

# Colossians: The Supremacy of Christ (Col. 4:2-6)

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[ 0 : 0 0 ]     Amen. Good morning, church. It's beautiful August, Sunday. Man, it was great to do church out at camp last weekend.

! It was great to see many of you who weren't there all weekend come out for our Sunday morning gathering. And I think we're going to make that an annual thing. It's pretty nice. You can go ahead and turn open to Colossians.

We're back in our study this morning looking at Colossians 4, verses 2 through 6. Although I'm going to sneak some other verses in there because I know that you are a very attentive group and could use more Scripture.

And we'll look forward to having those that read the book come out to our place this Wednesday night, 6 p.m. We'll look forward to that. And if you haven't read, you have like, I don't know, three days.

I think your best bet is probably to do Audible and go on 1.5. So that's probably your best shot at getting through that book.

[ 1 : 1 5 ]     So let me pray, ask God's blessing on our study, and then spend some time in God's Word together. It says in Lamentations 3 that the steadfast love of the Lord never ceases.

His mercies, they never come to an end. In fact, they're new every morning. And you are faithful, God. And we're thankful for your mercies.

We're thankful for them every day. And Lord, I pray that we would experience those mercies, yes again and new today. Lord, whatever your people need, whether it's encouragement, conviction, a reminder that you're good, you're sovereign, that your words are true.

Maybe there's some here this morning just need to be reminded that if they have trusted in Christ that their salvation is secure. Forever secure. So Lord, whatever your people need, would you provide?

And Father, as we spend time in your Word, would you give us each something that we could take with us and we could meditate on today and this week. And Lord, we would hear your voice, and we would respond to your Spirit, whatever you ask.

[ 2 : 4 5 ]     We want to say yes. So we commit our time. We pray that this would be an act of worship as we engage our hearts and minds. And I pray, Lord, that as a result, we would each look something more like Jesus because of our time together.

And it's your name we pray. Amen. So, two weeks ago, Scott didn't actually cover the passage that he was assigned.

I think he assigns them so he has permission to do that. But I'm actually going to go back and cover a section of the previous passage, beginning in chapter 3, verse 22, that deals with slaves and masters, simply because I get into conversations, I wouldn't say often, but on occasion, as I'm talking with unbelievers, that struggle over this concept of slavery in the Bible.

And so I felt like, you know what? Because I get this question in the course of my Uber ministry, this would be helpful for us to tackle. And so we're going to look at that section, and then we're going to launch into the main section that has been assigned to me this morning.

And we will look at Paul's burden for the gospel to advance. And what I'm going to attempt to do is fold these sections together into just a central exhortation.

[ 4 : 15 ] We'll see if I can pull it off. If the sermon doesn't seamlessly come together, we know who to blame. All right.

Let's get after it, beginning in chapter 3, verse 22. Paul writes, also have a master in heaven. Now, what is Paul referring to when he speaks of servants and masters? And the first thing that I want to say this morning is Scripture is clear on the subject of condemning stealing people in order to sell them into servitude of any form. There are roughly 27 million people today that have been trafficked, exploited currently in the world.

It's a big problem. Scripture condemns this. Paul writes in 1 Timothy 1.10, he says, the sexually immoral men who practice homosexuality enslavers, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine. So he's speaking against those in the category of being an enslaver, one who takes one captive for exploitation. This is slavery. And it's against, Paul says, sound doctrine. That's the New Testament. And yet even back in the Old Testament, even with allowances for Israel to take foreign slaves, this was never through kidnapping.

And in fact, Exodus 21.16 says it this way, whoever steals a man and sells him and anyone found in possession of him shall be put to death. So the first thing I want to say here is slave ownership was common practice long before the time of the Mosaic law was given. So the law, it never instituted slavery, but it didn't end it. Rather, it regulated it to protect against the exploitation of people. And I know this is hard to understand because we have a concept in our mind of what slavery is. But culturally, in the Old Testament and in Paul's day, the servant-master relationship was a very different social dynamic than what we know in America of our own checkered history.

slavery. Slavery in Scripture was not racially driven, nor was it typically a permanent condition for the Israelites. It was often a mechanism for an individual to advance actually within society.

[ 7 : 31 ] There were opportunities for one to earn their freedom. Exodus 21, verse 3 and 4 says it this way, when you buy a Hebrew slave, he shall serve six years, and in the seventh he shall go out free for nothing. If he comes in single, he shall go out single. If he comes in married, then his wife shall go out with him. Additionally, if you look in Leviticus 25, it describes a year of Jubilee. So every 50 years in Israel, there was a reset. All debts were forgiven.

And so God built this reset in for this society. And when slaves were released, and these were Jewish slaves, they were not just released empty-handed, but they were sent with resources. Deuteronomy 15, 13 says it this way, and when you let him go out free from you, you shall not let him go out empty-handed.

You shall furnish him with liberally out of your flock, out of your threshing floor, and out of your winepress. As the Lord your God has blessed you, you shall give to him.

So there were protections built in. And even speaking about foreign slaves, there was opportunity for them to advance within the Jewish society. Leviticus 25, 47 mentions that if a stranger or a sojourner among you becomes rich, so there's opportunity for them. And in fact, we know the story of a foreign slave in Ruth, a Moabite acquired by Boaz, and that actually became her redemption story.

So the question then for us is, why not just completely eliminate this slave-master relationship in the New Testament? And I would say by the time of the New Testament, servants comprised a third of the workforce in society. This was the central labor force actually within the Roman economy, which is why Paul doesn't condemn this class from existing. It would have destroyed the economic fabric of society and would have also eliminated the means of advancement for many. Instead, what Paul does, without condemning or even condoning the practice, he guards against the exploitation of the weak and the domination from the powerful. And that's why he says in Colossians 4, 1, masters, treat your bond servants justly and fairly, knowing that you also have a master in heaven.

[10:18] And that's why, as Scott mentioned previously two weeks ago, servants were actually seen very much as part of the household. Now, for our usefulness, I think a better parallel, as Scripture clearly condemns, enslaving, stealing people to exploit, a better parallel in our experience today would be employees and bosses. Paul is essentially calling believers to be the best employees and the best bosses out there.

Bosses don't take advantage of those that work for you. Employees don't dial it in when the boss isn't looking. And Paul even writes here, not by way of eye service. Oh, the boss isn't in today. I can arrive late. I can leave early.

I can take an extended lunch. Why should we not behave this way? Well, Paul says in Colossians 3, 23, whatever you do, work heartily. As for who? The boss? No, as for the Lord. As for the Lord.

You're serving the Lord Jesus Christ. So even our vocation is worship if it's done unto the Lord.

God notices. God notices. God notices. And it's worship unto Him. Now, for the thrust of the passage we're going to be actually looking at this morning, it's not just God that notices. It's actually people that notice as well.

[12:00] And because we're talking about the advance of the gospel, don't let your work ethic become a stumbling block for others to then dismiss the good news. I had a football coach in high school who said, you know, your actions, they speak so loud, I can't even hear what you're saying.

And he would repeat that over and over. Today, Paul serves really, I think, a wake-up call, a reminder for the church. I don't think there's anything especially new here, but he's reminding us, hey, this life isn't for us to just simply acquire comfort. Let's not be dull-hearted to the mission of God in this life. Hell is forever for those without a Savior. So let's be gospel people.

Let's be a people who orient our lives around the gospel advancing. So let's consider our central text here this morning. Beginning in verse 2, Paul writes, "...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 towards outsiders, make 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." One of the things that I love about Paul is sometimes you can get a sense like, man, he's getting a little preachy, but Paul is like a follow-me kind of a guy.

He's not a do-as-I-say kind of an individual. He's not like the dad who yells at his child and says, hey, stop yelling. You guys will catch that in a moment. No, Paul said, hey, follow me.

1 Corinthians chapter 11 verse 1, imitate me as I imitate Jesus. The way Paul serves up this live for the gospel challenge is first by telling us how he personally is committed to it. And so if you want to divide our section this morning, verses 2 to 4, Paul's exhorting us while recounting his own evangelistic ministry. And he's exhorting us in prayer. And so verses 2 to 4, you could talk, you could give the title, Talk to God About People. And then in verses 5 and 6, he's calling believers then to move into action, participate. And so we could title that section, Talk to People About God.

[ 15 : 00 ] Talk to God About People, and then talk to people about God. And within both sections, there is this clear exhortation for us to be more involved in God's gospel story that's being written.

And that's part of the joy of being a follower of Christ is participating with God. Amen? It's like when you get to participate and have ministry with someone, it's joy. I mean, God is writing like one gospel story, one magnum opus, like the redemption of mankind throughout history, and we get to be participants in that. I mean, how tragic to not be like cast in that book, that play. Could you imagine like, what will the marriage feast of the Lamb be when everyone's celebrating and thinking about, man, the way I got to participate? I got to share the gospel with this person. I got to be generous with my resources here. I got to serve at my local church in this way and be part of this gospel advancing story. Like, the worst part is when you don't get to participate.

When I was in high school, our football team beat the previous year's state champ. And I was an underclassman at the time. And it was a wonderful celebration after the game. Like, we beat the state champs. And then I looked at a buddy of mine, we were both underclassmen, and our uniforms were just like spotless. And it was like, whir! It just, it wasn't the same. Like, you want to participate.

And that's Paul's heart for us here. Participate. Fourth, be part of God's gospel story. And the first exhortation he has for us for greater gospel advance comes from verses 2 to 4.

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. So, if you want to be part of God's redemptive story, Paul's exhortation simply here is, pray more. Pray more. In fact, he says, be steadfast in prayer. What does it mean to be steadfast? Be persistent. Continue in.

[ 17 : 25 ] I love that Paul is calling Christians to just the normal life of the Christian, which is prayer.

It's just our daily activity. It's just normal. It's what we do. It's like brushing our teeth. It's like eating our meals. It's like breathing. It's spiritual breathing. Paul said to Thessalonians 1 Thessalonians 5.17, pray without ceasing. Be watchful. Stay awake in prayer.

Any of you ever had a rough time staying awake? Yeah. Hopefully not this morning, because I can turn the volume up. I had an occasion where I had a rough time staying awake. Julie and myself were being interviewed. We were planting a church, and I was being interviewed, and a bunch of pastors were coming together, and I was going to share about the new church that we were helping start. And for some reason, we're driving to this event. I mean, this is like a lot of important people that are going to be there, and I am just dying in the car like, honey, I cannot, I don't know what's going on.

I feel weird. And we get there, and I just barely could get through the evening. I don't even know what I said when I had opportunity to speak. I was just, this is horrible. And then when I found out later, I don't know if it was the next day, I figured out what had happened, and I blamed my wife, but I don't think it was her that switched the pills. But I don't know why I was supposed to take something for something. I don't even know, I don't know if it was a headache, but I grabbed the pills that were in the medicine cabinet, and they were left over from some root canal, and it was like, it was codeine or something. It was, I was on drugs when I got interviewed to plant a church, not, not, not what you should go for. And I was just like, why do I feel so weird? And it was the worst experience of like, I can't stay awake. Now, I just had to share that. How does that tie in?

We get like that in prayer. We're just like, I don't want to pray. I don't, I, in fact, I haven't been praying. Why? Why? Paul's saying stay awake in prayer. What moves us to sort of prayerless slumber?

[ 19 : 55 ] Why don't people pray? I think there's a number of reasons. Let me give you three. I think first, maybe we're distracted by sin. If we have an area of our life that's sort of partitioned, it's hard to want to go talk with the Lord, because you may feel conviction from God's Spirit, and you're like, I don't know if I want to deal with that. And it just sort of begins to sort of erode prayer from your daily rhythm. Maybe you're just distracted with the temporary.

You guys know that 70%, I read the statistic this week, 70% of the world population is now on social media. I don't think that's a healthy thing. The average American teenager spends five hours a day on social media. Maybe there's adults that are the same. But if we're constantly scrolling, and we're just, when are we still? And even when we're still, there's a whole industry of phone distraction games so that I don't have to ever be still. And all of those things can begin to erode prayer from an individual's life. When are we still to be present with the Lord, distracted by the temporary? Third reason why we don't pray, we just don't believe prayer does a whole lot. We would never say that out loud, but in our heart of hearts, we kind of wonder.

I love the parable that Jesus shares in Luke 18. It says in 18 verse 1, he said, told them a parable to the effect that they ought to always pray and not lose heart.

Why do people find it difficult to pray? They lose heart. Jesus says, don't. Don't lose heart. Talk to me. And then he tells them this parable. It's really fascinating. It's about this wicked judge, this widow. I'll just read a section, verse 3 to 5, Luke 18. It says, and there was a widow in a city who kept coming to him saying, give me justice against my adversary. For a while he refused, but afterwards he said to himself, though I neither fear God nor respect man, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, that's in the text, that emphasis, I will give her justice so that she will not beat me down by her continual coming. So as the story goes, this wicked judge relents and then responds to this widow's request. And so you have to ask yourself, what is Jesus telling us here? What is he teaching us here? Is this a story to teach us that we just need to like wear God down with repeated pleading with him? Is that what this parable teaches? No, that's not what this parable teaches. This is a contrast parable, okay? God is not like the wicked judge. He's unlike him in that he hears our request the first time. He'll answer the prayers of his children. Not just typically, it just typically doesn't happen in our timetable. Or sometimes we get an answer that we don't want.

Maybe it's a yes, maybe it's a no. Often it's a wait. And sometimes it's painfully slow from our vantage point. And if you've experienced things in life where you're pleading with the Lord over an issue, maybe there's chronic illness. Maybe there's, man, you want a spouse, you're struggling with infertility. You're out of work. There's, it could be a myriad of things and you're just like, God. Let me just say this. God answers his kids. But it's his timing. It's his timing.

[ 24 : 02 ] Sometimes he actually blows us away and we need to write those occasions down. I love Isaiah 65, 24, where the prophet writes, before they call, I will answer. While they are yet speaking, I will hear.

The point is, our God is a God who answers prayer. He's a God that works through prayer. And so Paul, he's exhorting the church to pray more.

Pray more. But he's not just saying just pray more. He's actually trying to focus their prayers. I mean, if we were honest and evaluated our prayers, we might feel a little sheepish this morning.

There's a lot of bless me sort of prayers. And maybe it's not extravagant bless me. I don't need a million bucks, God. I just want to be out of pain or out of debt. I actually had a friend who was here with us visiting Dr. Doug Guy that did college minister here years ago and was one of Cole's professors down at Biola. But he did an exercise one time with his small group and he let them know that he was doing this. This wasn't a secret recording. But he said, hey, let's just record our prayer time tonight. And so this small group, they prayed. He recorded. And then Doug was like, let's play it back and reflect on how we prayed. And it was very like sobering.

Because it was like they got through it and there was very little gospel advancing prayers. There was very little let's pray for the unbeliever. It was very inward focused.

[ 25 : 46 ] I'm not brave enough to do that, but Doug was. So more power to him. What should we pray for? Paul guides the content of our prayers. The most central item is the gospel and its life altering advance. Verse 3, that God may open to us a door for the word.

When we gather to pray, we should be praying gospel prayers. God, rescue people. And then in verse 4, he says, and that I might make it clear which is how I ought to speak.

Is that surprising for what Paul's asking for? Well, Jay, we know the Apostle Paul. We know what he prays for. Certainly. But note this, Paul doesn't shy away from also asking for help in the trial that he is presently in. But I want you to notice something. As he prays for help in trials, these requests, they're laced with something. Listen, he says this in Philemon 1.22. There's a letter sent to Philemon in Colossae while he's in prison. Same time he's writing this letter.

It says, at the same time, prepare a guest room for me. For I am hoping that through your prayers, I will be graciously given to you. So he's actually, through your prayers, asking like, pray that this trial of me being in prison would cease. Okay? But he's doing that for what reason?

So that he could go minister. See, there's a gospel purpose attached to it. 2 Thessalonians 3, verse 1. Finally, brothers, pray for us that the word of the Lord may speed ahead and be honored as happened among you, and that we may be delivered from wicked and evil men, for not all have faith. Again, there's this, yeah, in this trial, I want help, but let the gospel go forward. There's this gospel edge present in Paul's prayers. This is encouraging.

[ 27 : 57 ] It's also convicting. Do we pray gospel prayers? Because when we do, what happens in a very real way is we actually become greater participants in God's story. That's the cool part. We're participating. We're part of the narrative. God gives you a burden for an unbeliever? Well, then pick up that prayer rock that you see as you're just walking along. Pick it up. Talk to the Lord about it. Drop it in his basket. I have a high school friend I have prayed for for 30 years.

Not every day, but as the Lord lays this individual on my heart. One of my best friends in high school, Mormon, doesn't know the Lord of the Bible, and so I prayed for him for 30 years.

I want to be part of that story of God rescuing him where he comes to know Jesus of the Bible. What burdens do you have? I woke up at 3 a.m. this morning. I don't know if it's because I'm like 55 or I don't know how it all works, but I was up. So I was talking to the Lord. I was thinking about a neighborhood gathering happening later in the week. And I know we're going to see a lot of our neighbors. I was like, Lord, let us be a witness for you. Let us represent you well. And so that's what I was praying about. And we're participating in God's story when we do that. Let's talk for a moment about both these aspects. First, that God may open to us a door for the Word. So I think when we pray, let's say for God to move. God, give us opportunity. Prayer is necessary for the gospel to spread. In fact, God has ordained prayer to be the means by which he moves his hand in drawing people unto himself. It's a really interesting juxtaposition when you think about Paul here, because Paul is in prison. He can't open any door. He can't even get out of the door that he's behind. I'm literally in prison. But yet God demonstrates that he's using Paul while in prison still to advance the gospel.

God even used that imprisonment, right? We know about it in Philippians 1. Hey, what's happened to me has really been there to serve the advance of the gospel. And so thank you, Lord. Sometimes in the midst of our suffering, God's using in ways we cannot readily see, even though Paul did here. And yet the key, God is the central one moving the gospel forward, but it's fueled through the prayers of the saints. We had a group this morning, 8 o'clock, praying in the fireplace room. You want to join, participate? Maybe you're feeling this morning, I'm not doing a lot. Well, you can show up at 8 and begin to pray. Pray that God would use his people to share good news. We should be praying for opportunities to share the gospel.

And it's so interesting because I do this Uber thing about four evenings a week, and I forget sometimes, like I'm just out and I'm driving, and then it's like, oh, I need to pray. I need to pray.

[ 31 : 36 ] God, give me an opportunity. I want to talk to somebody. And I was doing that Friday night, Lord, let me have a conversation with someone about you. I pick up a guy who's smoking like a chimney and gets in the car and apologizes for, you know, the smell. I said, it's fine. It wasn't fine, but I'm like, it's fine. And I'm just like, I don't know where this is going to go. I mean, he was decked out in gear I would never wear. I'm not saying I wouldn't look good in it. No, I wouldn't look good in it. But I was like, I don't know where this is going to go. And so he starts telling me about, you know, his dream of becoming like doing beats, like mixing music, doing beats. And I'm like, okay.

And so I said, hey, you know this I shared about Christian artists I know does that sort of thing. I said, you ever heard of this guy? He's like, no, I never heard about him. I'm like, oh, it's great music. And he's like, no, I'm really into rap. So then I shared another Christian artist. And he's like, oh, I know that guy. And I was like, yeah. And then all of a sudden he's like, hey, you know, man, I've been reading my Bible. I'm like, I'm like, I didn't even tell him I was a pastor, but all of a sudden he just was like letting me know, like I'm reading my Bible. And then I said, well, I happen to be a pastor and where I, you know, serve. And he's like, I'm going to show, I don't know if you're here, if you're here. The smell wasn't that bad. It was just a little bit of cigarette, a little, little bit of smoke. Okay. Nothing air fresher can fix.

But by the end of the ride, he's like, man, I'm going to show up and man, Pastor Jay, you gave me this idea. I'm going to dress up like a preacher like you. And then I'm going to do a video. It was at any rate, like I didn't know that conversation was going to happen, but I got to encourage this guy. And countless stories. I believe that if you pray for opportunities, God will bring them church. I believe that. I still remember a conversation I had with our oldest daughter, Callie's third grade teacher, when she was at a public school over on the West side, third grade, I had a conversation with the teacher. We were on a field trip and she was just sharing with me because she was a believer, loved the Lord in a public school. And she just relayed to me and she said, you know what? I pray for every student every year quietly when I go around every day and I'm praying for these students. And she said, I can't tell you the number of students and families I have been able to minister to as a result of those prayers.

And that just stuck with me. Let's pray more. Let's ask God, God, give me opportunity to be used by you. All right. Second prayer item that we could make it clear how we ought to speak. So we need to pray for courage, pray for wisdom, what to say. Sometimes it's pray for wisdom, what not to say and pray ahead of time for this. You know, I always have the perfect response in my Uber conversations after the person leaves the car. And I just think, let's, Lord, help us in the moment, right? I think a couple things that can help us, even as we pray for wisdom, like know how to share the gospel. Have a basic gospel message that you can share. Well, I don't know what to share. Do you know John 3.16? Start there.

And then you can work your way up and like the Romans road. That's a pretty simple one. Four verses you can kind of walk through, right? Romans 3.23, Romans 6.23, Romans 5.8, Romans 10.

[ 35 : 12 ] Nine to 10. These four, second, just the gospel. There's many ways to share the good news, but just kind of have that in your mind. I still have, and I've shared, we've done some training here in terms of how to share the gospel in our basic training, right? Two Ps, two R's. God's plan, man's problem, God's remedy, man's response. And I just have those four key words that I can go through and talk about.

God's plan for life, for peace, for relationship. Man's problem, sin, separate him from God. But God's remedy in the person of Jesus to live a sinless life, to be a sacrifice on our behalf. And then we have to decide if we're going to respond in faith. And so there's ways that you can share the gospel very quickly if you have kind of a rough kind of structure in your head of how to do that. But I would encourage you to do that.

Secondly, I would suggest that you think about this question. What is it that's so attractive about the gospel to me? I would suggest you answer that question like ahead of time now so that when you're talking to somebody about the gospel, that spills out. I love the gospel is so attractive. It's like this beautiful feast. What do you love about it?

Well, I love that I'm forgiven. I love that I've got hope. I love that I have purpose now. I love that God is so patient. Like, what is it about the gospel you love? Because as you share the gospel with people, that should spill out.

Because you're recommending a restaurant you've actually eaten at. Right? Talk to God about people. Well, let's get on to the second part on being participants.

[ 37 : 00 ] Talking to people about God. Look at verses 5 and 6. Paul writes, So Paul has called us to pray.

Now he's called us to action. We want to participate in your story, God. So let's pray, but then let's act. What does it mean to walk in wisdom towards outsiders?

Well, essentially our lives, church, lend credibility to our message. See that? See how I connected the first section that you thought didn't even tie in at all?

Right? Bosses, employees, work ethic. Right? It's part of our gospel message. Our work ethic.



We don't want people to dismiss the words that we share because they see the lives that we're living. When we're at work, when we're at play.

- [ 38 : 25 ] How do you maintain your home? How do you maintain the outside of your home? If your home on the street is the one with all the weeds and everything's sort of like falling apart, it could hinder somebody wanting to listen to you share about the good news.

That's all I'm saying. Let our life lend credibility to our message.

Our attitudes. If we're unhappy. If we're complaining. If we're critical. It's hard for people to believe that the gospel is really that beautiful.

If we're deceitful with our words, we hide the power of the gospel to transform. Walk in wisdom towards outsiders.

Are you living for material possessions, pleasures? Folks are going to have a hard time when you're saying, I really find my joy in Christ.

- [ 39 : 46 ] Okay. That's a little too convicting. Let me say it in the positive now. When we serve others, that's the gospel lived out.

When we're generous with our resources, it demonstrates a transformation from a cultural norm. To be stingy.

To hoard. Shows the gospel has power. And essentially what Paul is saying here, when he says walk in wisdom towards outsiders, making the best use of time, what he's saying is, we are actually God's marketing strategy.

People see Christians who are joy-filled, who care about people, who pursue holiness, and thus they know there's a God who can actually transform lives.

People should see something of Jesus in each one of us. And there is only so much time to accomplish this.

- [ 40 : 57 ] Which is why he says, make the best use of time. I don't know if you've heard of the concept of the phenomenology of time.

I think philosophers, maybe Cole will explain this later, they use words like that for no real good reason. But they do. And it's really, it's considering time from the vantage point of time lived versus time measured.

The phenomenology of time. Which basically says this, when you're a child, time stands still. And it's never Christmas. And then, you get older and time flies.

And it's just like, every day is another birthday. And you're just like, stop already. Make the best use of time.

And I think as we age, this phenomenology of time, as it just feels like it's speeding up, speeding up, even though it's not in time measured, but it's just time lived, it feels that way, it should grow in each of us in urgency.

- [ 42 : 08 ] Oh, I want to be part of God's work. I want to be part of God's story. So it should be something that is a catalyst to pray more. God, use me. Use my family.

Use this circumstance. I don't like it, but just like Paul in prison, Lord, use it for your purposes. Let the gospel advance. I love what Paul writes in Romans 13, 11, and 12.

He says, besides this, you know the time that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us than when we first believed.

Salvation. This is not like saving grace right here. Salvation. This is ultimate salvation. This is deliverance from this life. This is the return of Christ.

For the return of Christ, we could say it, is nearer to us now than when we first believed. The night is far gone. The day is at hand. So let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light.

[ 43 : 10 ] And we want to be prepared to meet Jesus, church. Amen? We want to be prepared to meet our Lord. Amen? So, and we want to see as many people as possible come to faith.

So let's make the best use of time. Paul here then takes things to really the next level of our lives, lending credibility to the gospel by picking out a very specific area of our lives, our tongue.

I think we comprehensively talked about this at camp last Sunday. But Paul says this, let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer each person.

And I love that he uses this adjective, gracious. Let your speech be gracious. And if this is about gospel proclamation, gospel advancing, are we gracious with our words?

Are we gracious with our tone? You can say the right words that have an ungracious tone. Amen?

[ 44 : 31 ] You know. You have children. You know. You know. Are our words gracious? People notice people with gracious words.

Church. Kind people cannot be hidden. They are attractive. And Paul says they're like seasoned with salt.

They're like good seasoned food. Sweet spirit, hard to hide. And that's part of our gospel message. And I love actually that we were out at camp last weekend and I was telling Scott that in all the five years of family camps that I've been a part of, this last weekend was the best.

And it was the best because there was just a sweet spirit. There was a kind, gracious spirit that was so evident. And I'm not saying that the other four that I went to that was just harsh and horrible.

I'm not saying that. But it was just so obvious. People enjoyed being together. There was friendship. There was kindness. And it was just, it was beautiful.

[ 45 : 43 ] And what I love for us, Forth, is that it's powerful. Like this church, it means that there are many here that will be useful to see others come to faith.

It's gospel horsepower. In fact, it's interesting in Philippians 2, Paul says, you know, hey, don't speak in this way. Don't grumble. Don't complain. All of this.

And he says, actually, if we live in such a way where our speech is good and it's kind, then we will shine like lights in the world. Like, kind people cannot be hidden. They can't be.

I notice any really kind person that gets in my car, it's like evident immediately. It's like, it's like, you kind of want the ride to keep going because they're so nice.

It's so enjoyable. I think that's why many of you are here at Forth. Because despite me being on staff, you know Scott's here. And he's so kind.

[ 46 : 44 ] It's why I love to serve with him. It's like, yes, because I get to serve with a kind shepherd. And I get to work with a kind staff. I'm not going to name all of you, but you're all in that category.

But I was actually telling Hannah, I don't even know if she's in here right now. Oh, she just stepped in. I was like, Hannah, you just knocked all of us down on the kind meter because you're on staff now. Because she's like setting a high bar.

But she's gracious. And if you've been like recruited to serve and you're not guilted, she's so gracious. And it just is so attractive. And I think our world, they're just tired of mean, just harsh, unkind people.

And when they run into God's people and there's a kindness in our words, our countenance, our posture, our spirit, man, people, there's something different. I think that's power for the Lord to use to see actually the gospel go forth.

So church, let's pray the gospel. Let's talk to God about people. Let's live the gospel.

[ 47 : 52 ] Let's speak the gospel. Let's speak to people about our good God. Because you know what? This life is far too short not to. Amen? Amen? Father, thank you for this word from Paul.

Lord, we want to confess that maybe our prayers have not been maybe super consistent. But Lord, as you put people on our hearts, as you convict, as you kind of prompt us, I pray that we'd be quick to talk to you to pray.

Lord, I pray that we would be, it would just be like breathing for us. That we would pray without ceasing. Talking to you all the time about the things that are trials, things that burden, things that, longings, and maybe things we feel like are unanswered.

But Lord, we would also be talking to you about those that you've placed in our life that don't know you. That we would have opportunity to be your presence. And then Lord, give us courage.

If we're not really prepared to share good news, maybe we'd give some thought to that. A sense of time in looking through those Roman verses or reflecting on a couple key verses that kind of condense the gospel down that we would be prepared to share.

[ 49 : 16 ] And Lord, maybe even giving thought to what we love about the gospel for us. Lord, it's part of our testimony. And as we share about the things that are dear to us in our salvation, the people around us, our friends, our co-workers, maybe family members, they have to kind of ponder on that.

But Lord, I pray that you would use this church. Thank you for the spirit that's here. Thank you that this really is, there's just so many kind people. And it's powerful. And it's so different than this world in which we live.

And I pray, Lord, pray God that you would use it to advance your story. And Lord, someday there would be much for us to celebrate with you in heaven. We commit all these things to you in Jesus' name.

Amen.