

Colossians 4:2-6 Speech and the New Man

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Introduction

Speech will reflect the kind of person one is for it reveals the heart.

Paul continues the discussion of the new man and now focuses on the speech of the new man. Speech is important for it is what the watching world will look at carefully when it evaluates Christianity.

Speech is one of the most difficult area for believers to control.

In his discussion of the speech of the new man, Paul puts the emphasis on four areas: the speech of prayer, the speech of proclamation, the speech of performance, and the speech of perfection.

2

Colossians 4:2-6

Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving; ³ 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, ⁴ that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak. ⁵ Walk in wisdom toward those *who are* outside, redeeming the time. ⁶ *Let* your speech always *be* with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.

3

The Speech of Proclamation

Colossians 4:3-4

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, ⁴ that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak.

Paul turns from prayer, which is speech directed to God, to the proclamation of the gospel, which is speech directed to people. Having exhorted the Colossians to pray, he gives them a specific request, “**meanwhile praying also for us.**” The plural pronoun **us** probably includes the list of Paul’s friends and co-workers that begins in 4:7. The content of Paul’s request was **that God would open to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ.** A **door** in the New Testament usually refers to an opportunity. In 1 Corinthians 16:8–9, Paul writes, “Furthermore, when I came to Troas to *preach* Christ’s gospel, and a door was opened to me by the Lord (2 Cor. 2:12).”

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Believers are to pray for open doors because it is God who opens them. At the end of Paul's first missionary journey, he and Barnabas reported to the church "all that God had done with them, and that He had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles" (Acts 14:27). In Acts 16, after several doors had been shut, "a vision appeared to Paul in the night. A man of Macedonia stood and pleaded with him, saying, 'Come over to Macedonia and help us'" (v. 9). Upon seeing the vision, Luke writes, "immediately we sought to go to Macedonia, concluding that the Lord had called us to preach the gospel to them" (Acts 16:10). Revelation 3:7 describes Jesus as the One "who opens and no one will shut, and who shuts and no one opens." That was literally the case when God opened locked prison doors and freed Peter to preach the gospel (Acts 12:1-11).

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Paul desired an open door so he could speak forth the mystery of Christ. The term mystery refers to something hidden in the Old Testament but manifest in the New. In the present context, it refers to the content of the gospel. Paul asks the Colossians to pray that he would have an open door to speak the full truth of the gospel.

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Let's pause a minute and make this personal. We each have been given a ministry. We need to pray that God will open doors for us to serve and to share the message.

We should be praying for those around us who do not yet know Jesus. Let's pray that God will give us a door so we can have opportunity to share the truth of Jesus!

7

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It was for the sake of the gospel that Paul was **in chains** (imprisoned). Like Jesus, the message that Paul was preaching was threatening to those trapped in the legalism of Judaism. To those in power, the gospel threatened their position and power. The masses struggled with prejudice as it was difficult for them to see gentiles as their equal. As a result, Paul was falsely accused of bringing a gentile into the Temple. This was not true but was the means for the religious establishment to attack Paul. Paul appealed his case to Rome. The book of Acts records these events and his Journey to Rome. Even in prison, Paul still wanted to share the truth of Jesus.

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The Speech of Proclamation

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Paul asked the Colossians to pray that when God opened a door for the gospel, **that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak.** **Ought** can be understood in two ways. First, it refers to the compulsion Paul felt to preach the gospel. That was a constant burden in his life. To the Romans he wrote, “I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek” (Rom. 1:16). In 1 Corinthians 9:16 he said, “For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for necessity is laid upon me; yes, woe is me if I do not preach the gospel!”

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The Speech of Proclamation

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Second, **ought to speak** refers to the mandate for using the God-ordained method of presenting the gospel. Paul preached the gospel by testifying to both Jews and Greeks of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 20:21). “**Manifest**” means to give a thorough and complete testimony. The gospel should be proclaimed clearly, boldly (Eph. 6:19), wisely (Prov. 25:11), and graciously (Eph. 4:15).

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The Speech of Performance

Colossians 4:5

Walk in wisdom toward those *who are* outside, redeeming the time.

What believers are gives credibility to what they say. **Wisdom** involves properly evaluating circumstances and making godly decisions. Believers are to exhibit a carefully planned, consistent, righteous Christian life.

If those who say they are believers live as fools, **outsiders** or unbelievers will reject the gospel message. Only if believers live wisely will the watching world see the power of God at work in them. Be warned: believers can live like fools. Many discredit their testimony by living for money, power, and prestige. Other discredit the gospel through legalistic requirements or other fleshy endeavors.

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The Speech of Performance

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The believer is to “**walk in wisdom toward those who are outside.**” Walking in wisdom comes from spending time to know God’s Word and learning how to put God’s Word into how we live. The believers’ lives must stand in stark contrast to that of the world. It is only through walking in wisdom that believers’ words will mean anything. The early church had none of the modern means of advertising the gospel, yet by living out the truth of the gospel in their personal and corporate lives, they turned their world upside down. May that be said of us.

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The Speech of Performance

Colossians 4:5

Walk in wisdom toward those *who are* outside, redeeming the time.

Living a godly life also involves “**redeeming the time.**” This means making the most of the opportunity. Opportunity is fleeting. Life is short, and every day more people die without Christ. “Night is coming, when no man can work” (John 9:4). Our Lord may return at any moment.

Romans 13:11–14

And *do* this, knowing the time, that now *it is* high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation *is* nearer than when we *first* believed. ¹²The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. ¹³Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. ¹⁴But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to *fulfill its* lusts.

The time is now for believers to speak with their lives.

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The Speech of Perfection

Colossians 4:6

Let your speech always *be* with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.

Consistency of life must be followed by consistency of speech. Paul is not speaking here of preaching the gospel, but general conversation. Believers’ **speech** must **always be with grace**, as was Christ’s (Luke 4:22). There is no place for those things that characterize the unredeemed mouth. Whether undergoing persecution, stress, difficulty, or injustice, whether with your spouse, children, believers, or unbelievers—in all circumstances believers are to make gracious speech a habit. To speak with **grace** means to say what is spiritual, wholesome, fitting, kind, sensitive, purposeful, complementary, gentle, truthful, loving, and thoughtful. Paul wrote in Ephesians 4:29, “Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.”

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The Speech of Perfection

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Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.

The speech of the new man must also be seasoned with salt. It is not only to be gracious, but also to have an effect. Salt can sting when rubbed into a wound (cf. Prov. 27:6). It also prevents corruption. Believers' speech should act as a purifying influence, rescuing conversation from the filth that so often engulfs it. Salt also adds flavor, and the speech of the new man should add charm and wit to conversation.

Believers must also know how they ought to answer each one. They must know how to say the right thing at the right time. In Peter's words, they must be "ready to *give* a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear" (1 Pet. 3:15).

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So What ...

The speech of the new man is vitally important!

We must become conscious of what comes out of our mouths.

How we speak gives testimony of what is in our hearts.

Let our speech be a proper reflection of our relationship with Jesus Christ. Let us put on:

- the speech of prayer,
- the speech of proclamation,
- the speech of performance,
- and the speech of perfection.

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