

**Title:** The Christian Mission

**Text:** Colossians 4:2-6

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## **Introduction**

Well – friends – **let me ask:**

**What** has been **consuming you** – **what** has been **on your mind** – **what** have you been **preoccupied with** – say – for the **last 18 months?**

Is it **masks? Vaccines? Lockdowns?**

**Whatever it may be may be – I want us to take a moment to ask ourselves:**

**Have we** been **so consumed** by **these things** – whatever they may be – **so much so** that **we** have **lost focus** – that **we** have **forgotten** – that **we** are **on a mission?**

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**I think** that **this** was **one** of **Paul's concerns** for the **Colossian church** – well! – **at least** as we **come** towards **the end** of **this letter**.

**Paul** – as we know – **has been helping** to **navigate** the **church** through the **uncharted waters** of **false teaching** that had **come their way**.

And **what we've seen** is that:

- **Paul** has **reminded** the **Colossians** of the **utter supremacy** and **sufficiency** of **Christ** in **all things** in **chapter 1**.
- **He** has **reminded** them of **their completeness** in **Christ** in **chapter 2**.

- And **he** has **reminded** them of the **practical implications** of **that reality** in **their Christian life** and in **their Christian community** in **chapter 3**.

So far – **Paul** has been pretty **inward-looking**.

That is – **he** has been **focusing** on **how** the **supremacy** and **sufficiency** of **Christ** should **affect** **the Christian life** and **the Christian community**.

And **this** is **fair enough** – **given** the **onslaught** of **false teaching** that was **threatening** the **church** at **Colossae**.

**But** in **our passage** today – as **Paul** brings **his exhortations** to a **close** – **Paul's focus** takes a **dramatic shift**.

**Paul's focus** shifts from the **inward** to the **outward**.

It's **as if Paul** – although *primarily* addressing the **false teaching** in **this letter** – does **not** **want them** to be **so consumed by it** that **they lose sight** of **their greater mission** – the **mission** to **make the gospel known** to **those outside the church**.

And that's **Paul's point** in **our passage** today:

**Never let distractions side-track our mission.**

And **what we're going to see** is that:

- **Paul reminds us** of **our Christian mission**.
- **He reminds us** of **our duty** to **those** who are **outside the community of faith**.
- And **he shows us** **how we** *can* – and *should!* – be **engaged** in **this mission**.

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So – **without further ado** – let's **walk through today's passage**.

And **what we're going to see** is that **we are to be engaged in Christian mission**:

- By *praying* for the mission (vv.2-4).
- And by *participating* in the mission (vv.5-6).

Let's **take each of these in turn**. *Firstly* – we are to **pray for the mission** (vv.2-4) ...

## 1. Pray for the Mission (vv.2-4)

**Paul begins** here by **issuing a general call to prayer**.

### A General Exhortation to Prayer

**Look with me** at **verse 2**:

*“Devote yourselves to prayer – stay alert in it with thanksgiving.”*

Now – **before we look at the details of this text** – let's **ask ourselves**: **Why does Paul *begin*** with a **general exhortation** for **believers to pray**?

### *Our Fundamental Duty*

Well – for **one thing** – **Paul is simply reminding us of our basic and fundamental duty as believers** – namely – **prayer**.

After all – as **J. C. Ryle** once put it:

**“Prayer is the very life-breath of true Christianity.”**

**Prayer is to characterise our lives as believers.**

- It is **the air** that we breathe.
- It is **vital** to our spiritual health.
- It is a **sign of life**.

And yet – how many of us know that we don’t pray as often as we ought?

Perhaps *that’s why* Paul begins with this exhortation to pray.

But **I think there’s another *more pertinent* reason – one in line with the mission focus of this passage – and it is this:**

### *Spiritual Warfare*

**Paul knows that our God-given mission is *not* a breeze.**

It is *not* a walk in the park.

**No! It is warfare! Spiritual warfare!**

**As Paul reminds us in Ephesians 6:12:**

*“... our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this darkness, against evil, spiritual forces in the heavens.”*

In other words – **Paul is reminding us:**

- That **we** are **engaged** in a **spiritual battle**!
- That **we** have an **adversary** – the **devil** – who is “**prowling** around like a **roaring lion**, **looking** for **anyone** he can **devour**”.<sup>1</sup>
- That **we** are **being sent out** – as **Jesus** puts it – like “**sheep among wolves**”!<sup>2</sup>

**That’s why we need to pray!**

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So – **Paul** says:

*“Devote yourselves to prayer ...”*

Now – the word “**devote**” – προσκαρτερέω – is **significant**.

- It is **used elsewhere** in **Acts 2:42** of the **early church** “**devoting**” themselves “to the **apostles’ teaching**, to the **fellowship**, to the **breaking of bread**, and to **prayer**”.
- It is **used** in **Acts 6:4** of the **apostles** “**devoting**” themselves “to **prayer** and to the **ministry of the word**”.
- It is **used** in **Romans 12:12** where **Paul** exhorts **believers** to “**rejoice in hope**”, “**be patient in affliction**” – and here’s the word – “be **persistent** in prayer”.

In other words – **what Paul is getting at** is that:

- **We** are to **give ourselves** to **prayer**.
- **We** are to **be steadfast** in **prayer**.
- **We** are to **persevere** in **prayer**.

And the **present tense** of the **verb** implies that **this** is ***not*** just to be a **one-off action** – but an **ongoing** – a **habitual action**.

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Pet 5:8

<sup>2</sup> Matt 10:16

So – **prayer *in general*** – and **prayer for Christian mission *in particular*** – **ought** to be a **regular** – and **established** – **part of our lives**.

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**Paul continues:**

*“... stay alert in it with thanksgiving.”*

In other words – **our prayers** are to be **characterised** by **alertness** and **thankfulness**.

*Firstly* – **we** are to **be alert** – that is:

- **We** are to **be awake**.
- **We** are to **be vigilant**.
- **We** are to **be watchful in prayer**.

**We** are *not* to be **lacklustre** or **indifferent** – but *rather* – **we** are to be **mindful of the times in which we live** – and **alert to the needs of those around us** – and **we** are to **pray accordingly**.

*Secondly* – **we** are to **be thankful**.

That is – **we** are to **pray** with an **attitude** of **thanksgiving** for **what God is doing *in* and *around* the world** today.

- That **the way of salvation** has been **opened up** by **Christ**.
- That **God** is **able to save to the uttermost those** who **come to God** through **Christ**.
- And that **nothing can thwart God's plan** whatsoever.

So – to **sum up** – **what we can say from Paul's opening exhortation** is that **Christian mission *begins* on our knees**.

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So – friends – **by way of application** – let's ask ourselves:

- **How is our prayer life?**
- Is it characterised by **steadfastness** – **alertness** – and **thankfulness**?
- **What can we put in place to cultivate a richer and more consistent prayer life?**

Let's strive – by the grace of God – to make prayer *in general* – and prayer for Christian mission *in particular* – an **integral part** of our Christian life!

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Now – having given a *general exhortation* to prayer – Paul turns to make a *specific request* for prayer.

### A Specific Request for Prayer

Look at **verses 3-4**:

*“At the same time, pray also for us that God may open a door to us for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains, so that I may make it known as I should.”*

**Think about it for a moment:** This is *Paul* – the *great* apostle Paul – who is **speaking** here.

And **what is he asking for?**

- He is asking for **prayer** from the Colossians.
- He yearns for **their prayers**.
- He wants them to **pray for him**.

And I think **this is instructive!**

**It reminds us:**

- That **none of us** are **beyond** the **need** for **prayer**.
- That **we need** the **prayers** of **each other**.

But **more than that** – in **making this specific prayer request** – **Paul** is also **reminding us:**

- That **we** are **in this together**.
- That **we** are **accomplishing God's mission together**.
- That **Christian mission** is a **team effort**.

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Notice – **Paul** asks for **two things** in **particular:**

### ***Pray for Opportunity***

*Firstly* – **Paul** asks for **opportunity**.

**Verse 3** – Paul writes:

*“[P]ray ... that **God** may **open a door to us** for **the word**, to **speak the mystery of Christ**, for which **I am in chains** ...”*

Friends – **remember:**

- **Paul** is **in chains**.
- **He** is in **Roman imprisonment**.
- And **he's there** because of **the gospel**.



Now – I want you to **put yourself in Paul's shoes for a moment:**

- **Imagine that you are in chains – imagine you are in prison – because of the gospel.**
- **And here you are – writing a letter to the Colossian church – and requesting prayer from them.**
- **What would *you* write? What would *your* prayer request be?**

Now – I'm not sure about you – but I know what *my* prayer request would be!

It is this:

**“Pray that God would get me out of here!”**

**That's what *I* would ask for! That would be at the top of my list!**

But *not so* the apostle Paul!

Notice Paul's request:

- **Paul's request is not that God would open the door of his prison.**
- ***But* that God would open a door for the spread of the gospel.**

Friends – **how amazing** is this?!

- **It reveals Paul's missionary heart.**
- **It reveals Paul mission-mindedness.**

Here is **a man on a mission!** Here is **a man consumed by the gospel!**

**So much so** that even within the confines of his prison cell – Paul's heart – Paul's passion – is for **the advancement – for the spread – of the gospel.**

So – **Paul asks the Colossians to pray that God would open doors.**

That **God** would **provide him** with **opportunities** to **proclaim the gospel** – *yes!* – even while **he is in prison!** **Amazing!**

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Just **think about it** for a moment:

- **Here is Paul is in prison. Confined and limited. And yet he is actively praying – and seeking – for opportunities to share about Christ!**
- **And here we are. Free to go anywhere. Free to talk to anybody. And yet – how slow – how hesitant – are we to make the most of these opportunities!**

Friends – **I’m not sure about you – but I know that – I – *for one* – stand rebuked!**

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Now – **let’s think:**

**What is the *significance* of Paul’s request here? What does it *imply* about his belief?**

Well – **I think that it implies that Paul knows that *if* the gospel is to spread – *if* the gospel is to advance – it requires a prior act of God.**

***If* the gospel is to make inroads – then:**

- **God must first act.**
- **God must open up doors.**
- **God must open hearts.**

**We see this – for example – in Acts 14:27.**

**Luke records for us that:**

*“After they – [that is – after Paul and Barnabas] – arrived and gathered the church together, they reported everything God had done with them – [and notice this!] – and that [God] had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles.”*

Did you catch that? **God** was **the one** who **opened the door of faith** to the **Gentiles**.

**Only God – only a sovereign God – can open such doors – and provide such opportunities!**

**Paul knows this.** That is why he enlists the **prayers of the saints**.

**We see this** throughout **his letters**.

For example – in **2 Thessalonians 3:1** – Paul writes:

*“... pray for us that the word of the Lord may spread rapidly and be honoured, just as it was with you.”*

**What we can learn from this** is this is that **Paul knows** that:

**Prayer** is the **fuel** of **all evangelistic efforts!**

**Paul knows** that – as **Psalm 127:1** puts it:

*“Unless the LORD builds a house, its builders labour over it in vain;  
unless the LORD watches over a city, the watchman stays alert in vain.”*

So – friends – **we need to pray!**

- **Pray for pastors.**
- **Pray for missionaries.**
- **Pray for gospel workers.**

**Pray that God would open doors – pray that God would provide opportunities – for the gospel to be proclaimed – and souls to be saved!**

**That's what we *can* – and *should*! – do as we co-labour in the cause of God's mission!**

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**But – friends – let's *not just* pray for *these ones*!**

**But let's *also* pray for *ourselves*!**

**Pray that God would provide *us* with opportunities to share the gospel to those around us!**

**For the thing is this: If we are actively praying for opportunities – we tend to be more alert to these opportunities. And we will be more likely to seize those opportunities when they come our way!**

**So – pray for opportunities!**

### *Pray for Clarity*

But *not only* does Paul ask for opportunity to preach the gospel – he *also* – asks for clarity in preaching the gospel.

Look at verse 4:

*“... so that I may make it known as I should.”*

The Greek word for “*make known*” is φανερώω.

It means “to reveal” or “to make manifest”.

Thus – the **ESV** and **NASB** translates it as:

*“... that I may **make it clear** ...”*

In other words – **Paul** is asking the **Colossians** to **pray for him** that **he** would **make the gospel clear – plain – manifest** – in **his preaching**.

**Paul** is **not satisfied** in presenting a **hazy – truncated – or watered-down – version** of the **gospel**.

- **He does not want to succumb to the pressures of men.**
- **He does not want to pander to the felt-needs of his hearers.**
- **He does not want to compromise the gospel by making it palatable to the sensibilities of men.**

For the **simple reason** that – **such a gospel saves *no one*!**

No! **Paul’s heart – Paul’s desire** – is to **make the gospel known:**

- **In all its fullness.**
- **In all its totality.**
- **In all its beauty.**

And **Paul** wants to do so *clearly* and *plainly*.

**Why?**

Well – so that **no one** may **misunderstand the gospel** – but *rather* – **understand it** – and – *by God’s grace!* – **make an intelligent response** to it.

**Paul** knows he needs **God’s help in this** – and so he asks for **prayer** that he might be **clear**.

And if we look at the **parallel passage** in **Ephesians 6:20** – **Paul** makes **another request:**

*“Pray that I might be bold enough to speak about it as I should.”*

So – **what we see** is that the **apostle Paul** requests **prayer** for both *clarity* and *boldness* in his **proclamation of the gospel**.

And **think about it**: If **Paul** – the *great* **apostle Paul** – requires **prayer** for *clarity* and *boldness* in his **proclamation** – *how much more* do we need **prayer** for **ours**!

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And – friends – **that’s what we can** – and *should!* – **be praying** for **pastors, missionaries, gospel workers** – and for **ourselves** – namely – that:

- *Not only* **God** would **open up doors** for us to **proclaim the gospel**.
- *But* that **we** would **do so clearly** – **fearlessly** – and **faithfully**.

That’s **the first duty** that **Paul enjoins upon us** in our **passage** today.

**We are to engage in mission** by being **devoted to prayer** – **praying**:

- That **doors** may be **opened**.
- That **the gospel** may be **boldly** and **clearly proclaimed**.
- And that **souls** may be **saved**.

And **to help us see** the *vital importance* of our **prayers** in the **propagation of the gospel** – let me **share this quote** from **E. M. Bounds**:

“[Prayer] is indispensable to **God’s work** in **this world**, and is **essential** to **getting God to work** in **earth’s affairs** ... One of the **constitutional enforcements** of the **gospel** is **prayer**. Without **prayer**, the **gospel** can **neither** be **preached** **effectively**, **promulgated faithfully**, **experienced in the heart**, nor be **practiced in the life**. And for the very **simple reason** that **by leaving prayer out** of the

**catalogue of religious duties, we leave God out, and His work cannot progress without Him.”<sup>3</sup>**

So – friends – **with that in mind:**

- Will we **commit ourselves to take a few moments each day to pray for the spread of the gospel?**
- **Trusting and knowing that God works through means – that God works through the prayers that we offer up to him – to accomplish his will here on earth?**

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So – we to **pray for the mission.** But **not only that** – we are **also** – *secondly* – to **participate in the mission.**

## **2. Participate in the Mission (vv.5-6)**

**Look with me at verses 5-6:**

*“Act wisely toward outsiders, making the most of the time. Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you should answer each person.”*

In these verses – **Paul is here transitioning** from:

- **A call for us to engage in long-distance warfare** by means of **prayer.**
- To that of **a call for us to engage in close-combat** by means of **our witness.**

**We are to participate in the Christian mission by means of our personal witness.**

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<sup>3</sup> E. M. Bounds, *The Works of E. M. Bounds*, 530.

And **Paul** here addresses **two aspects of our witness** – namely:

- **Our walk** (v.5)
- **Our talk** (v.6)

And **what we'll see** is that **the two go hand-in-hand**.

That is – **if our witness** is to be **effective**:

- **We must have *both***.
- **We *can't* have one *without* the other**.

So – let's **examine** – *firstly* – **Paul's counsel** regarding **our walk** ...

### **Our Walk**

**Look with me at verse 5:**

*“Act wisely toward outsiders – making the most of the time.”*

**Paul** is here **telling us how we ought to carry ourselves** before **“outsiders”** – that is – before **those who are unbelievers**.

And **his instruction** is **twofold**:

### *Act Wisely*

*Firstly* – we are to **act wisely**.

That is:



- **We are to live – we are to conduct ourselves – with wisdom toward outsiders.**
- **That is – we must know how God would have us live before a watching world.**
- **And we should strive to walk in a manner that is worthy of God before unbelievers.**

And **why?**

Well – for the **simple reason** that – as often has been said:

**“Our actions speak louder than our words.”**

Or – as **Ralph Waldo Emerson** famously puts it – and – *by the way!* – this is **NOT** what we want people to be **telling us**:

**“Your actions speak so loudly – I cannot hear what you are saying!”**

Friends – as **Christians** – we need to ensure:

- That **our actions *line up* with our confession.**
- That **our lives *validate* our message.**
- That we ***not only* talk the talk – *but* actually walk the talk.**

And **the reason** this is **important** is because:

**Our actions lend credibility to our confession.**

And while we are certainly ***not* perfect** – a **good question** to **ask ourselves** is this:

- **Do we who profess faith in Christ *live differently* from those who don’t?**
- **Is the transforming power of the gospel *evident* in our lives?**
- **Does the gospel *shape* the way we live, think, and speak?**

Again – while we’re ***not* talking** here about **sinless perfection** – we are **asking** if there is **sincere progression** in our lives as **believers**:

- Are we **growing** in **conformity** to **Christ**?
- Is the **Holy Spirit's** sanctifying work *evident* in our lives?
- Are we **living** in a way that is **consistent** with **the gospel**?

For **the thing** is **this**:

- Like it or not – **outsiders** are *watching*.
- **They** are *observing* our lives.
- And **they** are *judging* the **credibility** of our **faith** by **what they see in us**.

And **my guess** is that **the last thing** we want is for our lives to be a **stumbling block** – or a **hindrance** – to **others coming to faith in Christ**.

**The last thing** we want is for our lives – or actions – to **malign** – or **bring reproach** – to the **name of Christ**.

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Now – **if you are like me** – you can probably think of times where **we did just that** – that is – **put a stumbling block** in our **Christian witness**:

- **Whether** it is *by means* of an **unkind word** – or an **unruly action**.
- **Speech** and **actions** that were **anything** – but **appealing** or **wise**.

**That's why** – if you remember – **Paul prayed** in **Colossians 1:9-10** that **believers**:

*“... may be filled with the knowledge of [God's] will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, so that [they] may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him ...”*

And **that's why** – in keeping with **this prayer** – **Paul exhorts us**:

- In **Ephesians 5:15** – to “**pay careful attention to how we walk**”.
- And – in **our passage** – to “**act wisely toward outsiders**”.

Simply put – **Paul wants us to live in a way that:**

- **Draws others *to* the gospel.**
- And ***not* drive them away *from* the gospel.**

### ***Making the Most of the Time***

**Paul continues in verse 5:**

***“... making the most of the time.”***

The **Greek word** for the **phrase** – “**making the most**” – is ἐξαγοράζω.

It ***literally*** means “**to buy back**” – or “**to redeem**”.

And **the idea** here is:

- To **seize the day**.
- To **maximise the time**.
- To **make the most of every opportunity** that **God** has **given us**.

There’s a **sense of implied urgency** here:

- The **days** are **short**.
- **People** are **dying**.
- **Jesus** is **coming**.

**Therefore:**

- **We should stop putting off sharing the gospel with others when the chance presents itself.**
- **We should stop saying that we'll do it tomorrow – for what I realise with this excuse is this – “tomorrow” never comes!**

Instead – **we are to do all we can – we are to seize every opportunity:**

- **To have spiritual conversations with people.**
- **To salt their thinking.**
- **To share the gospel with them.**

And **this is urgent!**

For **Hebrews 9:27** reminds us that:

*“... it is appointed for people to die once – and after this – judgment ...”*

And **Hebrews 10:31** tells us that:

*“It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”*

Therefore – as **Paul** puts it in **2 Corinthians 5:11**:

*“... since we know the fear of the Lord – we try to persuade people.”*

Friends – as **God's people** – let's see to it that **distractions *not* side-track us from our mission.**

Instead – let us **make the most of the time** – let us **seize every opportunity** we have to **witness for Christ** – to **tell people about Christ.**

May these **spine-chilling words** from **W. E. Sangster** compel us to **do just that.**

**Imagining himself at the final judgment – Sangster writes:**

**“How shall I feel at the judgment, if multitudes of missed opportunities pass before me in full review, and all my excuses prove to be disguises of my cowardice and pride?”**

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**So – by way of application – let’s ask ourselves:**

- **Who** are the **unbelieving friends** that **God** has **sovereignly placed** in our lives?
- Maybe **we might want to take out our phones** tonight – **scroll through our contacts** – and **make a note of these ones**.
- And **let’s commit to pray for them** – and to **seek out opportunities** to share the gospel **with them**.
- Maybe it is **asking them out for coffee** – **inviting them over for a meal** – or just **calling to see how they are doing**.
- The **key** is that **we are actively making the most of every opportunity to influence them for Christ**.

**Friends – the thing is this:**

- **Every one of us** – *regardless* of our **season of life** – has **God-given opportunities** to **make a difference in the lives of those around us** – and to **influence them for Christ**.
- The **question** is: *Are we making the most of these opportunities?*

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**Well – Paul *not only* addresses our walk – he *also* addresses our talk ...**

***Our Talk***

**Look with me at verse 6:**

*“Let **your speech** always be **gracious** ...”*

**Paul** here addresses **our speech** – **the way we talk**.

And **what we see** is that:

If **wisdom** is to *characterise* our lives – **grace** is to *characterise* our speech.

**Our speech** – **Paul** says – should *always* be “**gracious**”:

- It should be **full of grace**.
- It should be **shaped** – and **informed** – by **God’s grace**.

And **this** – whether we are **engaged in conversations *in general*** – or in **proclaiming the gospel *in particular***.

In **contrast to the things** – as we saw in **Colossians 3:8** – that we should **put away from our lips** – things such as “**anger**”, “**wrath**”, “**malice**”, “**slander**”, and “**filthy language**” – **Paul** says here that:

- **Our speech** is to be **characterised** by “**graciousness**”.
- It is to be **kind** – **gentle** – and **respectful**.

**What this means** is that **not only** does the *content* of **what we say matter** – but the *manner* in which **we say it matters** as well.

So – in **our endeavour to witness for Christ** – **ask ourselves**:

- **What is our speech** like toward **outsiders**?
- Would **those around us** – **outsiders *in particular*** – describe **our speech** as “**gracious**”?

- Does it **give grace to those who hear?**
- Or do we **come across as harsh – condescending – and obnoxious?**

Friends – **our speech matters a great deal!**

For **the thing is this:**

If we are to **witness for Christ – a time will come when we will have to open our mouths – and tell others about Christ.**

That’s why **the words – *commonly but mistakenly!* – attributed to St. Francis of Assisi:**

**“Preach the gospel at all times – and if necessary – use words.”**

**Makes no sense whatsoever!**

For **the gospel – of necessity! – demands the use of words. It demands proclamation. It demands declaration.**

So – perhaps **a better way to put it – in light of what we’ve seen in verses 5-6 – is as follows:**

**“Preach the gospel at all times – and let your life back it up.”**

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Friends – **our speech matters!** – because – **similar to what we saw earlier regarding our actions – our speech also has the potential to *advance* – or *hinder* – the cause of the gospel.**

And **the thing is this:**

- **The gospel – the message of the cross – is inherently foolish and offensive – to the world.**

- And **the last thing we need** is for us to **unnecessarily add to that offense** in the way we speak – or present – the gospel.

Instead – **let’s endeavour to present the gospel:**

- **Faithfully – articulately – and clearly.**
- And **yet** – in a way that is **gracious – tender – and loving.**

After all – let’s **remember** that we are **not** out to **win arguments** – but **people to Christ.**

So – let’s see to it that **our speech** – whether **our conversations *in general*** – or **our sharing the gospel *in particular*** – is **done** in a **gracious manner.**

That it **embodies the character of Christ.**

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But ***not only*** is **our speech** to be **gracious** – it is ***also*** – **Paul says** – to be:

***“... seasoned with salt ...”***

**What** does **Paul mean** by this? **What** does it **mean** for **our speech** to be **“seasoned with salt”**?

Well – there’s **debate** as to **what this metaphor really means.**

**Most scholars** – based on **Greco-Roman parallels** – **think** that the **reference** is to **speech** that is **“winsome”** or **“witty”**.

**Others** – based on **Jewish sources** – **think** that it **refers** to **speech** that is **“wise”**.

Now – ***whatever it may be*** – whether it **refers** to **speech** that is **“winsome”, “witty”, or “wise”** – I think **Paul’s point** is this:



- Paul wants **our speech** to be **well-seasoned** so that it *doesn't* come across as **dull, insipid, or superficial** – but *rather* – **lively, attractive, and thoughtful**.
- He wants **our speech** to **ignite interest** – **awaken appetite** – and **stimulate thought** – regarding **the Christian faith**.

And **in light of the next phrase** that we'll soon see – **I think that this means** that we **have to be prepared and ready**.

**For example:**

- It **requires us** to **know the gospel well enough** to **present it** in a **clear, concise, and compelling** way.
- It **requires us** to **anticipate and seize opportunities** to **bring or weave the gospel** into **our conversations**.
- It **requires us** to **be thoughtful** as to **how to answer** the **various questions or objections** that **people** may pose.
- It **requires us** *not* to **settle for cliché answers** – or to **have a canned approach** to **sharing the gospel** – but **one** that is **flexible and adaptable** to the **situation** at hand.

**On that point** – we **just need** to **think of people** like **Jesus and Paul** who **adapted** their **approach** according to the **unique set of circumstances** that **they found themselves in**.

- For **example** – we see how **Paul's approach to the Jews in Acts 13** *differs* from his **approach to Gentiles in Acts 17**.
- His was *not* a **canned or mechanical approach** to **sharing the gospel** – but **one** that **can be adjusted accordingly**.

Now – **this may require us** to **read some books** – **attend some classes** – or **learn from others**.

But **the key** is that we are **taking steps** to **equip ourselves** to be **effective ambassadors of Christ**.

And **why do we need to do so? Why do we need to put thought and preparation into our speech toward outsiders?**

Well – **verse 6:**

*“... so that you may know how you should answer each person.”*

**Notice** – by the way – it is *“each”* person.

That is – **we need to prepare ourselves as much as we can – so that we may know how best to answer each person – *not* with a cookie-cutter – ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach – but appropriately – and accordingly.**

**We need to – as 1 Peter 3:15 – reminds us:**

*“... [be] ready at any time to give a defense to anyone who asks [us] for a reason for the hope that is in [us] ...”*

And – **remember!** – we are to **do this “graciously”** – or – as **Peter** puts it:

*“... with gentleness and respect.”<sup>4</sup>*

## **Conclusion**

Well – friends – **I’m sure we would agree** that it’s been an **‘interesting’ year** – or – **couple of years** – with **COVID** still **showing no signs of abating.**

But – friends – **whatever it is** – I want to **encourage us:**

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<sup>4</sup> 1 Pet 3:15 ESV

In the **midst** of the **hustle** and **bustle** of **daily living** – as we **go through** the **daily grind** of our **daily routines** – **let's not lose sight** of our **Christian mission**.

**Let's not allow** the **distractions of life** – **COVID** or not – **side-track us** from our **primary mission**:

The **mission to make disciples of all nations**.<sup>5</sup>

As a **church** – **let's remember** – and **let's remind one another** – that *as long as* we are **here on earth** – we face a **task unfinished**:

- A **task** that – as we saw in our **passage** today – should **bring us to our knees**.
- And a **task** that should **propel us to go forth to make Christ known**.

Why not we pray?

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<sup>5</sup> Matt 28:18-20