



Silverdale Baptist

VICTORY IN RELATIONSHIPS ~ VICTORY IN RELATIONSHIPS WITH NON-CHRISTIANS
COLOSSIANS 4:2-6 ~ 05/20-12/2023

Big Idea

Victory in relationships with non-Christians starts with actually having a relationship with non-Christians. We develop relationships with non-Christians and pray for God to open their eyes to see Him.

Getting Started

How many non-Christians would you say you have a relationship with?

As Pastor Tony said, God's heart is for the whole world. The Apostle Paul asked how the world will know about God unless someone tells them (Rom 10:14). Most of us are more willing to listen to someone we have a relationship with. So, how do we have victory in relationships with people outside of the kingdom of God? Let's find out.

Learn

"There are two kinds of people in the world, those inside the kingdom of God and those outside the kingdom of God." – Pastor Tony.

Be watchful as you pray for outsiders.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ Colossians 4:2-6.

What is the main idea of this paragraph?

1. Ask God to open their hearts to the Lord.

Prayer is the repeated word in verses 2 and 3. Specifically, what does Paul say about prayer, and what does he request prayer for?

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 2 CORINTHIANS 4:4.

How does this verse help us understand the need to pray for the lost?

2. Ask God to open up a door of opportunity.

Paul wrote the letter to the church in the town of Colossae from prison. Even though he is in prison, what is Paul's prayer request? (verse 3)

How would you want the church to pray if you were in prison?

Be wise as you engage outsiders.

1. Walk consistently.
2. Live purposefully.
3. Speak graciously.

Pastor Tony gave us three principles from verses 5-6 to help us engage outsiders.

In verses 5-6, how does Paul tell us to act toward outsiders?

What does Paul mean when he tells us to make the best use of our time with outsiders?

How does Paul illustrate a conversation full of grace?

How does salt help as a seasoning?

How do we have victory in relationships with outsiders? We pray for them, and we speak kindly to them.

Apply

How can you apply Paul's example of praying for an open door to share the gospel?

What does it look like for you to act wisely toward those outside of Christ?

Pastor Tony talked about a *Most Wanted for Jesus* list. Who will you put on your list to pray for?

Have you seen someone you had been praying for surrender to Christ? Would you share the story with the group?

Pray

Father, show us who to pray for and keep us alert to opportunities to share the gospel. Amen.

Dig Deeper

Colossians 4:2–9

Never underestimate the power of speech.

A judge says a few words, and a man's life is saved or condemned. A doctor speaks a few words, and a patient either rejoices ecstatically or gives up in despair. Whether the communication is oral or written, there is great power in words. I am told that for every word in Adolph Hitler's book *Mein Kampf*, 125 persons lost their lives in World War II.

The power of speech is a gift from God, and it must be used the way God ordains. In the Book of James, the tongue is compared to a bridle and a rudder, a fire and a poisonous animal, and a fruitful tree and a fountain (James 3). These three pairs of pictures teach us that the tongue has the power to direct, the power to destroy, and the power to delight. The tongue is but a little member in our bodies, but it can accomplish great things for good or for evil.

In this brief section, Paul pointed to four important ministries of speech.

Praying (Col. 4:2–3a)

Prayer and worship are perhaps the highest uses of the gift of speech. Paul was not ashamed to ask his friends to pray for him. Even though he was an apostle, he needed prayer support for himself and his ministry. If a great Christian like Paul felt the need for prayer support, how much more do you and I need this kind of spiritual help! In these few words, Paul described the characteristics of a satisfying and spiritual prayer life.

First, our praying must be *faithful*. "Continue in prayer" (Col. 4:2). This means, "Be steadfast in your prayer life; be devoted; don't quit." This is the way the early church prayed (Acts 1:14; 2:46). Too many of us pray only occasionally—when we feel like it or when there is a crisis. "Pray without ceasing" is God's command to us (1 Thes. 5:17). This does not mean that we should walk around muttering prayers under our breath. Rather, it means we should be constantly in fellowship with God so that prayer is as normal to us as breathing.

This is not to suggest that God is reluctant to answer prayer and that we must "wear Him out" by our praying. Quite the opposite is true: God enjoys answering our prayers. But He sometimes delays the answer to increase our faith and devotion and to accomplish His purposes at the right time. God's delays are not always God's denials. As we continue in prayer, our own hearts are prepared for the answer God will give. We find ourselves growing in grace even before His answer comes.

Our praying must also be *watchful*. We must be awake and alert as we pray. The phrase "Watch and pray!" is used often in the Bible. It had its beginning in Bible history when Nehemiah was rebuilding the

walls and gates of Jerusalem: “Nevertheless we made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch against them [the enemy] day and night” (Neh. 4:9). Jesus used the phrase (Mark 13:33; 14:38); Paul used it too (Eph. 6:18).

There is no power in dull, listless praying. If there is no fire on the altar, the incense will not rise to God (Ps. 141:2). Real praying demands spiritual energy and alertness, and this can come only from the Holy Spirit of God. Routine prayers are unanswered prayers.

Our praying should also be *thankful*: “Watch in the same with thanksgiving” (Col. 4:2). Thanksgiving is an important ingredient in successful praying (Phil. 4:6). If all we do is ask, and never thank God for His gifts, we are selfish. Sincere gratitude to God is one of the best ways to put fervor into our praying.

There is always so much to be thankful for! We have already noted the emphasis in Paul’s Letter to the Colossians on thanksgiving (Col. 1:3, 12; 2:7; 3:15, 17; 4:2). When we recall that Paul was a prisoner when he wrote this letter, it makes this emphasis even more wonderful.

Finally, our praying ought to be *purposeful*: “Praying also for us” (Col. 4:3). Too often our prayers are vague and general. “Lord, bless the missionaries!” How much better it would be if we would pray for specific needs. By doing so, we would know when God answered and we could praise Him for it. Perhaps it is our lack of faith that causes us to pray generally instead of specifically.

It has well been said that the purpose of prayer is not to get man’s will done in heaven, but to get God’s will done on earth. Prayer is not telling God what to do or what to give. Prayer is asking God for that which He wants to do and give, according to His will (1 John 5:14–15). As we read the Word and fellowship with our Father, we discover His will and then boldly ask Him to do what He has planned. Richard Trench (1807–1886), archbishop of Dublin, said it perfectly: “Prayer is not overcoming God’s reluctance; it is laying hold of His willingness.”

Of course, it is possible to pray in our hearts and never use the gift of speech (1 Sam. 1:13); but we are using words even if we don’t say them audibly. True prayer must first come from the heart, whether the words are spoken or not.

Study Paul’s prison prayers (Phil. 1:9–11; Eph. 1:15–23; 3:14–21; Col. 1:9–12) for examples of prayer at its best.

Proclaiming the Word (Col. 4:3b–4)

Paul did not ask for the prison doors to be opened, but that doors of ministry might be opened (1 Cor. 16:9; Acts 14:27). It was more important to Paul that he be a faithful minister than a free man. It is worth noting that in all of Paul’s prison prayers, his concern was not for personal safety or material help, but for spiritual character and blessing.

Paul was in prison because of the “mystery of Christ” which related to the Gentiles (see Eph. 3:1–13). The mystery involved God’s purpose for the Gentiles in relation to Israel; for in the church, Jews and Gentiles are one (Eph. 2:11–22). Read the account of Paul’s arrest in the Jewish temple (Acts 21:18–22:30). Note that the Jews listened to Paul till he spoke the word *Gentiles* (Acts 22:21–22). It was Paul’s concern for the Gentiles and his ministry to them that put him into prison.

Even among some believing Jews, there was a kind of bigotry that wanted to force the Gentiles into a lower position (Acts 15:1ff). This extreme legalistic party wanted the Gentiles to become Jews ceremonially before they could become Christians! Paul and Barnabas met this threat to the Gospel of grace head-on and the council decided in their favor. But the legalistic party continued to oppose Paul and his ministry. They did not want the Good News of the mystery of Christ to get to the Gentiles. They wanted to maintain their air of Jewish superiority.

How strange that Paul would want God to help him do the very thing that had caused his arrest! He had no intention of giving up his ministry or of changing his message. When John Bunyan was arrested for preaching illegally and put into prison, he was told that he would be released if he promised to stop preaching. "If I am out of prison today," he replied, "I will preach the Gospel again tomorrow, by the help of God."

How could Paul share the mystery of Christ when he was a prisoner? Paul's case was discussed by many people; Paul was also able to witness to the guards to whom he was chained (Phil. 1:12–18). Imagine being chained to the Apostle Paul! Through this witness, the Gospel was carried into parts of Rome that would have been inaccessible to Paul had he been a free man. There were even "saints in Caesar's household"! (Phil. 4:22)

The proclamation of the Gospel is empowered by prayer. The Spirit of God uses the Word of God as we come to the throne of grace and ask God for His blessing. We must never separate the Word of God from prayer because God has joined them together (Acts 6:4).

A visitor at Spurgeon's Tabernacle in London was being shown around the building by the pastor, Charles Spurgeon.

"Would you like to see the powerhouse of this ministry?" Spurgeon asked, as he showed the man into a lower auditorium. "It is here that we get our power, for while I am preaching upstairs, hundreds of my people are in this room praying." Is it any wonder that God blessed Spurgeon's preaching of the Word?

You, as a church member, can assist your pastor in the preaching of the Word by praying for him. Never say to your pastor, "Well, the least I can do is to pray for you." The *most* you can do is to pray! Pray for your pastor as he prepares the Word, studies, and meditates. Pray that the Holy Spirit will give deeper insights into the truths of the Word. Pray too that your pastor will practice the Word that he preaches so that it will be real in his own life. As he preaches the message, pray that the Spirit will give him freedom of utterance, and that the Word will reach into hearts and minds in a powerful way. (It wouldn't hurt to pray for other church leaders too.)

The proclaiming of the Word of God is a great privilege and a tremendous responsibility. You do not have to be an ordained preacher or a missionary to share God's Word. Even in your daily conversation you can drop the seed of the Word into hearts, and then pray that God will water that seed and bring forth fruit.

Witnessing to the Lost (Col. 4:5–6)

"Them that are without" refers to those who are outside the family of God. Jesus made a distinction between His disciples and those who were outside (Mark 4:11). Paul also made this same distinction (1 Cor. 5:12–13). Those of us who are born again are the "spiritual insiders" because we belong to God's family and share His life.

However, as Christians, we must never have a sanctified superiority complex. We have a responsibility to witness to the lost around us and to seek to bring them into God's family. To begin with, we have the responsibility to *walk wisely* (Col. 4:5). *Walk* refers, of course, to our conduct in daily life. The unsaved outsiders watch us Christians and are very critical of us. There must be nothing in our lives that would jeopardize our testimony.

This story has often been told about Dr. Will H. Houghton, who pastored the Calvary Baptist Church in New York City and later served as president of Chicago's Moody Bible Institute till his death in 1946. When Dr. Houghton became pastor of the Baptist Tabernacle in Atlanta, a man in that city hired a private detective to follow Dr. Houghton and report on his conduct. After a few weeks, the detective was able

to report to the man that Dr. Houghton's life matched his preaching. As a result, that man became a Christian.

What does it mean to "walk in wisdom"? For one thing, it means that we are careful not to say or do anything that would make it difficult to share the Gospel. It also means we must be alert to use the opportunities God gives us for personal witnessing. "Redeeming the time" means buying up the opportunity (Eph. 5:16). This is a commercial term and pictures the Christian as a faithful steward who knows an opportunity when he sees one. Just as a merchant seizes a bargain when he finds one, so a Christian seizes the opportunity to win a soul to Christ.

Walking in wisdom also includes doing our work, paying our bills, and keeping our promises. We must "walk honestly toward them that are without" (1 Thes. 4:12). A friend of mine went into a store to make a purchase for his church. The salesman asked, "Is — a member of your church?" My friend said that he was, and the salesman proceeded to tell him how much money that church member owed his store and how difficult it was to get anything from him. It would probably have been futile for my friend to witness to that clerk.

Christians in general and Christian leaders in particular must have "a good report of them which are without" (1 Tim. 3:7). When members of a church are calling a new pastor, they ought to investigate his testimony among his neighbors and the businessmen who know him. Even though unsaved people are in the dark spiritually (2 Cor. 4:3–4), they have a great deal of discernment when it comes to the things of this life (Luke 16:8). It is unfortunate when members of a church call a pastor who has not paid his bills and has left behind a bad witness to unsaved people.

It is not enough simply to walk wisely and carefully before unbelievers. We must also *talk* with them and share the Gospel message with them. But we must take care that our speech is controlled by *grace*, so that it points to Christ and glorifies the Lord. This means we must have grace in our hearts (Col. 3:16), because it is from the heart that the mouth speaks. With grace in our hearts and on our lips, we will be faithful witnesses and not judges or prosecuting attorneys!

The Lord Jesus Christ spoke with grace on His lips. "And all ... wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth" (Luke 4:22). Among the many statements about Jesus Christ in Psalm 45 (a messianic psalm) is this: "Grace is poured into Thy lips" (Ps. 45:2). Even when our Lord was dealing with sin, He spoke words of grace.

Our speech is supposed to "minister grace unto the hearers" (Eph. 4:29). But it cannot do that unless we have grace in our hearts and in our words. "Speaking the truth in love" (Eph. 4:15) is God's ideal for our conversation.

Why did Paul add "seasoned with salt"? (Col. 4:6) In that day, salt was used as a preservative as well as a seasoner. We should never say to anyone, "Now, take this with a grain of salt." We must put the salt into our speech to make sure it is pure and properly seasoned. "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth" (Eph. 4:29). Our speech must be pure.

Salt was also added to the sacrifices (Lev. 2:13). Perhaps Paul was suggesting that we look on our words as sacrifices offered to God, just as our words of praise are spiritual sacrifices (Heb. 13:15). It would no doubt help us to say the right things in the right manner if we remembered that our words are looked on as sacrifices to God.

It is unfortunate when a Christian speaks in a rude or coarse manner, particularly when the unsaved are listening. "Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear" (1 Peter 3:15). Meekness is the opposite of harshness, and fear is the opposite of arrogance. There is no place in a Christian's conversation for a know-it-all attitude. While we need to have convictions and not compromise, we must also cultivate a gracious spirit of love.

The Christian's *walk* and *talk* must be in harmony with each other. Nothing will silence the lips like a careless life. When character, conduct, and conversation are all working together, it makes for a powerful witness.¹

¹ Warren W. Wiersbe, [*The Bible Exposition Commentary*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 145–148.