

General Session 3

Colossians 4:5-6

Pastor Carl Hargrove, September 16, 2018

Why don't you pray with me. Father, thank you for Your goodness and mercy. We pray that in the moments ahead, that You would use Your Word; that it would encourage our hearts, that we can rest firmly in You. Thank you for the wonderful testimonies that You heard and how appropriate they are even in the topic that we're going to look at from Your Word now. We pray that it will be an encouragement to us all, God. And that You would use it and everything that happens in these moments ahead, that Christ would be glorified. So, give grace, I pray in Christ's name, amen.

Well, it's good to be with you again for this final lesson in our topic on "Prayer and Evangelism". And before I say anything else, I need to remember (I had mentioned it before) most of you may know Hohn Cho who visited with me twice. He wanted me to extend his greetings and send his love to you all. So, I need to do that.

I'm excited about this final lesson because it ties in so appropriately to what's going to happen even after the service. As we've heard two testimonies of God's grace, how the grace of God sought out two of His children who were His children before they even breathed the breath of life. And even as you heard before, there was even a universe that He knew them by name, which is just a wonderful thing to think about and to consider, when we realized that God had a foreknowledge of us. He fore-loved us even before we existed, and He had determined in His own mind that He would save those who are His own.

When you think about the importance of that call, the importance of that reality, God calling people to saving knowledge of Christ, then you would think you want to participate in that. And if that's the most important thing that a person can be involved in, if that's the most important thing in the universe (and it is) - that is God's redemptive plan unfolding and people being called to faith, one would think that, "I want in on that. I would like to participate in that. I want to be involved in God's redemptive plan. I want to participate by being an ambassador for the Lord Jesus Christ and calling people to faith in Him."

That's the purpose of the church. That's the purpose of your existence. That is why we are here. I mean, we gather and we have things like on a normal service, a time of fellowship, a time of singing, a time of announcements, of gathering up our resources. But all of that is moving in one direction, and that direction is that we be a people who are representing the Lord Jesus Christ in the world, so that we can witness to them that they might come to faith. That's why we linger here. That's why we have the breath of life even, I'm proposing. And we have to walk in this world, but we have to do it wisely.

And I have entitled this lesson "Wise Evangelism". We could even say that perhaps it's simply walking wisely in the world. And we walk this way for an ultimate goal, so that we can be those wise ambassadors for the Lord Jesus Christ. And as you see the outline, which we're going to look at from Colossians 4:5-6, there are three parts that we want to consider. There are three

aspects of this wise walk, or wise evangelism, which is number one: that we will walk with wisdom in the world.

The text is clear. It says that we're to conduct ourselves with wisdom towards outsiders. And then secondly, we want to consider how do we walk with opportunity in the world. Because the text says well, which we'll look at in a moment and obviously more in depth, "making the most of the time", or "making the most of the opportunities". "Let your speech always be with grace as though seasoned with salt." Then Paul says, finally, "Walk with eternal purpose in the world." And we might even change that title and we could even say, "Walk with personal awareness in the world. Purpose awareness in the world." Because he ends the passage by saying, "So that you will know how to respond to each person." You can see the movement even of these two verses, everything is moving towards, "So that you will know how. So that you will know how, so that you will know how to respond to each person." But that requires wisdom, it requires insight, it requires discernment, if you will.

If we look at the context even of Colossians chapter 3 and how everything is building to that point, it will help us understand it. What do I mean by that? If you note chapter 4:5-6, and really the book has come to an end, although there - obviously verses 7, and following a verses 7 through 18, these are sort of final thoughts that Paul is giving as the book comes to a close. But as far as his formal instruction, it's going to end here in verse 6.

So, there's a question that one asked, "Why here? If this is so important, if this purpose clause that we see here in verse 6, 'So that you will know how to respond to each person,' if that's so important about witnessing to people, why doesn't this come in the beginning of the book?" That is why does Paul perhaps say to the church in Colossae, "I want you to walk with wisdom in the world. I want you to make the most of the opportunity, and I want you to make sure that you know how to respond to each person," and then he could go into the book further, but he doesn't. It comes at the end.

We should understand just something about Paul in thought, is that often, what he would do is, "Here is the doctrinal motivation for you now. When I give you instruction, you can look back and say, 'Yes, I am absolutely motivated to do this, in view of this doctrinal instruction that you've given me'" And this is evident in Colossians as well. And even in this passage, it's definitely evident if we just go back to chapter 3, Paul has set it up this way.

What do I mean by that? If you consider chapter 3:1-4, if we notice the flow of thought, how everything is moving towards chapter 4:5-6. Chapter 3:1-4, here is this wonderful image about Christ and we look to Him, the one who is raised up, who is at the right hand of God. And that statement is just saying that Christ is absolutely victorious. He has accomplished what was necessary by His life and His death and His resurrection, and now He is at this place of majesty, at the right hand of God. And then we look to Him as the proper motivation for life, and we also look to Him as the absolute resource for life, not on the things of this world, and not on the things that these false teachers are proposing to you. Christ is the sufficient one.

Then having said that, if you would notice verses 5 through 11. In verses 5 through 11, he says, "Now having looked to Christ, you must put away the things of the past. Therefore, consider the

members of your earthly body as dead.” And really a better translation would be “therefore, put to death the members of your earthly body”. And he gives a list of what those are - immorality and impurity, and passion, and evil desire, he refers to. And even in verse eight, the anger and wrath and malice, and don't lie to one another. “You have been renewed, so live like a people who are in fact, renewed.” So, he tells us that in verses 5 through 11.

Then notice verses 12-17, the movement continues. Here, the virtues that you must put on. Yes, you put these other things to death, those things that still linger in our life, but they must be replaced with these virtues, is what we see in verses 12-17. So, now that we've looked to Christ, so that now you put to death the things that linger in you, so put on as chosen people of God, holy and beloved. Things like compassion and kindness and humility, gentleness, patience. Making sure that you're bearing with one another and that you're forgiving one another. This should be true in your life.

Then he makes another movement in chapter 3:18, all the way to 4:1. “Now”, he says, “Here are the family codes. This is how you should live in life. You look to Christ, you put away the old, you put on the new, and now let me give you some specific instructions and what should your home life be.” And then it gives us instructions in verse 18, to wives and to husbands and children and fathers and even to slaves and masters - he gives them instructions as well.

So, now that things are in order live this out in your life. Because he could have started even here. He could have started and said, “Well, wives be subject to your husbands, and husbands love your wives.” But no, he's not done that. He says, “It will be difficult, therefore, let me motivate you properly by looking to Christ. Let me tell you, you should put off the old and let me tell you, you should put on the new. And if you do that, you'll be able to submit. You will be able to love. Children will be able to be obedient. Fathers won't exasperate. Slaves will work unto the Lord. Masters will treat their slaves properly because they realize they have a master in heaven, and that master is at the right hand of God even now, looking down upon them.” So, order is important.

This, we see continues. And notice what he says in verses 2-4, which we looked at the last two days. Now, having said that, this final passage here, “Make sure that you are a people of prayer,” as we've looked at in two sessions already. And then he closes by saying, “Make sure that you are witnessing properly in the world, and you're doing it wisely.”

There has been this dramatic transformation that has taken place for the people of God. As a matter of fact, now what has happened here in its most dramatic way, every believer has been propelled from darkness into light. And as a matter of fact, in Colossians 2:13, it tells us that we all were under this immeasurable debt none of us could ever pay back. This is what Colossians 2:13 tells us. It was a hostile certificate of debt against us, and Jesus Christ took on our sin that we might be forgiven.

So, what Paul is saying, in view of these great truths, it is only right that you want to walk wisely in the world and fulfil your purpose by being a witness to those around you. So, he gives us these three descriptions of what is that going to look like. And I want us in the time ahead, to walk through those three descriptions so that you can be a church that can be that light on a hill. You

can be those who are loving one another, and kind to one another, that others can look to you. You can be that voice in this community. You can participate in God's kingdom work for the glory and honour of Christ, by being witnesses to people who don't know the Lord.

So, let's look at this first description. Walk with wisdom in the world. Notice verse 5, the first part of it. "Conduct yourselves with wisdom." And we just pause there for a moment. So, literally, what he's saying, "in wisdom, be walking". And when he says here, "Conduct yourselves with wisdom," we can simply say, "walk with wisdom in the world". And what does it mean when he says here to "walk with wisdom in the world?" What does it mean to be a wise person? What is wisdom? Let's consider that even for a moment.

Well, in the Old Testament, this idea of wisdom is used in context or in a very literal sense. It means "to have skill with life". How do I live a life that is skillful? In the Tabernacle, the building of the Tabernacle, God would endow some with a spirit of wisdom, but it wasn't so much that they were like a sage, that they could speak wise things (all of that occurred at times), it was in a literal sense, that they had skills with their hands in silver work or with woodwork, architecture, embroidering, even for the Tabernacle. And even for Aaron's robes, people were given a spirit of wisdom.

So, it's saying that we're to walk with skill in life. If we take that literal sense and then we take it to the New Testament, he's saying, "If you want to walk in wisdom, walk with skill." And how do we develop a skill? Well, we practice, we study, we pray, we meditate, we learn, we hear the Word of God. That's how we grow in wisdom.

So, we might say it this way, in answering that question - in the New Testament, this definition is consistent with the old. It means that we're walking through life with this sense of skill and we need to develop that skill. And that's in part why are you here. That's why some of you, I can say it this way, you've sought out a Bible-believing, a Bible-teaching church. Because you realize that someone is going to open the Word of God, and here is this manual that is teaching you how you can walk with skill more effectively.

So, when we look at the New Testament, we can say that this skill is given by divine enablement. God through the Holy Spirit helps us with this as we grow in the knowledge and grace of Christ. We can say this, that the skill is gained by a proper response to divine revelation. What do I mean by that? When we hear God's Word, we have to make a decision that we will be doers of the Word. "Okay, I've heard that lesson, that's wonderful. Now, what is my response to the Word of God?" It will be no different than a student that is constantly hearing lectures, but they never act on the lecture itself. They won't develop in their skills. You have to practice it. And it is this, we develop this skill even through life experience. As we go through life, that's why when one tends to gain more gray hairs, that they have more skills in life, if they paid attention.

Now, there's a qualifier there. Because there are people that may have more gray hairs but they don't have more wisdom or skill, because they've not paid attention to the lessons that they should have learned in life. And there are people who have fewer gray hairs and they have more wisdom or skill because they've paid attention. You remember the story of Job and remember his counsellors that came to him and they were bad counsellors. And there was one at the end; Elihu,

and he said, "I thought that wisdom should speak or age should speak. I am young ..." and he says, "I withheld from speaking, but now I will speak up." And one of the first things he says is this, "It is not necessary (he says in a positive) that youth may have wisdom. One who fears God, that is wisdom." And he speaks up, and Elihu correctly relates to Job, what is happening in his life. And actually God then begins to speak and says, "Elihu has represented me properly." Why? Because he had wisdom and skill. Although the other counsellors were older, they had not learned their lessons in life.

So, we want to all grow in wisdom. Do we not? We want to all grow in the skill, in living the Christian life. And so, when we think about this, we can move ahead and say that the New Testament is really pretty comprehensive when it talks about walking with God. And let me just give you some examples of it just really briefly here.

We walk in newness of life. That's Romans 6 and 4. We walk a walk of faith; this Scripture tells us. We also have this: we walk a governed walk - that is a governed walk, that there are restrictions. We cannot simply decide what Christianity will be. God is saying to us, "I have governed your Christian walk, walk accordingly." And then we can say this: it is a predestined walk. And that's the beauty of even a part of the testimony that you heard and especially as Richard emphasized this idea that his name was known even before the foundation of the world. What does Ephesians 2:10 tell us? You are supposed to walk in these good works which He had determined, when? Beforehand, "that you would walk in them". And now, what we're doing in our life, we're trying to grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, to discover, "What should I be doing for you God? How have you equipped me?" We can also say this: it's a forsaking walk. Paul is communicating there that you're supposed to forsake the things of the past, forsake the darkness and strive after the light. We can also say this: it's a loving walk, because we grow in our love for each other and our love for God. God has set the example for us and this is what Ephesians 5:2 tells us, that we grow in this way. We can also say this: it's an honouring walk. How do we honour the Lord with our walk? We say that as a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, I want to represent Him as best as I possibly can. And I think all of us also face the reality that we stumble and we fail at times. Don't we? We don't honour the Lord the way that we would hope, but we strive for it. We can say this as well: it's a growing walk - that we're growing again in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. First Thessalonians 4:1. We look back at our life and we can say, all of us have prayed. All of you that know the Lord Jesus Christ should be able to look back and say, "My life is different than what it was a year ago or several years ago." And some, perhaps, if you've known the Lord, you can look back and say it's different than what it was 20 years ago. "I've grown in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ."

Just as I look out and see some of the little ones that are on your lap or they're cuddled next to you, one day they're going to grow up. And then there's going to be that moment even they're going to leave home. And some of you are saying, "Don't tell me that right now, I don't want to hear that." I think about my kids and I was just sharing with someone recently, my twins, and they're about to go off and be marines and they want to be in the infantry of all things, which I applaud. But at one point in time, I held them just like a football in my arm. And now both of them are taller than me. They grew up physically. And in character, they grew up. We're to grow up spiritually. We can't remain as babes. We can't continue to dine on children's food. We have

to strive for the things that are weightier and solid and deeper if we're going to grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ.

We might also say this: it's an emulating walk. I want you to turn here with me, go with me to Philippians chapter 3. Philippians 3:17, notice what it says here, "Brethren, join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us." So, that pattern, we set an example. Make sure that you emulate that pattern and you follow after us, an example. Notice that we're all to be setting an example for those around us and we can either lead people to grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ or we can lead them astray.

Turn with me to First John 2. And notice what's stated there in First John 2. In First John 2:6, John says ... and let me read from verse 5. "But whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him; the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked," the Lord Jesus Christ. So, here is the prime example, we emulate His life, which is the theme that we see in first Peter. And this is in part what Paul is saying in chapter 3:1-4, "Look above to Jesus Christ who is seated at the right hand of God and emulate Him." So, this is the walk. And if we walk this way, we will be people who will be good ambassadors of the Lord.

Go back to Colossians, and I want to show you something as well - this idea of wisdom that is necessary for this Christian walk. There is this theme of wisdom, is the root, the book of Colossians. Look at Colossians chapter 1, Colossians 1:9. It says, "For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding." Why? Notice the purpose in verse 10. "So that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects."

Stop for a moment, think about that. Wouldn't it be wonderful to live the Christian life and you could actually live the Christian life and you could say, "Every day I please Him in every respect?" I mean, that would be great, wouldn't it? Do I have any takers in here? Would you like that life? But here's the reality, sometimes before the day even begins, we're saying what? "Lord forgive me," but we strive for it nonetheless. That we can walk in a manner that's worthy of the Lord. So, but we do it in wisdom. Notice chapter 2:3, wisdom comes up again. He ends verse 2 by saying, "Resulting in a true knowledge of God's mystery, that is, Christ Himself in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." And that's what we strive after - Christ. Because notice the relationship here, Christ Himself, He represents ultimate wisdom. In Him, are the treasures of wisdom.

Think about that for a moment, this imagery that Paul uses here. If one were to come to a treasure chest and open it up, he is saying, "If you're seeking wisdom, once you open up the Word of God and discover more about Christ, there you will find wisdom." That's why we should look to Him. That's why He is the ultimate example. Study His life, study His person, study how He responded to people, and you cannot help but walk in wisdom. Because He represents the treasure of it all. Look at chapter 2:8. "See to it that no one take you captive through philosophy and empty deceit," which is what the false teachers were doing - "according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ." It must be according to Christ, who is the treasure of wisdom. So, yes, this walk is a

walk of wisdom and we're to emulate the Lord Jesus Christ in every way. But notice, if we go back to Colossians chapter 4, go back to Colossians 4. And what does it tell us here? In Colossians 4, it says, "Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders." So, all of these aspects of our walk with the Lord, they must have an object. That is, we walk in a manner with a goal in mind. We walk towards unbelievers, the unbelieving world. That is our purpose. That's our reason for even being here. And this is what Paul has communicated as we've looked at the flow of thought from the passage beginning in chapter 3. And of course, you could even go back to chapter 1, everything is moving us towards this. "I instruct you so that you can walk towards unbelievers with wisdom."

You know, we talk to people often and we may say to them ... I know that I have, that today may be the day of salvation. You say to a person, "Don't wait" or you speak to them with a sense of urgency because life is not guaranteed. But the question for us is this, what is the message to our own souls? I mean, when we look in the mirror of our own lives, what reflection do we see? When we speak with that sense of urgency to other people and we say to them, "Friend, tomorrow's not guaranteed, why don't you give your heart to the Lord right now? The Lord Jesus Christ can make a way for you to be saved. You don't have to face the eternal separation from the Lord." And we speak with that sense of urgency, but we should speak with urgency in our hearts.

And never become passive and indifferent to this calling. And never think that to be a witness to people outside of the world, that's for the professionals to do or that's for the pastor to do, or for the elders to do or those that are on the council to do. It's for every believer. Every believer is an ambassador for the Lord Jesus Christ. And if we have a true vision of Christ, we will be motivated to live as He lived.

Before I go on in a moment, I think we need to look at something else in Colossians, which is sort of this problem or this challenge at Colossae when it came to wisdom. We've looked at one verse, but I want you to see some others. Go back to chapter 2, chapter 2:4. Because he says in verses 2 and 3, Christ Himself, the treasure of wisdom and all knowledge. Then in verse 4, he says, "I say to you that no one will delude you with persuasive argument," and that is a part of what is happening at the church at Colossae. False teachers have come in, and they're trying to persuade the church to consider empty words - words of philosophy. He's trying to say to those at the church at Colossae, "If you would simply practice these things, if you would even at times, if you would be involved in angelic worship, which is absolutely vain." And then we see the same thing in chapter 2:8. "See to it that no one take you captive through philosophy and empty deception." And this is really strong language in verse 8, "Captive." Literally, to be carried away as plunder. Because if you allow them to take your eyes off the Lord Jesus Christ and His sufficiency, and if you allow them to make you think that if you were to practice holidays and Sabbath and the worship of angels and these false visions and a philosophy of the world that is not Biblical, you will be taken captive and off to plunder. Which means you will lose your reward.

Then, notice what else? Chapter 2:16. Notice what it says here, it comes up again. "Therefore no one is to act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day - things which are mere shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ." Again, the warning is there. This is not true wisdom. They think that it's wisdom, but it

isn't. So, Paul has to confront this and say, "Here is genuine wisdom. If you follow this path, it is a path of destruction." And see all religious instruction apart from the grace of God is condemning. And this was the era at the church at Colossae 2,000 years ago, and in some ways, it can be today as well. And if Paul doesn't confront this, then the hope of the Colossians is based in something that has no substance whatsoever. It's what he said, if you were to consider chapter 2:23. Notice what he says there. "These are matters which have, to be sure, the appearance of wisdom in self-made religion and self-abasement and severe treatment of the body, but are of no value against fleshly indulgences." He really brings a thought together right there in verse 23. It's an appearance of wisdom. It's self-made, it's not from heaven. It's not from above. That's why you look above, not to the things of the earth, severe treatment of the body. And some would say, "Well, I'm going to fast for a long period of time." And at times even do harm literally to their body (themselves), to mistreat it. To say that, "Well, since the body is the residence of evil, I'm going to mistreat it and that is going to make me appear to be spiritual." And Paul is saying, "This nothing, it has no power over the flesh. You can do that all you want, you'll still lust, you'll still have desires that you shouldn't have. You can't gain heaven this way. So, it's not wisdom."

Let's move ahead and consider this second aspect of this way to walk in wisdom. Walk with opportunity. We could even say, "Walk with genuine opportunity in the world." And it's really broken into two parts that we want to consider here. If we go back to Colossians 4, what does he say? "Well, conduct yourselves with wisdom towards outsiders, making the most of the opportunity." And so, let's look at that and consider that for a moment; making the most of the opportunity. What does that mean? Some translations may say "making the most of the time". And so, I want us to consider the redemptive nature of this walk. Why do I say that? What's the redemptive nature of this walk?

Well, it's tied into this word. This word that refers to here, or is translated "making the most of", the opportunity. In Ephesians chapter 6, it's translated there, at least in the NASB, he says, "redeeming the time". Why does it translate there "redeeming the time?" Because the word has this idea literally, to redeem, to buy back. And at times it could be translated that way - to buy back the time. That's what needs to happen. Because if not, opportunities will come your way and you won't take advantage of them. This is what Paul is saying. Making the most of those opportunities that come our way, we must do that.

Let me share something else with you, two words I want to teach you. When he says, "Making the most of the time, there are two words that can be used for time. One is one that we'd be familiar with, is the word *chronos*. Because we think chronological. We think about order.

But the word that's used here is the word *kairos*, is the word. And you noticed, I just wanted to give you that image because it's helpful to understand the distinction in the words, one is chronological. It's simply linear. It's just time as it moves along. I look down now and I see my timing here and it's just ticking along here. And I still have a good amount of time leftover, I think. And some are going to be based on your faces, I think they're okay with me going a little bit longer here. Chronologically, it is ticking away as I look at the clock. So, that's *chronos*.

But then there's this other word, *kairos* in the Greek language, and you notice that it has the little circles in it. Why is that? Because this is focusing on opportunities within time. There's a difference. See, these opportunities come our way and we have to take advantage of them when they are presented. And that's what Paul is saying, "Make sure that you're redeeming the time. Make sure that you're taking advantage of the opportunities because if not, they can escape you."

Let me give you some ways in which others maybe can relate the word or translate even this phrase. Some would say, it means buying up all the opportunities which time offers. Using opportunities to the full, exploiting them. Eagerly seizing every opportunity to promote God's kingdom and using those opportunities wisely and resourcefully. Another says, making the use of every favourable point of time to further God's kingdom. Another said, seizing opportunities while they occur to do good to those outside. And I like this, perhaps the best - letting no opportunities slip through your hands to further God's cause.

Think about that for a moment. Because perhaps, we say that sometimes, something slipped through our hands. Like it was there and now the opportunity is gone. Opportunity is presented to us and we didn't act on it, and now it's gone forever. And what Paul is saying, "As you go through life, opportunities will be presented to you, make sure that you grasp it. Don't hold it loosely, because these are kingdom opportunities."

Question, how many of you have met someone and you know that perhaps you should have witnessed to them and you didn't? An opportunity presented itself and it seems as if it was a great opportunity to share the Gospel and you got maybe distracted. You thought, "Maybe not now." Or you thought, "What will they say?" Or maybe they'll respond a certain way and you didn't share the Gospel. And you walk away from it and you say to yourself, "Oh my, what did I do? I missed that opportunity." What Paul is saying, "Make sure that you don't miss these opportunities that come your way. You may never have them again." And I've had many opportunities in life that have come my way, and some have slipped through my hands. And sometimes they slip through my hands because there was a fear of man. And there could be people who in other ways, are very bold people and outgoing people. But all of a sudden, when it comes to sharing the Gospel, sometimes they can change. This is why we're here - to take advantage of these opportunities. Who is going to share with them if we don't? How do they hear the message?

That's Romans chapter 10. That people have to hear a message about Jesus Christ, and how will they hear unless someone is sent? You've been sent into the world. When you became a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, you were sent into the world. Every day, you're sent somewhere. To your place of work, you're sent there to be a witness for Christ. Where you recreate, you're sent there to be a witness for the Lord Jesus Christ. That's our calling. That's what we're supposed to do.

But notice something else about this opportunity. There's a gracious nature to it as well. Go back to Colossians chapter 4. And it says here, "Making the most of the opportunity, let your speech always be with grace as though seasoned with salt." So he says, "Make sure though, when you go out and you speak to people, yes, you do it redemptively," (that is, you take advantage of it)

“but make sure that when you do it, your speech is gracious.” The gracious nature of speech. And what does this mean, especially when it says, “As though seasoned with salt?”

We stop for a moment and we think about salt and how salt is used. Well, in the ancient times and even today, salt would be a preservative. We understand that. Salt would be something that could be a seasoner. And salt would also be something, it would be a purifier. And when Christ says, “You are the salt of the earth,” what we see communicated, you purify in one sense, the earth, by your behaviour. You hold back the tide of immorality. And as you influence other people and you witness to others, you hold back that tide. He’s also saying there’s a sense in which you give season to the earth. Because as you live your life and others see that life, it touches people and it influences people.

But there has to be that sense as you think about seasoning as well. We may use different seasonings in food, but you partly do it so that it’s satisfying to the palate, isn’t it? You put seasoning on something because you want it to be satisfying and you want it to be attractive, and you like to take part in it, and you would even want it again. So, with our Christian life, the question is, are we living in such a way that others would say of us, “What you have, I want? How is your life that way? How do you live that way? How do you make those decisions? Why do you deal with difficulties that way? How do you have the joy that you have? Why do you show kindness the way that you do?”

Then we’ll be a people whose speech is gracious because we’ll speak to them, not harshly. Now, some will say to us, especially today is, the moment you confront anyone with any sin, that’s considered hate speech. Or to say to them “That is something that is objectionable according to the Word of God,” that’s considered hate speech. But we should never allow a person to be able to legitimately say to us, “You were harsh with me.” Speech is gracious, it’s seasoned.

Even in rabbinic tradition, they would think that the seasoning of salt was just saying, it’s wise. See, there’s discretion in how you share with a person. You’re not a person that says, “Well, let the cards fall where they may, I’m just sharing truth. Because the Scripture also tells us in the book of Ephesians, speaking the truth in love. I can speak truth to a person, but I can also do it in love. And at times, a person might say, “That hurts me,” but it’s the most loving thing that I can say to you.

All of us, when we came to the Lord Jesus Christ, there was some level of hurt because when we were confronted with our sin, we realized that we were sinners, but that was the greatest example of love the Holy Spirit could show towards us by convicting us of our need. And so, we do the same. We show love.

Let me share some thoughts with you, how our behaviour is so important with the outside world. And go with me to Philippians. Go first to Philippians chapter 2. And I want to give you some examples of them. You have them there, you can just take a shot of it or I’ll send you the PowerPoint - however you prefer it. Philippians 2:14-15, and I want to run you through these verses because what I want you to see is our behaviour is important in reference to our evangelism.

In the same way that there must be order ... remember there's order in this passage, beginning at chapter three. There's order throughout God's creation. It starts simply with this, "In the beginning, God ..." And then He begins to unfold His redemptive plan. There's order. Say for instances, there's order when it comes to selecting men who might be elders in the church, the testing ground being their home. So, if they're managing their home well, then, choose them to be an elder. You don't have someone be an elder first and then ask, "Oh, what is your prayer life like? Tell me about your family." There's order. That's sensible, that's necessary. So, here, there must be order. Because if we are not living as a church the way we should be, we're ill-equipped to go witness to the world. Philippians 2:14-15, "Do all things without grumbling or disputing; so you approve yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world." But if we're not living accordingly, our light is dimmed, if you will. You see the same thought in first Thessalonians 4:11-12, "Make this your ambition to live a quiet life and attend to your own business and work hard with your hands, so that you will behave properly towards outsiders." First Timothy 3 ... You don't have to turn there. I'll just will allude to it. It says that you are to have a good reputation with those outside the church. That is an elder, must have a good reputation with those outside the church, so that he can speak the mysteries of Christ even to those people. Titus tells us this thought as well. You see it in First Peter chapter 2, "Doing what is right so that you can silence the foolishness of ignorant men." Think about it. What Paul is saying, make sure that in the church you're living out the Christian life and you're loving so that people will not be able to indict you as a congregation. And you can speak truth to them in their world. But I do want you to see something. Look with me at First Corinthians chapter 10. These two verses here, I sort of call these "culminating verses". It sorts of pulls it together, if you will. First Corinthians 10:32-33, notice what Paul says, "Give no offense either to Jew or to Greek or to the Church of God; just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit but the profit of the many, so that they be saved." What is Paul saying here? Briefly, succinctly, what he is simply saying is, "I live in such a way that my life would not offend anyone else, so that my testimony towards them will be honourable. It will be reputable. And that I want them to be saved. I strive to grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ with one goal in mind, that I can have an influence in the lives of other people and they can escape eternal damnation."

There's one last point I need to make. If we go back to Colossians chapter 4 (wise evangelism): walk with eternal purpose in the world (notice at the end of verse six), "so that you will know how to respond to each person." So, it comes down to this. Here's our purpose. All of this is leading to that point.

So, I pray ... and notice what is so interesting about speech here. If we go back to verse 2, it really began with speech to God. "Devote yourselves to prayer ..." Verse 3, "praying the same time for us as well, that we would speak forth the mystery." That is, "When we're evangelizing, that we would speak it properly. That we would speak it with clarity and with obligation," in verse 4. Then he says, "Now conduct yourselves with wisdom. Let your speech ..." again, speech comes up - "Let your speech be gracious, so that you will speak to each person properly." Now what does it mean, know how to respond to each person? And I think plainly, what Paul is saying here, is there are different people in different stages in life. Say, for instance, one goes out and you talk to someone who was a Jehovah witness. My interaction with them is different than

it would be ... than when I talk to someone that's a Mormon. Or maybe, I talk to another person who has been in church all their life and they say, "I've always been a Christian." And you ask them about, "Are you a sinner?" "No, I'm not. I'm a good person." My conversation with them is different, so that's where skill is involved and wisdom is involved, so I'll know how to respond to each person. Now, each person ... there is a common thread, and that common thread that I might speak to each person is this: Jesus Christ is holy. You are His creature. And if you live a life in disobedience to Him, you dishonour Him. And because He is a holy God, here are the consequences of your life without Christ. You will spend an eternity of separation from Him. You say this to each person, but sometimes in different ways. Your works are filthy rags to the Lord. Nothing you can do will gain inner favour with Lord Jesus Christ. You can attend church, you can pray, you can read, but to think that somehow you can try to live a moral life, that will not please Him, because all men fall short of the glory of God. You say that to every person, and you say to every person that Jesus Christ is in fact, the way, the truth and the life, no one comes to the Father except by Him. Jesus Christ lived an absolutely perfect life. He was buried and He raised Himself again from the dead, and now He is in fact, at the right hand of God, and He will come again. And if you're found to be without Christ, the Scripture is plain about it. "It is appointed for man once to die, and after that, the judgment."

I was speaking with a man (and that was about a year ago now in Singapore). I had been there to see a missionary, and I was on my way back. I got a cab there and I'm going back and I asked him, "Friend, tell me about your life. Religion, where is religion in your life." And he said that he was a Hindu, and we began to talk.

We had a discussion about life and the afterlife, and we had a conversation about coming back again. And I asked him, I said, "So, what are you striving for? Where's the end of this? When is this over? How do you reach Nirvana? How do you know that you've arrived? Isn't this frustrating, that you're coming back, trying to make this life better than the previous and better than the previous? The Bible says, 'It's appointed for man once to die and then there's judgment.' You will not come back again, friend. You will have to face the living God. And my faith tells me this, that the Lord Jesus Christ is a sufficient sacrifice and He has died for me. So, when I die, because I'm in union with Him, I will be ushered into Paradise, the paradise that you're striving for that you will never achieve."

He listened and we talked a bit more and I said, "That must be incredibly frustrating. You're in this vicious cycle of trying to please God and you never can." I left him a track and I prayed for him. I put him in my app - the Uber driver from Singapore. And when I go through my cycle of prayer, his name comes up. And I add people to that app and I have other people that are in it. I've even added others even recently. I pray for those people. But it's going to take maybe God ... well, the words I share with them ... maybe He'll bring them to life one day. Or maybe it's going to take someone else that will go and walk wisely and share with him the Lord Jesus Christ.

I want to end on the Scriptural note. Turn with me to the Psalms. Paul is clear that we should know how to respond to each person. There's diversity in people and their background and understanding, but the message is the same. We want to live our lives so that when life is over, we can present to God a life worthy of Him.

Notice what Moses said - so appropriate to end here, and I just want to leave you with this thought. Psalm 90:12, Moses says, "Teach us to number our days that we may present to you a heart of wisdom." Think about that. Paul said, "Making the most of the opportunity." Or in Ephesians, "redeeming the time". That *kairos* time, the opportunities. "Lord, I want to live in such a way that I want to number my days. These days are a grace that is given to me and I need to be a steward of those days. Teach me to number those days," is what Moses is saying to the people of God. Then at the end, "That we may present to You a heart of wisdom."

Lord, at the end of my life, I want to be able to say, "I lived life with skill, not foolishly. Opportunities came my way and I grabbed them. I didn't let them slip by me. I lived my life with the perspective of eternity, not the things that are temporary, not the things of this world. I looked to heaven and I looked to Christ and He motivated me." So, I pray that we all can present to the Lord a heart of wisdom. Father God, we thank you for Your Word, You give us, and pray that You would take these words, use them for Your glory. Amen.