

## The Supremacy of Christ The Gospel Represents Jesus Colossians 4:2-6

### Introduction

This passage is the practical part of Paul's letter to the Colossians. In these verses, he calls upon them to be representatives of Jesus. The Colossian Christians were not highly gifted evangelists like Paul. Like most of us, most of them were ordinary people living everyday lives in the same location. Nevertheless, Paul sees their role as incredibly important and significant.

Each of us has a mission to share our faith in Christ with our families, neighbors, friends, and coworkers. It is our unique sphere of influence. The key is to represent Jesus accurately in what we do and what we say. Our behaviors and attitudes can definitely influence our neighbors, friends, and family members.

Our faith and conduct should make people glad they are our neighbors. But it's a real challenge to live this way! That's why we should ask God each day for His motivation and love, and power to be a blessing to those around us.

But we also need to represent Jesus in what we say. In 2 Corinthians 5:20, Paul says, "We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore *you* on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. For He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.:" (2Co 5:20-21 NKJV)

Jesus has paid for everyone's sins, and He wants to rescue and reconcile everyone. We must tell the people in our spheres of influence about what Jesus has done for them. And we must urge them to accept Jesus as their Savior and Lord. How can we represent Jesus well by "what we say?" Paul gives us three universal guidelines.

### I. Pray for open doors (4:2-4)

In verse 2, Paul writes, "Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving; meanwhile praying also for us, that God would open to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in chains, that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak." (Col 4:2-4 NKJV)

Telling people about Jesus doesn't begin by talking to them; it starts by talking to God. It begins with asking God to open doors and open hearts to provide opportunities to proclaim the good news about Jesus boldly. Paul asks the Colossians to pray for him even though he was imprisoned and cut off from interaction personally with them. And we know that God answered their prayers.

Paul tells the Philippians, "But I want you to know, brethren, that the things *which happened* to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel, so that it has become evident to the whole palace guard, and to all the rest, that my chains

are in Christ; and most of the brethren in the Lord, having become confident by my chains, are much more bold to speak the word without fear." (Php 1:12-14 NKJV)

Our prayer's key focus should be to ask God to open doors and empower us to have a Christian influence upon people. The same God who was able to open doors for Paul in prison can open doors for us. God's answer to our prayer is a huge part of what makes following Jesus an exciting adventure!

Paul supported the Colossian church through His prayers for them. In Chapter 1, he told them, "We give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of your love for all the saints; because of the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, of which you heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel," (Col 1:3-5 NKJV)

Paul also wants their life and ministry to continue to prosper through continued vigilance in prayer. The ancient Greek word translated continue means "to be built on a root, or 'to be strong.'" Prayer is foundational to a strong and healthy faith. In this passage, it implies persistence and fervor. This sort of *earnest* prayer is essential, but it does not come easy.

Spurgeon writes this about prayer, "Heaven's gate is not to be stormed by one weapon but by many. Spare no arrows, Christian. Watch and see that none of the arms in thy armory are rusty. Besiege the throne of God with a hundred hands, and look at the promise with a hundred eyes. You have a great work on hand, for you have to move the arm that moves the world; watch, then, for every means of moving that arm. See to it that you ply every promise; that you use every argument; that you wrestle with all might." (Spurgeon)

How often do you talk to God? Do you pray regularly for God to open doors for you? James says, "You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend *it* on your pleasures." (Jas 4:2-3 NKJV)

What would happen if we cultivated the habit of asking God at the start of each day to guide us and open doors for us to represent him well? The more you ask, the more doors God will open. The more doors God opens, the more motivated you will become and the quicker you ask God to guide you. As devout followers of Christ, we should eagerly seek God's guidance each day and look for His next answer. Paul doesn't just pray for open doors for himself; he asks the Colossians to pray for him as well.

Just two individuals can pray a prayer of agreement. Jesus said, "Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them." (Mat 18:19-20 NKJV)

Involving others in prayer can accomplish dynamic results. When you pray regularly with other Christians, it strengthens and confirms your faith and focus. When you make this kind of praying a priority, the results can be amazing. So, do you pray regularly with others for open doors? Paul is calling upon the Colossians to do this. It's very satisfying and affirming to experience answered prayer on a regular basis. What do you think would happen if each of us took our praying seriously?

When we pray for open doors, God can open the right doors. Paul concludes this point by saying, "As long as we are on the subject of prayer, please pray for us!" But Paul wasn't requesting prayer for his personal needs; he asked that God open a door for him to share the gospel. Paul was already in chains for his faithfulness to the gospel, but he wanted even more boldness and wisdom to speak it in a way that would give a clear and evident picture of who Jesus was. But what do we do when God answers and opens the door? Paul gives us two essential guidelines.

## **II. Make the most of the opportunity**

In Verse 5, Paul says, "Walk in wisdom toward those *who are* outside, redeeming the time." (Col 4:5 NKJV)

When God opens a door for you, He expects you to make the most of the opportunity! The Greek "agora" was the marketplace. The term "*exagorazo*" was a marketplace word that meant "to capitalize on a good deal." Do you like to find a good deal when you go shopping? Sometimes, when you find a really good deal, it makes you even want to buy extra. You may even call your friends or family members to tell them about it so they can get in on a terrific deal.

So, when God provides an opportunity for you to share the good news about Jesus, you should make the most of it! In order to make the most of the opportunity, you need to "act with Holy Spirit wisdom." A rehearsed script will never do. We need God's wisdom because each opportunity is different – different people, a different time, different levels of interest, different degrees of credibility, etc. – each opportunity requires a different type of response.

The perfect outcome is that a person is so impressed by how we live that they ask us why our life is so blessed. 1 Peter 3:15 says, "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always *be* ready to *give* a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear;" (1Pe 3:15 NKJV)

When someone recognizes that something is inspiring about you, don't take credit for it; give the glory to God! Let people know that if they see anything good in you, it's because God has touched you with His blessing. And then let them know that Jesus can do the same thing for them!

Always be honest with people about the subject you're talking about. Be vigilant and energetic in your faith, but don't forget to thank God for His help and for all the great things He has done!

Your life should also be filled with praise to God. When the Puritans settled in New England, they often observed a day of fasting and prayer. There were so many of these prayer and fasting days that someone finally suggested that they have a day of feasting and thanksgiving in celebration of answered prayers.

The prayer closet isn't the only place we should practice our faith. We must also demonstrate a practical, lived-out Christianity, which lives wisely, especially around non-believers. (Or, as Paul says, "toward those who are outside.") Pray for open doors, and then say what you sense the Holy Spirit is leading you to say – and then count on the fact that God will use what you said to get a person's attention spiritually!

The way we talk has a lot to do with this. We must always season our speech with grace, which is what Paul says in verse 6, "Let your speech always *be* with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one. (Col 4:6 NKJV)

Everything we say about Jesus with Spirit-led wisdom is significant.

### **III. Speak graciously**

Verse 6 tells us that just as important as *what* we say about Jesus is *how* we say it. Gracious speech is not condemning or harsh. It is always gentle and respectful. Paul says we should *always* speak graciously – no matter how rude or ungracious others may be toward us.

What does this gracious speech look like? It's almost rare to hear gracious speech anymore in our culture. So much of the language you hear, even from leaders, is increasingly rude and self-absorbed. For this very reason, we will definitely stand out if you use positive and gracious speech.

Christians should show genuine warmth and courtesy in their everyday conversations. It means listening with a genuine interest in what someone else has to say. It includes an engaging curiosity in another person's important life-experiences, values, goals, and spiritual beliefs. It means usually sharing what you have discovered about Jesus.

It means carefully choosing your words when you must express disagreement about moral issues, non-essential doctrinal issues, political positions, or misunderstandings about the gospel. It means refusing to become entangled in argumentative and unproductive discussions, reciprocate mocking, or name-calling. It means humbly apologizing when our speech or behavior has been wrong or offensive.

For a Christian, gracious speech is vitally important. It is crucial theologically because every person is made in God's image. Each of us has an eternal soul, and God's love for each of us sent Jesus to die for us and rescue us from sin. Gracious speech is important practically because it encourages non-threatening dialogue,

which helps us explore a person's real questions and needs. It also helps us share what God says He will provide for their questions or needs.

Gracious conversation also makes people feel safer to ask questions about Jesus. Christianity does not turn people into mean-spirited, narrow-minded, domineering bigots and our gracious manner and speech proves it. When you choose your words wisely and speak graciously, you'll find people more willing to have an ongoing personal and faith-related conversation. You will also see many more people respond to your invitation to meet more Christians like you.

Speak graciously, especially to your Christian brothers and sisters. It will help you to speak more graciously with those in your life who don't know Christ. And it will also make you much more pleasant to be around!

## **Conclusion**

It's a sad fact that the great majority of Americans are now unchurched. Most have never attended Christian churches or Bible studies. They do not have Christian friends or Christian family members. They don't respond to billboards or websites that invite them to Christian churches. One of the few chances they have to hear about the real Jesus is through authentic Christians like you and me, who live next to them and work with them. Paul wanted this kind of witness for the Colossians. He prayed for them to be filled with spiritual wisdom to represent Jesus well (1:9,10a).

Paul believed that Christians should answer others from their understanding of Biblical truth. He encouraged them to work at learning how to communicate those answers in a gracious way to non-believers. William Barclay translates Colossians 4:6 this way, "Let your speech always be with gracious charm, and seasoned with the salt of wit so that you will know the right answer to give in every case."

He explains, "It is all too true that Christianity in the minds of many is connected with a kind of sanctimonious dullness and an outlook in which laughter is almost a heresy... The Christian must commend his message with the charm and the wit which were in Jesus himself."

We need to cultivate the gift of using wise and gracious words that cause a person to stop and consider what we have to say. Paul says that God concerns himself with both our personal dialogue with him through our prayer life and our interaction with the world. He cares both about the prayer closet and the public street, and He wants us to care about both also.

Paul has spent considerable time in this letter explaining the truth and refuting bad doctrine. Yet all this correct teaching and knowledge is of little value unless we apply it in both the prayer closet and the public street of daily life. All that's left to consider is our response!