Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

The Speech of the New Man, Part 2
Scripture: Colossians 4:2-6
Code: 2151

Colossians, chapter 4, verses 2 through 6. Now, remember that the book of Colossians is a defense of the sufficiency of Christ. False teachers had come into the city of Colossae and were trying to deny that Christ was sufficient. They were trying to deny that all you needed was Jesus Christ, and they were saying, “No, you need Christ plus a certain human philosophy. You need Christ plus the Mosaic Law. You need Christ plus certain mystical relationships to angelic beings. You need Christ plus a certain life of self-denial.” And so they were really denying the sufficiency of Christ. And in rebuttal to that, the great climax of the book comes in two passages. One was alluded to earlier; it's in the first chapter, where he discusses the sufficiency of Christ, who is the image of the invisible God, and by Him were all things made, and He has all power, and so forth and so on. And the second great climactic statement is in chapter 2, verse 10, which says, “And you are complete in Him.”

So the argument of the book, then, is that in spite of the errorists’ teaching, Christ is indeed sufficient. Christ is all we need, and he establishes that in the first two chapters. Now, having established that Christ is sufficient, he begins, then, in chapter 3 to show what it means to have that sufficiency in Christ. If Christ is sufficient to redeem me, if He has given me new life, if He has given to me eternal life or resurrection life, what does that mean to me? Well, such a new life, says Paul, demands a new lifestyle. And so chapter 3 and chapter 4 discuss the new lifestyle of the new man in Christ, and we've been looking at it ever since we began the third chapter.

The first four verses define the new life, and from verses 5 through chapter 4, verse 6, where we'll stop tonight, we see the new lifestyle that should accompany the new life. Now, among some of the things that we've looked at – and we're not going to take time to go back over them tonight – but among some of the things that we've looked at is this whole idea of the lifestyle of a Christian as related to his mouth, or what a Christian speaks. When we become new creatures, we saw last week, our speech should conform to that new creation. It's kind of like accents. When you leave a certain country and you go to live in another country, or when you leave a certain part of the United States, particularly the deep south, and you wind up in the far west or the north, eventually, after a certain amount of time, you begin to lose your accent.

And essentially that’s what Paul is saying. He is saying when you become a Christian, you ought to begin to lose the accent of the world. Your speech ought to mark you out as something different. In fact, you ought to begin to identify with the heavenly language. I know that whenever I go, particularly Latin American countries, it isn't long before I'm speaking sort of Spanish-flavored English. Because

you hear them speak it, pretty soon you wind up speaking the same thing, and giving it the same tone and the same flavor, and sort of changing your English to conform to poor Spanish-English. You pick up the customs of the people. I've noticed that, too, when I was in England, you begin to speak like the English.

You don't even realize you're doing it, but you sort of get into the thing and you identify with it. And essentially Paul is saying that when you become a believer, you begin to lose the old accent, and you begin to pick up the new accent of the new lifestyle in Christ. And that's essentially what he's saying here. Your mouth ought to match your new life. There ought to be a change in the use of your mouth and the things that you speak. So Christ is sufficient to make us new creatures, and as new creatures, we live in a new society, in a new state before God, in a new lifestyle that demands a new accent. And we ought to drop the accent of the world and take on the habits of speech conforming to the family in which we belong.

And I think a good model for this is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. I've studied this before, but I was running it through my mind again this week. One of the greatest studies you'll ever make in the Bible is to study the mouth of Jesus, and just go through the New Testament and catalog everything Jesus said. One that has meant a great deal to me is this one, in Matthew 5:2: “And He opened His mouth and taught them.” That's a great thought, isn't it? He opened His mouth, and out came instruction; Matthew 5:2. And there are other things we find about the mouth of Jesus. They’re in the book of Luke, and there are many, but I'll just give you a couple of illustrations.

“And all bore Him witness,” Luke 4:22, “and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth.” He opened His mouth and taught. He opened His mouth and spoke with grace, graciously or gently or courteously, becomingly. In Luke, chapter 11, verse 54 – and Luke seems to be somewhat preoccupied with the words of Jesus – but in Luke 11, 1 think it's verse 54, it says that they were “laying wait for Him and seeking to catch something out of His mouth that they might accuse Him.” And we all know that they never ever were able to do it. And the New Testament tells us in the book of James that a man in whose mouth there is no deceit and who makes no error with his mouth is a perfect man. And Jesus never did make an error with His mouth.

In John, chapter 6, and verse 63, again in reference to the mouth of Jesus, it says, “The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life.” In 1 Peter, chapter 2, and verse 22, again regarding the mouth of Jesus, “Who did no sin; neither was guile found in His mouth.” He never said a word that would deceive anybody or trick anybody or hook anybody or cover up any truth. And that's just four little looks at the mouth of Jesus, or five. You can study it for yourself, and He's the model. So that the new man has a new mouth, and he begins to speak with a new accent; he begins to lose the accent of the world. Now, what comes out of this new mouth? Well, four things that Paul deals with here, in chapter 4, verses 2 to 6, and we mentioned one last time.

The first distinct element in the speech of the new man is the speech of prayer, verse 2. Let me read it again: “Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving.” Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving. Now, the first characteristic of the speech of the new man is prayer. The new man speaks to God. We saw last time that the words “continue in prayer” have to do with a strong, persevering, committed, continual beseeching of God. And we pointed out, basically, that there are two thoughts there. When it says continue in prayer, or pray without ceasing, or in everything by prayer and supplication let your request be made known, this idea of continual prayer, first of all, has the concept of being God-conscious.

It has the idea of just having God in the front of your mind, so that no matter what happens, instantly you respond by taking it to God. You see a good thing, you thank God. You see a bad thing you beseech God on behalf of it. It's that quick to respond to the presence of God, so that I'm always on the verge of a conversation with God in the light of any event that occurs. That's praying without ceasing. But we saw that continue in prayer, the root meaning of the word in the Greek means to be courageous, and bold, and persistent. So that it isn't just the idea of a floating God-consciousness, but it's the idea of a hanging in there, persevering, praying, burdened until God does something.

And we saw the illustrations of it in the gospel of Luke, in the 11th and the 18th chapter. We saw how that where there's perseverance, and importunity, and persistence, that God answers just because of that. Paul Sailhamer and I were discussing this, and he suggested this week a good illustration of that. I'd like you to look at it, in Nehemiah, chapter 1. And this is an illustration of both of those concepts in prayer. Nehemiah, in chapter 1, endeavors to prepare himself in a time of prolonged prayer. He says in verse 4, “It came to pass, when I heard these words” – relative to the destruction of his city, Jerusalem, and its broken-down condition – “I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven.

“And I said, ‘I beseech Thee, 0 Lord God of heaven, the great and awe-inspiring God, who keepeth covenant and mercy for them who love him and observe His commandments: Let Thine ear now be attentive, Thine eyes open, that Thou mayest hear the prayer of Thy servant, which I pray before Thee day and night.’” And here is a man who is continuing in prayer, and it is not just a floating God-consciousness, it is an importunity, it is a persistence, it is like Jacob, it is hanging on to God and saying, “I won't let go till You bless me.” And he's beseeching, and beseeching, and beseeching, day and night. And that's the one kind.

And then it's interesting to note that he's brought before King Artaxerxes in chapter 2. Let's look at it. Verse 1: “It came to pass in the month Nisan, the twentieth year of Artaxerxes the king, that wine was before him: and I took up the wine, and gave it to the king.” He, of course, was the official wine taster for the king. “Now I had not been sad in his presence. Wherefore the king said to me, ‘Why is your countenance sad, seeing you are not sick? It is nothing else but sorrow of heart.’ Then I was very

much afraid, And said to the king, ‘Let the king live forever’” – which is an official thing you've got to say to kings now and then to keep them happy – “‘Why should not my face be sad, when the city, the place of my father's sepulchers, lieth waste, and its gates are consumed with fire?’

“The king said to me, ‘For what dost thou make request?’” Now watch. “So I prayed to the God of heaven.” Now, here is the other dimension. This isn't prolonged, continual prayer; this is just grabbing a quickie. In other words, he is going to have an opportunity right now to hit a very important moment in his life, so he grabs a prayer. That's that floating God-consciousness that causes Nehemiah to have the first reaction in every situation toward God. So in chapter 1, you see the prolonged idea, and in chapter 2, you see the God-consciousness that makes a man trigger his thought toward God in the moment of stress or the moment of an event. So that's what we're seeing.

Now back to Colossians, chapter 4. We're seeing here in the concept of “continue in prayer” both of those realities. The idea of a continuing concept and the idea of grabbing God into your conscious thought any moment that any event crosses your path. So we learned about that, and we also learned that we are to watch. You can't pray without seeing what's going on, and we are to be thankful. Thanksgiving is a very vital part of prayer. It might be interesting for you to note that you will remember that the apostle Paul, upon the writing of the book of Colossians, was a prisoner. And so when he says, “Continue in prayer and watch in the same with thanksgiving,” it has some guts to it because of his situation; he was a prisoner.

If you'd read Psalm 69, you would find, for one example, the spirit of David, who continually is pouring out his heart to God over a very bad situation, but through it all is woven the spirit of thanksgiving. And the thanksgiving comes because he has absolute confidence that God is going to work things to his benefit. In Psalm 116 – you don't need to look at it, but I'll just read you something here. “Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of His saints. 0 LORD, truly I am Thy servant; I am Thy servant, and the son of Thine handmaid: Thou hast loosed my bonds. I will offer to Thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving.” In other words, “precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints; and even if that happens, I will thank You.”

Now, that's the right attitude – thanksgiving even in death. Here is Paul in prison, still thankful. So the mouth of the new man, then, has the speech of prayer coming from it. It is strong prayer, persistent prayer, watchful prayer, and grateful prayer. Let's look at the second. The second element of speech is the speech, not of prayer, but verse 3 and 4, the speech of proclamation – the speech of proclamation. The new man's mouth utters this – notice in verse 3 – and Paul links it up with prayer as a prayer request: “Praying also for us, that God would open to us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in prison: That I might make it manifest, as I ought to speak.”

Twice you see the word speak. Once you see the word utterance. Once you see the word manifest. And here is the speech of proclamation. Here is the apostle Paul saying, “Pray for me that I may open

my mouth and proclaim." And by allusion here – not, of course, by a direct statement to us – we see that another element in the speech of the new man is the speech of proclamation. Notice the phrase at the end of verse 3: "For which I am also in prison," or "bonds." Paul at this particular point in his life – and I'll give you a little bit of background of the book of Acts. Let's look at it just very briefly. Look at Acts 21, and let's see how Paul got to the place where he is.

In Acts 21, verse 27, Paul had come to Jerusalem and, boy, it had been a long trip getting there, and it had been a very arduous one. He had very lovingly collected money all over the Gentile world to give to the poor saints, and to try to conciliate the Jews in the church there with the Gentile believers. And he had done some great, great things to get over the hump of getting this thing accomplished. And he finally arrived with great joy in Jerusalem, and no sooner had he gotten there than all chaos broke loose. Verse 27: "After the seven days" – of a vow he was involved in – "had ended nearly, the Jews of Asia, when they saw him in the temple, stirred up the people, laid hands on him, Crying out, 'Men of Israel, help.

"'This is the man, that teaches all men everywhere are against the people, and the law, and this place'" – that is, the temple – "'and further he brought Greeks into the temple, and has polluted the holy place.'" Which, of course, is not true; it simply says they had seen him in the city with Trophimus an Ephesian, and they supposed Paul had brought him to the temple. "And all the city was moved, and the people ran together: and took Paul, and drew him out of the temple: and at once the doors were shut. And they went about to kill him," verse 31. Well, that was the beginning of the imprisonment of Paul. He was taken as a prisoner there, kept in prison, made a defense, he finally was delivered out of Jerusalem because it was too dangerous for them because of the plots to kill him.

He was taken to Caesarea, which was on the coast, and Caesarea was the Roman-occupied city where they had set up their rule for the land. He was there for a while, and he gave some great speeches there, defending himself to Felix and Festus and Agrippa, and finally realizing that he wasn't going to get anywhere there, he appealed to Rome, and they put him on a ship and sent him to Rome. Remember that? And on the journey to Rome, he went through all that tremendous problem at sea, the shipwreck, and further on in the book, as you get into chapter 27, you read about that. Finally, in chapter 28, he arrives in Rome.

Now, when we get him to Rome, it tells us a little bit about what happen to him in relation to his being a prisoner. Look at verse 16 of 28; Acts 28:16. "And when we came to Rome, the centurion" – that would be a soldier over a hundred men – "delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard: Paul was permitted to dwell by himself with a soldier that kept him." Apparently, Paul was allowed a hired house, or a rented house, in which he was kept prisoner, and tied to a soldier or soldiers that would come and go, and guard him. Verse 30 of the same chapter: "And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him." All right, now you can go back to

Colossians.

So we find the apostle Paul in that two year imprisonment when he writes the book of Colossians. He uses his chains as a means to accomplish his ministry. He gets a lot of letter-writing done, because he's not doing much traveling. And another thing he gets a lot of done is a lot of evangelizing of soldiers. The soldiers that came and went were no doubt evangelized. He says in Philippians 1:13 – he also wrote Philippians during the same two years – “So that my bonds or my chains in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places.” He says, “This is the greatest platform I've ever had. They just keep sending me soldiers, I keep winning them to Christ and sending them back, and they keep winning others.”

And crowds of people were coming to his own hired house, and he was preaching the gospel. Philippians 4:22 says, “All the saints greet you, chiefly they that are of Caesar's household.” He had even won some of the people in Caesar's household. Now, if you were to go backwards again, to the last verse of the book of Acts, Acts 28:31, it says this; “During the two whole years, he was preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concerned the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence” – and this great statement – “no man forbidding him.” For two years, with imprisonment as a platform, he preached and taught, and the prayer request in chapter 4 was answered, so that he had an open door, and nobody, during that whole time, ever forbid him to preach. All the time of his bondage was a time of proclamation.

In Acts 21, when he was first taken prisoner, he gave a great sermon before the mob. Read it. It's a masterpiece. In Acts 24, he stood before Felix, the governor, and gave a great message. In Acts 26, before Herod Agrippa, he gave another great message concerning the truth, including his wonderful testimony of his conversion. In Acts, chapter 28, when he arrived as a prisoner in his own house, the first thing he did was call all the Jews together, so he could evangelize them to start with. And he called them all to his house in Acts 28:17 and they had a great time of Jewish evangelism, to start off his imprisonment. The man never had a negative thought in his mind. Everything was only an opportunity. He was always proclaiming. The only time his voice was silent was when the axe cut his head off. What a great lesson.

There are no negative circumstances, only unique opportunities. Some of you read in *Grace to You* the letter I received from Charles “Tex” Watson, who was one of the Manson family who was in prison. It's kind of a marvelous story to realize I got a letter out of the blue one day, and he said, “I want you to know that I've gotten some of your tapes, and I'm growing in the Lord, and received Jesus Christ as my Savior, and I've got a Bible study going in the prison.” And I wrote him back, and he's since written me back again. And I understand he's corresponded with some other people here at Grace Church. What's kind of exciting is that he says, “This is a great place to minister. If the Lord wants me out, that's His business, if He wants me here, that's His business, too. I'm happy wherever, as long as I'm able to preach for Him.”

Now, that's transformation, folks. And that's the attitude of Paul; anywhere was a pulpit. Anywhere – and Paul was dynamic enough to create problems, to stir up the town. There never was a negative opportunity. Anybody who says, “Well, I'd like to do some proclaiming, but my circumstances don't permit it. It’s not your circumstances that don't permit it, it's something else. It was a strategic thing in the city of Rome. You know, the golden days of Rome were gone. The dictators had gradually usurped all the power of the people, and the republic was dead. Despotism ruled, and the worst of them all was ruling at this time, a man by the name of Nero, and when the apostle Paul arrived in Rome, Nero would have been around 25 years old.

And he would already have been responsible for the bloody murder of his mother, Agrippina, and most assuredly he had also by this time murdered his wife, Octavia. In the middle of all of this stood the temple of Jupiter, and the false worship that went on there. And on the palatine were the three great palaces of Augustus, Tiberius, and Caligula, and they had been all lumped together to form the one home for Nero. And Rome had become the center of decadence and paganism. There were approximately two million people living in the city. More than half of them, one million or better, were slaves, and historians tell us that of the rest, 700 were senators, 10,000 were knights, 15,000 were soldiers, and the majority of the rest were poor, thousands of whom slept in the streets because they had no homes.

And into this melee, and into this debauchery, and into this problemed area, dropped this little Jewish bomb; and even though he was a prisoner, and even though he was locked up in his own house, that never hindered his proclamation at all. During this time, he wrote Colossians. During this time, he wrote Ephesians. During this time, he wrote Philippians. During this time, he wrote Philemon. It was a productive time. And so he says here, “Praying also for us, that God would get us out of this” – no – you don't see that. He didn't pray for where his body was. He only prayed that his mouth would have an effect. So he says, “Pray for us, that God will open to us a door of” – what – “of utterance, of speech, to speak the mystery of Christ.”

Pray for us is kind of nice. The plural pronoun means he probably was including some of his buddies who were with him, and if you look at the end of chapter 4, you'll see a list of names. And at one time or another, those dear coworkers of Paul were with him. And so he's saying, “Pray for us, and especially that we would speak the mystery of Christ.” It's a man with one thing in his mind, one thing, and that was to speak. Why pray for Paul that God would open to us a door of utterance? Literally, the Greek says, “a door for the Word” – a door for the Word. In Ephesians 6:19, a similar prayer, he writes to the Ephesians, and of course he wrote this book at the same period of time, so it has much similarity.

He says in Ephesians 6:19, “Pray for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel, For which I am an ambassador in bonds: that

I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak." Pray for me that I might be bold; pray for me that a door for the Word might be opened up. This man was aware that he was on the battleground in the forefront, out in the trenches, fighting as an infantryman. He didn't ask to pray for his personal needs. He didn't say, "Pray for me that I'll hold up under the stress." He didn't say, "Pray for me that I get released from prison." He just said, "Pray for me, that I'll open my mouth, and find a door for the Word" – boldness.

Nothing's really changed, people. You go all the way back to the book of Acts, and when the church was born, the first prayer meeting they ever had in which the events of the prayer meeting and the requests they prayed for are recorded, are recorded in Acts, chapter 4, verse 29. They had other prayer meetings. The first time we know what they prayed for is Acts 4:29. "And now, Lord, behold their threatenings." Lord, the whole town is after our hide. "And grant unto thy servants, that we may get out of this mess alive." Nope - didn't say that. "Grant to thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak Thy Word."

And verse 31, "When they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled; they were filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the Word of God with boldness. And the multitude of those that believed were of one heart and one mind." The first time we know a prayer request of the early church, it's a prayer for utterance, it's a prayer for boldness, it's a prayer for proclamation. The mouth of the new man should speak the gospel. I've often said that Christians, unfortunately, are like the Arctic River, frozen over at the mouth. Somehow, because of some inhibition, because of some fears, we are lost to the effort of evangelism unless we are poked and jabbed and prodded continually.

We have a wonderful thing going on in our church, a wonderful evangelism ministry, and we've seen people come to Christ week after week after week. Many of you don't even know about it. Jim George, who handles that ministry, said to me the other day, "You know, John, we're praying that God will give us just 30 men; 30 men who'd be willing to be trained, and to go out two-by-two" – or whatever pattern they use, three-by-three – to win people to Christ. Would you pray with us," he said, "that God will give us those 30 men?" I said, "I will." You'd think out of a congregation of 4,000, there would be 30 who would be challenged with the opportunity of speaking the proclamation of the gospel.

I know how Paul feels, because I fight the same battle. How you desire above everything else that there would be a door for the Word of God; that you would have an opportunity to speak. And you have this terrible fear that in your own strength you can't do it. It's like Moses. And God said, "Moses, speak for Me." And Moses said, "I can't - I stutter. What am I going to do?" And God says, "Who made your mouth?" In other words, God says, "If I made it I can make it work. Just trust me." And Jeremiah had the same problem. Jeremiah said, "If you think I'm going to get involved in this ministry by myself, you've got another think coming. Ah, Lord God, I can't speak," he said. God said, "Don't worry about it - I can do it through you."

And so Paul is saying, “Look, I can't do it on my own, so the Lord's going to have to provide a door for the Word.” Now, a door in the New Testament means an opportunity. The ninth verse of 1 Corinthians 16, Paul says, “I'll tarry at Ephesus till Pentecost, for a great door and effectual is open to me.” In other words, he says, “I'm going to stick around Ephesus, it's too good here. I mean, the door is wide open.” And the door means opportunity. The reason he lingered in Ephesus for so long a time – well over two years, and nigh unto three – was because the opportunity was so great. “A door is open for me.”

Now, God had closed some doors in Paul's life. If you read Acts 16, he started to go into Asia Minor, and the Spirit stopped him. He started to go into Bithynia, and the Spirit stopped him. So the Lord had closed doors, and Paul knew that.

But the Lord had also opened doors. He was closed to the east, because he had just been there. He was closed to the south, because the Spirit stopped him. He was closed to the north. The only way to go was to the west, and he got to the west, and he got to the Aegean Sea, and he said, “Now what, Lord?” And a man of Macedonia came in a vision, said, “Come on over and help us,” and God opened the door. So he was used to God opening and closing doors of opportunity. And, you see, that's God's business. Paul says, “Just pray that God will give me an open door for the Word.” You know, beloved, that's really all you need to pray about, if you've got the courage to do it. Just pray for open doors. Pray for opportunities.

It takes a little courage to do that, ’cause you're going to get them if you do, and you're going to feel responsible. It's God's business to open doors. In Revelation, chapter 3, verse 7, it says this: “To the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: These things saith He that is holy, He that is true, He that has the key of David, He that opens” – that's Christ – “and no man shuts; and shuts, and no man opens.” When the Lord shuts a door, it's shut. When the Lord opens a door, it's open. He says, “I know your works: I have set before you an open door. You think The Church of the Open Door is in Los Angeles. No, the church of the open door is in Philadelphia, not Philadelphia, PA, but Philadelphia AM, Asia Minor.

That's the first church of the open door. God gave them an open door, and said, “Nobody will shut it if I open it. You've got an open door for the Word. All I'm asking you to do is proclaim it.” I would say that probably the best parallel to the church at Philadelphia would be Grace Community Church or any other church in our country. People, we have an open door, don't we? There's no man that can forbid us to preach, is there? There's no law to stop us. There's nothing to prevent it, except our own indolence, our own unfaithfulness, our own self-will. In Acts, chapter 12, Rome had padlocked the prison doors and set a guard on Peter, but the Lord opened them because the Lord wanted him to preach.

In Acts 14, Paul was beaten and stoned at Lystra, but God raised him up and sent him back into town, because He wanted him to preach. He returned to his brother at Antioch, and he testified to the church there that all that God had done with them, and how He had opened the door to the Gentiles. God has opened the door for us. It's up to us to open our mouths and speak. The speech of the new man is a speech of proclamation. You know, you've got to push a little bit. I mean the door may be open, but you might have to just kind of push it aside. A young country boy came to apply for a job in the big city. He was awed by this big building that he went in. And he went in to the prospective employer, sat down for his interview, and the employer said: “Do you have a motto in life, young man?” “Yes sir, same as yours,” he said. “Well, what do you mean, son?” “Saw it on the door, sir – PUSH.”

That's a good motto. PUSH, it might be open. You'll find out if it isn't. And Paul is shoving here, and he says, “God, I hope this is open.” Notice the word utterance there in Colossians really means Word. He is saying, “an open door for the Word.” I love the fact that Paul never bothered to share his opinion. Paul always taught the Word. And you know how I feel about that. One thing you're going to have when you come to Grace Church is you're going to have the Word, because that's what we're all about, teaching the Word. And what about it was he teaching? Well, look at verse 3: “To speak the mystery of Christ.” And we've studied enough to know what the mystery of Christ is. It's all the gospel, and all that it embodies.

All those sacred secrets, hidden in the Old Testament, revealed in the New. All the truths about Jesus Christ – that He indwells the believer. That's the mystery of the indwelling Christ, in Colossians 1:26 and 27. That He is God incarnate. That's the mystery of the incarnation, in Colossians 2:2 and 3. The mystery of the Rapture, that Jesus is going to return for His church, I Corinthians 15:51 and 52. The mystery of the bride, that He's going to unite Himself with us in an eternal way, as the bride and object of His love, Ephesians 5. The mystery of iniquity, that He's going to come and put an end to the fullness of sin, 2 Thessalonians 2:7. All of those sacred secrets are revealed in the New Testament in the gospel of Christ.

And the mystery of the one church, Jew and Gentile, one in Him. In other words, Paul says, “Pray for me, that I may have a door for the Word, to speak the full truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ.” It's so important. He says in verse 4; “That I may make it manifest as I ought to speak.” Notice the word ought; he had a divine ought in his life. Read Romans, chapter 1. He says, “I'm not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: it's the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes; the Jew first, and also to the heathen.” Earlier he had said, “I must speak, I am compelled to speak. I am a debtor” – remember that – “to Jew and Gentile.” And then in 1 Corinthians, chapter 9, that great passage where he says, ”Woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel.”

He doesn't care about liberty for his feet, if he has liberty for his mouth. And he wants to do it right. “I want to do it the way it ought to be done. I want to make it manifest the way it ought to be made manifest. I want to speak the fullness of that mystery.” Listen, beloved, God wants you to proclaim Christ, but He wants you to proclaim Christ as it ought to be done. And I see two thoughts in that phrase “I ought to speak” - that's the ought of doing it, and that's the ought of speaking it the way it ought to be spoken. I'm afraid sometimes that a good message proclaimed in a bad way will do just about as much as a bad message. Paul wants prayer about his own motivation, to speak the way he should, and about doing it right, to speak the way he should speak about the gospel.

Whenever I have a pastor's conference I warn pastors about how to present the gospel. It's so very easy to present less than the gospel, and then ask people to commit their lives to something they don't even understand. In Acts, chapter 20, when Paul talked about how he preached, he said; “I testify.” And he used the Greek word *diamarturomai*, which means to give thorough and complete testimony about repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. In other words, I give thorough testimony, no half-baked evangelism. And I tell pastors, “Watch out for three things in evangelism. Watch out for experience-centered evangelism. That's where you never really preach the gospel; you just have somebody give the story of how their life was changed.

I remember picking up a paper that came to the church office – we get a lot of different papers that come, and they mail – every Christian organization in the country, about, sends us their paper, and their information. But one that we got had a deal in it called “How to Build Your Sunday Night Service,” and it said, “Have testimonies from strange and different people.” And it suggested one who was excellent was a 38-inch-tall midget, who would come and stand on your pulpit and really give a zinger. And over here we have the tattooed lady, and over here we have the sword-swallower, you know, and you've got the whole side show. Well, I'm happy for the 38-inch-tall lady.

But I'll tell you, one of the dangers in evangelism is getting people to respond to a testimony rather than to thorough information about the gospel so that they really don't know what they're responding to, and they get vaccinated. And somebody later says, “Oh, I want to tell you about Christ.” “I tried it. It doesn't work.” The second thing is you want to avoid ego-centered evangelism. The idea that – “how would you like, how would you like, how would you like, how would you like, how would you like it? Wouldn't you like it? Wouldn't this make it happy?” So – you know. I had an occasion to receive a phone call from somebody, who said to me on one occasion, “I've just had the most terrible thing happen to me.

“I tried to lead this person to Christ, and oh, she had all these problems, and a very conscientious person, a very dear person. And I told her, “Christ could solve your problems, and Christ can heal your marriage, and Christ can bring back your son – who was in a mental institution – and Christ can do all of this for you,” and she received Christ. Who wouldn't under those conditions? And a couple of weeks later, she came back, and she threw Jesus in this lady's face, and she said, “Your Jesus

doesn't work.” See? Well, I mean that's not really fair to do. I know some people who just got saved, and their troubles started. Don't promise people that. That isn't the gospel.

So avoid experience-centered evangelism, avoid ego-centered evangelism, and by all means, avoid expedience-evangelism, where all you want's a commitment, no matter what they know. Make sure you don't just run the quickie by them, to get them to the commitment. I always remember the guy in the church who brought me a copy of the *Hollywood Reporter* that had an advertisement for that biblical Disneyland they were trying to build. You know, they had all those crazy things – they were a $26 million biblical Disneyland. One time I was telling this to a group of pastors, and the guy who was doing that was there. I'll never forget it. Boy, he was really not too thrilled. He had told the pastors about it, apparently. I get into those things now and then. But anyway, but you've got to watch it.

This guy was trying to build a biblical Disneyland, and he had some ads in the *Hollywood Reporter,* a trade paper for the movie industry, and he was trying to recruit people to get into this thing. And it was a very serious thing; he paid money for a big ad, and it had they needed certain people who could design a Red Sea that parted, and they wanted a guy who was 7 feet, at least, to play Goliath, and they wanted a kid who was good with a sling-shot, and, you know, all those kinds of things. They wanted all kinds of, you know, various and sundry things. They wanted somebody to build a whale; they were going to have a whale ride. And I don't know, it was crazy stuff, you know. But the key thing that just knocked me over flat out in the patio – I'll never forget it – right out there I was reading it.

It said, “Wanted: male, tall, dark, handsome, over 6 feet, to play the part of Jesus; must know *Four Spiritual Laws*.” Nothing wrong with the *Four Spiritual Laws*, but when the world thinks that's what Jesus knows, somehow they've gotten the quickie without getting the whole message. Avoid experience-centered evangelism, ego-centered evangelism, and expedience evangelism. Don't work just for a commitment, don't work just to try to pacify people's problems, and don't try to get somebody hooked just because you got hooked. Give them the truth in its totality, so that they're making an intelligent response to the total testimony concerning Christ. And that, of course, is the way verse 4 is really hitting me, that I may make it manifest as I ought to speak.

I want this gospel to be – the word manifest means clear – in the way that it ought to be clear. So Paul says, “Pray that God will give us doors of utterance.” The new man, then, is going to have the speech of prayer, and the speech of proclamation. Thirdly, verse 5, the new man is going to have the speech of performance – the speech of performance. Now, this departs from the mouth a little bit, but really is the most essential speech of all. We're not going to spend a lot of time in it, let me just give it to you generally; verse 5: “Walk in wisdom toward them that are outside, redeeming the time.” Now, here he's talking about the speech of performance, or if you like, the speech of behavior.

You want to know something? The most important thing you say is not what you say, it's what you are. Is that right? Because it's what you are that gives credibility to what you say. The old line I

remember my dad saying so many times when I was a kid, your life speaks so loud I can't hear what you're saying. That's essentially what we are talking about. “Walk” – look at verse 5. Walk, walk, remember walk comes before talk. Walk comes before talk. Now he says, “Walk in wisdom.” What is wisdom? Properly evaluating circumstances and making godly decisions. Walk with a carefully planned, consistent, Christian lifestyle. And if you have any question about what that walk is, you can just look at the book of Ephesians, chapter 4, 5 and 6, and it will tell you all about it.

Walk in wisdom. We can walk in wisdom because we have that basic wisdom. Colossians 1:9, we saw that. “For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and desire that you might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; That you might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing.” You have been saved, you have been given wisdom; you need to be filled with that wisdom that you might walk in it. You know, a Christian can walk like a fool. And then when he tries to talk, nobody believes him – nobody hears, nobody listens. We've been given wisdom. Sometimes we turn our back on it.

You say, “Well, how can a Christian play the fool?” Well, one way to walk like a fool is in 1 Timothy 6:9: “But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and many foolish and hurtful lusts.” One way to play the part of the fool is live for money. That will confuse your testimony to the point where nobody will understand what you say. Another way to play the fool is to try to live the Christian life legalistically. In Galatians, chapter 3, verse 1: “0 foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth?” Verse 3, “Are you so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, you think you are made perfect by” – what – “by the flesh.” You want to be foolish? Then work in the flesh. Function in the flesh, operate in your own strength, or live for money. There's just a couple of ways that a Christian can play the part of a fool.

Another way is in James 3, where he says, “Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you?” I'll tell you who –“The one who shows out of a good life his works.” You know how you can tell a wise man? The way he behaves. “But if you have bitter envy, strife” – hmm, that's not wise. That's foolish – “confusion, every evil work.” Oh, we see another way the Christian can play the fool – by envy, strife, division, confusion. You see, these are just ways the Christian can play the fool in his lifestyle. But Paul is saying here, “Don't do that. Walk in wisdom.” And what is wisdom? Right here, isn't it? Set your priorities according to the book. Set your priorities according to God's pattern.

Let me just give you four hints that will help you, four ways to get wisdom. Number one: worship – worship. “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of” – what – “wisdom,” Proverbs 9:10. When you begin to really worship God, that's wise. That's where wisdom begins. Secondly, prayer. James says, “If any man lack wisdom, let him” – what – “ask.” Worship, ask; I'll tell you another way. Study. You will gain God's wisdom when you study God's truth. Colossians, chapter 2, verse 2: “That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, Christ; In whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom

and knowledge." All right, it's in Christ that all wisdom exists.

Now go to 3:16. If it's in Christ that all wisdom exists, then 3:16 says, "Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly in all" – what – "wisdom." You're getting wisdom by worship, prayer, study, and one other way - instruction from godly teachers. Colossians 1, verse 28: "Christ whom we preach, warning every man, teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus." Now listen, there are some sources in the Christian life for gaining wisdom. Through the act of worshipping God, God imparts to us His wisdom. Through prayer, through study, through instruction from godly teachers, that wisdom is available, that wisdom is to be maintained, and that wisdom is to issue in a wise lifestyle.

Not the foolishness of living for money. Not the foolishness of living legalistically. Not the foolishness of living according to the carnal mind, as in James 3. But the wisdom of walking according to the truth of God's Word. And you know what happens? When you walk in wisdom toward them on the outside, then what you say is going to mean something; and, frankly, not until. Just think about the Colossians, how did they advertise their faith? First place, they were a minority; I mean a little tiny minority. They had no church building. They had no building. No big cross in the air. No billboards. No radio. No signs. No bumper stickers. No tracts. No books. No musical productions. No New Testament. Nothing.

You say, "My, how did they make it? I suppose they didn't even have a Bible bookstore. Hmm - no fish symbols? What did they hang around their necks in those days? How did they get the message out?" You want to know how they got the message out? They got the message in and they lived it, and that was, and still is, the only credible method of evangelism in the world. Walk, then talk. And you can be on TV, radio, billboards, bumper stickers, till you're purple, but if Christians don't live it, nobody's going to buy it. It isn't any different today. All that stuff does – and I'm not against that stuff – but all it does is confirm or deny the reality of Christianity that people read in the life of the Christian they know. That's all.

So he says, "Walk in wisdom toward them that are on the outside." Non-Christians. Believers are on the inside. Now he says, "Redeeming the time." Well, what do you mean, Paul? Time there is not *kronos*, from which we chronology or chronograph, which means time in terms of clock time. It is *kairos*, which means time only in terms of its opportunity. It should translate "redeeming every opportunity." Psalm 90: "So teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts to wisdom." It's a matter of buying opportunity. Boy, I tell you, opportunity is here and gone. Life is short. People are dying. You're dying. Jesus is coming.

The Bible talks about the door being shut. The Bible talks about the night that's coming, when no man can work. The Bible talks about Jesus removing the candlestick. Romans 13 - read it – verses 11 to 14, it's a tremendously potent passage. It warns us that there's a time coming when it isn't going to be

possible, knowing the time, that it is high time to wake out of sleep: the night is far spent, the day is at hand: cast off the works of darkness, put on the armor of light. Walk honestly. It's time to get your lifestyle connected up with your message, people. Not in wild parties, drunkenness, immorality, wantonness, strife, envying, but put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and don't make provision for the flesh. You see, it's time to get the lifestyle shaped up.

When are you going to begin to live the way God wants? How much opportunity are you going to squander? When are you going to begin to share Christ with that friend? When are you going to use those abilities and gifts God's given you? When is God going to receive that money that you promised Him long ago? Your walk talks. I hope it says the right thing to those on the outside. Every time you have an opportunity, redeem or buy up that opportunity. Purchase it for eternity. Life is so short. It's so stupid for the Christian to waste it. So the new man has a new mouth. And that new mouth has a speech of prayer, a speech of proclamation, and then the speech of performance, which makes what he says believable. That leads us to the fourth - the speech of perfection.

Consistency of life is followed by consistency of speech. I love this verse; I wish we had more time. “Let your speech be always with grace.” Remember what I read you earlier from Luke about the speech of Jesus? He opened His mouth, and it was always gracious. “Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer every man.” Now, he's not so much talking about preaching the gospel here. He's just talking about general conversation. The mouth of a Christian should utter the speech of perfection. Never out of the mouth of a Christian should come that stuff that I listed for you last week: lust, evil, deceit, cursing, oppression, lying, perversity, destruction, vanity, flattery, foolishness, babble, madness, verbosity, idle talk, false teaching, plotting, boasting, hatred, swearing, filthy talk, or gossip.

That's all characteristic of an unregenerate mouth, not a Christian. Let your speech be always with grace. Make gracious speech a habit, whether you're being persecuted, whether it's a stress situation, whether it's difficulty, whether you're before a worldly judge, whether you've been wronged. Whether it's with your wife, whether it's with your child, your neighbor, whether you're teaching a Bible study, whether you're leading a class, whatever it is, let your speech be gracious. You say, “Well, John, what do you mean talk with grace; do you mean speak the grace of God?” That's not primarily what it means. It means let your mouth speak what is spiritual, what is wholesome. What is fitting, what is kind, what is sensitive. What is purposeful, what is complimenting, what is gentle, what is truthful, what is loving, what is thoughtful. Not bitter, abrasive, vindictive, sarcastic, shady, angry, cutting, boastful, none of those things. Let it be gracious.

But just so you don't come off as sort of a dribbling out all the niceties only, he adds this: “Seasoned with salt.” Not just gracious, but it ought to have some kind of effect. Now, what do you mean, seasoned with salt? Well, salt does a lot of things. It stings, once in a while, when there's a wound, right? But after it does stinging, what does it do? It heals. Salt also prevents corruption. And your

speech should be a purifier that prevents corruption. Your speech should act as a purifying, wholesome, cleansing influence, rescuing conversation from the filth that so often engulfs it. Ephesians 4:29 says the very same thing. Let your speech be gentle, gracious, thoughtful, but let it sting when it needs to.

When there's a wound to be healed, let it go right to the sore. And let it be that which is pure and beautiful to rescue a conversation from corruption. The Greeks had another thought here. They said the idea of salt was the idea of wit. And wit is the ability to say just the right thing at just the right time. And isn't that what he's saying? “That you may know how you ought to answer every man.” You've got just the right answer for just the right time, and just the right person. The Greeks would translate this as Plutarch did, charm and wit. The right word at the right time to the right person, the speech of perfection. Never filthy communication, always answering every man who asks, a reason for the hope that is in you, 1 Peter 3.

But just in conversation being able to say that right thing; your mouth is so important. It's got to come to that sooner or later where you speak the truth, and by what you say you either open the opportunity or close it so many times. Listen, the ungodly claims this in Psalm 12:4: “Our lips are our own; who is Lord over us?” Who can rule me? I can say anything I want. But the Christian says this, Psalm 141:3: “Set a watch, 0 Lord, before my mouth, and keep the door of my lips.” What comes out of your lips – prayer, proclamation, the speech of perfection? Just the right thing at the right time for the right person – that's the way the new man talks. You're a new man, did you know that? And along with those other things, with your new lifestyle should come a new speech.

Let me remind you of something as we close. The problem with you – and I know what it is. You say, “You don't know me.” Oh yeah, I know you. I know your problem. The same problem I've got. The problem with us new people, new creatures, is not that we have two natures, the good and the bad, the old and the new. The problem is the new nature, the new I, has been so strongly influenced by the flesh that it just can't shake it. An illustration. You might take a whiskey bottle – you don't have to actually do this, this is an illustration. You might take a whiskey bottle and empty it – you could do that. Reminds me of a preacher who said, “If I had all the whiskey, I'd dump it in the river. The preacher got up and said, “Now for our invitation, we'll sing, “Shall We Gather at the River.”

Anyway – for the sake of illustration, you might take a whiskey bottle and dump out all its contents. Empty it of all that rot that's in there. And you know what happens? Smell it. It stinks. The odor remains. You want to know something? That's not unlike a Christian. You are a new creature; the old contents are gone, you are new, but you know something? Some of the old stink is there. Some of the old odor is there, some of the old scent. You pour into that whiskey bottle that you've got there a fresh water supply, and then you pour it out. And you pour more in, you pour – and you just keep filling it, keep filling it, keep filling it, keep filling it. And little by little by little by little, the smell will fade.

The more the filling, the more the cleansing. The more the cleansing, the less the scent. You're a Christian, the old is poured out, the smell of the old is still there. The more you're filled with the Spirit, the more you're filled with the Spirit, the more you're filled with the Spirit, the more the cleansing; the more the cleansing, the less the scent. The less the scent, the more you mature, the less recognizable it is that you ever even were an old whiskey bottle. You're new men, but you've got an old scent. It's got to be removed. How's it going to be removed? Look what he says. “Put off some things,” remember those? Chapter 3: “Put on some things.” Chapter 3, verse 15: “Let the peace of Christ rule.” Verse 16: “Let the Word of Christ dwell.” Verse 17: “Let the name of Christ rule.”

Take care how you live in the family; wives, husband, children, father, servants, masters. Take care of your mouth, as we saw in our study, from verses 2 to 6 of chapter 4. And when you take care of all of those things, in the energy of the Spirit of God, then the new man is going to be the man that God created the new man to be. Listen, beloved, Christ is sufficient, isn't He? He's sufficient to make you a new creature. And when you've been made a new creature He asks that you have the aroma of a new creature, and that means taking care of some of those old things by the cleansing agency of the filling of the Spirit of God as you yield to Him. Well, let's pray.

We thank You, our Father, tonight, for a good time of fellowship, for how You've ministered to our hearts, and how enriched we've been just as we've shared with our college people, and as we've shared in Your Word. Thank You for the patience of these dear folks who have gathered, and I pray that You will reward them according to their faithfulness and their faith by Your abundant grace and blessing. And that You'll enrich our hearts because of the love we've seen tonight, fellowship we've shared, the Word we've heard. We'll give You all the glory and the praise in Jesus name. Amen.

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