

Colossians 4:2-6

“Christian Witness”

Sermon

Tim Black

1.

Introduction

1.

We have now come nearly to the end of the book of Colossians. What remains in the book is today's passage, then a long section of greetings from Paul's fellow workers, then Paul's farewell in 4:18. What unites these final parts of the book is that they are addressed to the Christian community as a whole. They are not addressed to individuals in their respective roles as wives and husbands, children and fathers, or slaves and masters. And these final passages do not share the particular focus on putting off the old man

and putting on the Christian character of the new man

. Rather, now that you have been taught to put on Christian character

, and how to live in Christian relationships

, Paul teaches you how to live as a Christian community

. The life of a local congregation is bigger

than the local congregation. It reaches out to the unbelieving world, and participates in fellowship with Christians in other congregations. So Paul teaches us in 4:2-6 about maintaining our

Col. 4:2-6 - Christian Witness

Written by Tim Black

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Christian witness

, and in 4:7-18 Paul shows us how we ought to send

Christian greetings

. As a Christian community, we

witness to the world

, and we send

greetings to Christians

.

2.

In today's passage, Paul teaches us to maintain our Christian witness to the world. He has already taught us much of what it means to be a Christian. In the immediately preceding verses he taught us how to live as Christians in our households, and so now is a perfect time to teach us to present Christianity to the world.

Now that you have your house in order, it's time to have an open house. Invite the neighbors in, and let them see what Christ is doing in your life. Take Christ, your Christian character, your Christian relationships in the Christian community, and pour these blessings out in your neighborhood.

3.

Paul gives you two ways to do this. First, pray for our witness, vv. 2-4.

Second, witness!
(vv. 5-6)

4.

Outline

1.

Pray for our witness vv. 2-4

2.

Witness! vv. 5-6

1.

Body

1.

Pray for our witness vv. 2-4. Where would you say we should start when we seek to witness to the world about Christ? The Christian community's witness to the world begins with prayer. And so in **vv.**

2-4

Paul tells you to

pray for our witness

. But you will not pray for our witness unless you already have an active prayer life

. Specifically, our prayer must be continual

,
watchful

, and
thankful

. So in v. 2, Paul tells you to strengthen the foundations of your prayer life

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1.

Strengthen the foundations of your prayer life v. 2

1.

Continue in prayer 2a

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Colossians 4:2 Continue steadfastly in prayer

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This word “[continue](#)” indicates both continuity and earnestness. The same word is used of Simon Magus when “[after being baptized he continued with Philip](#)” in

Acts 8:13

. Do you keep regular company with God, by keeping regular company with prayer? Make it your companion when you wake and when you sleep, when you sit down to a meal and before you rise, in all your joys and all your sorrows.

-

It’s easy to let prayer fall by the wayside. But we must continue in prayer. The result will be that we will be closer to God. And when your neighbor comes close to you, he will be that much closer to seeing the grace, the power, and the majesty of God.

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Illustration: Mount Rainier.

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In Seattle it is often overcast and rainy, and that dreariness added to the cares of life drive many there to depression. But when the weather clears and the sun's brilliance reveals the snow-covered slopes and incredible bulk of Mount Rainier on the horizon, the view is majestic! People flock from the whole Puget Sound, and even the whole world, to stand at the foot of Mount Rainier in a place called Paradise, in awe of its glory.

-

How often do you stand at the foot of the great white throne in heaven? How often do you lift your gaze from the dreariness of this life to see once again the majesty of your God? When you do, you will remember that even the stones would cry out in praise to our God, and every knee will bow, and every tongue confess, that Jesus Christ is Lord. The more you seek out your God in prayer, the more you will pray for the church's witness of the true and living God to shine brightly, and the more you will proclaim that witness to the world.

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Be watchful in it 2b

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Colossians 4:2 [being watchful in it](#)

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This word “[watchful](#)” literally means to “stay awake.” To stay awake in prayer. Who would have thought we need to stay awake in prayer?! But isn’t that one of the most basic problems we have in maintaining our prayer life? It’s so easy to lose concentration, especially when you’re tired. But if you’re not awake, you’re not praying.

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Some could wrongly interpret this word to mean that we are commanded to keep all-night prayer vigils like the Catholics and Charismatics do, taking the word to mean we should “stay up late” in prayer. But this interpretation would overlook the more important point that is being made. It is more important to be alert in prayer than merely to be awake in

prayer. And this word “

watchful

” means not only to be “awake,” but also to be “alert.” And frankly, staying up all night in prayer is not the best means to be alert in prayer.

-

Here are some better ways to remain alert in prayer. Watch during the day for reasons to praise God, remember them, and praise God for them. Watch during the day for requests you should make of God, and then request them! Watch during the day for temptations you need strength to face, and pray for that strength. Make a list of things to pray for, and pray for them regularly. Make a point to pray with others in your household or in your church so you can encourage each other to continue and be united in watching for the right things to pray about.

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Remember to give thanks 2c

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Colossians 4:2 with thanksgiving.

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And as you pray, remember to give thanks. It's easy to forget to give thanks.

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“...a grateful heart...weaves memory into hope, and asks much because it has received much. A true recognition of the lovingkindness of the past has much to

do with making our communion sweet, our
desires believing, our submission
cheerful.” [1](#)

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Pray for witness vv. 3-4 As you
continue in prayer, pray also for our
Christian witness. Paul asks you to
pray for “[us](#),”

including not only himself, but also his
coworkers in evangelism, missions,
church planting, and ministry. You
should remember to pray for the
leaders of the church as they lead the

church in proclaiming the gospel. In doing so you are also praying for the church's witness as a whole, which includes your own involvement in presenting the gospel to the world. Paul tells us to pray for two things in particular: First, that God will open a door for the gospel, in v. 3, and second, that the gospel will be presented clearly, in v. 4.

1.

That God will open a door for the gospel v. 3

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Colossians 4:3 3 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-

-

Door: The “door” is an opportunity to speak the gospel

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Paul is in chains, in prison.
So, he can't move freely, or
preach freely.

-

But the word of God is not
chained! Only the messenger.
Yet his desire while in prison
was not that Paul would come
out, but the
gospel

.

-

Pray that pastors, evangelists, missionaries around the world will be freed from prison and be freely allowed to proclaim the gospel. We have seen our own missionaries and brothers in Christ imprisoned in recent months, and even now hear the terrible news from Afghanistan of the Korean missionaries held captive and put to death for proclaiming the gospel. Pray that they would be given the

freedom to speak of the way of salvation through Christ.

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But the issue is more general. Ask God to remove any and every barrier to the gospel's progress in the world. Pray that the doors of governments, communities, schools, households, and of people's hearts will be open to the gospel.

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Mystery: The “**mystery**” Paul mentions here is the gospel of Christ, and especially the promise of salvation for the Gentiles – not only for Jews, but for all who believe on Christ. There are no national, cultural, economic, or social barriers that ought to keep anyone from receiving salvation through Christ. It is “

by grace you are saved
through faith, and that not of
yourselves; it is the gift of
God.

” (

Eph. 2:8

) We are saved wholly by
God's sovereign initiative, by
God's sovereign work. Yet
God uses means of open doors
for His word to be preached,
to be heard, to be understood, to
be believed. Consider how
Paul explains this in
Romans 10:12-14
:

-

Romans 10:12-14 12 there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. 13 For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” 14 But how are they to call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never

heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching?

-

And so we must pray that God will open the doors for this great mystery to be revealed to those who need to hear.

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**That the gospel will be
presented clearly v. 4**

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Colossians 4:4 that I
may make it clear, which is
how I ought to speak.

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Pray also that the gospel
will be presented clearly.

Pray that it will be
understood by those who
hear it, and that they will be
convicted of its truth.

-

It is the preacher's

obligation to present the gospel clearly, and every member's obligation to not hide their lamp under a bushel. You are a city set on a hill, and people are watching you to confirm their suspicions that Christians are helplessly ignorant or proudly self-righteous, hedonistically immoral or the oppressors of the third

world. But the gospel and true Christianity are none of these. Pray that we would present it truthfully, and clearly, as we ought.

-

Witness! vv. 5-6. Upon our foundational dependence upon God in prayer, Paul tells us to build the two pillars of Christian witness: a wise walk and gracious speech. We should witness in our walk and our

talk

; in our

deeds

and in our

words

▪

1.

Witness in your deeds

v. 5 First, in v. 5, witness
in your deeds

▪

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Colossians 4:5

Conduct yourselves wisely
toward outsiders, making
the best use of the time.

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1.

Walk in wisdom toward those outside the church

-

Walk: Actions. This

phrase “

Conduct yourselves
wisely

” (ESV) is more literally

“

Walk in wisdom.

” Here the word “

walk

” means “

conduct

.” Your “

walk

” is the actions you do
from day to day, in full view
of those who are “

outside

.” Those who are “

outside

” are those outside the church as a whole, with whom you come into contact. They are your coworkers, the clerk in the grocery store, your neighbor next door. They could even be your family members, if for example you have an unbelieving husband, in which case Peter says “

they may be won
without a word by the
conduct of their wives.

”

(

1 Pet. 3:1

)

-

Wisdom:

-

The way we should walk before unbelievers is to walk “in wisdom.” Biblical wisdom is doing what is right, with righteous motives, with righteous means and righteous effects. It is practical in nature. It’s knowing when to answer

a fool according to his
folly and when not to
answer a fool
according to his folly. It's
having insight into the
way things work and
using them the best you
can for the Lord.
Consistent Christian living
will do much to
commend the gospel.

-

“Common sense and practical sagacity are important accompaniments of Christian zeal.” [2](#) It is a rare thing to find a man who is full to the brim with both

enthusiasm and
diplomatic adaptation,
fire and ice together,
fervor and tact, both
Peter's “

Lord, I am ready to
go with you both to
prison and to death
”

(

Luke 22:33

) and Paul's “

I have become all

things to all people, that
by all means I might
save some.

” (

1 Cor. 9:22

)

-

Christ told us to “Be

wise as serpents, and
innocent as doves

.” The more you walk
in wisdom before
those outside the
church the more the
world will see
Christ’s wisdom, and
the more you prove
yourselves innocent
the more they will

testify that He is
righteous.

—

Redeem the time:

Make the most of every opportunity

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And so Paul tells us
to make the most of
every opportunity we
are given.

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Here there is no
mention of the reason
given in Ephesians, “fo
r the days are evil
.”
▪

-

Time: The word used for “time” is the Greek word that carries the positive connotation that it is the “right time.” It is always the right time to do what

is right, and it's
always a good time to
do what is good. The
word is not about “
time
” in general, but it
is about a “
season
,” an “
opportunity

”

■

—

Think about how
you respond to
unbelievers. Do you
respond in ways
characteristic of the

old man, or of the
new man? Put off
the old man, and
put on the new man,
when you are
interacting with
unbelievers.

-

**Witness in your
words v. 6 Second,
in v. 6,**

witness in your words

■

-

Colossians 4:6

Let your speech
always be gracious,
seasoned with salt,
so that you may
know how you ought
to answer each

person.

1.

**Let them be
“with grace”**

-

Human or

divine?

-

This word can
mean human

“graciousness” or
divine “grace.”

Most likely it means

both here, but we must make our first priority to let our words be seasoned by God's grace, and true human graciousness will follow.

-

We are not to
always be
agreeable in the
eyes of others,
because while
the gospel is the
aroma of life to

those who are being
saved, it is also
the stench of death
to those who are
perishing, and we
cannot avoid the
offense it creates.
Yet at the same
time the gospel is

the aroma of life,
and should be
presented as such!
Christ did not come
into the world to
condemn the world,
but that the world
would be saved
through Him. Is

that your attitude
when speaking with
an unbeliever?
Whether he thinks
your speech is
pleasant should
depend on his
attitude
, not

yours

▪

You

speak the truth

in love, and it's

his

responsibility to

recognize it as

such.

-

**The need for
practice.**

-

We must
practice speaking
with grace when it is
easy to do so, so
that when it is of
utmost importance
to do so our skills
will be
well-honed and

ready at hand. It is a terrible thing when a Christian goes to the deathbed of his friend and says “I am sorry you are suffering” but speaks nothing of the comfort of

the grace of God,
because he doesn't
know how to do so,
because he
never tried.

-

Do you ever say

words like the following?

-

“I thank God for that!”

-

“Praise the
Lord!”

-

“The Lord bless
you!”

—

“I forgive you.”

—

Start with those,
and more will follow.
Speaking about
God's grace and
meaning it will train
you to mean
gracious things
even when God
is not mentioned.

And eventually even
your human
graciousness will
testify to the grace
of God. Your
accent will
betray your country.

-

**Let them be
“seasoned with
salt”**

—

Paul illustrates
and extends what it
means to speak
graciously by
saying that our
words should be “se
asoned with salt

”

■

—

Sacrifice. In
the OT, salt was
sprinkled on
sacrifices and

mixed into
incense, as a
symbolic flavoring.
We should present
our words today
as a pleasing
offering to God.
Hebrews 13:15
says

—

Hebrews 13:15

Through him then
let us
continually offer up
a sacrifice of praise

to God, that is, the
fruit of lips that
acknowledge his
name.

—

Preservative.

-

Salt also works
as a preservative.
When salty
language of an

ungodly sort are
bantered about,
the truth is
crucified and God
is mocked,
preserve the truth
from error and
make it palatable
to those who

hear.

-

Eph. 4:29 says
“**Let**
no corrupting talk
come out of

your mouths.

” The word “

corrupting

” connotes

rottenness. But

words seasoned

with salt are not

able to decay,

because they have

the ring, the zest,
and the appeal
of the truth.

—

Christ charges
you to transform
the
conversations
around you, to
transform the

culture

you live in, to
banish the
darkness of this
world

with the light
of His truth.
Because “

13

You are the

salt

of the earth

,

”

and “

14

You are the

light

o

f the world

. A city set on
a hill cannot be
hidden. 15 Nor
do people light
a lamp and put it

under a basket,
but on a stand,
and it gives
light to all in the
house. 16 In the
same way, let
your light
shine before

others, so that
they may see your
good works and
give glory to your
Father who is in
heaven.

” (

Matthew

5:13-16

)

1.

**Result: You'll
know how to
answer each
one**

—

The great
result of speaking
with grace, words
seasoned with
salt, is that yo

u will know how
to answer each
person

. The larger
your repertoire of
gracious and true
words, the more
effectively you

can speak a word
in season, the
better you'll be
able to
nail
the point that an
individual needs
to hear. And

when you've paid
attention to the
unique hunger for
grace each
one of your
neighbors has,
and what parts of
the gospel are

truly delicious to
a hungering soul,
your practice in
gracious speech
will pay off in a
gracious,
delicious,
winsome and

appropriate
exaltation of the
glory of God in
the redeeming
grace of Jesus
Christ.

—

Matthew

10:16-20 16

Behold, I am
sending you
out as sheep in
the midst of

wolves, so be
wise as serpents
and innocent
as doves. 17
Beware of men,
for they will
deliver you
over to courts

and flog you in
their synagogues,
18 and you
will be dragged
before governors
and kings for my
sake, t
o bear witness

before them and
the Gentiles

. 19

When they
deliver you over,
do not be
anxious how you
are to speak or

what you are to
say, for what
you are to say will
be given to you in
that hour

. 20 For it is
not you who
speak, but the

Spirit of your
Father
speaking through
you.

—

When, as part
of the Christian
community
amidst the world,
you pray for
our Christian
witness and
engage in it, you

will see how
true it is that
God's grace in
the gospel is
from Him,
through Him,
and unto Him.
To Him be the

glory forever!

1 Maclaren,
359-360.

2 Maclaren, 363.

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