

Colossians 4:2-6

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[0:00] Okay, we're going to continue in our study of Colossians. Last week, Zemir took us up through the end of chapter 3, Colossians chapter 3, up to the start of chapter 4.

So I'm going to do Colossians chapter 4, verses 2 through 6. And in the ESV, the section header is called Further Instructions. And I renamed it for this message, I'm titling it Missional Instructions, because it seems like his further instructions are very missional.

Which I think is great, because that's kind of what we're focused on. Not kind of, this is exactly what we're focused on in Christchurch right now, being a new church plant. So I think it's timely. Still going? Okay, look at this.

I think it's timely. So I think it's worth noting, this section follows a section on divine order. And think of it as Paul building a house.

And it's fitting that his further instructions are further building on this house of divine order. So, you know, last week, Zemir taught on this.

[1:15] Right relationships in families. Wives submitting to husbands. Husbands loving their wives. Children obeying their parents. Fathers not provoking their children. Honoring our earthly masters.

Which, you know, now it's our employers. Working in a way that's pleasing to the Lord. Honoring them. So he lays this foundation of right relating and divine order in the church. And says this is essential.

This is like, this is main thing type stuff. This isn't secondary thing type stuff. And then he talks about evangelism. I think that's meaningful. You know, we want to be on mission. We want to be an evangelistic church.

But God is jealous for his name and his character to be rightly reflected by those who are communicating this. You know? So I think it's noteworthy.

You know, this is coming. This is not an evangelistic admonition out of nowhere. It's further instructions. Now we get to evangelism. All right? So it's meaningful.

[2:16] So I'm going to read through it. I'm going to share some thoughts on each passage. And at the end, I have some points that are related to the things in this passage that I think are especially timely for our church.

So I'll have some points at the end. So getting into it, Colossians chapter 4, verse 2. Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving.

At the same time, pray also for us that God may open to us a door for the word to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison, that I may make it clear which is how I ought to speak.

Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.

I'm going to start with verse 2. Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving. The NASB says, devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving, which I think is a meaningful way of rephrasing this.

[3:25] You know, the NASB says, continue steadfastly in prayer, and NASB says, devote yourselves to prayer. It has this connotation of devotion. This is something that we as a church from the heart are giving ourselves to at a heart level, you know.

It's not just that we're kind of going on doing it, like we're punching the prayer clock, but this is something we're devoted to. And I also think of this as being communicating Paul's expectation for an atmosphere of the church.

This is an atmosphere of a missional church, a church that's devoted to prayer, keeping alert with an attitude of thanksgiving. And the phrase that came to my mind was, like, rephrasing this a little

bit, always watchful thankspraying.

Like, it just kind of mixes it up a little bit. You think of praying, like, my experience with praying is I'll get fired up on it for a season.

I'll pray for a bunch of stuff, forget about what I prayed for, start focusing on problems again. And not even, by the time God answers the prayer, I'm just like, it doesn't even occur to me to give thanks for him.

[4 : 33] But that's not the atmosphere that Paul is describing and exhorting here. He's saying, hey, devote yourselves to prayer and keep alert, keep watching for the Lord to answer those prayers with an attitude of thanksgiving.

I think Julie was talking this morning how she has gotten into the habit more recently of actually giving thanks ahead of time for things that she knows God's going to answer, like, because it's according to his word. It's this, I'm praying, and I'm praying not just for things I want.

I'm praying for things that God said he's going to give me. I'm going to be thankful ahead of time, you know. So anyway, this is kind of the environment.

This is like a good fertile garden for evangelism. He goes on to talk a little bit more about it, but I think that's, this is the foundation. This is a church who's given to prayer, praying for the Lord to open doors, and being thankful ahead of time because he's going to do it.

You know, he's the one telling us to do it, so he's going to answer it. Verse 3, at the same time, pray also for us that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison.

[5 : 43] So Paul says, pray for us. Who is us? You know, in this exact context, it's his coworkers. So in other places, in Colossians, he lists off a number of his coworkers.

So Paul, Timothy, Tychicus, Onesimus, Aristarchus, Mark, Jesus, or Justice, Epaphras, Luke, Demas.

So it's this apostolic team. This is the missionary team, all right? This is the, these are the people who are out doing the work of ministry, sharing the gospel, and he's asking this church to partner with him in praying that God would open up doors for them.

Pray for us, all right? So we are an apostolic team. We're a church plant. So what's the application for us? It's us.

So Philippians 1, verses 3 through 5 says, I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you. Always in every prayer of mine for you all, making my prayer with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now.

[6 : 53] So this, this speaks of us as a team, as a church planting team, being on mission to people.

And our prayers should be oriented towards each other. You know, we don't have like this concept of there's a evangelist and their job is to do the evangelism. And so we're all going to fast and pray for, you know, Fred the evangelist to go out and do his job.

You know, no, it's us. It's us as a team partnering in prayer with each other, praying that the Lord would do what he's about to talk about. What should we pray for?

What does he exhort them to pray for? That God may open to us a door for the word. So there's other places in the Bible that talk about this.

There's a few verses I'm going to share. But Paul has this conception that just because he's going out and preaching the gospel doesn't mean it's just going to work. All right. He knows that there's doors. And that unless God opens that door, it's not going to bear fruit.

[7 : 57] So the thing that needs to happen is for God in sovereignty to mercifully open a door for Paul's apostolic work to have any fruit.

That's why it's essential. We got to pray. He's like, hey, guys, I'm asking you to partner with me in prayer and pray that God would open doors. And unless God opens the doors, what we're doing really is in vain.

It doesn't really matter. You know, so a few examples of this Revelation three verses seven through eight. This is Jesus talking to John. He writes to the church in Philadelphia, the words of the holy one, the true one who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, who shuts and no one opens.

You know how final that is. This is Jesus. This is this is who he is. And he says to them, I know your works. Behold, I have set before you an open door, which no one is able to shut.

Which is awesome. It's the finality of Jesus Christ reigning and ruling. He has authority to do this. And he says he gives us a little encouragement. He says, I know that you have but little power. [9:06] And yet you have kept my word and not denied my name. That's awesome. That encourages someone like me. I feel like I have a little bit of power. And I think back through it. So like, at least I haven't denied his name yet. You know.

And he encourages him. He says, hey, like the agency isn't in you. The agency is in me. I opened a door and nobody can shut it. That's what we're praying for. We're praying for the Lord to open up doors that no one can shut.

And it's impossible for all hell to shut it. He opens it up. We walk through. We share the gospel. Fruit. That's the Lord's way. And Paul knew this. He knew in his apostolic journey that everywhere he went, there were closed doors that only Jesus Christ can open.

And he's asking the saints, hey, partner together. Pray together that the Lord opened these doors. A few from his own experience. Second Corinthians 2, verses 12 through 13.

Paul's talking about when he was in Troas. He said he came to Troas to preach the gospel of Christ. Even though a door was opened for me in the Lord. So he has this understanding that God opened a door.

[10:11] He said he had no rest for his spirit and he took his leave because he didn't find his brother Titus. So Paul passed on that one. There's a mystery there. I think it has to do with his intention for co-working and things and doing something together.

Not just alone. But the fact of the matter is he acknowledged that God had done a work in opening a door. And that's essential for fruitful gospel ministry. That's what we're praying for. 1 Corinthians 16, verses 8 through 9.

Again, he says, as he's writing, he says, I will stay in Ephesus until Pentecost. For a wide door for effective work has been opened to me. And there are many adversaries.

So these doors are real. God opens them. They're spiritual. You can say all the right words with all the right, you know, proof texts.

You can do it right. You can walk people through Romans Road right. Nothing. Unless God opens that door, we're speaking to the air, you know. There's closed eyes.

[11:10] There's hard hearts. And God has to open eyes and open their hearts to receive the word. Just like he says to Lydia. He opened her heart to understand the word. That's what we're praying for.

You know, these are like house doors. They're not some like metaphysical, weird, strange door. This is doors to people's hearts. You know, the God of this world has blinded the eyes of the minds of unbelievers so that they wouldn't see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

We're asking that God has mercy on them and opens their eyes so that they can receive the word, the message that we're preaching to them. So we're dependent on it. And for what?

What is this? Why do we? Why is? What are we preaching when this door is opened? He says to declare the mystery of Christ. There's a lot in this.

The mystery of Christ is, and we could spend a hundred years of sermons talking about what the mystery of Christ is, but just a few verses here. He actually talked about it earlier in Colossians, Colossians 1, verses 25 through 28.

[12:10] He touches on what this mystery is.

And again, next chapter, he says, To reach all the riches of full assurance.

This is chapter 2, verses 2 through 3. To reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ. In whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom of knowledge.

Again, 1 Timothy 3, verse 16. Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness. He, Christ, was manifested in the flesh, vindicated by the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory.

This mystery is a person. It's Jesus Christ. It says, we, the world has no taste, no eyes for Jesus Christ. It says, he has no beauty that we would desire him.

[13:37] In the world's eyes, he's despised and rejected. He's just, he's a blip on the radar. You don't even, like you're cruising through. It's like a homeless person on the street. You just don't even see him. You have your blinders on. You know, just how people are programmed to just systematically ignore certain things.

That's how we are naturally, specifically towards Jesus. And it's a mystery. It's this hidden mystery. And he is who we're preaching.

So it's even more essential that God opens a door so that we can share this mystery, you know.

Because the world doesn't want to know about him. But he is life.

And in this mystery is the gospel too. It's not only the person of Jesus, it's the person and the work, what Jesus did for us on the cross. On account of which I'm in prison. So with the testimony, with this open door, with a deliverance of this mystery message, comes prison.

Comes conflict. And I'm not going to spend too much time on this, but this is the picture throughout the whole New Testament. When there's an open door for the gospel, immediately there's conflict.

[14 : 45] And I just say this because that's what we should expect. The devil's tactic is to give us to throw up our hands and just be like, oh my gosh, that was bad. You know, we preach the gospel. We were expecting good things to happen and then bad things happen.

Well, no. Actually, they go together. So one example is 1 Corinthians 16 verses 8 through 9. Again, I just read the same one. It says, he will stay in Ephesus till Pentecost for a wide door of effective work is open for me.

But the emphasis is, and there are many adversaries. So that went along with his open door, his adversaries. And this attended Paul every single place he went.

Open door for the gospel, soul saved, and violent adversaries persecuting him. And we should expect the same thing. This is not, you know, Christianity hadn't gotten better.

Or the world hadn't gotten better after 2,000 years. You know, it's just the same. So anyway, moving on from this. Verse 4. Pray not only for an open door, but that I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak.

[15 : 52] Prayer for clarity. Like you, I'm sure you've experienced this in your life. You just learned so much. You learned so much Bible. You learned so much about the gospel.

And it comes time to share it. And you're just like, Jesus, you know, and this, and he died. And you just kind of tell it all backwards. It's all a jumbled mess. Well, it's because it's the only message that we need the Holy Spirit to actually be able to effectively communicate.

We can't just like learn good enough to be able to do it good. We need to learn good. We need to practice doing it good. But it's the Spirit that gives life and clarity and timing and the right verses at the right time to be able to speak it clearly as we ought to.

Jesus says, after he ascended, he had communicated all the information that the apostles needed to do their job. But he said, wait. Wait in Jerusalem until what?

You're imbued with power from on high. The Holy Spirit comes. And then you will receive power to be my witnesses. So the point of this one is just very simple.

[17 : 03] We have to have the Holy Spirit. Not only do we got to get the Holy Spirit on day one, we need the Holy Spirit regularly. Pray, Lord, give me boldness. Give us boldness. Give us a fresh filling of the Spirit.

So when we do have these opportunities, when God opens the door, then it'll come out like a bunch of gobbledygook. You know, we actually have urgency and clarity. A Spirit-controlled tongue that can communicate a timely word in season.

It's essential. And again, God holds us in his hand. I need him. I need him to do it. We all need him to do it. So not any way to downplay reading God's word, studying evangelism, learning how to be a better workman.

We need all that. And that gets refined. We learn how to handle the word with maturity. And we learn how to hear the Spirit's voice. But we never grow out of the need to just be filled up every single day, just as much as we did the first day.

Apart from me, Jesus says, apart from me, you can do nothing. Zilch. Nothing. Like, are you grown out of that? No. We need it. Okay. Okay.

[18 : 06] Moving on. Verse 5. Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. This is where I spend most of my time in this.

So I'm going to try to make the best use of my time in this passage, this verse here. Colossians 4, verse 5. And the AASB says, conduct yourselves with wisdom towards outsiders. So walk.

It doesn't mean just like movement forward. It's like the way you conduct yourself. It's how you live. Conduct yourselves with wisdom towards outsiders, making the most of the opportunity.

Conduct is huge. All right. So people who aren't in our world, who we interact with, who only really know us, like we might be the only Christian they know.

They're reading us primarily. The stuff that's coming out of our mouth, that's like the second thing they're reading. The first thing they're reading is us, our conduct.

[19:06] You know, and so we need to understand that. Like we need to realize people basically don't care what we have to say. They care what we communicate with our conduct.

Our life is the bedrock. It's not just, you know, we don't want to fall. There's two ditches. All right. So there's a ditch over here where it's just all conduct. We don't say anything. Is it St. Francis of Assisi? Was he like this? You know, like just very hardcore, like pendulum swinging towards, you know, basically your life is the only message. That's a ditch. Well, there's another ditch that says we say all the things, but our life just says something a lot louder, which means I don't really believe this.

I don't really believe what God's saying, you know. And what the Lord's saying is we need both. So what's this foundation for effective witness? Conduct yourself with wisdom towards outsiders.

There's a reason this passage here, these additional instructions are coming after an exhortation on divine order in the church. Because that's what the world reads.

[20:13] They read us. They read our life. Okay. So 2 Corinthians 3 verses 1 through 6 has a very explicit teaching on this. And Paul says in that, he says, Are we beginning to commend ourselves again?

Or do we need, as some do, letters of recommendation to you or from you? You yourselves are our letter of recommendation, written on our hearts to be known and read by all.

And you show that you are a letter from Christ delivered by us, written not with ink but the spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tables of human hearts. And such is the confidence that we have through Christ toward God.

Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything is coming from us, which is an important thing. Like, we can hear this whole, hey, you're the message. And you're like, oh, no. I do not want to be the message.

That is one of the most condemning things I've ever heard. You know, if I just look at my life and all the areas that are off, and I think, I got to get that whole thing fixed before I ever share Jesus. No.

[21:16] And this is why this is encouraged. This is not what he's saying. He says, not that we are sufficient ourselves to claim anything is coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God, who has made us sufficient to be ministers of a new covenant.

Not the letter, but the spirit. For the letter kills, but the spirit gives life. The Lord's work is happening in our life. If we've received Jesus, he's already doing this.

So the exhortation is, let him. Say yes. So when he's coming into life and he's putting his finger on areas of our life that we're very uncomfortable about, he's writing a letter to the world through us.

This is his part of his letter that he's writing. And it gives a foundation for being able to communicate the gospel to people in an effective way. So, you know, this harkens back to that verse in the early part of Colossians where it says, Christ in you is the hope of glory.

This is Jesus living in, he's the word made flesh, okay? Jesus living inside of us through the spirit, communicating himself to other people through our conduct and through our words.

[22:21] But we just need to recognize for a skeptical world who is predisposed to not believe what God says, what they're looking at first is you, okay?

And we should be encouraged that we have the spirit who's up for the challenge. Christ in us is the hope of glory and he's up for the challenge of displaying his glory to the world through us.

So, moving on a little bit. So, it says, walking wisdom towards outsiders, making the best use of the time. So, what does wisdom look like?

It means making the best use of the time, okay? So, I thought about just the array of different relationships we have. We have some relationships that are really long term.

I mean, they have a time span of 50 years, maybe, you know, family. Very long time span with family. There's a different way I'm going to walk with family members than a cashier, okay?

[23:23] I might see that person one time. So, we need to have wisdom. We need to think through these different relationships. I mean, I'm a letter being written to the world. Each of us is a letter of God to the world, bearing about the testimony of Jesus.

But the way I handle that in wisdom looks differently depending on the kind of relationship it is. So, you know, you have a random person come along your path.

The Lord opens the door to share the gospel. You need to share it. You need to share the whole thing with them. Like, it might not be the most comprehensive thing on the face of the world. You know, like that. It might not be like a John Piper servant.

But it might be a two-minute testimony of Jesus Christ. And that might be the only interaction you ever have with them.

So, the Lord opens the door and we're praying that God would open doors. The way I preach the gospel to some random person I meet is going to be different than, say, my brother. Who I've had lots of conversations with.

[24 : 21] And every time I see him, if I share the gospel with him every single time, it might not be the most helpful thing for a relationship to continue. You know, because we've already said, okay, we were, you know, we have a certain understanding.

And now we're talking and we're praying for him and we're wanting to put good conduct over a long time span to give foundations to the truth that we're communicating.

So, we're supposed to walk in wisdom, you know. And anyway, Julie had an interaction with one of our neighbors that I thought was a really good example of this. And the illustration I thought of for walking in wisdom was heads up, not heads down.

Okay. Heads down, we're just buried in our own life, our own problems, our own stuff. And we're walking around like this. And God's got to really do something crazy to pull our head up and get us to recognize the existence of another person.

Okay. Well, walking in wisdom towards outsiders means we have our heads up. And she had an interaction with one of our neighbors. She was driving by. She was out doing her gardening, you know.

[25 : 29] And this is a neighbor we just have not interacted with that much. And she was driving by and she just had a split second. She was like, I could roll down my window and talk to this person. And she didn't feel like doing it because the habit is heads down.

And this is both of us. I'm not, you know, trying to do the end of the bus. But she didn't. She rolled down the window and she talked with her. And this lady was kind of like, you know, like there's, people are so lonely.

And when we have our heads up and we just allow the Holy Spirit to say, hey, make the best use of this time that you have with this person, this two minutes. There can be a relationship that's established that you just never would have thought of.

And it feeds into this overall mission. Now we can be more thoughtful about our neighbor and pray for them, you know. Where before, maybe out of shame or whatever, you kind of just keep that stuff down.

You don't even pray for them because you're embarrassed about the fact that you always, you know, blow by that, you know. Well, the Holy Spirit wants to bring our heads up and give us an alertness towards the people around us so that we're making the most out of every opportunity.

[26 : 38] You know, we have wisdom. So, I guess moving on from that, the last verse, verse six. Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer every person.

How you, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person. It's hard to get through that. Gracious speech. This is not my wheelhouse.

Out of all these, I think this is the one that was most convicting to me. Don't be a truth bulldozer. A gracious person doesn't just plow people over with the truth.

So much salt, a person can't taste the love. You know, that was something that came to mind. It's just, you know, you eat food that's just over salted. I like really salty food. For me, it's like the right salt level is usually a little bit too much for other people.

Like, oh, it's too salty. But there's a salt level where I'm just like, even I don't like that. I'm just like, no, that's not, that's too much salt. That's not edible. All right. If we have speech that's full of truth, but there's no graciousness to it, it's like that.

[27 : 47] Like, it's food, technically, but there's so much truth in it. There's so much salt. I just can't hear it. You know, it's just off-putting. 1 Corinthians 13, one said, If I speak in the tongues of men and angels, but I have not love, I'm a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.

This is how essential it is to have graciousness that comes from love. What we're talking about is love. You know, truth and love, they go together.

John chapter 1 says, The law came through Moses. Grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. He was full of grace and truth. He had both. The law was all truth.

It was terrifying. People heard it and they're like, I can't hear any more of them. It's just too much. It condemns me. Jesus had all the truth. He was full of grace.

And people beheld him. He was the word made flesh. They could come. They could taste. They could see. And they could hear it. You know? And they could hear it from away from Jesus that you just can't hear it from other people. Well, Jesus lives in us so we can be the same through his spirit.

[28:58] Don't treat people like a checklist. I treat people like a checklist or like a to-do list. All right? I see problems. They're now, if they're in a person, that person's now on my to-do list.

I got to work through my to-do list. I got to check it off. I got to address the truth problem. And then we're going to move on. You know, this is not like people feel that. I know that's the effect that I've had when I'm not walking with graciousness, with a heart full of the love of the Lord.

And anyway, so that's one extreme. Gracious speech is essential so that we're not just bulldozing people with the truth. On the other side, it's not just gracious speech.

It's let your speech be always gracious, seasoned with salt. Don't be so sweet you don't share the truth. There's a way of just trying to build relationship and build relationship and build capital and build trust.

And you're building, you're building, you're building, you're building. Are you really building? Are you sharing the truth? Are you allowing the salt of Jesus Christ to pervade that relationship?

[30:00] It's like food that has no taste in it. Matthew 5.13 says, You are the salt of the earth, but if the salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored?

It's no good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet. So we think naturally that if I err on grace, I'm going to build street cred with them.

I'm going to earn myself a seat at the table so I can finally, someday, share the truth. And man, when I do, they're going to trust me so much, they're going to have to say, Yes, that's the truth and I receive it.

And we think that we're going to kind of be their bestie that way. But it's not true. People don't work that way. It says in Proverbs 28 verse 23, Whoever rebukes a man will afterward find more favor than he who flatters with his tongue.

That kind of graciousness is not actually graciousness. It's flattery. Okay. And that way of interacting with people is like salt that's lost its saltiness.

[31:07] That's good for nothing to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet. And people do it. You see it in the world. You see someone who's just constantly trying to like earn trust, earn favor, earn trust. And they're so scared of the reproach of Jesus Christ.

And they're so embarrassed about what the Bible actually says. They never share it with them. It's despicable. It's kind of something that makes you feel like you can't respect somebody like that. Because you're two-faced.

You're not being honest. You're not being genuine. Jesus does both. There's graciousness and there's truth together. And that's what our orientation towards people ought to be.

Full grace. You know, gracious speech, season with salt. It's done. And it says, so that you may know how to answer each person. Each. So that you may know how to answer each person.

There's one way of thinking about this that says, while we are communicating with unbelievers, we need to have gracious speech that's seasoned with salt. And that's true.

[32:19] But this actually colors it in a little bit different of a lens. It says, let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt. So that you may know how to answer each person.

It's a lifestyle. A lot of times, we try to turn it on. When you get a mission opportunity, it's like, oh, wait. Okay. Okay. Time to share the gospel.

I need to have gracious speech, seasoned with salt. And you try to just turn it on then. But you don't have this as your way of being throughout all of your life as a Christian.

So it's unnatural. And you're not ready. You know, so if our speech, our speech is very important to the Lord. You know, it says in James, hey, how can bitter water and sweet water come out of the same well?

It doesn't. It doesn't. The tongue is so important to the Lord. It's a sacred place. We're trying to use our tongue. We want our tongue to be enlivened by the Holy Spirit.

[33:22] A place where the Holy Spirit is like, that's my house. Our mouths are where the Holy Spirit lives. And if we're going around our normal life, our non-mission life, which there really isn't one, but the way we think of it is like, okay, our non-mission life.

And we're backbiting. We're grumbling. We're complaining. We're slandering. We're slandering. We're slandering. This is a mouth that's not ready.

When those interactions come, we're not ready. Our mouth is to be under the control of the Holy Spirit, set apart for Jesus, for his glory, no matter where we are.

And it's this mouth, this gracious speech, always seasoned with salt, that makes us ready when those opportunities come. We're praying for opportunities.

Are we praying to be ready for those opportunities? So this is also, this is what it means to walk by the Spirit. I love that the Holy Spirit's referred to often as the Spirit of Christ, which is kind of an interesting way of framing the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

[34:33] There's the Trinity, the Father, Son, Holy Spirit, distinct. Each has a unique ministry, though, and the Spirit has a ministry of Christ. It communicates Christ into our hearts, that Christ would dwell in your hearts through faith.

So when we talk about Jesus living inside of us, what we're talking about is the Holy Spirit living inside of us. But the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Christ. He's communicating the personhood of Jesus into our hearts and expressing his character.

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. And so when the Holy Spirit comes and lives in our hearts, he's making a home for Jesus to express himself.

And he's the same as he always is. You know, so I shouldn't expect the Spirit inside of me to be different than Jesus. When I read about Jesus, it's just that. That should be my expectation.

So we ask to be filled with the Holy Spirit. We're asking for Jesus to come and have his home and reign and rule in our life. It's a little bit of an aside, but this does have bearing on this whole being ready thing, having gracious speech.

[35:36] First Peter 3 verse 15 says, Sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts. Always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that's in you, yet with gentleness and reverence.

Parallel passage. Same thing. Same message. Okay. But his message to them then is say, Hey, sanctify, set aside. Lord Jesus is holy in your hearts.

That's what sanctify means. He's living inside of you through the Spirit. Treat him as holy. So that you can be ready to make a defense to anybody, at any time, always.

And the thing I love about Jesus is, you look at his example, he always knew what to say to anybody, everybody, in every situation, no matter what, no matter how different it was, no matter how like out of left field it was, over and over and over again, Jesus always knew what to say.

The Bible says Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. He's the same Jesus who lives in our hearts. So he's always ready. The reason we can be ready is because he's always ready.

[36:39] So, you know, woman at the well, Nicodemus, how he talked to Peter, how he talked to the disciples, the rich young ruler, Pharisees, Sadducees, crowds, you know, a random Syrophenician woman.

He just, no matter what, he had the right words to share. He's the same. He lives in our hearts. We need to realize and have our, we need to ask the Lord, Lord, open my eyes to the fact you actually live inside of me.

I'm your house. And let me treat you as holy. You're not going to let me act one way to my wife or speak one way about brothers and sisters in the Lord who Christ died for.

And then turn around and talk like totally different to some random stranger I'm trying to share the gospel to. Continuity. He's the same. So, and that should give us an encouragement.

If we're insecure about having a word to share, he's got it. He's always got it. Just set him aside as Lord. Trust him. And through the spirit, he always gives the right words to speak.

[37:43] So, anyway, that's all I have in the commentary on the verses. I did have a few points I wanted to pull out. Some of these are repeats. I think these are the things when I pray about Christchurch, when I think about Christchurch.

Some of these is just like myself because I'm in Christchurch. These are the things that stand out to me as being pertinent. Number one, God has given each of us a personal responsibility in gospel

ministry.

So, we speak a lot of doing this together, which is awesome. It's awesome. But there's an order of operations in that togetherness.

There are people in each of our circles that only we know. And God has ordained that we have a personal responsibility to be a first point of contact and gospel witness with those people that no one else in this room or in this church or in the world has.

Only you do. We need to own it in faith. We don't need to be insecure about this or in fear about this. But we need to own it because you are the letter that they're reading.

[38:52] They don't care about what church you go to. They don't care about your small group.

They don't care about your gospel message. They care about you. We have been given everything we need to fulfill that ministry through the power of the Holy Spirit and to own it.

That's why Paul's not saying, Hey, let's go as a mass group on mission to every single person.

As a gigantic group. And we're going to be on mission together. And we're going to co-preach to every single person in each one of our individual circles.

That's not how it works. There's an order. He sends them out individually and two by two to share the gospel. There might be some fruit.

We bring them in. We expose them to other believers. We pray and we get on mission together.

They become a Christian. They're plugged into the whole body. They're built up with the discipleship. But this is how it works.

[39:50] He scatters and he sends the disciples out. He sent the 72 out two by two to do the work of ministry. Well, in our immediate circles right now, that's actually happening. There are people, and I've heard a lot of examples of this, but there's people that only we know, and then there's this initial gospel work that the Lord wants to accomplish.

So the exhortation I have is for all of us, myself included, just own it. Okay? Own that personal mission that we have. I like the analogy of a movie and previews.

If people don't like the preview to a movie, they're not going to go see the movie. We're the preview. The people that only you know, you are the preview to. And if they don't like the preview, they're not going to watch the movie.

So, like, don't succumb to the temptation to try to get them to jump over the preview and go see the movie. Own your task. Hey, I'm a letter. I have a mission task here to give them a good preview of the gospel and what the glory of Christ and the body of Christ looks like.

I love it. The end of Colossians, Paul singles out one person. He says, Colossians 4.17, Say to Archippus, see that you fulfill the ministry that you have received in the Lord.

[41:11] You. I think it's an awesome challenge. Each one of us has this directly from Jesus Christ. And when each of us individually are owning that mission together and we're praying for each other, Lord, help us individually own the mission that we've received in Jesus.

It's fruitful, you know. So, anyway, that's an exhortation to have is own the personal responsibility each one of us has to be a letter, to be an emissary, to give people a hearing that no one else in this room has opportunity to give.

Second, be devoted to praying for each other in this ministry for open gospel doors. Each of our individual missions fail unless the Lord opens the door. This is the first stage partnership.

This is how we partner together, you know. The kingdom of God and all of life together, that's our mission. This is how we partner together in the gospel. Letting each other know about these relationships and praying.

Lord, like, make an open door. You know, Sam's talking to his buddy, taking him out to dinner. Lord, open a door for the gospel. Let this land.

[42:24] And at the right time, if there's enough of that landing and open door, fruitful work of ministry, we enter into it with him, you know. And the Spirit will lead us at the right times for that. But we pray together with thankfulness.

Not a glass half empty mentality. The glass is full. You know, it's just essential. So moving a little bit quicker. I know we got crying kids. Always be ready with the confidence that comes from the Holy Spirit.

Jesus is the same yesterday and today and forever. He lives in us. That gives us great boldness and confidence wherever we go. You know, he's with us. Can you imagine, like, the problem with this challenge of personal ownership is it makes you feel scared.

It makes you feel insecure. Because it's just you. You know, it's like, where's my, you know, person who's going to go with me and, you know, I can lean on? Well, Jesus is with you. Wherever he goes, he knows the right thing to say.

We can have boldness and confidence. Actually, Carrie, I loved your story just about your day the other day where you just had all these open doors for these awesome Holy Spirit interactions. And you were so encouraged.

[43:30] That's just awesome. That's like a miniature snapshot of what Jesus' life just was all the time. Well, that's what our life is like. We pray to be filled with the Holy Spirit. We're praying for these open doors.

And there should be a regular experience of, man, the Lord's just opening doors, you know. So, anyway, gracious, seasoned speech. We've talked about that a lot.

I think it's essential. The main part being in all of the time, in all of life. I'm personally convicted about this one. I want to be careful with how I talk.

Even about real things, even about problems. The Lord is there. And he cares about how I talk. And he's living inside of me. And he's using my tongue for other things.

I should not be using my tongue on the one hand to praise God. And on the other hand to tear down my brother or sister who's made the image of God, you know. And the last is making the best use of the time.

[44:32] I had an excerpt to read, but I'm not going to. I'm just going to summarize it. D.L. Moody was a famous evangelist back in the 1800s. And he had a thought on making the best use of the time.

He had an experience in Chicago. He preached to a huge congregation at the time. Wide open door for ministry. Preached in the gospel. Huge crowds. And one evening, he presented the gospel. And then he gave everyone a challenge and said, Consider what you're going to do this week with this Jesus of Nazareth. And come back next Sunday with your answer. All right? And they adjourned. They sang a song and they adjourned the meeting.

That night, the Chicago fire broke out. Hundreds of people died. Huge sections of the city was wiped out. The church was wiped out. And he said he never saw that congregation again. People either died or were displaced.

And there wasn't a next Sunday. It was gone. And he said he would never again waste an opportunity when he's preaching the gospel to share it all the way and to challenge people.

[45:40] Hey, you might only have today. So when we talk about making the best use of the time, we need to have that in our minds. The people that we're seeing and interacting with, you don't know how much time you got.

So that's a big asterisk on the whole, you know, use wisdom with like how you interact with family members versus not. Here's an interaction that's the same no matter what.

We need to share the gospel with them. We don't save people. God saves people. But don't be deluded that you might have tons of time with people and let that lure you into a false sense of security, complacency.

The Bible guarantees us today. Today, if you hear his voice, don't harden your heart. And this is the same with sin. Lord's putting our finger, his finger on sin.

There isn't a I'm going to repent tomorrow for anything. You might die. This might be it. So that's when we think of walking in wisdom.

[46:40] And having wisdom with how we make a best use of the time. Let's trust the Lord for the ability to share the truth with people, you know, and do it soon.

Don't wait for years to pass and building up tons and tons of street credo people. That's a deception. That's not how Jesus interacted with anybody. He used different words.

He would share different aspects of the truth according to the spirit. But he didn't act like the evangelists today do, who are ashamed of the testimony of Jesus. Let us not be ashamed.

Let us be faithful stewards of God's word. Let's not use underhanded ways with how we deal with people. But like Paul said, by the open, open proclamation of the truth, commended themselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God.

Let God deal with whether or not he opens their eyes or not. That's his deal. You know, that's that's Jesus's job. So anyway, that's all.

[47:41] I'm in.