

How To Be A Winsome Witness

Colossians 4:2-6

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Now let's read Colossians 4:2-6. Paul says that we should, "Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving,"—and then he tells us what we should pray for—"Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds,"—Paul was in prison when he wrote to the Colossians—"That I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak. 5 Walk in wisdom,"—this is the key text for this paragraph—"toward them that are without,"—meaning unbelievers—"redeeming the time. 6 Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man."

Years ago I learned a little poem that kind of summarizes our text tonight. It says:

You're writing a Gospel,

A chapter each day,

By the things that you do,

And the words that you say.

Men read what you write,

Whether faithful or true;

Tell me, what is the Gospel

According to you?

That's what this text is all about. We're writing a gospel, a chapter each day, by the things we do and the words we say. But the question tonight is, what is the gospel according to you?

We've seen in Colossians 3:18-21, we spent several weeks there, that we're to be living the gospel in our home—that we're to be wives who are submitting to their husbands, husbands are to be loving their wives, children to be obeying their parents, and parents are not to be provoking their children to wrath but bringing them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord so that we are living the gospel in our homes. Also, in the workplace, Colossians 3:22-4:1 that we are to be living the gospel in the workplace, that whatever we do, in word or deed, we do all to the name and the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

As I mentioned, verse 5 is the key text, "Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time." That phrase, ". . . them that are without," is a reference to non-Christians. Why? Because they're without God, because they're without hope, because they're without

Christ, and because they're outside the body of Christ. They are unbelievers. We're living in a world that is not our home. We're strangers and pilgrims, but the world is watching. A lot of times they won't listen to your preaching, but they'll watch your walk and see how you're living your Christian life. So, are you living the gospel before the watching world?

As Christians following Christ, we have a responsibility to be effective in our witness to this watching world. We have what's called the Great Commission, not the great suggestion, that we, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel," and that includes our homes, our workplaces, our neighborhoods, our own towns, the cities where we live as well as, " . . . the uttermost parts of the earth."

But how should we live in front of the watching world, and how can we be a winning witness? There are three ways that we can do this. I want you to write them down tonight taking notes. First of all, in order to be a winsome witness, we must pray purposefully. We must be men and women of prayer and pray purposefully as the Lord directs us. Look at verses 2-4, "Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving: 3 Withal praying also for us,"—Paul's including himself and Timothy and the other apostles that are with him—"that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ,"—again, he's speaking about, "I want to testify. I want to preach. I want to witness of Christ and His mystery."—"for which I am also in bonds: 4 That I may make it manifest,"—which means making the gospel clear—"as I ought to speak."

If we're going to be effective in our witness, we have to learn how to pray. Someone said, "Before we can speak to men for God, we must learn to speak to God for men." Many times we go rush right out and try to preach the gospel, but we haven't spent time on our knees praying according to God's purpose and plan. This statement in verse 2, and you hear me say this all the time but here we go again, in the Greek it's actually what's called an imperative or a command. It's in the present tense, so we're to constantly, continually, commanded to keep praying faithfully.

Let me break it down for you. Again, this is a great, one of those note-taking sermons. I want you to write this down, "How To Pray Purposefully." First, you pray faithfully. That's why he says in verse 2, "Continue in prayer." As I said, that's an imperative. It's a command. It's literally devote time, attention, and strength to the task. That phrase literally could be interpreted, devote time, attention, and it connotes the idea of strength to the task of praying faithfully. It's the idea of being strong when he says that we continue—don't give up, be strong. Some have persevere.

In Luke 18, we'll get there on Sunday morning in many, many, many months, but we'll get there, Lord willing. Maybe we'll get raptured first. Amen? It's a whole chapter on prayer, and Jesus said, " . . . men ought always to pray, and not to faint." Never give up prayer. So often that's one of the first things to go from a believer's life when they're backsliding. E.M. Bounds has written some really choice books on the subject of prayer. He made this statement. He said, "Apostasy generally begins at the closet door." I love that. When you stop praying, you're not

drawing close to God or drawing strength from God. We need to keep on faithfully praying. So, if I'm going to be a winsome witness, if I'm going to be an effective witness to others, I must pray faithfully, which means that I give time, attention, and my strength to that task.

Let me give you some other verses to write down. Write down Acts 1:14. It says, "These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication,"—that's the activity of the early church—"continued with one accord in prayer." In Acts 6:4, "But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word." Write down Romans 12:12. It says, ". . . continuing instant in prayer," so we are to continue in prayer. Write down James 5:16. It says, and you know it, "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man"—I believe that 'man' is talking about mankind, so it's men or women. Don't dismiss that as a manly verse—"The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous,"—person—"availeth much." Amen? If we're going to be an effective witness, we must learn how to pray faithfully.

Secondly, we should pray watchfully, if we're going to pray purposefully and be an effective witness. Look at the little phrase in verse 2, ". . . and watch in the same." Do you know what the phrase literally means? Stay awake and pray. It's talking about the importance of prayer. It means being mentally sober and alert, but practically it could convey the idea, "Don't fall asleep when you pray." You know, have you ever gotten down to pray kneeling by your bed. You put your hands together and put your forehead in that perfect little cup right there, it just sets just right, elevates you just enough over the bed so you can still breathe. You start to pray, "Lord, I thank You," (huge yawn) "for," (another huge yawn) "the day. Goodnight, Jesus." You wake up an hour later, there's a big red dot on your forehead and you go to sleep when you pray.

When Jesus went into the Garden of Gethsemane with His disciples, He took Peter, James, and John a little further into the garden. What did He ask them to do? Watch and pray, which is stay awake and pray. Immediately, they went to sleep, and Jesus prayed. Twice He came to them, "What? Could you not watch with me for one hour? Watch and pray. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." Make sure that you don't fall asleep when you pray. It might be good to walk around the house or walk around the block if you need to do that to stay awake while you're praying.

Write down 1 Peter 5:8 where Peter says, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." Don't be sleeping, be sober-minded as you pray.

So, we pray faithfully, we pray watchfully, and that means thoughtfully and alertly, and thirdly, we pray thankfully. I love this, verse 2, ". . . with thanksgiving." When we pray, we're praying faithfully, watchfully, and we're being thankful. James Moffatt in his translation of this verse has maintain your zest for prayer by thanksgiving. In 1 Thessalonians 5:18, Paul said, "In every thing give thanks."

I read this quote, "The cultivation of a thankful heart will do much to keep one alert and alive in their prayer life." It may be a little bit hard to see, in the English translation of verse 2, ". . . with

thanksgiving,” the phrase actually conveys the idea of thanksgiving motivates us, energizes us, and strengthens us to pray. This is one area where I must confess that I wish I was better at, and that’s instead of petitioning God to learn to thank God.

Have you ever thought about just saying, “I’m just going to pray and I’m going to praise and give thanks to God for all the blessings He gives and ask Him to do nothing.” Now, ask—He said to ask and it’s good to ask—but the problem is all we do is ask and we never stop to thank Him. Try it sometime. Maybe even do a week and say, “Okay, all week I’m just going to start counting my blessings, naming them one by one, counting my blessings, see what God has done.” A lot of times the clouds will blow away. Emotionally, if you’re discouraged or depressed or bummed out, you’re focusing on the negatives. Begin to count your blessings.

He’s actually saying, this text, “When you pray, pray with thanksgiving.” Have a thankful heart. Thank God for His blessings. Don’t just run into the presence of God, rip off your prayer shopping list, and then run out of the presence of God. Take some time to worship Him, to praise Him, and to thank Him.

How bout when Jesus gave us the Lord’s Prayer, the model for prayer, “Our Father which art in heaven,”—what did He start with?—“Hallowed be thy name,”—which is let Your name be considered holy, or praise be Your name, Your nature and Your character. So many times we do not remember to worship with thanksgiving when we pray or to pray with a thankful heart.

Write down Philippians 4:6 where Paul says, “Be careful for nothing,”—or don’t worry about anything—“but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.” Someone said, “Thanksgiving acknowledges submission to the will of God.” Thanksgiving acknowledges submission to the will of God. “Lord, I thank You even in my troubles, even in my trials. I want to have a thankful heart.” Cultivate a thankful heart.

I actually asked Aaron to put this on the screen so you could see it with me together. It’s an old Scottish prayer from what’s called the Scottish Prayer Book. It says this, “We praise Thee for the grace by which Thou hast enabled us to so bear the ills of the present world; that our souls are enriched by a fuller experience of Thy love; a more childlike dependence of Thy will and a deeper sympathy with the suffering and the sad.” You can even take the sorrows and the sufferings of life and turn them to something you can give thanks for because God uses it for your good and for His glory.

So, we pray faithfully, watchfully, thankfully, and here’s the fourth, we pray purposefully. I love this. This is found in verses 3-4 when he specifically tells us what to pray for. If you’ve ever wondered what you could pray for, just take this as a guideline. Verses 3-4, “Withal praying also for us,”—the idea is pray for those who are ministers of the gospel—“that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds: 4 That I may make it manifest,”—that is, the gospel—“as I ought to speak.” He’s speaking of specific things that they should pray for—“ . . . that God would open . . . a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ,”—that I may make it clear. I want to be able to speak the gospel, and I want

to speak it clearly.

Often I think our prayers are too vague and general. I've been in prayer meetings where I've heard people say, "I pray, God, that You'll just save the world." Now, I know God's omniscient, but I can hear Him scratching His head, "How do I save the world when it's obvious the Bible says, ' . . . broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat.'" That doesn't mean we don't pray for the lost, but be specific. Pray for our country. Pray for a state. Pray for a people group or pray for specific friends or family members. Zero in...have their names written on a prayer list. Write down specific prayers, and take it a step further, put dates on your prayers and then you can go back and see when God answered prayer. I think the devil loves general prayer because you never know if God answers them. You just throw them out there, don't know where they land or what they're about or anything. You just throw out these prayers, "God, bless the world, in Jesus' name." You're not really naming names or specifically zeroing in on specific things you want God to do.

Again, I've been in public prayer meetings where people come and just tell God, "I'm really sad. I need help. Lord, I'm discouraged. Lord, I'm lonely." That's fine, but I'm thinking, Ask Him something. Don't just tell Him what He already knows. You know, we don't really inform God when we pray. It's like, "God, You know what I'm going through right now." It's like God, "No, no, no, no, no I don't. Tell me about it." So many times we just inform God of what He already knows, and then we run out of time to pray, we don't ask Him. It's almost like He's, "Ahhhh, ask Me something. What do you want Me to do?" So, think about that. Start writing down requests and putting a date by it when you pray. Keep praying and see that God doesn't answer that prayer. You can check it off your so-called prayer list. How important that really is.

Pray for spiritual leaders, verse 3, "Withal praying also for us," and then he says to pray for me, that I might preach the gospel. He's asking for corporate prayer for them as spiritual leaders, and then for him individually. Now, Paul was in prison when he spoke, and so he's asking for more power and opportunity to preach the gospel, which got him into prison to begin with.

What did Paul want them to pray for? Two things. Look at it in the text, " . . . that God would open unto us a door of utterance." Ask God to open the door of utterance. You know, I've discovered that if ever in the morning, and I don't know why I don't do it every day, but whenever I say, "Lord, give me an opportunity today to speak to someone about You," guess what God does? He answers prayer. We need to take advantage of that, but if we ask God, "Give me an opportunity to speak to someone today about You," the door opens up. I think, Wow! Why don't I do this every day and step into that door? The Bible says you have not because you ask not. So, ask God to give us a door of opportunity, and God does open those doors, we need to be open to them and keeping an eye out for them.

Look at verse 3, I want, " . . . to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds." He's asking for more of what got him into trouble. Now, if I were Paul writing to you here at Revival from prison, I would say, "Pray that I get out of jail. Bring me a cake with a file in it. Spring me from this place."

Don't you love those old cowboy movies. You say, "What does a cowboy movie got to do with the text?" Nothing, I just wanted to share this. When the good guy's in jail and the good guy rides up on a horse and throws the rope through the bars on the outside of the jail, ties it to the saddle horn and rides off, and the whole wall of the jail breaks open, he jumps on the spare horse, and they ride off together. That's awesome. I don't know why I shared that...oh, okay, Paul was in jail and he didn't pray to be sprung. He just prayed that God would give him an opportunity.

Do you know that when Paul was in jail he still kept preaching. When he wrote to the Philippians and he talked about all those in Caesar's household that heard the gospel, Paul was under house arrest, he was in chains, but he was still actively preaching the gospel in Rome when he wrote Colossians, Philemon, Philippians, and Ephesians. So, we need to know that Paul didn't pray to get out of jail, he prayed that wherever he was that he would take advantage of that and preach the gospel. So, pray God opens the door.

Write down Romans 1:16, one of the greatest verses in the New Testament. Paul said, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation . . . to the Jew first, and also to the Greek." We should not be ashamed, either.

Here's the second thing Paul wanted them to pray for, that he would make the gospel clear so that God would give him an opportunity to make known the gospel and that when he spoke it—listen carefully—he would be clear in gospel presentation, "That I may make it manifest,"—which means clear—"as I ought to speak." I have to confess there's been times that I've heard preachers, so-called, preaching the gospel and I can't even tell what they're talking about. I don't know what they're talking about. We, as Christians, should know the gospel, we should be clear about the gospel, and we should present the gospel. So, you're praying, and here's the NIV translation, "Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should."

In light of that, I want to give you four points in sharing the gospel. Write down the word, "problem." First of all, we need to share the need for the gospel—man is a sinner, Romans 3:23, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;" "There is none righteous, no, not one." You can't share the gospel without sharing the need of the gospel, and they must come under conviction, so we need to make clear that we're sinners, that's why we need the gospel.

Secondly, write down the word, "punishment," step two. Sin brings God's judgment, Romans 6:23, "For the wages of sin is death," so we're sinners and the wages of sin is death.

Thirdly, write down the word, "provision." So, you have "problem," we all need the gospel, we're sinners; you have "punishment," God will judge, because He's holy, all sinners; and thirdly, you have, "provision," God in His love provided a Savior, and we all know John 3:16, right? How hard is that to memorize John 3:16? "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." You're sharing the "provision" of God sending Jesus.

Now, when you do that, always go to the cross. Always take them to the cross of Christ. Why did Jesus die on the cross? To pay for your sin, the penalty. The “problem,” your sin; the penalty, He died for it. He paid a debt He didn’t owe; we owed a debt we couldn’t pay. Jesus died on the cross; and the fourth thing you write down is, “personal application or ap.” You must repent and receive Christ, believe in Jesus. That doesn’t matter if you use that word “repent.” You’re going to use that word “receive,” John 1:12, “But as many as received him.” You can use the word “believe,” John 3:16. They’re synonyms in many cases, they’re all tangled up together in the Scriptures, so just believe or receive or trust in or put your faith in Christ. You turn from your sin.

Repentance, by the way, so much confusion about that. The word “repent” is the Greek word *metanoé* — Do you know what it means? It means to change your mind. It also involves your mind changes and thus you turn and go a different direction. What are you doing? You’re changing your mind about your sin, you’re changing your mind about God being holy and punishing sin, you’re changing your mind about the cross of Jesus Christ, and so you’re turning from your sin, and then you trust Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. Don’t get hung up on the need for repentance, preach the cross, preach sin, and people will turn from that to Christ to be saved and be forgiven. You can do it very simply, “You know that we’re all sinners. Do you know that God is holy, your sin separates you from God. The only way for you to know God is to deal with the sin problem. The only way to do that is that God provided a sin substitute—Jesus Christ, the sinless Son of God, who died on the cross, took our sins, was buried, rose from the dead.” You can throw the resurrection in there as well, but there’s got to be that content as you’re preaching the gospel.

Paul said in 1 Corinthians 9:16, “For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!” And then, remember Ephesians 2:8-9. All Christians should put those verses to memory. What does it say? “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: 9 Not of works, lest any man should boast.” Every Christian should memorize those verses because you can use them to make clear the gospel if you’re going to be a winsome witness.

Here’s the second thing we need to do, and we won’t tarry as long. We not only need to pray purposefully, we need to walk wisely. One verse, verse 5, “Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming,”—or buying up opportunities. To be an effective witness we must walk wisely. That “walk” is a figure of speech for how you live your life. If you’re going to be a winsome witness, you pray, and you pray faithfully, thankfully, purposefully; and you also walk wisely. It’s how you conduct yourself. It speaks of a consistent daily walk. It’s in the present active imperative, so it’s a command to walk wisely. It’s a wise walk.

The Greek wisdom walk there means that we walk cautiously and tactfully fearing God, Proverbs 1:7, which, “. . . is the beginning of . . . wisdom,” and obeying His Word. It actually is live before the unbelieving world, verse 5, “. . . them that are without,” so we need to live winsomely or attractively. Notice also in verse 5, we need to buy up opportunity. We need to live urgently—winsomely, attractively, and urgently.

That word “. . . redeeming the time,” means buy up opportunities. You know, Jesus said, “I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work.” Take advantage of the opportunities to witness to family, to witness to neighbors, to witness to friends, to witness to coworkers. Sometimes we put it off, we put it off, we put it off. Sadly, and I’ve seen it happen, you find out they were killed in an automobile accident or they move off or move away and you didn’t share with them. You didn’t have an opportunity to talk to them. You’re not buying up that opportunity when God opens the door, making it clear, redeeming the time, buying up that opportunity. It’s so very important. Don’t put it off.

Here’s the third, we pray purposefully, we walk wisely, redeeming the time, and thirdly, we speak graciously, our words. Look at verse 6, “Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt,”—not chili peppers, not hot sauce, but with salt, so it should be flavorful—“that,”—reason—“ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.” To be an effective witness, we must pray right, live right, and talk right. Christ can be honored not only by our conduct but by our conversation—winsome, pleasing, courteous words.

You know, if it’s in the heart, it’s going to come out of the mouth. Your words betray what’s in your heart. As I’ve often said, “If it’s in the well, it comes up in the bucket,” right? So, ask God to give us a heart that’s pure and right before Him, “Search me . . . know . . . me: try me . . . And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting,” so that “. . . the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable,” unto Him.

Now, let’s break it down before we wrap this up and end tonight’s study. Our speech should be always gracious. I love that. The word is *cháris*, gracious, beautiful. It’s not talking about God’s grace being poured out on us, it’s talking about beautiful, charming, gracious speech. It should never be coarse. We should never be involved in coarse jesting or things that are inappropriate. It means pleasant, attractive, charming, and winsome—always what is spiritual.

Then, “. . . seasoned with salt,” means, this is Paul’s recipe for speech, it means pure, wholesome. Salt was used as a preservative to preserve corruption. They didn’t have ice. They didn’t have refrigerators. Think about that, living in a whole culture without refrigeration or ice, so they would have to rub meat down with salt to preserve it. Our mouth, or our words, should be preserving.

Write down Psalm 141:3, “Set a guard, O LORD, over my mouth; Keep watch over the door of my lips.” It’s so very important. And then, notice why, “. . . that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man,” that means always ready to answer.

So, we have to have gracious words, we’re to have seasoned, pure, wholesome words, and we’re to have ready words, “. . . that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.” In 1 Peter 3:15, “. . . and always be ready to give an answer . . . of that hope that is in you,”—you do it—“with meekness and fear,”—reverence. It’s showing sensitivity to the need of each individual.

Do a study if you can sometime of Christ and His dealing with other unbelievers—John 4, the

woman at the well, notice how Jesus talked to that woman so graciously; John 3, Nicodemus, how Jesus spoke to him; John 8, the woman caught in the act of adultery; the rich young ruler, how Jesus dialogued with him; Jesus' ways with sinners. Again, always be ready, 1 Peter 3:15.

Now, let me give a summary on this text. If every Christian would pray for the lost; secondly, look for opportunities to witness; thirdly, walk in wisdom, speak with seasoned speech, we would see more people won to the Savior. Amen?