

## The Speech of the New Man!

Colossians 4:2-6

Visiting his grandparents, a small boy opened the big family Bible. He was fascinated as he fingered through the old pages. Suddenly, something fell out. He picked it up and found that it was an old leaf that had been pressed flat between the pages. "Mama, look what I found," he called out.

"What have you got there, dear?" his mother asked." With astonishment in his voice, the boy answered, "I think it's Adam's underwear!"

Matthew 12:37, "For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned."

You see, a person's speech becomes the truest indicator of his spiritual state.

As we continue our study in Colossians today we will look at 4 areas of speech in the New Man as found in Colossians 4:2-6.

The first area of speech is:

### I. Prayer

Colossians 4:2, "Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful."

Prayer is speech directed to God. It is the most important thing we can say. During our process of revising our Mission/Vision statements we kept coming back to the phrase "prayer is the work."

Through prayer we confess sin, offer praise to God, call on God to act and intercede for each other.

Our prayer is to be to God, aligned with His will, in the name of Jesus and for God's glory.

With this in mind we turn to the words of verse 2.

#### 1. Devote

This means we are to be steadfast or enduring. It means we stick with it! We are to be persistent.

How long would you pray for your child's salvation? Would you pray for that every day for the rest of your life knowing that only then would it come to fruition?

1 Thessalonians 5:17 says that we are to pray without ceasing. Does this mean that is all you do? No! The

goal Paul is encouraging here is that we walk in a God consciousness.

Do you remember the parable of the persistent widow in Luke 18? She repeatedly went to the judge seeking justice. Finally, the judge gave her justice so that he wouldn't have to hear her anymore. Luke then records that if an unjust judge would answer the widow's plea how much more will a loving God answer our repeated cries for justice.

## 2. Being watchful

The English Standard Version translates this as 'keeping alert' and literally means 'don't fall asleep.' It also holds the idea of praying specifically, you just have to ask for it.

When you apply this it means that you should be alert to pray for specific needs that arise around you. You pray for the driver of the vehicle that you pass which has been in an accident and being tended to by the EMT's.

You pray for salvation to those around you that don't know Jesus. You pray for the health of the sick you encounter. The finances of someone in need. Are you

alert to these things going on around you? Be watchful! They are there for you to pray over.

## 3. An attitude of thanksgiving

5 times in Colossians we are told to be thankful and to show gratitude. In 1:12 it's for salvation. In 2:6 it's for growth. In 3:15 we are to give thanks for fellowship with Jesus and the church. In 3:17 it's for opportunities to serve. See Karen in Children's Ministry. And now here in 4:2 it's to be thankful that God will answer when we pray according to His will.

So, what should we be thankful for? God's":

1. Presence
2. Provision
3. Pardon
4. Promise
5. Purpose

The second area of speech is:

## II. Proclamation

Colossians 4:3-4, "And 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. 4 Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should.”

Prayer is speech directed to God and proclamation is speech directed to people.

Paul is asking that we pray to have opportunity to share the gospel. Does this sound familiar? Do you remember what BLESS stands for?

B...Begin with prayer.

Paul was in prison but that didn't stop him from seeking the open doors to share the gospel of Jesus Christ. The gospel, the good news, the forgiveness of sins.

Paul is asking them to pray that he would also have clarity in his speech, this means he is asking to be Holy Spirit lead in his conversations. That we would be Holy Spirit lead in our conversations.

Have you ever had a Holy Spirit lead conversation? I have. I'm listening to what is coming out of my mouth at the same time I am wondering where that wisdom is coming from. It wasn't me, it was from Him, The Holy Spirit, giving me the words.

God wants to speak through you in the same way, just pray for the opportunity.

The third area of speech is:

### III. Performance

Colossians 4:5, “Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity.”

To be wise in the way you act means you properly evaluate the circumstances and make godly decisions in those moments. You see, only if we live wisely will the watching world see God's power in our lives.

The 'outsider' he referred to in this verse is someone outside the faith. It isn't referring to illegal aliens as some might try to interpret here.

The opportunity Paul is talking about in this context is the opportunity to share Christ with the outsider.

Paul writes in:

Romans 13:11-14, “And do this, understanding the present time: The hour has already come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. 12 The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put

aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. 13 Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. 14 Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the flesh.”

Do you hear the urgency in Paul’s words? The time is growing late. Now is the time for our lives to do our speaking for us.

If Paul finds it urgent to use every opportunity to share Christ, how should we consider the opportunities God provides for us? Remember the first step: Begin with prayer...BLESS.

The fourth area of speech is:

#### IV. Perfection

Colossians 4:6, “Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.”

This area of speech deals with your day-to-day conversations. No matter the circumstances, your speech is to be filled with grace.

What does this look like? At work, does your speech reflect grace? How about when you are under persecution, like Paul was? How about when you are under stress?

When you are at home with your spouse and children? What does your speech say about you there?

How about when you are surrounded by those without Christ? And their speech is not Christ like?

Ephesians 4:29, “Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.”

How are you doing with this? Are your words helpful, building up those you speak to?

Or are your words propping yourself up, seeking to control the situation. Is this grace filled speech?

Then Paul says that our words should ‘be seasoned with salt.’ Your words are to have an effect, influential for the gospel. When we seek to gain control or power with our speech do you think that is influential for the gospel?

Influential for the gospel doesn't mean selling someone the gospel or out debating them into the superiority of Christ. That doesn't move anyone into a relationship with Jesus. Is your speech full of grace, seasoned with salt.

I don't know about you, but I like salty food. Barb and I did one of those food services where they sent you meals that you would prepare. Every veggie in those meals were heated with olive oil and sprinkled with salt and pepper. Who knew veggies could be good.

Salty foods taste good, salty words taste good. Do your words taste good or do they leave a bad taste in someone's mouth? You should know by how they react to you.

Paul finally adds these words, "so that you may know how to answer everyone."

Peter carries the same concept in:

1 Peter 3:15, "But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect,"

Be ready to share Christ always, but notice that last little phrase "But do this with gentleness and respect,"

Have you ever seen someone force feeding Jesus to someone? That is what Peter is warning against here. When you share Christ with someone who doesn't want to hear it or isn't ready to hear it you can push them away from Christ.

You don't have to force it. It's the job of the Holy Spirit to prepare the heart and when He does it opens the door for us to share all about Jesus.

Now, don't use this encouragement to be gentle and respectful as an excuse not to share Jesus with people. The context here in Colossians and in 1 Peter is that we are to share Jesus. Just do it gently and with respect.

One last encouragement is that we all make mistakes. Check out what Jesus' brother James says about this:

James 3:2, "We all stumble in many ways. Anyone who is never at fault in what they say is perfect, able to keep their whole body in check."

I love that verse, we all stumble. Man, I know that's me. Speech is a challenge.

Every Sunday I get up and talk for 25-30 minutes and on a typical Sunday I have made at least one person mad at me.

You see, speech is also a two-way street. There is what is spoken and then there is what is heard and amazingly sometimes what is said and what is heard are two completely different things.

It is so easy to take offense at what people say, because we interpret it through our life experience which, of course, is different from the speaker's life experience. The key here is one word: grace.

A rule that I try to live by when I hear others speak is this: Assume best intent. As you interpret the words of others assume best intent. Too often and too easily we assume others not only intend to hurt us, but that they are actively seeking our utter and complete destruction. Assume best intent. Put on grace.