



Message Transcript

Mission Alignment

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Thank you so much for choosing to worship with us today. So glad you're here. And as we get ready to celebrate the Christmas season, I want to invite you as you leave our Worship Center this morning to pick up one of our cards, not only so that you'll remember the times, the 2:00 and 4:00, but so that you'll use this to invite people because at Christmas time, as well as at Easter, people are looking for a life-giving church. When people come here, they're going to hear the Gospel, God is going to move.

And so, just encourage you to take those and use them as the Lord would lead you. Can we go the Lord in prayer this morning? Lord Jesus, we just thank you for the privilege of worshiping your name, for honoring you, Lord, for giving you all the praise that you so rightly deserve. And Lord, we pray this morning that as we hear Your word, that we would hear directly from you.

Lord, this is your book, you wrote it, you have a word for us this morning. And Lord, our desire is to hear you and respond to you by faith, the way that you show us. And now, all God's people who are ready to hear his word, believe what he says, and by faith put into practice what he shows you, agreed with me very loudly this morning by saying the word, Amen. Amen.

Deep down in our heart, as believers, all of us want to have significant impact for the Lord Jesus Christ. As a matter of fact, many people at a funeral will often talk about and they'll give good words, the eulogy for the person who has lived for Christ and the impact that they've made for His kingdom. But more importantly, than what

people say on this side of heaven is, what will the Lord say when you meet him face-to-face? And how is it that you know that you're aligned with what God has for your life?

Because for all of us, in our human condition, oftentimes, we can spin the gamut of feeling like, "Man, I'm doing really great. And there's nothing else I could do to. I'm lousy, I'm not doing anything for Jesus." And somewhere in between, and it's hard for us to be consistent. What is it that God would have for us to do?

He's commissioned us to go into all the world and make disciples. He said, we're part of his family, and that he wants to use us for great things. So, how is it that we can make sure that we individually and collectively as a church are aligned with the mission that the Lord Jesus Christ has for us?

And if you've ever wanted to know, what's God's purpose in my life, and how can I be aligned with him, then this message will be of help to you this morning. I want to encourage you to open up your Bible to Colossians 4, starting in verse two. And while you're turning there, remember, in the Book of Colossians, Paul has been writing to a church that he's never visited before, that he is encouraged because he's hearing reports that people are being saved.

They're coming to the knowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord. They know they've been forgiven of their sins. And now, he's telling them the mystery. The mystery of the Gospel, which was not known in the Old Testament is that, when you trust Jesus, through His Holy Spirit, He comes to live inside of you, and in dwell you. And so, the

beauty of the Christian faith is not what you're doing for God, but how God is living his life in and through you.

And then, he begins to explain to us what will that be in the case, then how does that work itself out in real life? And last week, we took a look at what it looks like to be a godly husband, and a godly wife, and a godly parent, and a godly child, and a godly employee, and a godly employer, and how do we work all that out. And really, what he's spelling out here at the end of his letter is just the core of the missional alignment that God would have for all believers in Christ that we know that we're living the way God wants us to live.

And that's where we are today in Colossians 4, starting in verse two, I'll read these verses, and then we will unpack them together. Here's what Paul says, "Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving; praying at the same time for us as well that God will open up to us a door for the word, so that we may speak forth the mystery of Christ, for which I have also been imprisoned; that I may make it clear in the way I ought to speak. Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity. Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person."

In here, nestled in the heart of the Book of Colossians by the Apostle Paul, inspired by the Holy Spirit, we read about missional alignment. When I talk about missional alignment. I'm saying that God, when He saved you, didn't just save you so that you could have a relationship with God. And so, you could go to heaven.

God saved you and he baptized you into a family called the Body of Christ. And being a part of that body makes you part of his mission, which is to go into all the world and to make disciples. And how is it that your life can align with the mission that Jesus Christ has for you.

And here's the first thing he tells us. He says, the missional alignment requires persistent and grateful dependence on God's leading. Persistent and grateful dependence on God's leading. Notice what he says. He says, "Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert at it with an attitude of thanksgiving." Look at those first words, "Devote yourselves to prayer."

It's interesting that when the Apostle Paul writes under divine inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he says, "If you really want to have alignment with what God has for your life, if you really want to have significant Kingdom impact, devote yourselves to prayer." That's all of you. Devote yourselves to prayer. Devote means to persistent. It means, to stay after. It means, to pray and not give up.

Now, why would Paul give that instruction? I love the Bible, because it's so real. Because if there's anything that we will give up on, it's our time of prayer with the Lord. Just think about your own prayer times for a second. Even with your best efforts to say, "I'm going to sit down, I'm going to pray today, I'm going to go after it, I'm going to seek the Lord's face." Have you ever had this experience?

You sit down and you begin to pray. And all of a sudden, your mind can go in like 75 directions all at once. And you begin to think as you're praying, "Man, I got to get

that Christmas present. Man, I got to go by for that person." And then, how can that happen at work this week? And I'm so mad at them. And why am I so mad at them? All of a sudden, it derailed, and your mind's gone everywhere except to praying and seeking the face of the Lord.

Let me tell you why it says persistent prayer, because it's really, really, really, really, really, really hard. Prayer is difficult. I mean, some people say that prayer is as easy as breathing. It's just like having a communion with God. We're just talking to God, and he's talking back to us. It is as simple as breathing.

Let me tell you this, I don't struggle with breathing. It just happens for me. I was doing it all last night. I didn't even know about it. I woke up. I've been doing it all day. I'm doing it right now. I'm not even consistently, thinking about it. Prayer for me doesn't work that way.

Prayer is an effort of directing my attention towards the Lord. And while it's as simple or as clear as breathing, there's a responsibility on my part, to pray. And prayer is challenging. It's difficult. And this is why we sometimes give up. Paul says, "If you want to be significant for the Kingdom, devote yourselves to prayer."

Now, we have a great model for that in the Lord Jesus Christ. Did he devote himself to prayer? His whole life was marked by prayer. And Mark 1:35, it says, "Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up and went to solitary places where there he prayed." The night where Jesus takes all of his disciples and from them, selects 12. He stayed up all night in prayer.

Before he fed the 5,000, he was given five loaves and two fish. And the people came to him, and gave Him five loaves and two fish. And what does he do? He prays before he breaks the loaves. What does he do before he walks on water? He spends all night that night, praying before he goes out and walks on the water. How about the night that he was betrayed? We find him in the Garden of Gethsemane. And for three hours, he's there doing what? He's praying.

Even when he goes to the cross after being falsely accused and falsely tried and wrongly condemned, put on a cross. When everybody's shouting insults at him, what's he doing? He's praying. I mean, his whole life was so marked by prayer. Then, the disciples say in Luke chapter 11, "Lord, teach us to pray." We want to know how to pray, like you pray. And that's what we call the Lord's Prayer, Our Father who art in heaven, and so on.

But think about the disciples, did they pray? I mean, oftentimes, we look in the Book of Acts and say, "Well, the church was birthed in Acts chapter two." But go back and read Act chapter one, Jesus told the disciples to remain in Jerusalem, so the Holy Spirit came upon them.

And there's 120 people in an upper room for days doing what? Nothing but praying. They were seeking the Lord's faith, so much, that in Acts chapter six, when we have problems in the early church, and we got this race problem, because different widows of different races are getting better distribution of the food, the apostles look on, and they said, "This is a big deal. So, appoint for yourself seven men, filled with the

Spirit, so they can deal with this food distribution and racism problem in the church. But as for us, we will do what? We will devote ourselves to prayer, and the ministry of the word."

The early church understood that prayer was foundational. It's why when you read almost every New Testament letter, Paul's saying, "What am I doing? I'm praying for you. I'm praying for you. I'm praying for you. A path versus praying for you. We're praying, we're praying, that's what we do. We pray and we minister the word of God."

So, you would think that if you read through the Bible, you would say, "Yeah, prayer is really important. I should be all about prayer." But here's, let me tell you why, it's difficult to pray, because God is nothing like us. God is holy. God is righteous. God is true. God is merciful. God is loving. Before the world even existed, God existed all by himself. He's self-sufficient. He doesn't depend upon anyone.

And let me tell you something about God. When you press into God, yes, you can get intimate with God. And I've heard people describe prayers intimacy, that you have a fellowship with Him, and there's more intimacy. But let me tell you something that God is, God is dangerous. He's absolutely dangerous.

Think about the people in the Bible that oppressed into God and what the result has been, because they pressed into God. I mean, think about Jeremiah, Jeremiah, the prophet starts pressing into God, and what does he hear God tell him? He hears God tell him this, "Before you were formed in the womb, I knew you and I set you apart to be a prophet to the nations." And Jeremiah, probably, in his heart is saying,

"That's not what I wanted to do."

As a matter of fact, that closer he presses into God, God tells him, you will not marry and you will not have kids, because I'm going to use your life as an example to Israel, because I'm going to judge the entire nation. By the way, you will say everything that I want you to say. And when you do, you will know you're honoring me, but very few people are going to listen to you. As a matter of fact, they're going to rebel against you, and you're going to go through all sorts of hard times.

It's no wonder that in Jeremiah's ministry, all we do is we read him weeping the entire time. I mean, he's weeping and complaining every single chapter of the book. God, how come they're doing this? And how come I... Why? Because he got close to God in prayer, and God used him as an instrument in his hands.

I think about another prophet like, I don't know, like Jonah. Remember that guy? He had close to God. And what did God tell him? I want you to go to Nineveh, that city, that you hate, that city that hates all of Israel, and I want you to go proclaim the good news of my love to them.

And so, what'd he do? He hopped the first ship to Tarshish and went the exact opposite direction. And as they grew in their "intimacy," here's what God said, "Oh, you want to get closer to me? Cool. I'm going to throw you over the board from the ship. I'm going to have a big fish swallow you while you're getting drown and seaweed, then we'll have some more prayer time together."

And as he gets closer to God in chapter three, what does he do? Okay, God,

whatever you want. He goes back to Nineveh. He preaches the Gospel, thousands of people get saved. And that last chapter of the book, what's he doing? He's ticked off at God. God, I knew you were going to do this. You're always so merciful. They didn't deserve it. I didn't want to do that, anyway.

I mean, can you tell me a story of anybody that got close to God in the Bible, where their life went exactly the way they wanted it to go. I can't think of any. How many young virgin named Mary, that was living in Israel at that time, that the Holy Spirit came and say, "Hey, you found favor with God, here's what's going to happen. Even though you've never been with a man, you will be impregnated with the Son of God, and you will bring the Savior into the world."

How did that go for Mary? Kind of a cool story, unless you're Mary and have to tell the one man you're betrothed to, "Don't worry about it. I haven't been with anybody else. The Holy Spirit put him here. And he's God. And actually, what's in my belly is going to save your life. So, you better marry me." I mean, that's a tough deal.

She's rejected by all their family and friends. It's why when they go down to Jerusalem, they have to end up in Bethlehem. There's no room for them, in the end. Why are they looking for a hotel room in the end? Because none of their family wanted to be around them.

Mary got close to Jesus and was righteous. Joseph was close to Jesus and was righteous. And what happened? Their life didn't go the way they wanted it to go. Of all the post resurrection disciples, the 11 that survived. Church history tells us 10 of them

were martyred. And one John was banned on the Island of Patmos, all by himself.

Nobody had a life that they would have planned and said, "This is exactly the way I wanted it to go." Why does God tell us to devote ourselves to prayer? Because he knows this, you're his instrument for advancing the Gospel. And the closer you get to God, the more God can reveal things individually to you, that he wants you to do. And oftentimes, those are the things that you will say, "I didn't sign up for that. That's not what I wanted." He says, "No, devote yourselves to prayer."

One of the authors that I like to read is E.M. Bounds. He was a pastor a century ago, who wrote 11 books, nine of them were on prayer. And here's what he says. E.M. Bound says, "That God's plan is to make much of the man, far more of him than anything else. Men are God's methods. The church is looking for better methods. God is looking for better men." Women, same is true for you.

Oftentimes, we're going to God trying to figure out what God can do for us. And we like keeping God at a distance, so long as he takes our life that we want and the trajectory we were going and just adds a little healing and adds a little blessing and adds little prosperity and adds a little of this.

And, but when you got to realize, when you get close to this dangerous God, he says, "I fashioned you, informed you for my purposes, long before you ever even existed. And now, that your mind, when you seek Me in prayer, I will begin to fashion you and take you in a direction that I intended you to go."

And the reason we're called to devote ourselves to prayers, we get faint hearted

when we see some of those things. Like, that's not the way I wanted to go. That's not what I thought you had for me. And it's interesting because this word devote means, to continually do it. Because sometimes, we like answers to prayer so fast, not only just so we can see God answer prayers, but then we can be done praying that anymore.

God heal me, oh, He healed me, I'm not going to pray anymore. God, give me a job, I don't have to pray for that anymore. Devoting yourself to prayer means, that you're consistently coming before the Lord on an ongoing regular basis to make sure you're aligned with everything that God would have you to do and to be.

I remember about 10 years ago, it was June 16th of 2009 where God clearly spoke to my heart through a phone call, through talking to my wife, that we were going to move to Denver and plan a church. I knew it, I knew it, I knew it. Like, that's where I'm going. I really felt it at that time. That's for the rest of my life. That's where I'm going.

But do you know that just because God answered that prayer doesn't mean I don't pray anymore about what God wants to do with my life. It doesn't mean that 10 years ago, I stopped praying and said, "Now, God, I'm here, you can't do anything else in my life. I have to be a pastor at BRAVE Church in Denver." That's not how I pray.

There have been times since I've been here just came through a season where I'm praying to the Lord, "Lord, is this really what you have? It's something changed. Do you need to take my life in a different direction, because I'm yours. And I'm your instrument." And when God takes you through a season like that, one of two things

happens. He either realize where you're going, or guess what? He confirms what you already thought to be true. And both are really, really good.

And that's the love that the Lord has for us. We devote ourselves to prayer because at the end of the day, we're giving our attention and our allegiance to the Lord Jesus Christ and how he's leading us at any given moment. That's what it means to devote yourselves to prayer.

Now, notice what else it says in there. Some of your versions may say, "Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful, it says, devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it. What does that mean? It means if you serve a dangerous God, who's taking you on a dangerous mission, you better be aware of all the obstacles that are going to come your way.

You better be aware of it. I mean, Jesus in Matthew 26:41, when he took his disciples in the garden, he says, "Watch and pray." You better keep your eyes open. I mean, we're doing what our thought, my father wants us to do. And danger is on the way.

Let me just tell you this, as someone who is growing in prayer, and someone who hasn't mastered prayer, and the more I grow in prayer, the more I realized, I don't know about prayer. The more I pray, and the more I see answers, and the more God does in through my life, the more danger I see in the world. The more I say, "Lord, this is going to be hard." The more I say, "Lord, get me out of here."

The more I pray, and the more I realize that God's called me to faithfully proclaim

His word, the more I see a world that says, "Don't you dare do that." The more I see a world that someday it's going to say, "You can't say that." The more I see a world that says, "If you say that in a public sector, we're going to arrest you." The more I see the danger, the more I pray.

And the more I pray, the more I see the danger. It's just the way it works. Why? Because when you genuinely pray, there is always a counter attack from the enemy. The greatest battle you can have is not standing up and fighting with your fist, the greatest battle you can ever have in serving the Lord is on your knees in prayer. It's where all the power comes from. It's where all the energy comes from. It's where all the Holy Spirit begins to move. It's when you're aligned with the Spirit of God in your life.

Now, how important is this for our culture? How important this is for our culture? Just by show of hands, I mean, if you've ever seen anything in our world, in the United States, you say, "Man, that's messed up right now." I just noticed that, would you just raise your hand and say, you see something?

Now, here's my question, what would happen, just what would happen if everybody who claims the name of Jesus genuinely got down on their knees, and they prayed like this, "Hey, Lord, whatever it would take in my life, so that your glory would be put on display in this world, I'm willing to sacrifice anything, do anything and become anything, so that you can look famous in our country." What might happen? I mean, there would be so much conversion, it would be crazy.

Methods won't change it. New lights, new technology, won't change it. New cool people that dress a certain way to preach, won't change it. The power of God comes through the Spirit of God, when God's people hunger for the things of God, and are willing to relinquish who they are, so that God can be put on display. That's why Paul says, "Devote yourselves to that."

You want to have massive Kingdom impact, pray. I believe in heaven; we're going to meet a lot of anonymous saints that are rewarded greatly right next to the throne of Jesus that nobody on earth knew. But that Jesus knew really, really well, because they were seeking his face on a regular basis. It's persistent and grateful dependence upon God's leading.

And notice how we should do it. We should do with an attitude of thanksgiving. I mean, we come before the Lord. It's not like, "Okay, I'll pray, and if you make me do something, I don't want to. I'm just going to do all begrudgingly." No, I'm praying, and when the Lord shows me what I'm supposed to do, I'm going to do it with thankfulness.

Because oftentimes, what I find whether it's in our business or in our home or in our ministry or community, where we live, what we do, oftentimes, God gives us something that we know was of the Lord and we're like, "I don't know, I don't know if I want to do that. So, I better call together a small group and I'll process it with all my friends to see if they're getting that message to, and then I'll do it."

Now, do you realize that when you seek the Lord in prayer, He will show you what you need to do that looks different than anybody else. And when you align with

him in prayer, then God can use your life in a way where you become the arrow where He shoots you out doing what He wants you to do. And God will take you on a journey that is breathtaking and different than anybody else.

So, devote yourselves to prayer with an attitude of thanksgiving, be grateful that the God of the universe is shaping you for His Kingdom service. Now, being thankful is nothing new. If you flip over one book to 1 Thessalonians 5:16 through 18. It says, "Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything, give thanks, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

Prayer and thankfulness go hand in hand. Philippians 4:6-7, what does it say? "You offer all your prayers with thanksgiving." We're thanking God that he knows better than us. One of the reasons we don't like prayer is because God speaks. And God tells us, "This is what I created you for, this is who you are, this is what I want you to do."

Now, I don't know about you. But when I first got saved, I thought prayer was something for older people to do, right? Or people that didn't have public gifts, and then they pray. And then, you go do the work of ministry. And if you were to pray, you pray when you're desperate. Like, if someone's really sick on a hospital bed, go ahead and pray for them. And pray that God would do some big things.

But I didn't realize that God wanted to be involved in every single area of my life. It seemed silly. I remember meeting people in college and they said, "I was praying about where the Lord wanted me to live this year, whether he wanted me to live in a

dorm or an apartment." I'm like, "Why don't you pray about that? Just live wherever you want." Why would you pray about that? I'm praying about who I should date and why shouldn't. Why would you pray about that? I mean, do it yourself.

I mean, I never thought like that. But God's concerned about every area of your life. Like, if you're going to buy a home, does God want you to buy a home? Where does he want you to buy a home? Where does he want you to live? Why does he want you to live there? How are you supposed to be for your neighbors? What's the purpose of God doing that in your life? Are you supposed to date or are you not supposed to date? Why? Why not? How are you supposed to use your income for the sake of the Lord? What's it looks like for you to be generous?

Do you realize God wants us to pray and seek Him about everything? And one of the reasons we don't is, we don't want to hear an answer different to what we're already doing. Because we care more about us than we do about the advancement of the Kingdom of God. And that's why he says, "Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping at it with a watchful eye, doing it with an attitude of thanksgiving."

Be aware, when you pray, things change. When you seek the Lord, your life will change because you are depending upon him and you're telling the Lord every time you come before Him, "Lord, you're in-charge. I'm not, whatever you want. That's what I want. And Lord, even in those areas, I don't change my heart. So, they'll align with yours." Persistent and grateful dependence upon the Lord.

Secondly, is this, mission alignment requires praying for Gospel impact through

others. Praying for Gospel impact through others. Notice what he says. He says, "Praying at the same time for us as well." So, Paul's just instructed the church, "Devote yourselves to prayer." But then, he wanted to say, "Pray for us as well."

Now, think about this. Why would Paul ask for prayer? I mean, if there were a ranking system, and there's not, but if there were, you're talking like the top five saints of all time in church history. Paul would be a contender for number one. He's the foremost missionary theologian ever. He pinned two-thirds of the New Testament under divine inspiration of the Holy Spirit. He clearly understood the Gospel as well as anybody. And What's he asking for? Pray for me, please, please pray for me. Pray for us. Pray for us.

Now, Paul, why do you want us to pray for you? Here's what he says, "Pray for us as well, that God will open up to us a door for the word, so that we may speak forth the mystery of Christ." Say what? I mean, Paul is like Mr. Evangelist, and you're saying, pray for me that God would open a door, so that I can speak the word of Christ, and I can do it clearly?" Yeah, that's what he's saying.

Do you know why? Because only Jesus Christ can open the heart of somebody for the Gospel. Not even the Apostle Paul can open the heart of somebody. Billy Graham was not able to open the heart of somebody. Only the Holy Spirit can open the heart of somebody. What does this tell me? That we should be praying for opportunities to share the Gospel or God gives us an open door.

When there's an open door sharing the Gospel is so easy. I mean, it's so easy.

It's like people are saying, "What must I do to be saved?" Let me tell you what you must do to be saved. That's an open door. Oftentimes, we have family members and friends that were so bound, that we got to lead them to Christ. And we keep praying for them, and trying to get them and praying for them.

And here's what I would say, continue to pray for all your family members, and continue to pray for all your friends, and continue to pray for all the lost people that you know. Continue to do that, pray and don't give up. But while you're doing that, would you please open your eyes to how the Lord may open doors for you to bring the Gospel to somebody else? I mean, think about it like this.

I mean, you could say, "I'm going to leave my sister to Christ, I'm going to leave my brother to Christ, I'm going to leave my mom to Christ." And you're going out to a meal with them, and they're not open to the Gospel, but your server would be. And you start talking and they say, "Oh, you're talking about Jesus, I've been looking for a church. I don't understand all this stuff. And I don't know what it means to be saved. But I want to learn."

Well, then, you can say, "Mom, Dad, I want to talk to you a minute, but I'm going to leave this person to Christ." We missed so many opportunities, because we're so focused on who we got to see get saved. If God doesn't open the door to their heart, there's nothing you can say, anyway.

The reason most of us don't enjoy sharing the Gospel, we feel like it's a sales pitch to somebody who doesn't want it. It's not. We pray for opportunities to share the

love of Christ, and then open our eyes. And there will be opportunities, if we're open to what God brings us and who God brings us to sharing the love of Jesus. And you don't have to be the Apostle Paul, or a pastor to do that.

You can be like the guy in John chapter nine. All I know, is I was blind. And now, I see. And Jesus did it. You can tell your story. How did God save you? If you pray for those opportunities, God will bring them to you. Paul saying, pray that doors will be open, so I present it clearly. Now, what's clear? Clear is the message of the Gospel. It's the hope of the Gospel.

So, what is that? The clear message of the Gospel is this, that God the Father sent His Son to be the Savior of the world, that Jesus Christ is the way, the truth, and the life. That you are dead in your transgressions and sins. And God by His grace came on a rescue mission for you, because you couldn't get your way back to God.

It means, if you're here today, God's not asking you to become religious, or join a church or sign a card or raise your hand or walking out. He's saying to you, "Before you were even formed in the womb, I knew you." He's saying, "I came for you, because I knew the sin condition that you had, and even your best efforts can't get right with me. But I sent my son Jesus Christ, He fulfilled the law perfectly. And before he left this planet, he took my divine wrath, he took all of your sin on himself, and he paid for it."

He was killed, according to the Scriptures, he was buried, and He was raised on the third day, according to Scriptures, and that in Christ and in Christ alone, you can

have life and you could have life in his name. That's clearly the Gospel.

So, the question is, if you came to BRAVE Church this morning, do you have a relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ? When did that become clear to you? When did you know you weren't just religious or kind of religious or out there, but that Jesus Christ is indeed the Lord of your life?

And if you admit the fact that you're a sinner, and you believe Jesus died and rose for you, and you confess Him as your personal Lord and Savior, you can have life with him and have life in his name right now. That's the clarity Paul, speaking about. Lord, let me make it clear to others. Let me do that clearly to others. That's what he's saying.

And notice what else he goes on to say. He says, "That I may speak forth the mystery of Christ, the mystery of Christ is Christ in you the hope of glory that God wants to dwell in the heart of every single person, for which I have also been imprisoned." I mean, keep in mind where Paul is right now.

I mean, Paul's in prison, right? It wasn't like a prison where he had satellite TV. It wasn't a prison where he was served three hot meals a day. It wasn't a minimal security prison. It was a prison where he's, nobody brings him food, he doesn't eat. Nobody takes care of him. He dies. I mean, he's in prison.

So, you would think he'd say, "Y'all keep praying, and then pray for me too that I can get out of this mess. Pray for me too that my circumstances change." I don't pray for circumstances to change. What's he pray for? That in the circumstances that I'm in,

that Jesus Christ can be exalted through my life.

How many of you know that oftentimes, when you're going through a bad situation, the situations that you want to pray your way out of? Those are the situations God's put you in for the purpose of exalting His Son? Those are the purposes he's put you in for giving God praise. Those are the purposes that he's put you in because you have greater Gospel opportunity and impact.

And instead of praying, we tend to want to pray, "God, get me out of those, get me out of this." Here's what we're praying, "God use me in this for your glory, give me opportunities to clearly share the Gospel like I should." And that's what he goes on to say. He says, "That I may make it clear in the way I ought to speak."

Now, why is this important? Because praying for Gospel impact through others can be difficult. Praying for Gospel impact through others can be difficult. Do you know oftentimes, we don't like to celebrate other people that are sharing the Gospel? I'm a pastor, I know a lot of pastors. A lot of times, pastors don't like to celebrate other pastors and churches that are doing it well.

And certainly, nobody that's doing it better than them. And they like to complain about it. Yeah, that church they say that many people got saved, but look at how they do it, I mean, they play rock music at their church and they don't even share the Gospel right. And their pastor, when he preaches, he doesn't even use the right version. And he doesn't even read from the Bible that much, and all this nonsense.

Let me tell you this, I don't know if it's because I'm aging, I'm aging at the same

rate you are, by the way. But I don't know, because I'm getting old. I really don't care. I celebrate God's work through other people. I pray for God to work through other people. People that don't think like me, people that don't believe like me, but can center on the truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Now, think about this. Here comes the question, rhetorically, how often did you pray for me this week that I would have a word to bring to you? I mean, how much time did you spend? Right? Here's a better question, how much time did you spend for other pastors to bring the Gospel to you? How much time did you spend for other churches? How many times did you spend for pastors in other nations? Hey, how much time did you spend this week praying for the people in your small group or people that you know in our church, that God would use them for greater Gospel impact?

See, the reality is, oftentimes, we don't want that. Oftentimes, we want to know that we've done good things for God. And we don't care about everybody else. And so, let me just free you up a little bit. Let me just free you up a little bit. In case you're looking for the people that think just like you, and you can pick the church that thinks just like you. There's nobody in the world that thinks just like you, okay.

I'm convinced of this as a pastor, there's not one of you in this room and not one person listens to my voice that thinks exactly on every finer point of theology the way I think. And I promise you, I don't think the same way you do, okay. That should be very freeing to you. Because oftentimes, we're trying to form these ideas of, "I got to get into church that thinks just like me on every single issue." Nobody does. Nobody ever will. I don't expect you to. You can't expect me to.

But here's what we can center on. We can center on the Gospel of Jesus Christ, that in him, he's fully God and fully man, who came to the world, who died, who rose, and in him is life, and life in his name, Amen. And we begin to celebrate when God is doing to work through others, to the Glory of God. We do.

So, don't talk to me about, "Well, I don't like that Pastor. I don't like this pastor." Here's what I like, to the extent that they're preaching Jesus, I rejoice. Yeah, but how did they even get saved? God used a donkey in the Old Testament to speak His word. I mean, I'm using that word specifically. And if you can use a donkey, he can use anybody, right? He uses me.

So, pray for Gospel impact through others, that it would be clear and pray that the Lord would open doors for that. And then, he's going to get to two more areas than if we're going to have massive Kingdom impact. And we're going to have missional alignment, where our life needs to reflect the goodness of God.

And here's how it's reflected, through honorable conduct coupled with an opportunistic spirit. Honorable conduct coupled with an opportunistic spirit. Notice what he says, "Conduct yourselves with wisdom." Literally, it says, "Walk in wisdom towards outsiders, making the most of the opportunity."

Now, how do you conduct yourselves with wisdom or walking wisdom? Or how do you have honorable conduct? See, here's the challenge that we have. The challenge that we have is, my Bible says, that all of us have sinned and fallen short of the Glory of God.

My Bible tells me that when I trust in Jesus Christ, that the penalty of all my sin is washed away, never to be remembered, my sin as far as the east is from the west, that God loves me with an unconditional love. He's not going to bring it up anymore. I love that.

My Bible also tells me that when I meet Jesus face-to-face, that I'm going to be completely glorified. And I'm going to be known, even as I am known right now. I mean, I'm going to be fully glorified in His image, and I will not know how to sin. My Bible also tells me that in the present, I'm growing in my sanctification, I'm growing in my holiness. Progressively, I'm becoming more and more like Christ

Here's what I falsely think sometimes, about myself, and you falsely think about you, then I'm further along that road than I actually am. Yeah, there's sins that I don't sin anymore, by God's grace. But you know what? I still haven't arrived. Conducting yourself in a manner of wisdom does not mean, "I'm going to live perfect for Jesus, and then I'll be ready." That'll never happen on this side of heaven. How many of you know after walking with the Lord for a period of time, there's still some sin in your life or a thing that repeats where you're like, how is it that after this many years, I still struggle with that, when God's already forgiven all my sin?

Just by showing of hand, anybody struggle with anything... Why is that? Because you're still progressively, growing and sanctification. Walking in wisdom towards outsiders means this, outsiders are those outside the faith. It means, you're going to walk in wisdom. It means, I want to live for Jesus in front of them the way that I'm

genuinely, living for him in the church.

In the church, it's easy. We tell each other that we're all sinners. We tell each other our struggles. We're authentically telling people, "I'm not quite there yet." But oftentimes, when we share the Gospel with non-believers, here's what they hear, "I used to be just like you. I used to be dead in my sin going to hell just like you. God saved me, and now, I am perfect in him, and you could be like me, if you want to."

And then, we say, "They rejected the Gospel." No, they rejected your inauthenticity. How about this? You know what? I used to be hopeless like you too. And in the Gospel of Christ, I found hope in Him. And He hasn't redeemed me completely, but he calls me holy. And he calls me righteous, and he calls me good. And I'm growing in my sanctification. I'm becoming more like him.

And, yeah, there's still areas of my life that don't measure up. But I'm growing in that too. And in those areas, let me just tell you what I'm doing. I'm confessing those sins to the Lord. And he's growing me and helping me become something better than what I was. And I have hope and joy in him that I never had before. And you can have that hope and joy too.

See, it's different. That's walking with wisdom towards outsiders. If your presentation of the gospel is, "Your bad, and I'm awesome," nobody's going to respond to that. If the response of the Gospel is, you're dead in your sin, and Christ is awesome, and I was dead in my sin, and Christ forgave me. And he's willing to do that for you, too. That's walking in wisdom towards outsiders.

It's growing in sanctification. It's growing in the knowledge that we have of Christ. And it's being able to grow in our ability to walk our talk. He's like, make the most of every opportunity. Make the most of the opportunity. What's the opportunity? Here's the opportunity, you're still breathing, right? Here's the opportunity you have on this side of heaven to share the love of Christ with people that don't believe yet. That's the opportunity you have.

You will never have the privilege and heaven of sharing hope with a non-believer because there are no non-believers in heaven. The opportunity is now. The opportunity is present. And if you open your eyes and you live opportunistically, that every day is a new opportunity to see who God may bring in your path, to share hope, to share love, to share joy, to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ. That's the opportunity you have now.

So, as you conduct yourselves, you're living in a way where you're reflecting what God has done in your life, in a way that other people would say, "Well, what do you have that I don't have?" And you can step right in and just share it with them. That's the Gospel. That's the good news. And there's always somebody out there.

I mean, just by show of hands in this Worship Center today, if you know of anybody outside these walls that doesn't know Jesus that needs a relationship with them, can you raise your hand, just one person at least, okay? They're everywhere. If you can't find them, come and see me or somebody else in the church, we can point you to scores of them. They're all over our city. And they're all over everywhere.

And if you live opportunistically, that God gave you breath today to share the love

of Christ with other people. And it's not just about you working out your salvation. So, yeah, I'm becoming more like Christ, and yeah, I'm becoming better like Christ. And yeah, me and Jesus are good. He's growing me because he wants to do a work through me to all the people I'm coming into contact with. That's the purpose of the Gospel.

He didn't just save me for me, he saved me so he could use me as his instrument, so that I would have honorable conduct coupled with his opportunist spirit to be Jesus with skin on. And then, finally, he says this, he says, "Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person."

This final way of growing is speech that encourages, edifies, and exhorts people towards Christ. Speech that encourages, edifies, and exhorts people towards Christ. Now, all of these are challenging, right? I think as somebody who's a preacher who spends most of his life talking, that this may be one of the more difficult ones for someone in my shoes.

Why? Because the Bible makes it very clear. And in Luke 6:46, "For out of the overflow of the heart, the mouth speaks. When we speak, we're just revealing what's in our heart." Or in James 3:8, it says, "No one can tame the tongue." You can't change your speech by trying to change your tongue. It has to be done inwardly from the heart.

Proverbs 10:19 says, "For where there are many words, sin is not absent." I

think, it's the word for pastors. The more you talk, you're going to end up sinning at some point in time, right? And then, Psalm 141:3 as David is aware of this. Here's what he writes. Psalm 141:3, he says, "Set a guard, O Lord, over my mouth, keep watch over the door of my lips."

See, Jesus said that our speech should be full of grace. What's grace? Grace is God's unmerited favor towards people. It means, that when we speak, here's what people should be hearing, the love of God coming through. It benefits everybody. When people hear me talk, they talk to my wife, talk to my kids, talk to my friends, talk to our church. They hear Christ coming through me.

And boy, I wish I could tell you that. Yeah, everything I've ever said since becoming a Christian is completely grace filled and it's so edifying and building. I mean, the reality is, in the same way we talked about before, we're growing in that, right? We haven't arrived in this.

And for some of you, I'm just telling you, the lie of the enemy tell you is this, you've been a Christian for so long and your conduct is unbecoming and your speeches unbecoming. God can never ever use a person like you. Can I just tell you what that's called? That's a lie.

Through the blood of Jesus Christ, you can begin a new today, and God wants to use you, and he is using you and He loves you unconditionally. But speech, I mean, how many of you would just say, "Man, if I could go back just a couple times, three times, 10 times in the last week, and reflect on what I said, or how I said it, I would

say it differently."

And so, he's talking about speech. Speech that's becoming full of grace and seasoned with salt, salt in the New Testament was used, and that time was used for preserving or for seasoning and giving something flavor. Both can be used here. It means, that as we're preserving our testimony, that as we talk, our life should reflect that we truly believe Jesus. Not only are we walking our talk, but we're speaking our talk.

We're talking about who Jesus is, in such a way that's edifying to Jesus, that when people see how we live, and they hear how we talk, they say, "Wow, that's what I want." But our talk is also salty, right? I mean, not only is it preserved, it can add flavor. It means, we're giving understanding of what we're saying.

And when you study the life of Jesus, was Jesus's life... When he spoke full of grace and salt, I would say, yes. Remember, when the woman that was caught in adultery, remember what he said to her? He said, "Woman, where are your accusers? Then, I don't condemn you either."

Grace, unbelievable grace. Then, what's he say? He puts a little salt in the mixture. Now, go and sin no more, right? I mean, when you think about Jesus's ministry, every time he came into contact with somebody who was desperate and hurting and broken and thought, there's no way I can measure up to God, what do you give them? Grace.

Some of you were in that position this morning. Some of you wonder, can God

still love a person like me even though I've done this? Could God still care about me even though I've lived like this? Even though I spoke like this? Even though I've done this? Here's the resounding answer, yes, and amen.

And he loves you unconditionally. And no matter what, he wanted to remind you today, he's in love with you so much so God, the Father sent His Son to be slaughtered on a cross for all your sin, rose him from the dead, and offers life to you. You're loved. And there's nothing you can do to make God love you anymore. He just loves you.

But then, there's some of you here today, you can clap for that, praise God. But then, there's other people that would say, "Yeah, I know about that. And I think those religious stuffs just a big hoax. And I don't even know why people go to church and it's stupid." Did Jesus have salt for people like that? Jesus told the Pharisees, "You diligently studied the scriptures to learn about who God is, yet, these are the various Scriptures that testify about me. Yet, you refuse to come to me to have life."

And in Matthew 23, what do you say to them? "Woe to you, hypocrites, you Pharisees! You travel the world over to win a single convert, and when you do, you make him twice as much of a son of hell as you are." Salt? Yeah, pretty salty. I mean, do you realize what he's talking about here? He's talking about that our Gospel presentations can't be canned. Because depending on who we're talking to, we need to bring grace and/or salt.

Notice what he says, so that you will know how you should respond to each person. Every person is looking for something different. Some people are desperate.

It's like, "Help, help, help, I'm drowning here." For a person like that, you don't just say, "Well, you're a sinner going to hell." I already know that, right? Give them grace.

And then, there's other people. I think that religious stuffs just a bunch of hocus pocus. Give them some salt. Let them know Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. Let them know they will answer to God. Let them know Jesus is the name above every other name. Let them know that if they don't respond by grace, that one day they will hear those dreaded words of Jesus, "Depart from me you worker of iniquity, I never knew you."

Now, some people need to hear one, and some people need to hear the other and how are you going to know? If you're devoted to prayer, and you're praying for opportunities, and you're aware and walking in wisdom, then you will know what your speech needs to be, depending upon the person.

Some people need more grace, and some people need more salt. And Jesus did both in his ministry. And that's what we need to learn. There's nothing wrong with a track. There's nothing wrong with passing out the truth of the Gospel. But some people need to hear more of the grace side. And some people need to hear more of the salt side.

And here's what he's saying, if you're going to have massive Kingdom impact, and you want to be aligned missionally, you're praying for God's work in your own life. You're praying for God's work in the life of other people. You're praying that you would walk your talk. And you're also praying that in your speech as you're walking your talk,

that when people hear you, you would grow in the knowledge of Jesus.

Now, what does that mean? It means this, if you're listening to this message and say, "These are four things I'm going to try to perfect this week," you've missed the entire message. These four areas of ministry are four areas of ministry that you are going to grow in for the rest of your life. Persist in them, don't give up, walk them out, allow God to show you those things.

And in those areas of your life, that you're not experiencing that, confess those things before the Lord and say, "Lord, I realize it's my tongue. Lord, I realize it's my inconsistent walk. Lord, I realize I don't spend any time in prayer. Lord, help me to be an instrument used in your hands. And here's the truth. Every single one of you who's claimed the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, are a divine instrument that He desires to use, that He can use, and that he will use. And the closer you get to Him, the more he is going to use you for His glory in ways you don't even realize, Amen? Amen.

Would you pray with me today? Lord, we give You all the praise, glory and honor for who you are. And Lord, our desire here today is that we would know you and make you known. If you're here today, and you've never trusted Jesus Christ, as your personal Lord and Savior, you can do it like this, right where you're at, by saying, "Lord, I admit that I'm a sinner. But I believe that you're God, who came from me, who died on the cross, and who rose from the dead. And right now, I confess You as my personal Lord and Savior."

Lord, for those of us who know you, who have responded by faith, know that

your Holy Spirit is resonant in us. And Lord, we want to have an incredible missional alignment and Kingdom impact for your glory. So, Lord, do a work in us today. Lord, show us the areas that are out of alignment, show us the areas that need to be moved, so that Lord we can more glorify Your name. And we give You all the praise and glory and honor for all you're doing. In Jesus' name, Amen, and Amen. Can we give God some praise today?