

99-03-12b Colossians

Let's resume our study now in Colossians chapter 4. Having reviewed and I think gotten a grasp on why this particular section at the end of chapter 3 is there with these very personal and very immediate relationships between husband and wife, between children and parents, between servants and masters and the third thing you notice as we looked at this last week that the section on servants and masters that begins in verse 22 and goes through chapter 4 verse 1 is the longest, it's the fullest in this very brief section but the reason is that these principles basically apply to everyone. When you look at the structure of authority that God has designed for the human race this fits any other relationship that you could name including the two that have already been covered the marriage and the family and that's why when you get to verse 23 and 24 and 25 these are universal principles, it's not just the master of a slave or just the slave serving under a master to whom these things apply. Everyone should do what they do heartily as to the Lord and not to men knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance.

This is wonderful, it's impossible to really bring this across adequately into English but there's a little bit of a word play there when he's talking to the bond servants and he says obey in all things your masters or your lords according to the flesh not with eye service but in sincerity of heart and so forth do it heartily as to the Lord and the reference to the Lord in verse 24 is without the article in Greek which emphasizes it and he basically says don't worry so much about your reward from your earthly Lord and just remind yourself constantly, keep with you the knowledge that the real Lord is the Lord of Heaven. The real Lord is the one who will give you the reward of the inheritance. Even the word for reward here is somewhat unusual in Greek.

This word normally in Greek has kind of a bad connotation. It's sort of like a, what's a good synonym in English, a repercussion or it has the idea that something is going to come back on you in a negative way. That's the common use of the word that's translated reward here.

It's a consequence type of thing. So you get the idea that the servants may not have a happy lot in life. Even though they're a good servant and even though they do things heartily as unto the Lord it still may not be a wonderful life as a slave.

You're still a slave and you may still be under an unfair authority or an insensitive authority or whatever and the fact that you're doing things right doesn't mean that you're going to have this happiest of all possible. You're going to be like the little happy slaves in some of the old movies from the 40's and 50's that were just all kind of singing and strumming banjos and pick a little cottoner in the bed and party in the night and so forth. Even when you do everything right you still may have a harsh life and the recompense that you get from your earthly master may not be that you deserve.

It may be an unkind recompense. But he says knowing that from the Lord you will receive this

recompense of reward. And Paul takes the negative word and turns it into a positive direction.

And he says your consequence from the Lord is going to be this rich inheritance. And he says this has to be your knowledge. You know this.

This is the reality that shapes your attitude of soul and shapes your day. When you go out to be a slave and it's unfair and it's harsh and your daily consequences aren't that good just remind yourself that the consequence from God is going to be the reward of the inheritance. And it is hope that is to sustain a slave.

Paul doesn't say you masters release your slaves. He doesn't say you slaves rise up and revolt and break free from your masters. Slavery is a horrible evil.

He says this is life. And whether it's actual slavery or the types of slavery, everyone is under the influence or under the authority of someone else. And whether it's the common application of this as employers and employees, that everyone is answerable to someone.

All of us have authorities to whom we are accountable and responsible. Sometimes it's a very light burden. Other times it's a very heavy burden.

But these verses apply to anyone. Whatever you do, do it heartily as to the Lord. It's one thing to say that and it's another to actually do it.

When the circumstances are not good. When the authority is unfair. When there is insensitivity.

When there is callousness. When there is no appreciation or lack of appreciation. When your labors seem to go unnoticed and it's only your failures that get noticed.

Your diligence and your hard work and your triumph over adversity to get things done seems to go unnoticed. And you do that day after day after day. And then the first time you slip up and fail, that's what gets noticed.

And that raises a big cloud of unhappiness. In a circumstance like that, that's when doing something heartily is difficult. If you look at it from an earthly point of view.

This is why it's so important and why Paul has constantly throughout this letter reminded us that our perspective has to change. It's not these circumstances. It's not these evaluations that count.

And when we come to appreciate and understand that when God is pleased, that's the battle. When God is pleased, when we measure up with that standard of measure, that's great. God is pleased, there is a reward of the inheritance coming.

That ought to fill us with joy. It ought to give us peace. It ought to give us a thankful heart.

And we ought to be satisfied with that evaluation and with that measure of success. And not let

these other things encroach and overturn the climate in our soul. He who does wrong will be repaid for what he has done and there is no partiality.

You might as well go back to the Old Testament. Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord. It's a real easy temptation, especially when you're under someone's authority and you have the opportunity by being a little less dedicated or a little less diligent to let someone suffer some consequences.

To just say, well, he or she or it, they think this is not going well. Well, fine, I'll just lay back a little bit and let them suffer the consequences when I don't do a good job, kind of a thing. And Paul says, no, what you're doing, you're doing for the Lord, you're not doing it for them.

And do it heartily, do it diligently. Don't try to judge. We have reminded ourselves in the past of the definition of judging.

It isn't discerning that someone is in error, that's not judging. It isn't recognizing, it's okay to recognize. I think husbands and wives many times need to talk when they observe things in their periphery and discuss where a failure is and what the nature of an error is.

We've gotten so skittish about judging sometimes that we hesitate to even point out error or point out something that's wrong or something that's improper or sinful or evil. It is right and proper to identify and discern these things. Judging is when you decide that you will now inflict the penalty for that failure or that wrong.

You're going to make that person pay in some way. You're going to diminish their reputation. You're going to harm their standing in the eyes of others.

You're going to cause them inconvenience or discomfort or in some other way you are going to be the agent of their comeuppance. That is judging. And as a servant in whatever circumstances, if there is any penalty to be paid, if there is any justice to be done because someone is wrong, that's God's providence.

And it is an equal reality with the promise of the inheritance. The inheritance that enables us to do what we do heartily as unto the Lord and not unto men is a reality. So is the absolute righteousness and justice of God.

If there is a flaw, if there is a problem, if there is something that needs correction and if there is any punishment to be doled out, that's God's providence. Don't elbow God out of the way and seek to create consequences for someone's bad behavior ourselves. There is no partiality with God.

He's not impressed with the fact that this person is rich or influential or has had successes in other areas of life. If a wrong has been committed, God will recompense. Then the final statement in that section, Masters, give your bond servants what is just and fair, knowing that you also have

a master in heaven.

We can't help but think of the parable that Jesus told of the unforgiving servant who was forgiven much, a great debt by his own master, but then an underservant to him owed him a small debt and he would not forgive it and he beat the servant and so on. And when the master found out, then that servant was no longer forgiven. He was put in another's prison until he should pay every penny.

And throughout the Word of God, we are reminded that if we do not forgive others, we ourselves are not forgiven. With the measure that we measure out to others, it will be measured to us. And it is a measure of where our soul stands, just as we've seen in the relationship of marriage or the relationship of parents and children, the relationship of master to servant.

Our dealings with others will determine, in some ways, how God is going to deal with us. And you'll notice that each of these injunctions, each of these encouragements, is tied to knowledge of a truth. When you do things heartily to the Lord and not in the men, in verse 24, knowing that from the Lord you will receive.

This is the how-to. It's one thing to say, do everything heartily, when there's no reason to do it heartily. There's every reason to lay back and have a sour attitude about the whole thing because you're unappreciated, you're misunderstood, you don't get your just desserts.

How can you continue to do it heartily? Where does that come from? Where does that motivation and that attitude come from? Concentrate on the knowledge that you have of reality, the knowledge of God's justice, the knowledge of what's coming in the future. You can do this when you know that God sees and that God evaluates and that God will recompense you for what you do well and God will recompense the necessary discipline or punishment, whatever it may be, to someone who does wrong. Masters, how can you give your bondservants what is just and fair? Same thing, it's easy to be abusive, to be insensitive, to make mistakes and wrong people if you don't keep before you the knowledge that God is the ultimate authority and that he is evaluating you just as you are evaluating others.

He is going to have a level of compassion on you to the extent that you are having compassion on others in this context. This is where Paul brings all of the wonderful threads that we've seen in this letter together and answers the question, if these things are true, if Jesus Christ is the God-man, if he came to earth and established the nature of our calling and is an example of the way to live and walk before God in a worthy manner, so what? How can I follow that example? How can I accomplish that calling in my own life? Well, here's how and here's the measure. And when we achieve growth and progress and success in these areas, that's enough.

Don't let someone redefine you and point your attention in some other direction. This is where the battle is fought. Now, having talked about the order and the opportunity to put these things into

practice and the place where they are truly brought to fruition and measured, Paul says now in chapter 4 verse 2, Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it, with thanksgiving.

Meanwhile, praying also for us that God would open to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in chains, so that I may make it manifest as I ought to speak. Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time. Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each one.

So now, having addressed the immediate area of combat, the immediate area of challenge and victory in the soul, the area of accomplishment in our daily Christian life, Paul says, this reminds me of what Jesus said to the disciples about going to Jerusalem and Judea and Samaria and then the uttermost parts of the earth. You have to start in your immediate periphery and you work your way outward. You can't go out to Samaria and the uttermost parts of the world if you haven't yet accomplished the objective in Jerusalem and in Judea.

Our focus needs to be on winning the inner battles of the soul where God is measuring us, where the battle and the accomplishment truly is. That's all God is after. Stones can witness.

The Holy Spirit is the great evangelist. We are privileged to participate in ministry and evangelism and some of these other things, but our calling is not to evangelize and our calling is not to minister. Our calling is to be transformed.

Romans 12, 1 and 2. Paul emphasizes that here. That transformation is going to have its most immediate reflection in our immediate periphery. Then it's going to expand out.

People who sacrifice their marriage or their family on the altar of ministry do not understand this principle. They think, well, God will be pleased. I may be falling apart a little bit as a husband or as a wife or as a parent, but look at all the good I'm doing in my ministry.

My ministry. I think those are dangerous words. You will never hear me use those words myself, because there's no such thing as my ministry for a believer.

We have our souls, we have our circumstances, and we have our calling. We all are called. We all have a place in history and in circumstance that God has assigned us.

One of the impressions you get when you read this section is Paul says, don't think that your calling is somewhere else. Your calling is right where you are. It's in your marriage.

It's in your home. It's in your daily relationships. That's your battle.

That's your field of bearing fruit. Right where you are. People tend to think, well, I'm going to prepare myself for ministry.

I'm going to prepare myself to go out. I'm going to get organized and get with some other people, and we're going to go out and do something. That's a dodge.

It's a false objective, and it's weaseling out of the actual battle, which is right where you sit right now. It's in your home. It's in your soul.

It is with you every waking moment. That's the field of challenge. Everyone is different.

We are not all going to have the same opportunities, nor should we all be focusing on the same external objectives. But if we do move outside this immediate battlefield, once we do look at opportunities beyond home and hearth, they're not all going to be the same. Christianity today says that we're all evangelists.

We're all like the Apostle Paul. We should all be going forth and proclaiming the name of Christ. And it's wrong, wrong, wrong.

Look at this section that we just read. Paul says, you pray for me. You pray for us.

That God will open to us a door for the Word. You pray for yourselves that God will open to you a door for the Word, does he? We could hear that from a thousand pulpits Sunday morning. You need to pray.

Tell God that you want to go, that you want to give, that you want to work. And pray that he'll open that door of opportunity for you. You look in vain in the New Testament for Paul to tell believers that.

Paul never tells believers, go ask God to give you opportunities to witness. Paul never tells a church full of believers, go forth and witness. Go forth and make an impact in your community.

Why? Because that's secondary. It doesn't mean it should never happen. But Paul focuses on the primary objective, which is here.

And not everyone is called to be the mouth of the body of Christ. Not everyone is an ear. Not everyone is an eye.

And not everyone is a tongue. Some of us are fingers. And some of us are elbows.

And some of us are knees and feet. Notice here, some people are husbands. Some are wives.

Some are parents. Some are children. Some are masters.

Some are slaves. Different areas of opportunity. Different areas of challenge.

But a common calling. Self-control. Humility.

Orientation to the plan and purpose of God. Seeking to please God and do all things heartily as unto the Lord. That's our common ground.

It's our calling to be transformed by the renewing of our minds. The place where we're going to express that growth and that progress will vary from person to person. You may go your entire life and never share the gospel and never lead someone to Christ.

Most churches would consider you to be a colossal failure as a Christian if that statement is true of you. That you've never shared the gospel, never led anybody to the Lord. You're a dry, unfruitful branch, they would say.

And they're 100% wrong. Not everyone has that as a calling. And that is not the primary purpose for which God puts us on this earth.

We are here to be a work of God. We are here to be a reflection of His grace. To be an example of His power.

To be an example of a transformed soul. That is harder and requires more diligence, more endurance, more patience, more dedication to the things of God than any 15 minute presentation of the gospel. So Paul says, here's your opportunity, believers in Colossae.

You can pray. Pray for us. We are tasked with the responsibility of being the tongue.

Of being the voice of the body of Christ. That's our particular calling. Pray for us that God will enable us to do that well.

And do it effectively. And have opportunities to do it. Paul never tells the Colossians, you go be a voice, does he? He tells them, you concentrate on your marriage.

You concentrate on your family. Concentrate on your relationships with authorities that may be over you. Or authority that you exercise over those that are under you.

Concentrate on your relationship with God. Pray. Be watchful.

Be diligent. In your prayer. We will go speak.

Pray that God will give us opportunity to speak. And this is not an accident. Every epistle of Paul has this same perspective.

Paul never tells any church to go with us. He never tells any church to go make an impact in the community. He tells them that they have had an impact in the community.

Remember what he tells the Thessalonians? We go to places and they tell us. Of your hope. And the transformation of your souls.

We are getting ready to go tell them the gospel. And they say, oh that must be what the Thessalonians believe. Because it will out.

It will manifest itself. Without us having to make that an objective. But we have different areas of opportunity.

And the opportunity that they have here. As far as supporting the progress of the gospel. Being a partner with Paul in the spread of the gospel is prayer.

Prayer is a powerful and effective weapon in the spiritual battle. He says, as you continue earnestly in prayer. As you are vigilant.

This vigilant by the way is Gregoreo. We did a study one time on watch and pray. Remember what Jesus told the disciples in the garden? Watch and pray.

It's a wonderful study. If you've got a topical bible. Or you've got a Thompson chain reference or whatever.

Go to the topic on vigilance or watchfulness. And look at the link between vigilance and prayer. They are always tied together.

Why? Because when you are watchful. When you are paying attention to what is happening in the spiritual realm. Your response is going to be prayer.

It's the opportunity to make application of the doctrines and principles and promises that you know. When you are looking at life from God's viewpoint. From the divine viewpoint.

It's going to come up in your prayer. Be vigilant. Be watchful.

Be aware of what's going on. Because prayer is based on knowledge. This is why I personally.

And if you want to disagree feel free. It's like Paul says. I say this not the Lord perhaps.

But I am uncomfortable with someone coming up to me and saying. Fred Jones's wife's uncle is going in for cancer surgery tomorrow. Please pray for him.

I have difficulty with that because I don't know Fred Jones's wife's uncle's situation. I have no knowledge. How can I make application of the word of God? I don't know if he is a believer or not.

I don't know his history. I don't know his status. I don't know anything about his family.

I don't know anything about the circumstances. And prayer is an opportunity for the application of the word of God. You notice over and over again Paul says knowing.

Knowing. Knowing. Be watchful.

Be vigilant. How can you be watchful and vigilant if you don't have any idea what the situation is? Prayer is based on knowledge. This is why by the way when we get further down in chapter 4. Paul says in verse 7. Tychicus, a beloved brother, faithful minister, and a fellow servant in the Lord.

Will tell you all the news about me. Paul has just asked them to pray for him hasn't he? He says pray for us that a door of opportunity will be opened. That I will be able to make the gospel manifest.

And speak it as I ought to speak. Be able to communicate the mystery of Christ. Well how can they pray that prayer for Paul when they don't know the circumstances? Paul says look I'm going to send a couple of guys to you and they'll tell you all the details.

Then you'll be able to pray. Then you'll know how to pray and pray effectively. Because you'll be cycling your knowledge of God's word and God's will through your soul.

When you pray for me. You'll know how to pray. You'll know what to pray.

You'll know the issues. You'll be able to pray intelligently with purpose. And pray in accordance with the will of God.

Someone says oh my relative is going in for surgery and it's life threatening. Please pray that God will spare them. How do I know? How can I possibly imagine what God's will is going to be in that circumstance if I have no facts? If I have facts.

If I have knowledge of the circumstances. Now I can apply the will of God. Now I can know that I'm praying in accordance with the will of God.

Lord this is a believer who's in a stressful situation. Comfort them with your word. Comfort them with your spirit.

Manifest to them your power. And give them a sense of your grace. And create in them peace and joy and thankfulness for your presence.

You can pray things for a believer. All of those are absolutely within the will of God. No matter what circumstance a believer is in.

If you know they're a believer you can pray those things. If you don't know if they're a believer or not. What are you going to pray? Should you pray that the Holy Spirit can use this as an opportunity to convict them of their need for Christ? We have to pray in accordance with the will of God.

You can't just go up there and say, Oh God please heal so and so. On the basis of what? It would be like going to the Supreme Court and saying, Here you are, you're the parent of somebody

that's been convicted of felony crimes and has been sentenced to the death penalty. So you're going to go to the Supreme Court and say, Oh great Supreme Court justices, please spare my child.

And they're going to say, On the basis of what? What's your legal precedent? What's your grounds for this request? Why should I? I love them. I can't bear to see them die. Well, what kind of an argument is that going to make in a court of law? You've got to have something on which to base your request.

And when you do that you've got to do your homework. You've got to look up legal precedent. You've got to look up case law.

You've got to look up the facts and how they fit into the law. And you can say, Here's the basis for my request. This is why this is a legitimate request.

I know that this is in accordance with the laws of the United States or whatever it may be. Same thing when we go before God. When we go before God and pray and engage in intercessory prayer for a believer, we can pray in accordance with the will of God when we know His will.

We know that it's His will that believers grow in grace and knowledge of their Lord and Savior. We can know that when adversity and bad circumstances come up, it's an opportunity for the fruit of the Spirit to be born. And that that's done in the presence of the Holy Spirit and the presence of the Word of God.

You can pray that they'll have a sense of the presence of the Spirit. That they'll remember the Word of God that they've learned. That it will be real to them.

That it will bear fruit in the soil of their soul. That they will have opportunities for their light to shine before men. That they may see their good works and glorify the Father who's in heaven.

That it will be an occasion for making an issue of God and spiritual things in the eyes of others. That their family will be comforted and have the opportunity to draw on divine resources. There are so many things we can pray when we know something of those circumstances.

Paul says, I'm going to send you Tychicus. He will cause you to know the circumstances. And Onesimus in verse 9, a faithful and beloved brother who is one of you.

They, Tychicus and Onesimus, will make known to you all the things that are happening here. Then you'll be able to pray intelligently. Then you'll be able to fulfill my request to pray and also to engage in thanksgiving.

They can engage in thanksgiving on Paul's behalf because they know of the opportunities that he has in prison. And that he has outlets and means of communication. And that he's continuing to fulfill his apostolic ministry even though he's in chains.

So you get the idea here. These people are not told, go out and witness to people in cross. Go out there and get into a public debate with these people that are teaching false views of Christianity.

Go out there and refute them. Go out and stand in the public square and argue them down. He says, here's your opportunity.

You can pray. You can be thankful. You can support us with your love and with your prayers.

Praying with thanksgiving. Being vigilant with thanksgiving. He says in verse 5, walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time.

If you turn back in this letter to an earlier part. Since I did my studying in a different Bible, I'm going to have to look around how to find it. In chapter 1, verse 10, Paul mentioned walking worthy of the Lord.

Remember? Peripateo. He says, I pray for you that you'll be filled with the knowledge of his will and all wisdom and spiritual understanding. So that you may walk worthy of the Lord.

How do we walk the worthy walk? We're filled with all knowledge of his will. Wisdom, spiritual understanding. Now he's saying, walk in wisdom toward those who are outside.

So he says, look at your walk in terms of being worthy before the Lord. In chapter 1. Because that comes first. Now in chapter 4, he says, walk in wisdom toward those who are outside.

The word for wisdom is the same in both places. It's Sophia. We talked about that when we were talking about Sophia and soon Abasis.

Sophia is the detailed knowledge of how something works. And then the soon Asis is when you put that knowledge into application. And so knowing how to walk before men is going to be a result of knowing how to walk before the Lord.

If you can walk the worthy walk before God, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, you're going to know how to walk before men. You're going to know when to speak and when to be silent. You're going to know how to redeem the time.

Because this, and once again this is a phrase that recurs over in Ephesians, when he says, walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time, buying up the time, making the time count. This is specifically, we talk about, well, redeem the time because the days are evil over in Ephesians. Make good use of your time.

Be a good steward of your time. But here, this is specifically in the context of time spent with those who are outside. What is the definition of those who are outside? What category is that?

Outside the faith, outside the church, outside the context of what we've just been talking about.

These internal relationships are marriage, family, your immediate master-slave type relationships, whether it's employment or your inner circle of acquaintance. And then beyond that you have those who are outside, who you're not in close contact with, who you don't necessarily have personal responsibility or an authority relationship with. These are those who are outside.

They may be unbelievers, they may be believers that you're not acquainted with. Any situation outside, walk in wisdom, walk in Sophia. Know what you're doing when you're in contact with these who are outside.

And make the time count. When you're in contact with them, your time ought to count, it ought to be meaningful. Don't waste the time when you're walking toward those who are outside.

Well, how can you do that? What does that mean? A lot of people say, well, this means seize every opportunity to evangelize. That's not what it's saying at all. He doesn't say evangelize those who are outside.

Speak the gospel to those who are outside. Constantly speaking the truth, constantly praying for those who are outside. He doesn't say any of that.

He says walk in wisdom toward those who are outside. How do you do that? What does that mean? Well, go right back to your walking in chapter 1. How do you accomplish the worthy walk before God? Knowledge of His will, wisdom, spiritual understanding, knowing when to act and when to refrain from acting, when to speak and when to remain silent. Where do we get that wisdom? It's knowledge of the word and will of God.

It's focusing on doing what we do heartily before the Lord and not unto men. We're not walking with a view toward making an impact on them. We're walking in wisdom toward those who are outside.

When it comes time to make a decision about those who are outside, walk in wisdom. That's your answer. Should I witness? Should I remain silent? Should I create an awkward situation here? Should I speak up for principle? Should I tell this believer that I can't sit down to table with them because they're engaged in evil? And the word of God says don't sit down and share a meal with someone who's in an open rebellion against God and claims to be a brother.

How should I handle this? What's my answer? This is not a situation that's governed by the submission to husband or the submission to master or the love and the justice that's spoken of in these earlier verses. This is somebody where the authority rules don't help me out. How should I walk? How should I act in this situation? Paul says walk in wisdom.

When it comes to those who are outside, if you don't have authority issues either above or below in those circumstances, your answer is wisdom. Walk in wisdom. The same wisdom that you

walked before God.

Just concentrate on your walk before God. Make sure what you do, you do heartily as unto the Lord and not unto men. When it comes to those who are outside, don't look at what responsibility do I have to them.

That doesn't apply. You're not in an authority relationship. They're outside.

Your rule of thumb is wisdom. What pleases God? What reflects full knowledge of his will? What reflects spiritual understanding? Think of them in terms of where they are in the plan of God, where you are in the plan of God. Is this going to be an invasion of privacy? Are you going to be sticking your nose in their business? Or is this an opportunity to speak the truth in love? Wisdom will tell you the answer to that question.

Wisdom will tell you when to act and when to refrain, when to speak and when to remain silent. When to engage in an overt act of ministry and when to sit back and pray. For those who are outside, your guiding principle is wisdom.

Sophia, know the will of God. Know the plan of God. Know where you and this other person fit into the plan.

People say, what would Jesus do? What they're trying to get at with that is what is pleasing in God's sight in this situation? What could you stand before God and justify? And say, Lord, this is why I acted this way. Wisdom, Sophia, toward those who are outside, make the most of the time. When there's a situation that brings you into this point of decision, brings you into contact with someone who's not governed by one of these authority relationships, make the most of that time.

What is the best use of that time? The best way to bear fruit in that situation. That's redeeming the time. Make that time count.

Sometimes you have a visit from relatives, or you have an unusual situation. Somebody moves in with you for a short time, or you go and stay with them for some period of time for whatever reason. You're now with someone on the outside.

It's not marriage, it's not family type thing. It's not master-slave. Concentrate on wisdom.

Just be thinking all the time. I'm serving the Lord. I'm doing what I'm doing before the Lord.

I want to please the Lord in how I handle this situation, in what I say or don't say, what I do or don't do with this person. I'm not trying to impress them. I'm not trying to manipulate them.

I'm not trying to change their view of me. I want to do what I'm doing before the Lord. Sophia.

Wisdom. It's amazing how much Paul says in so few words in these closing sections of

Colossians. But this is the thrust of the book.

This is what he's been angling at in the first three and a half chapters. If your soul is transformed, if it is nourished and equipped by the Word of God, you'll have this wisdom and you'll know. You'll have a spiritual instinct that guides.

The Holy Spirit will use the Word of God to show us, to shine a light on our path and show us the way of wisdom. But our tendency is to start thinking about the person that's at issue, the situation that's at issue, the outcomes that are possible in some situation. And Paul says, no.

Walk in wisdom when it comes to those who are outside and make the time count. It's a test. It's an opportunity to bear fruit.

It's an opportunity to walk the worthy walk before God. Don't miss it. Don't blow it by getting distracted and using a false measure.

You're still being measured by what's going on in your soul. Let your speech always be with grace. This is amazing.

This is halagos. Turn with me back to Luke chapter 4. Real quickly. One of the first places in the New Testament where we find this phrase is in Luke chapter 4. Jesus came to Nazareth in Luke 4.16 where he had been brought up as his custom was.

He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath. They stood up to read. He was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah.

And he reads this passage from Isaiah in verses 18 and 19 of Luke 4. Then in Luke 4.20, he closed the book and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all who were in the synagogue were fixed on him. And he began to say to them, Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.

When it says he began to say, that means he said a lot more. But this is the gist of it. This scripture is fulfilled today in your hearing.

And then it says, look at verse 22. All bore witness to him. This is martyreo in the Greek where we get the word martyr.

All bore witness to him and marveled at the gracious words. This is halagos kariti. The very same phrase we have in Colossians 4.6. When Jesus communicated the word of truth in the synagogue, people were amazed.

They bore witness. They said, his words are full of grace. His words impressed them.

It was different than what they had heard before. The way that he spoke the truth of the word of God. It's halagos kariti.

Gracious words. Notice also, if you continue, they said, is this not Joseph's son? He said to them, and then he says, he predicts that they're going to say, physician heal thyself. No prophet is accepted in his own country.

He talks to them about the widows in the days of Elijah. And none of the Israelite widows were blessed. But this one who lives over in Sidon.

Sort of a Gentile area. Then he says in verse 27, many lepers were in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet. None of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian.

He said, you know, Israelites missed out. And it was the foreigners who recognized and received the grace of God. And he's telling them, you're from my hometown.

I'm from here. I grew up among you. And you're in danger of missing the opportunity.

So then they get all mad. All those in the synagogue, in verse 28, when they heard these things were filled with wrath, and rose up and thrust them out, said, well now what happened to those gracious words? Jesus is still speaking the truth. And he's still speaking it graciously.

But it has inflamed them. It's not the reaction of the people. It's how closely they reflect the word of God.

His gracious words, the halagos kariti, sometimes cause people to marvel and be impressed. And within a few minutes it caused them to rise up in anger and wrath and try to kill him. But they were the same gracious words.

They're words of truth spoken in love. And that's what Paul is talking about. Very same phrase in Colossians 4.6. Our speech.

Our speech should always be with grace. And it literally says, your halagos should be kariti, just like the Lord's. Don't measure whether or not they were gracious by the reaction that you get.

Just be sure that before the Lord, your words are words of grace. They're words of truth spoken in love. Just the way Jesus did.

Jesus wasn't trying to antagonize people. He just spoke the truth. And the truth convicted them and made them angry.

Seasoned with salt. People have pored over the meaning of that. What does it mean to have your speech, your words seasoned with salt? People think that this means, it doesn't make a whole lot of sense.

He says, let your speech be with grace, seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you ought to answer each one. Well, if you're already talking, you're already speaking words seasoned with

salt, how does that help you know what to say? You should have known what to say before you started speaking. That halagos, that's the same phrase that's used in the beginning of the Gospel of John.

In the beginning was halagos. The word was with God and the word was God. And the word became flesh and dwelt among us.

And it sort of transcends the spoken word. It's the doctrine that those words convey. And if the truth that you're trying to convey is the truth of grace, if it's the word of grace, it's not words of condemnation, it's not words of manipulation, it's not words of trying to convict a spirit for someone and cause them to change their ways, it's the word of God's grace.

Let that be the guiding principle when you're talking to those who are on the outside. Let your words be words of grace, seasoned with salt. Don't make it distasteful.

Don't make it hard to swallow. Present it. Speak the truth in love.

That's how you will know how you ought to answer each one. And Paul's referring now here to these people that have been teaching this false Christianity. These are ones who are on the outside.

They're coming in and saying, you're really not living the Christian life the right way. How should you reply to these who are on the outside? Speak the truth, but speak it in love. Season it with salt.

That's how you'll know how to answer each one of these. Just answer with the truth. Humility, grace, season it with salt.

Don't get into bitter arguments. Don't raise false issues. Don't get into ad hominem personal attacks.

Speak the truth. Speak it in love. Let the word of truth do its own convicting.

Exercise its own power. And that's how we'll know whether it's a personal relationship or a relationship with those who are outside. These are the guiding principles.

This is the most practical truth there is in the New Testament for not only knowing what to do in given circumstances, but ensuring that when we do it, and as we live our lives, it is reflecting the worthy walk. And reflecting that transformation of soul. This is a good place for us to stop.

We'll resume in verse 7 next time, this closing prayer. Father, we thank you for the wonderful opportunity that you have set before us. We thank you for the resources you have provided through your word and your spirit.

We thank you that through your power and through your grace, we can be reflections of your image and your glory. We pray that these things will become real to us, that we can fulfill our calling, that we can see it clearly and realize its area, its provenance in our lives, that it's the immediate, daily reflections of our focus on you that determine whether we are walking the worthy walk. We thank you again for your grace on our behalf.

We thank you for our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. And we pray these things in his name. Amen.