

#10 Colossians: end.

Tom Tillman

Verse 5: 'Walk in wisdom toward those *who are* outside, redeeming the time.'

By 'those who are outside,' Paul means unbelievers, non-Christians. Our speech, our actions, all that we say or do, should be with the understanding that we are representatives of the King; we are the visual pictures the World has of the Lord Jesus Christ. We are His ambassadors. By 'redeeming the time,' he means, never losing or wasting any opportunity to share the Gospel and he means, sharing the Gospel with our mouths: telling the truth of how we did, and they can, be forgiven and gain salvation unto eternal life. When we accept the notion of 'lifestyle evangelism,' believing that our lifestyle is what draws people to Christ, then we are already wasting opportunities and not redeeming the time.

Certainly, it's not always appropriate to open our mouths and share the Gospel but it is fear and laziness that causes us to never open our mouths to share the true and full Gospel of God's Grace unto Salvation.

Verse 6: 'Let your speech always *be* with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.'

Jesus said that we are the light of the World and the salt of the Earth. Matt 5:13 Salt had two important functions: as a seasoning and as a preservation against rot and decay. It was so valuable that it was used to pay workers' wages. Our word, salary, comes from *sal*, the Latin word for salt and the saying, 'worth his salt,' meant worth his wages paid out in salt. Our very presence in the World is holding back its rot of evil which will flood the World after the moment of the Rapture when the Holy Spirit removes His restraint of evil.

Here, Paul is not referring to preservation but rather, to seasoning. Our speech between ourselves and with unbelievers is to be restrained and seasoned by grace which is defined as: 'undeserved favor.' Unbelievers don't deserve to be treated with kindness, grace and love: no one deserves it; we're all sinners who deserve only hell. But we are commanded to be kind, loving and full of grace with all people. Paul's implication here is that we are 'answering,' with grace to unbelievers, whether they have legitimate interest in Christianity which we present as seasoned and tasty, or they want to persecute us and our answer should always be with grace, as if holding back the rot and decay which would result from our answering back in anger or pride... 'A soft answer turns away wrath, But a harsh word stirs up anger.' Prov 15:1

Now we come to the closing, personal notes with which Paul ended some of his letters:

Verse 7: 'Tychicus, a beloved brother, faithful minister, and fellow servant in the Lord, will tell you all the news about me. ⁸ I am sending him to you for this very purpose, that he may know your circumstances and comfort your hearts,'

Paul thought highly of Tychicus who was one of the Gentiles Paul had led to salvation; he accompanied Paul often; he took Tychicus with him to Jerusalem as a representative of the Gentile converts to prove that God's Grace had now been offered and poured out on the Gentiles. Paul even sent him to Ephesus as a substitute or interim pastor for Timothy 4:12 and Titus. 3:12.

Remember, when we studied Philemon, we saw that Tychicus was Paul's choice for the crucial mission of delivering his letters to Ephesus, Colossae and to Philemon.

And, speaking of Philemon: remember, that letter was centered on Philemon's runaway slave, Onesimus. Here, Paul writes:

Verse 9: (I'm sending Tychicus) 'with Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother, who is *one* of you. They will make known to you all things which *are happening* here.' Paul was really sending Onesimus back to Philemon but was asking him to consider Onesimus, now, as a Christian brother, much more than a slave, and to even give him his freedom. Paul's desire was to see Onesimus as an equal, full member of the Church at Colossae; he referred to him as, 'one of you,' more than a slave. Remember, Paul had made the point of there being, now, no division or hierarchy within the true Church, in his letter to the Galatians: 'For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. ²⁷ For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. ²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹ And if you *are* Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.' Gal 3:26

Tychicus was tasked with taking to the Colossians, all the news about Paul and his present circumstances, under house arrest in Rome and then with bringing back, to Paul, all the news about these several churches: Ephesus, Colossae, Laodicea as well as other house churches like those in Philemon's and Nympha's homes.

Verse 10: 'Aristarchus my fellow prisoner greets you, with Mark the cousin of Barnabas (about whom you received instructions: if he comes to you, welcome him), ¹¹ and Jesus who is called Justus. These *are my* only fellow workers for the kingdom of God who are of the circumcision; they have proved to be a comfort to me.

Although Paul was commissioned to go to the Gentiles, he was also preaching to Jews. Aristarchus, Mark and Jesus who is called Justus were all converted Jews who were with Paul, helping him with his needs while he was a prisoner in Rome. In Acts 19, we saw that Aristarchus was seized, with Paul, by the Ephesian mob.

This is John Mark, the cousin of Barnabas; he went with Paul and Barnabas on the first journey but left them to return home. Acts 13 When the next missionary journey was planned, Barnabas wanted to take Mark again but Paul refused. The disagreement led to the split between Paul and Barnabas. Acts 15 Instead of Barnabas and Mark, Paul decided to take with him, Silas whom we later see with him in the Philippian Jail.

We don't know any more about Jesus, called Justus than his name, here.

Verse 12: 'Epaphras, who is *one* of you, a bondservant of Christ, greets you, always laboring fervently for you in prayers that you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.' For I bear him witness that he has a great zeal for you, and those who are in Laodicea, and those in Hierapolis. It sounds like Paul depended upon Epaphras because he had the same heart's desire for the spiritual maturity of the new Christians, as did Paul.

Verse 14: 'Luke the beloved physician and Demas greet you.'

This is the Luke who wrote down the 'Gospel According to Luke' and also 'The Acts of the Apostles.' Here is a strong indication that Luke was a Gentile because Paul just listed all the Jews who were with him and then mentions Luke with the Gentiles. That would make Luke the only non Jewish writer of Scripture unless you also count Job.

Demas, here, sounds like just one of the guys working hard for the Kingdom. John wrote, 'They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but *they went out* that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us.' We discover, later, that Demas is not just one of the guys doing his part. To Timothy, Paul wrote, 'Be diligent to come to me quickly; ¹⁰ *for Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world*, and has departed for Thessalonica.' 2 Tim 4:9 False Christians can be so well disguised that even Paul did not recognize Demas as such. We can't always tell who is a genuine believer and who is not. Only God really knows, sometimes.

Verse 15: 'Greet the brethren who are in Laodicea, and Nymphas and the church that *is* in his house.

Paul sought to foster harmony and cooperation between the different Church groups in a city or within a region.

Verse 16: 'Now when this epistle is read among you, see that it is read also in the church of the Laodiceans, and that you likewise read the *epistle* from Laodicea.

Paul's letters were meant to be copied and passed around. It's too bad we don't have a copy of his letter to the Laodiceans. Perhaps, in it, Paul said he had changed his mind and it was now ok to have women pastors or that it was now ok to just let your lifestyle do the evangelization for you or that now it was important for us to do plenty of good works in order to earn our acceptance with God... or... maybe not...

Maybe we really do have all of the Scripture that God intended for us to have.

Verse 17: 'And say to Archippus, "Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it."'

Perhaps Archippus was becoming discouraged or dissatisfied with the ministry to which God had called him. Perhaps he was starting to love this present World like Demas later would. Paul was sending him a wakeup call... 'Wake up. Archippus! Pay attention! Do your best because time is short!' And that is the same wakeup call God wants every one of us to hear... 'Wake up! Time is very short! Do your best! Not because your salvation depends upon doing your best but, rather, your eternal rewards depend on it. Do your best!'

Verse 18: 'This salutation by my own hand—Paul. Remember my chains. Grace *be* with you. Amen.'

Paul probably dictated his letters to a secretary, but would then sign them, himself, to prove that he had authored it.

'Remember my chains.' Paul had two reasons for writing this phrase: first, obviously he wanted the Colossians to faithfully pray for him but even more importantly, he was reiterating what he had written in the first chapter: 'I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church,' Paul was a visible reminder of what the Lord Jesus Christ had done for these Gentiles, none of whom had ever seen Jesus Christ, that He had suffered and died for them (us) and as they saw, and heard, of Paul's suffering, they would be strengthened and encouraged when they also suffered persecution so that they would not choose to go back 'into the World' as Demas later would.

Everything that Paul wrote to all of these various churches, he was writing to us; everything of which he warned them, he was warning us: persecution would come, we would be hated; false teachers would permeate the Last Days Church; a great falling away in the Faith would occur just before the Rapture.

Paul believed that Jesus Christ's return for His Church would be much sooner than God planned; we know that it really is close because everything prophesied to be of the End Times is happening all around us.

Last week, in our question and answer time, someone asked about all those who have never heard the Gospel; could they be saved? And we talked about different levels of rewards and also different levels of punishment.

Jesus said, "Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. ³³ Sell what you have and give alms; provide yourselves money bags which do not grow old, a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches nor moth destroys. ³⁴ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Then He said: "Let your waist be girded and your lamps burning; ³⁶ and you yourselves be like men who wait for their master, when he will return from the wedding, that when he comes and knocks they may open to him immediately. (Here, it sounds like He is referring to Tribulation Saints whose Master has gone off to the wedding in Heaven) Blessed are those servants whom the master, when he comes, will find watching. Assuredly, I say to you that he will gird himself and have them sit down to eat, and will come and serve them. ³⁸ And if he should come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants. ³⁹ But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. ⁴⁰ Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect." Then Peter said to Him, "Lord, do You speak this parable only to us, or to all people?" And the Lord said, "Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his master will make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of food in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. ⁴⁴ Truly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all that he has. ⁴⁵ But if that servant says in his heart, 'My master is delaying his coming,' and begins to beat the male and female servants, and to eat and drink and be drunk, ⁴⁶ the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the unbelievers. ⁴⁷ And that servant who knew his master's will, and did not prepare himself or do according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. ⁴⁸ **But he who did not know, yet committed things deserving of stripes, shall be beaten with few.** For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more.'

This seems to clearly convey that there will be different levels of punishment for unbelievers.

Then Paul writes: 'And do you think this, O man, you who judge those practicing such things, and doing the same, that you will escape the judgment of God? ⁴ Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance? ⁵ But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who "***will render to each one according to his deeds***": ***eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality***; ⁸ but to those

who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness—indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, ***on every soul of man who does evil***, of the Jew first and also of the Greek; ¹⁰ ***but glory, honor, and peace to everyone who works what is good***, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. ¹¹ For there is no partiality with God. ¹² For ***as many as have sinned without law will also perish without law, and as many as have sinned in the law will be judged by the law*** ¹³ (for not the hearers of the law are just in the sight of God, but the doers of the law will be justified; ¹⁴ for ***when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves, ¹⁵ who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves their thoughts accusing or else excusing them***) ¹⁶ in the day when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel. Rom 2:3

This sounds like Paul is referencing Gentiles out in the World. Here Paul does not mention faith in Jesus Christ. He is speaking of Gentiles, to whom he had been sent, some of them actually doing the things in the Law according to the dictates of their consciences; some of them... did God reveal Himself to them?

“And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they ALL might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.” This passage clearly condemns ***only those who “believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness”***.

Job, and the Book of Job, written centuries before Moses and the Law and which some believe was actually written even before the flood and preserved by Noah, records Job as saying: *'For I know that my Redeemer lives, and He shall stand at last on the earth; ²⁶ And after my skin is destroyed, this I know, That in my flesh I shall see God, ²⁷ Whom I shall see for myself, And my eyes shall behold, and not another. How my heart yearns within me! Job 19:25*

Job was not a Hebrew or a Jew and he had no Law; neither were Adam or Noah Jews; neither is God.

In any case: the ancestors of every person on Earth knew the truth of Who God is... from Noah and his 3 sons. That knowledge could have been passed down through the centuries to every wild place on Earth.

God revealed Himself to Noah; God revealed Himself to Job... why not to others throughout the past 1000's of years... all around the World?

But... 'Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.' Acts 4:12

There is no salvation apart from the Lord Jesus Christ but Jesus, Himself, said, 'And that servant who knew his master's will, and did not prepare himself or do according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. ⁴⁸ But he who did not know, yet committed things deserving of stripes, shall be beaten with few. For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required. He said, 'to whom much is given, much'll be required' with the clear implication being, 'to whom little is given, (even information about salvation, perhaps) little will be required.'

This we know: No one is saved apart from the Lord Jesus Christ: 'that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. ¹¹ For the Scripture says, “Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame.” ¹² For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him. ¹³ For “whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved.”

But the question remains: What about those who've never heard? Has God revealed more, throughout the ages, to more people than we know?

For God so loved the World... every little people group ever! God knows His Own secrets. We don't.