

Colossians Ch4v2-6 - Gospel Growth

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[0 : 00] Well, follow with me as we go to Colossians.

We're almost through Colossians. We've got another one to go next week. And today's reading is chapter 4.

2 to 6 is a flicker around. Yeah, thank you. So a short text today.

Colossians 4, starting at verse 2 to 6. So let's read and then we'll pray and then look at his word together. So let's read God's word.

Colossians 4, starting at verse 2. Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.

[1 : 07] And pray for us too that God may open a door for our message so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ for which I am in chains.

Pray that I may proclaim it clearly as I should. Be wise in the way you act towards outsiders. Make the most of every opportunity.

And let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.

Well, let's pray. Father, we ask for your help.

Lord, I pray that you may know how to answer your heart. Lord, I pray that you may know how to answer your heart. Lord, I pray that you would open doors to our hearts and to our minds so that we may receive the message of Christ.

[2 : 10] Lord, I pray that you may know how to answer your heart. Lord, I pray that you may know how to answer your heart. And that you would help me to clearly teach the truth of your word. So that it honours you and pleases you and equips us as a church to be the kind of people you call us to be.

Thank you that you hear us. And that now you are speaking to us through your word. Amen.

Violent stabbings and mindless violence. I'm sure we all saw the scenes as they unfolded in our capital city.

And we were shocked and saddened by those events. Lives changed and ruined in just a moment. Businesses and livelihoods wrecked in an instant.

And as surgeons went to work on the injured and politicians gathered and planned, so came the questions. How can we stop this?

[3 : 26] What can be done in our society? Some say, well, it will take more powers for our policing. Others will say stricter laws on immigration.

And of course, with all of these and many more answers, there may be some help. It may bring some kind of change. But how long is it going to last?

We need something better. And you and I, the church here in Carrigoline, are at the very heart of the solution.

Yes, we are. You see, the answer to our broken lives and our disordered society is the gospel.

A gospel that reconciles people to God and to each other. A gospel that will bring people from every race and every background under the lordship of Jesus Christ.

[4 : 35] This gospel had come to Colossae. Have a look with me in chapter 1, verse 2.

The gospel had come and it had radically changed the lives of the people. Do you see it there, verse 2? The letter to God's holy people.

Not that they were perfect, but they had been changed. They were holy in God's sight. They were set apart for God. The faithful brothers and sisters in Christ.

But the gospel didn't stop there. It didn't just change their lives. Have a look down at verse 6. In the same way, the gospel is bearing fruit and growing throughout the whole world.

Just as it has been doing amongst you since the day you heard it and truly understood God's grace. These words that we've just read were written nearly 2,000 years ago.

[5 : 41] And the fact that we are meeting today here in Karageline is evidence that the gospel has been bearing fruit and growing throughout the world over the generations.

And today there are millions of believers just like us gathering together throughout the world. God's people who are called to bring the gospel of hope to a broken and disordered society.

So how is the gospel going to bear fruit in our country? How is the gospel going to reach into our communities and into our town of Karageline?

Well, two very simple things that we're going to see if we go back to chapter 4. Two simple things that's going to bring about gospel growth.

We talk to God and we talk to people. Very simple. Talk to God and talk to people.

[6 : 51] First, we talk to God about gospel work. Verse 2. Devote yourselves to prayer. Well, that sounds hard work, doesn't it?

Devoting ourselves to prayer. Well, look, prayer isn't a duty to perform. It's a gift and a privilege. Through prayer, we get to talk to the creator of the universe, our Father God, about what matters most.

We talk to God about the gospel and its impact in our society. So three things that we can pray for as a church.

We talk to God firstly about open doors. Look at verse 3. Pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ for which I am in chains.

In many countries around the world, it's illegal to preach the gospel. You'll be put in prison. And that's what's happened to Paul, the writer of this letter.

[8 : 00] He is, at the end of verse 3, in chains. So, in some ways, it's natural to think that he's praying to God and asking God, pray for us that the doors will be opened.

The prison doors will be opened so that I can go free. But that's not what he's asking for, is it? Look closely at verse 3. Pray for us that God may open a door for what? Our message. His concern is not so much his release from chains, but that the gospel would be spread.

You see, the opening of doors is not a physical thing, but a spiritual work. Go back with me to Acts chapter 14.

Acts chapter 14. Keep your finger in Colossians and go back to Acts chapter 14. Here, Paul has been on one of his mission trips.

[9 : 12] And he's just returned and he's reporting back to his home church all that God had done amongst the people. Verse 27.

It's right at the end of chapter 14. Do you see what he says? On arriving there, that is, at his home church, they gathered the church together and reported all that God had done through them and how God had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles.

You see, God was preparing hearts and minds of the people so that they would be receptive to the gospel. And he can report back and say, God has opened up doors.

We see something similar if you go on a couple of chapters. Chapter 16 and verse 14. Here they meet a lady, a businesswoman.

And this is what we hear. Verse 14. One of those listening to the preaching of the gospel was a woman from the city of Thyatira, named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth, a very expensive clothing item.

[10 : 35] She was a worshipper of God, not a believer, but somebody who had great respect for God. The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message.

Let's go back to Colossians 4. Do you see the opening of doors that is taking place? God is opening the doors for people.

We can't force people to be interested in the gospel. We can't make people see their need for Christ. If somebody is going to listen to the message, if people are going to be engaged, God must open a door in their life.

So we need to ask God, by prayer, to do what we can't do. Open doors in people's hearts and minds.

The second thing we can pray is that we would proclaim Christ. You see, praying for open doors is just the first step.

[11 : 45] Look again at verse 3. Pray for us so that God may open a door for our message so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ. The mystery is to be proclaimed.

Well, you say, that's not very helpful, proclaiming a mystery. People mightn't understand what the mystery is. Well, no, the mystery here is something that God has revealed.

It's like God has pulled back the curtain to show us something glorious. It's the unveiling of God's promised salvation. We've already learnt about God's mystery.

If you go back to chapter 1, verse 27, we learn there about this mystery of Christ and what it is.

Verse 27, to them, to God's people, God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles, among all people, the glorious riches of this mystery.

[12 : 49] God has made known what was hidden. God has revealed the mystery. Well, what is the mystery? Read on. Which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

What an amazing, rich message this is. It's got a double edge to it. Christ in you. God's promise that he will never leave you and always be with you.

God who came in the person of Christ and the person of Christ who now dwells in all who believe.

He is with us. And secondly, the hope of glory.

God's promise that he is going to bring his people to his eternal kingdom. What a glorious message this is.

You know, when a woman gets engaged, she's given a ring. And we hope that it will be a nice ring. Perhaps a double diamond ring.

[14 : 00] And it's symbolic, if you like, these two diamonds of intimacy and security. The intimacy, I am with you forever.

The security, I will keep you forever. And every time she looks at the ring, she's reminded of the deep love that is shown towards her. Well, this is the message of Christ that we have.

The glorious, twin riches of Christ in you, which is intimacy. Christ is with you. And the other one, the hope of glory, which is his security, his keeping of you.

That is a glorious message to reach out into our broken society. To proclaim anything else but Christ would be like a young man splitting one of his Christmas crackers and taking out that plastic ring and putting it on his fiancé's finger.

Not very rich or precious. No, we proclaim that Christ is proclaimed. Anything else is empty and hollow.

[15 : 16] So we pray for open doors that people may hear the glorious message of Christ. And third, we pray for a clear message.

as we began, we pray that I would speak clearly, that you would understand what is being said. I don't want to make it complicated or confusing.

I want us to see Christ clearly. You see, as we proclaim Christ, we're introducing people to a person. Not just information or facts.

We want people to know Christ, who he is, and what he has done. It's like the big spotlight on a stage at a theatre.

We want the light to shine clearly on Christ so people can see him for who he is and what he has come to do. So we pray for open doors.

[16 : 17] We pray that we would proclaim Christ and that we would proclaim it clearly. You see, prayer is vital in all of these areas.

If we are to see gospel growth, if we are to see the gospel bear fruit, if we're going to see a change in our society, then the church gathered together needs to pray.

Look at verse 2 again. Devote yourselves to prayer being watchful and thankful. You see, prayer is hard.

We all struggle with it and very often it's prayer that's pushed out to the side. We never seem to have time. It's always rushed. That's why we need to be watchful.

Remember what Jesus said to his disciples as Jesus was preparing to go to the cross as he went to the Father and he prayed. He said to his disciples, and I quote from Matthew, watch and pray so that you do not fall into temptation.

[17 : 28] The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak. I think we've all experienced that. The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak.

So we need to be watchful. We need to carve out time. We need to be thankful because as we come to God and thank God for all that he's done, it encourages us to pray, to remind ourselves,

this is what God has given me.

I give thanks to him. It creates a dependency. So we are intentional about praying for God to be at work.

We especially need to pray for those reaching out with the gospel. That's why we have our partners like Mickey in Kashmir or Amy over in Sheffield or think more closer to home.

The people who are teaching in Sunday school right now. The people who will be teaching in Rooted this afternoon. The people who will be gathered here for Rock next Friday.

[18:40] The outreach events through polo. The little flyer for Christmas carols. All of these things we're wanting people to know Christ and the forgiveness that he has for us.

But none of this will have an impact in anybody's life unless God opens the doors of people's hearts and minds. There won't be a change.

church. Everything will trundle on the same. We need to pray. That's why we send out texts during the week. You know on WhatsApp you get a little message that comes in.

Pray for. That's why we send it. Because we need God to work. And if you don't know what to pray well just turn to Colossians 4 verse 3.

Pray that doors will be opened. Pray that Christ would be at the heart of the message. And pray that those who teach would make it clear.

[19:51] So how are we going to see gospel growth? Well first we talk to God about gospel work.

Second we talk to people about gospel grace. We talk to God and now we talk to people.

Look at verses 5 and 6 with me. Be wise in the way you act towards outsiders. Make the most of every opportunity and let your conversation be always full of grace seasoned with salt so that you may know how to answer everyone.

Look I get it we might not all be teachers and preachers we might not be able to teach in Sunday school or the rock but we all have conversations every single day with all kinds of people family friends colleagues so the expectation I think of these couple of verses is that in our day to day conversations with people we would be looking for opportunities to talk about Christ Christ well how do we do that well three things here's the first thing we need to watch our behaviour watch our behaviour look at verse five be wise in the way you act towards outsiders you see yes we're to engage in conversation but it's not just our words but our behaviour that matters you see people don't just listen with their ears they're watching our lives one writer put it like this you can see it on screen here

God's purpose is that the good news of Jesus Christ is set forth visually as well as verbally by seeing and hearing people have to see with their own eyes that the gospel we preach has transformed me to put it simply we need to look like the message that we're talking about so if I'm talking about grace I should demonstrate grace if I'm talking about forgiveness I should practice forgiveness my life should be a demonstration model of what happens when you believe the gospel even when we're not in conversation our lives are witnessing our actions as we say can sometimes speak louder than our words here's two examples two texts from scripture the first one is from [22:53] Titus and it's talking about our relationships one to another and how we treat each other and the difference that makes and here's the difference look at the top one so that in every way they will make the teaching about God our saviour attractive do you see that our behaviour makes the message of Christ attractive to people here's another one that comes from Peter in this case it's talking about two wives about their husbands who may not be believers and it can apply the other way as well our message itself is grace filled that's what it says verse 6

I think this can apply two ways let your conversation be always full of grace not just graciously in how we talk but that the message would be graceful You see, we're not passing on a message for people to download information or to offer some advice that you can take or leave.

No, our message is full of transforming grace. It's a work that God does. That's what grace is. It's God's free gift of salvation that is unearned and undeserved.

Have a look back to chapter 1, verse 12. Here's a wonderful example of showing us that this is God's work in us.

Look at verse 12 of chapter 1. Give joyful thanks to the Father who has qualified you to share in his inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light.

[27:23] Who qualified you? He qualified you. He made you right. Verse 13. For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and he has brought us into the kingdom of his Son in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of our sins.

You see, it's God who is doing the work in us. It's a message of grace. It's free. And we are simply pointing people to the one who has done everything for us.

Here's a quote to help us get our minds around it. The gospel, the good news of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ is the astonishing announcement that God has done the whole work of reconciliation without a scrap of human assistance.

Isn't that wonderful? Isn't that wonderful? That God was the one who came searching for me and reached down to me. That he would come and forgive me.

You see, when we fail others, they write us off. But when we come to Christ with our failures, he welcomes us in.

[28 : 48] You will not see or hear a more radical message. This is what our friends, our family, our colleagues and our neighbours and we need to hear constantly.

May our message be grace-filled. You see, the gospel comes wrapped up in our lives. It's not just a message detached from us as people.

It's like giving that diamond ring to your fiancé. If you put that ring into an old, torn and dirty box and just left it on the side, it might never be opened.

It could be thrown into the bin. But if that diamond ring is placed in a velvet box with a beautiful red ribbon, it most certainly will be opened.

Well, in the same way, we have the treasures of the gospel that are wrapped up in the beauty of our words and our behaviour. So as we disperse, as we scatter into our community, to our workplaces, we go with a message of grace.

[30 : 02] How are people going to see gospel growth? We talk to people about the gospel of grace. Our community, our country is in desperate need and God has called us to the very forefront of bringing hope to a needy people.

It's people like you and me. As we talk to God and as we talk to people, that's what will make a difference.

Let's talk to God now. Our Father God, we thank you so much for the grace of your gospel.

We thank you for those who have taught us and who are willing to share their lives with us so that we might hear and receive the good news of Jesus.

So we pray that as we go into this week, we would be a people who talk to God and talk to people.

[31 : 30] Father, Father, open doors for us. Help us to take every opportunity given to us and help us to live our lives out well so that we reflect all that we say through the beauty of our words and our lives.

Father, do your work in this country and in our community for your glory, the praise of your name and for the good of our nation.

Amen.