Romans 10:9**); that we receive wisdom/understanding from God (**James 1:5**); that we confess our sins to God (**1st John 1:9**)

- Prayer has been a pattern in the New Testament church, Acts 2:42
- Prayer was important to Jesus himself – Bible records Jesus praying about 25-30 different times during His earthly ministry.
- **What does Paul say about prayer as it relates to our life?**
- Paul starts out by telling us that we aren't just to pray, we are to be devoted to it. In the Greek, **Devote yourselves** comes from the word *proskartereo*, a compound word made up of *kartereo* (which means to be steadfast, or to endure) with an added preposition that intensifies the meaning.

- This verb means to be courageously persistent, to hold fast and not let go. This is a call from the Apostle Paul, to all believers to be courageously persistent in prayer.
- We are to have a consistent prayer life. It is to be a part of our every day life.
- This is a constant theme throughout all Scripture - **Romans 12:9-12** – be devoted to prayer; **Ephesians 6:18** – pray at all times; **1st Thessalonians 5:17** – pray without ceasing.
- This is more than just saying the blessing before a meal. In the most general sense it refers to a specific time in your life that you put aside each day to pray.
- And within that context, its being intentional about when we pray and where we pray. It's being intentional about what we pray about it, who we pray about and how serious we are about it.
- This word intentional means something that is planned or intended. As Christians, our prayer life is to be a consistent, planned, an intentional time where we spend time in fellowship with God praying for and about specific things.
- This is one of the things that Paul has in mind when he says next that we are to be keeping alert.
- Paul says here in our text in verse 2 that **we are to devote ourselves to prayer, keeping alert.**
- In its most basic sense, Paul is referring to staying awake when we pray. It's obviously impossible to pray when you're sleeping. (having figured out how to do that yet)
- But beyond physical alertness, Paul is also referring to a Christian being mindful of what they are praying about. This is referring to praying for the for actual specific needs of someone's life.
- This is actually paying attention and caring about people's specific struggles and needs, verses the vague repetitive fillers that people say out of habit just to simply pray.
- It's when you've sat in a room when people are sharing their prayer requests, and when it's time to pray you choose to say things like
 - **Lord, bless this person today at work/school. Be with them today as they go about their day. Help them to know how to obey you in their life.** And then you end there.
 - They are probably thinking who in the world were they listening too!
- Don't get me wrong, its not bad or wrong to pray for these things. However, what a person is hoping for when they share a prayer request, is that you actually pray for what they shared.
- It means we have to care enough for people to actually listen and pay attention to them. Then we pray for their specific requests or needs.

- This can also refer to how you pray regarding your own struggles and needs.
- The way we get through trials and struggles, the way we deal with certain issues in life or get the wisdom and perseverance we need, is to pray specifically about those things.
- We need to be intentional and alert when we pray, and as Paul says in verse 2 at the end, that when we pray, we need to have an attitude of thanksgiving.
- No matter what we're praying about, who we're praying for, have much to be thankful 4 don't we.
- Specifically we have much to be thankful for towards God:
- **Salvation through Christ – God's Forgiveness – God's Faithfulness to us - Our every day blessings from God – That God's is working all things out according to His purpose/will**
- As a Christian, one that has been transformed into a new creation, we are to be specific in our speech towards God. We must have an unwavering commitment to prayer. We show this unwavering commitment to prayer 1st of all **'By being intentional in our prayer life.'**
- **We also show this unwavering commitment to prayer...**

2. By Praying for the Advancement of the Gospel (verses 3-4)

a. We must pray for opportunities to proclaim the gospel (verse 3) Read

- Paul tells us that we are to pray intentionally about things and that we are supposed to be alert in our prayer life. He also tells us that we must pray for the advancement of the gospel.
- Paul asks for prayer for a group of people, he says **for us as well**. Most likely referring to the names he begins to mention starting in verse 7 of this chapter.
- He specifically asks the Colossians to pray that God may open up a door for the word.
- This phrase of opening up a door, usually refers to an opportunity. We see this several places in the New Testament. In **1st Corinthians 16:8-9; Acts 14:27**
- Opportunity Paul is referring to here is that he may **speak about the word, the mystery of Christ**.
- This opportunity he is wanting his readers to pray for, is an opportunity to proclaim the gospel.
- Word mystery refers to something that was hidden in O.T., but has been made known in the New.
- Both in the context of this passage as well as now, it refers to the content of the gospel. Paul asks for prayer for the opportunity to proclaim the full truth of the power of the gospel. (Christ!)
- Paul has already addressed this in **Colossians 1:24-27**.

- Paul understood that it was God who opens those doors for him, it is God who prepares the hearts of the people, it is God who ultimately allows the gospel to advance.
- If you and I are going to be committed to the advancement of the gospel, we must pray that God will go before us and prepare those opportunities by working in the hearts of the people beforehand.
- **We must pray for opportunities to proclaim the gospel, and we must be ready to take them when they come.**
- I think also too, I've found personally that when I'm specifically praying for the advancement of the gospel, I'm more focused on those opportunities when they come.
- When I've been praying about it, I usually am also thinking about who I would share it with. What I would say if I had the opportunity. If there is a way to make opportunities throughout the day.
- As Christians, you and I show commitment to the gospel by praying for opportunities.
- Paul ends this verse with taking about his imprisonment for the sake of the gospel.
 - **Read Commentary (page 184) and make appropriate comments**
- But not only do we need to **pray for opportunities to proclaim the gospel...**
 - b. We must pray for wisdom to proclaim the gospel (verse 4) – Read Again**
- As we transition to verse 4, Paul also asked for prayer that **it would be made clear in the way that he ought to speak**
- This refers both to the accuracy of the gospel, as well as the presentation of the gospel. I wish this was more the focus as a whole for Christians today.
- What we unfortunately see a lot today, is gospel presentations based on emotion, on personal feelings and experiences, or health-wealth-prosperity gospels that lead to false professions of faith.
- Paul is asking here that he would have opportunities to proclaim the gospel, and that when they come he would know what to say that would best accurately, boldly, and graciously present it.
- Paul felt the wait of preaching the gospel and understood the urgency in it. He understood the damage of preaching a false gospel and was a clear voice against it as well. **Galatians 1:6-9** says
- He was passionate for the accuracy/purity of it. Also passionate for proclaiming it with boldness.
- In the Ephesians passage that Caleb read for us earlier, Paul writes this (**Ephesians 6:18-20**).
- Paul's prayer is that he would not be fearful or ashamed in away of the gospel. **Romans 1:16**

- Not only is Paul passionate about proclaiming the gospel with accuracy, and with boldness, he was also committed to proclaiming it graciously, with love. **Ephesians 4:14-15**
- The apostle Paul himself understood the importance of prayer as it related to his effectiveness in proclaiming the gospel. We as well must be committed to the same.
- We must be diligent to read God's word, to study it so that we understand what it says, and then to pray that we as well as others, would remember what it says in order to proclaim it in its truth.

I. (Well not only did we look at) How Should Our Speech be Toward God? that.....

A. We Must Have an Unwavering Commitment to Prayer (Verses 2-4)

- **We show this unwavering commitment to prayer...**
 - 1. By being intentional in our prayer life (verse 2)**
 - 2. By praying for the advancement of the gospel (verses 3-4)**
 - a. We must pray for opportunities to proclaim the gospel (verse 3)**
 - b. We must pray for wisdom to proclaim the gospel (verse 4)**

II. (Going to look next at) - How Should Our Speech be Toward Others? (Verses 5-6)

A. It Must be Demonstrated by Holy Living (verse 5) – Read Again

- Believers are to back their words up by living holy, obedient lives. They are to be careful how they live their life to all people, but especially toward unbelievers (**Outsiders here in verse 5**).
- **John MacArthur puts it this way “What believers are gives credibility to what they say. Only if believers live wisely will the watching world see the power of God at work in them.”**
- Holy living is what should define the Christians life - **1st Peter 1:14-16**
- But when a Christian lives a hypocritical life instead, a life inconsistent with the words they speak, it can de value the gospel to an unbeliever.
- This is a Christian who is quick to preach at people, but they are known for consistent disobedience. Their character, when put on display, resembles a life that is inconsistent with Godly living.
- Paul says instead here that we are to conduct ourselves with wisdom toward outsiders. Carries the idea instead of living consistent disobedient lives, we are to live our lives by walking in wisdom.
- What does this mean exactly?
- It means that instead of foolishly disobeying the commands of Scripture, we choose wisely to walk in obedience to Him. It's when we live this way that our words have meaning.

- Paul made mention of this back in **Colossians 1:28-29**
- This idea of conducting oneself with wisdom or teaching/admonishing with wisdom, refers to understanding practical discernment. It's understanding the biblical principles for holy conduct/holy living; and then going and living them out.
- **I read a quote earlier by John MacArthur. Here is what he goes on to say about holy living. "The early church had none of the modern means of advertising the gospel, such as TV, radio, tracts, books, magazines, or bumper stickers – and fewer of the scandals and hypocrites. Yet by living out the truth of the gospel in their personal and corporate lives, they turned their world upside down. May that be said of us."**
- John's not saying any of that is bad (except for the scandals and hypocrites of course). Rather he is saying that the way that we live our lives as Christians is vitally important.
- We need to hand out more tracts, we need to reach the lost in as many ways as we can. But we need most to live our lives as faithful men and women in obedience to God, for the glory of God.
- We are to live our lives for God (as Paul ends this verse) by making the most of every opportunity.
- We don't know how many chances we are going to get to impact someone's life.
- We don't know how long anyone has left on this earth. Our desire should be to reach as many people as we can with the hope of the glorious gospel.
- It's about reaching the lost and as the apostle Paul says in **2nd Corinthians 5:20...**
- Well, we must move on. Not only does our speech need to be demonstrated by holy living...
 - **B. It (also) Must be Edifying to All People (verse 6) – Read Again**
 - This is how all of our conversations as Christians should be characterized. What exactly does this mean that our speech should be filled with grace?
 - One writer puts it this way. He says **"to speak with grace means to say what is spiritual, wholesome, fitting, kind, sensitive, purposeful, complementary, gentle, truthful, loving and thoughtful."** – **John MacArthur; commentary on Colossians/Philemon**
 - Their not saying here we need to be seeker sensitive, that everyone is always going to like or want to hear what we say. That its always going to be warm and fuzzy. But as the apostle Paul says in **Ephesians 4:29, our words must be edifying. Read Ephesians 4:29 (comment)**

- This idea of edifying one another, is the idea that our speech must build one another up. It must be helpful, constructive, encouraging, instructive, uplifting and even corrective where appropriate.
 - That's the idea of it being seasoned with salt. Salt can sting when it gets down inside of a wound. But salt also preserves things. It prevents corruption.
 - Sometimes our words, even if said rightly, may sting a little. Someone may need to hear something corrective, maybe need a sin brought to their attention. Even that must be done in a loving way.
 - Salt also adds flavor to things. As Christians, we should be adding flavor to a world where conversations are flooded with filth. Our words should be wholesome, gracious, edifying, pure.
-
- At the end of this passage here, Paul says as Christians our speech must be edifying to all people so that you will know how to respond to each person.
 - If you dare to live a bold / courageous different life, I promise you will be different from the rest of the world. At the end here, Paul most likely has in mind what Peter talks about. **1st Peter 3:15**.
 - When people notice you are different in the way that you live and the way that you speak, that's the perfect opportunity to tell them why you are different. It's the perfect entrance to the gospel.
-
- When someone pulls you aside and says to you, why are you different? You take the opportunity to share with them the transforming power of the gospel of Christ that redeems sinners and brings them into eternity with the Father.
 - If you live a truly, transformed, godly life, people will know the difference. Some people may mock you, or call you a good person.
 - But some may say something to you. And if they do, oh what an opportunity to bring them hope by sharing the gospel with them. Always be ready!
 - How can we take a message today and apply it to our lives? I think the content itself is packed with deep application. I simply want to review the points again all together and bring them again to your attention.
-
- I. How Should Our Speech be Toward God? We Must Have an Unwavering Commitment to Prayer. We show this unwavering commitment to prayer by being intentional in our prayer life and by praying for the advancement of the gospel. In praying for the advancement of the gospel we must pray for opportunities to proclaim the gospel and we must pray for wisdom to proclaim the gospel.
 - II. How Should Our Speech be Toward Others? It Must be Demonstrated by Holy Living and it must be Edifying to All People.