

## Lesson 15 – Colossians 4:2-6

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### Review/Introduction

In Colossians chapters one and two, the apostle Paul has presented the person and work of Christ and His supremacy and sufficiency for salvation and sanctification. Union with Christ is the doctrinal prerequisite to walking with Christ. Chapters three and four address how the believer is to walk in light of Christ's supremacy and sufficiency. Paul exhorts the Colossians (and us) to strive in the power of the Spirit to walk in our position; to live out in practice what we already are in Christ.

But living a consistently God glorifying life is only possible through Spirit-filling. The Christian life is not lived in one's own strength. It is a life lived filled with the Spirit as the life of Christ flows through you. As the believer repents of all known sin (Eph 4:30), bows before God in complete submission (1 Thess 5:19), and is immersed in the word (Col 3:16), they we will be filled with the Spirit and will therefore exhibit the fruits of the Spirit.

Being filled with the Spirit (letting the words of Christ to richly dwell within you) produces manifold blessings – observable, tangible manifestations of strength, character, and connectedness to God through Christ. Specifically, it produces supernatural words, worship, reactions, and fulfilling of relational roles in one's life. Those relational roles are all within the context of the family, the household – husband/wife, parent/child, and slave/master.

Paul now looks at how Spirit-filling impacts the believer's relationship to the world.

### Some Thoughts on the “Having Gone” of Disciple Making

In order for someone to turn from their sins and trust Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior, they must first hear the gospel (1 Cor 15:3-5). No one will be saved from their sins if believers simply live morally. No one can believe unless they are told about Jesus (Rom 10:14-17). Therefore, believers must be equipped and ready (1 Pet 3:15) to explain the gospel in order to be obedient to the great commission (Matt 28:19-20) to “make disciples”.

<sup>19</sup>Go therefore and **make disciples** of all the nations, *baptizing* them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup>*teaching* them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” (Matt 28:19-20)

The “having gone” part of “make disciples” is evangelism. There are two primary motivations for evangelism; both flowing from love.

### Love for Christ

The first motivation for evangelism is love for Christ. Jesus the Christ is our great God and Savior (Tit 2:13). He sacrificed Himself for our sins. We love Him. The expression of our love is obedience to His word (John 14:21-23; 2 John 1:6). Jesus' command to us is clear – make disciples (Matt 28:19-20; John 20:21; Acts 1:8). Therefore, we should strive to obey out of love for our Savior. Even if we are scared, intimidated, or feel inadequate, out of love for Christ, we should obey. Walking in the Spirit will provide the strength to obey and overcome any felt inadequacies.

## Love for People

The second motivation for evangelism is love for people. Ultimately, we have love for people because we were loved first by Christ.

<sup>19</sup>We love, because He first loved us. (1 John 4:19)

Jesus has saved us from our sin and so we love Jesus. That love for Jesus overflows into love for others. Our example is Jesus' love for mankind.

<sup>4</sup>But when the kindness of God our Savior and **His love for mankind** appeared, <sup>5</sup>He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, <sup>6</sup>whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, (Titus 3:4-6)

<sup>16</sup>"For **God so loved the world**, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. (John 3:16)

<sup>8</sup>But **God demonstrates His own love toward us**, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. (Rom 5:8)

<sup>5</sup>and **from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him who loves us and released us from our sins by His blood**— <sup>6</sup>and He has made us *to be* a kingdom, priests to His God and Father—to Him *be* the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen. <sup>7</sup>Behold, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. So it is to be. Amen. (Rev 1:5-7)

We can also see the Apostle Paul's love for people in his direct description of his heart and the great amount in which he suffered to bring the gospel to the unsaved.

<sup>1</sup>I am telling the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience testifies with me in the Holy Spirit, <sup>2</sup>**that I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart.** <sup>3</sup>For I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh, (Rom 9:1-3)

<sup>1</sup>Brethren, **my heart's desire and my prayer to God for them is for their salvation.** (Rom 10:1)

<sup>19</sup>For though I am free from all *men*, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I may win more. ... <sup>22b</sup>I have become all things to all men, so that I may by all means save some. <sup>23</sup>**I do all things for the sake of the gospel**, so that I may become a fellow partaker of it. (1 Cor 9:19-23; see 2 Cor 11:23-29 for all Paul endured for the sake of the elect)

Unfortunately, the gospel has become muddled and confused among and by many churches. The message has been softened to make it palatable in order to not offend. God did not send Christ into the world to meet your felt needs, give you your "best life now", fix your self-image/esteem, become your "friend", or bring social justice. Man's greatest need is freedom from the penalty and power of SIN. This is why Christ came. This is possible only through Jesus the Christ. The gospel is the good news of God's grace to sinful mankind. It is the power of God unto salvation (Rom 1:16). Therefore, we better get it right!

In a nutshell...

<sup>3</sup>For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, <sup>4</sup>and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, <sup>5</sup>and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. (1 Cor 15:3-5)

All people—you, me, everyone—have sinfully rebelled against their Creator and are therefore deserving of eternal death, eternal separation from God. But God loved you so much that He sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to pay the penalty for your sins, to die the death that you deserve. He rose from the dead to validate His identity, confirming the truth of all He said. He offers salvation from sin to all who exercise true saving faith, turning from their sins and surrendering their life to Christ, trusting only in Him for salvation from sin. Forsaking any merit of good works, organizational membership, religious observance, or heredity. Upon exercising true saving faith, you enter into a personal relationship with God, you are born again (made new), the debt of sin is forgiven, and the power of sin over you is broken. Salvation from sin is completely and wholly the work of God.

It is imperative to get it right, for ourselves and for those we are evangelizing. Leaving out part of the gospel message can present a warped view of God's character, man's position before God, Christ's character or work, and the means of salvation. This can lead to presenting an incomplete gospel or a different gospel (Gal 1:8-9).

“...part of the biblical gospel is now preached as if it were the whole of that gospel; and a half-truth masquerading as the whole truth becomes a complete untruth.” *Introductory Essay by J. I. Packer in the Banner of Truth's reprint of John Owen's "Death of Death in the Death of Christ"*

Spirit-filled believers have a heart for the mission of making disciples. They are “missional minded”.

### **Life in the all-sufficient Christ – A Heart for the Mission (4:2-6)**

#### 1. Missional Alertness (4:2)

<sup>2</sup>Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with *an attitude of* thanksgiving;

<sup>2</sup>Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving. (ESV)

Christ's supremacy and complete sufficiency for salvation and sanctification is the theme of this epistle. Union with Christ is the believers only complete adequacy. We are fully and completely dependent on Christ for salvation and sanctification. Prayer demonstrates that dependence on Christ. Apart from Christ we can do nothing (John 15:5), but in Christ we can do all things (Phil 4:13).

We are completely dependent on God for all things. This is contrary to our American, independent-spirit thinking. We cannot exist without God. We cannot continue to exist without God. We can do nothing apart from God. We live in complete dependence on God. The unbeliever lives opposite of this truth and is therefore condemned.

❖ **Do you live independent of God and therefore like a functional unbeliever?**

The command here is to “devote” yourselves to prayer. “Yourselves” means this is for everyone in the local body, not just “prayer warriors”. “Devote” means to persevere, to persist obstinately in a task, to continue doing something with intense effort, or to tarry or remain somewhere. It is to be a lifestyle. Other uses of the word:

<sup>12</sup>rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, **devoted to prayer**, (Rom 12:12)

<sup>4</sup>“But we will **devote** ourselves to **prayer** and to the ministry of the word.” (Acts 6:4)

<sup>46</sup>Day by day **continuing** with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, (Acts 2:46)

<sup>42</sup>They were **continually devoting** themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to **prayer**. (Acts 2:42)

<sup>14</sup>These all with one mind were **continually devoting** themselves to **prayer**, along with *the* women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers. (Acts 1:14)

<sup>9</sup>And He told His disciples that a boat should **stand ready** for Him because of the crowd, so that they would not crowd Him; (Mark 3:9)

What does this look like? Because we understand our great privilege to come before the living God (Heb 4:16) and because we understand that God uses prayer as a means to accomplish His sovereign will (Jer 25:11-12 with Dan 9:19; Gen 20: 1-7, 17; Job 42:7-9) and because we are in desperate need for ourselves and others, you make prayer a priority in your life. Prayer is not something that you view as a haphazard activity when you get to it. It is something you come at with intense strength and persistence. Prayer is an essential part of the believer’s life.

#### ❖ **Are you devoted to prayer?**

“Keeping alert” means to keep awake, refrain from sleep and so to remain alert, watchful and ready. It means to be quick to perceive and act; being on the lookout. The idea stresses readiness or promptness in meeting danger or in seizing opportunity. It is present tense so pictures one continually in a state of "high alert. This is ready to seize opportunities to pray for opportune needs in your own life in the lives of those who come across your path. Specifically, those who need Christ. One commentator said, “Only after you talk to God about needy people are you ready to talk to needy people about God.”

#### ❖ **Are you alert in prayer?**

“Thanksgiving” expresses gratitude. In context, this is the grateful acknowledgment of past mercies and answered prayer and as gratitude for people in your life to minister to and evangelize.

#### ❖ **Are you filled with gratitude for all God does for, in, and through you?**

The context here is instructive. Book – we are completely dependent on Christ for salvation and sanctification. Immediately before – we are completely dependent on Christ for strength to walk in a way that honors Him and walking in the Spirit (or making the words of Christ to richly dwell in you) produces tangible manifestations of strength, godly character, and fulfilling of relational roles. Immediately after – missional lifestyle.

This verse is a bridge. Those dependent on Christ, walking in the Spirit, will be devoted to praying for individuals’ salvation and opportunities to be involved in that by “having gone”.

### ❖ What are you praying for?

So, missional life is devoted to prayer. But, missional life is devoted to specific prayer.

#### 2. Missional Prayer (4:3-4)

<sup>3</sup>praying at the same time for us as well, that God will open up to us a door for the word, so that we may speak forth the mystery of Christ, for which I have also been imprisoned; <sup>4</sup>that I may make it clear in the way I ought to speak.

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<sup>3</sup>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— <sup>4</sup>that I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak. (ESV)

With the understanding that prayer is an essential part of the believer’s life. And being always ready to seize opportunities to pray for opportune needs in your own life and in the lives of those the Lord brings across your path. And always being grateful for past mercies and future opportunities. The Spirit exhorts the Colossians to pray for Paul and his team (notice the “us”).

Since they are devoted to prayer and since they are already praying, pray for Paul and his team. We may often think of Paul as the lone apostle, but that is far from the truth. He was a member/leader of a team of disciple makers. Paul’s team is a group of people who are devoted to the mission of making disciples. They are sold out for this mission. They have dedicated their lives for this mission, having been called by God to accomplish it. Yet, they ask for prayer. This is a theme of Paul, to ask for the God’s people to pray; particularly that God would be glorified by the spreading of the gospel.

<sup>30</sup>Now I urge you, brethren, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, **to strive together with me in your prayers to God for me**, (Rom 15:30)

<sup>10</sup>who delivered us from so great a *peril of death*, and will deliver *us*, He on whom we have set our hope. And He will yet deliver us, <sup>11</sup>**you also joining in helping us through your prayers**, so that thanks may be given by many persons on our behalf for the favor bestowed on us through *the prayers of many*. (2 Cor 1:10-12)

<sup>19</sup>and **pray on my behalf**, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, (Eph 6:19)

<sup>19</sup>for I know that this will turn out for my deliverance **through your prayers** and the provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, <sup>20</sup>according to my earnest expectation and hope, that I will not be put to shame in anything, but *that* with all boldness, Christ will even now, as always, be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. (Phil 1:19-20)

<sup>25</sup>Brethren, **pray for us.** (1 Thess 5:25)

<sup>1</sup>Finally, brethren, **pray for us** that the word of the Lord will spread rapidly and be glorified, just as *it did* also with you; (2 Thess 3:1)

<sup>22</sup>At the same time also prepare me a lodging, for **I hope that through your prayers I** will be given to you. (Philemon 21-23)

<sup>18</sup>**Pray for us**, for we are sure that we have a good conscience, desiring to conduct ourselves honorably in all things. (Heb 13:18)

Verses 2 and 3 are a little difficult to interpret because it depends on to what the various clauses are connected.

praying at the same time for us as well

- **that** (hina) God will open up to us a door for the word ~~so that~~ we may speak forth the mystery of Christ, for which I have also been imprisoned
- **that** (hina) I may make it clear in the way I ought to speak.

There are two purposes in praying for Paul; two specific things for his team related to disciple making. He asks for prayer for opportunities and prayer for performance.

a. Opportunities

Paul asks for others to pray for him that God would open a door to speak forth the gospel. There are several passages that speak of “doors” being opened. Unfortunately, Christians are praying for “open doors” for all kinds of things. The context of “open doors” in the NT is always an “opportunity for the gospel or service”.

<sup>27</sup>When they had arrived and gathered the church together, they *began* to report all things that God had done with them and how **He had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles.** (Acts 14:27)

<sup>8</sup>But I will remain in Ephesus until Pentecost; <sup>9</sup>for a **wide door for effective service has opened to me**, and there are many adversaries. (1 Cor 16:8-9)

<sup>12</sup>Now when I came to Troas for the gospel of Christ and when **a door was opened for me in the Lord,** (2 Cor 2:12)

<sup>7</sup>“And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: He who is holy, who is true, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, and who shuts and no one opens, says this: <sup>8</sup>“I know your deeds. Behold, I have **put before you an open door which no one can shut**, because you have a little power, and have kept My word, and have not denied My name. (Rev 3:7-12)

That is the context here as well – an opportunity for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ (the gospel). This is not an open door for ease, prosperity, or any material thing – things that dominate many believers’ prayers. This is an opportunity to speak forth the gospel of Christ. It is also interesting that this is a prayer for open doors for the gospel specifically for other believers. There is nothing nebulous about these prayers.

❖ **Are you praying for open doors for the gospel?**

## b. Performance

Next, Paul asks for others to pray for his speaking forth the gospel “that I may make it clear in the way I ought to speak”. “Make it clear” has the sense of to be plainly recognized or thoroughly understood. Paul doesn’t want there to be any mistake about the gospel. No mistake about people’s need due to the death wages for sin nor the means of salvation from sin nor the definition of true saving faith.

“Ought” means that it is necessary (binding) or needful. Paul was not ashamed of the gospel (Rom 1:16). It was necessary that Paul speak the gospel clearly for he was under compulsion to preach the gospel (1 Cor 9:16). It was necessary for Paul to fulfill his mandate motivated by love of Christ and love of people. It is “necessary” for us also!

<sup>16</sup>For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. (Rom 1:16)

<sup>16</sup>For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for I am under compulsion; for woe is me if I do not preach the gospel. (1 Cor 9:16)

### ❖ Are you praying for clarity and accuracy in your speaking of the gospel?

So, were the Colossians prayers answered?

<sup>30</sup>And he stayed two full years in his own rented quarters and was welcoming all who came to him, <sup>31</sup>preaching the kingdom of God and teaching concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all openness, unhindered. (Acts 28:30-31)

Missional life is devoted to prayer for oneself and other believers for opportunity and performance in speaking forth the gospel with clarity and accuracy. It is also a life that is lived godly in the world. The Spirit-filled believer will be missional minded and will consider his/her conduct in the world so as to make the most of every opportunity for gospel outreach.

## 3. Missional Life (4:5-6)

<sup>5</sup>Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity. <sup>6</sup>Let your speech always be with grace, *as though* seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person.

<sup>5</sup>Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. <sup>6</sup>Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person. (ESV)

There are two areas of missional life that are particularly important – opportunity grasping and speech.

### 1. Opportunity Grasping

“Conduct” is the same word that is often translated “walk” and figuratively meaning to behave, to make one’s way, to make due use of opportunities. “Wisdom” can mean skill for living or applying the word in given situations in a practical way. “Outsiders” are the unsaved. “Making the most of” means to redeem or buy back or best use. “Opportunity” refers to a specific period of opportunity which when it passes by is irretrievable.

In the present context to “conduct ourselves with wisdom means” that the unsaved outsiders who are closely, critically scrutinizing our lives, should never see or hear anything in our lives that would jeopardize our testimony of Christ. Believers are to live before the unbelieving world in a way that does not distract from or confuse the gospel, but instead live in a way that makes the most of every moment. You do this consistently as you are walking in the Spirit.

❖ **Do you make the most of every moment for the gospel?**

2. Speech

Walking in the Spirit impacts your speech, both speech to avoid and speech to pursue. Speech to avoid includes:

- Lying including intentionally misleading, deceiving, or manipulation (Col 3:9-10; Prov 12:22)
- Gossip or repeating negative rumors about someone (Titus 2:3; 1 Tim 5:9-13).
- “Hurtful talk” which is derogatory speech intended to hurt and wound someone (Col 3:8; Prov 12:18)
- Quarreling or arguing (Prov 17:19)
- Complaining and grumbling (Phil 2:14-15)

Instead, the Spirit-filled believer will have gracious speech flowing from a heart bowed low before Christ, allowing His words to richly dwell within. MacArthur notes that “To speak with grace means to say what is spiritual, wholesome, fitting, kind, sensitive, purposeful, complementary, gentle, truthful, loving, and thoughtful.”

“Seasoned with salt” in classical Greek means “witty” or to keep interesting. Do we speak as interestingly about the gospel and our walk with Christ as we do about our work, family, material possessions, athletics, or hobbies?

In biblical use, however, salt is that which purifies, cleanses, seasons, and preserves from corruption. It speaks of the resistance to corruption, preservation of purity, or retention of flavor. Ultimately, generally, we can say that salt has an impact.

The Spirit-filled believer’s speech is with grace that impacts those that hear. This is the way each believer is to respond to each person.

❖ **Are you cognizant of your speech and its impact?**

**Conclusion**

You are completely dependent on Christ for salvation and sanctification. Walking in the Spirit (or making the words of Christ to richly dwell in you) gives strength to walk in a way that honors Him and produces tangible manifestations of strength, godly character, and fulfilling of relational roles. It also produces a missional (outreach / evangelistic) mindset. Missional life is devoted to prayer for oneself and other believers for opportunity and performance in speaking forth the gospel with clarity and accuracy. It is also a life that is lived godly in the world. The Spirit-filled believer will be missional minded and will consider his/her conduct and speech in the world so as to make the most of every opportunity for gospel outreach.



### **Additional Study**

1. As you walk through your days, are you demonstrating an alert devotion to pray? How is that demonstrated?
2. In your prayers, do you pray for opportunities and your own clarity of speech in presenting the gospel?
3. Is your conduct and speech different in various spheres of your life? Do you compartmentalize your life and live differently in each? Or are you consistently walking well? What needs to happen if you compartmentalize your life and live like an unbeliever in any area?