

## The Great Commission Part 4 - Colossians 4:6 - 2015-01-18

Call to Worship: Psalm 146:1-5

Scripture Reading: Psalm 119:41-48

Sermon: "The Great Commission - Part 4" 1 Peter 3:15-16; Colossians 4:5-6

Benediction: Hebrews 10:23

Colossians 4:5-6 Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time. (6) Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to **answer** each one.

1 Peter 3:14-16 But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you are blessed. "AND DO NOT BE AFRAID OF THEIR THREATS, NOR BE TROUBLED." But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a **defense [Geneva, KJV, NIV "answer"]** to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear; (16) having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed.

### INTRODUCTION

Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, when He had died for sinners, and had been buried, and then had risen from the dead, appeared to His apostles, showing Himself to be alive. He then said to the eleven apostles, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations . . ." We understand from what the Lord Jesus said to them another time, that what the church is to do, in order to make disciples of all the nations, is to preach repentance and forgiveness of sins in His name to all nations.

The apostles certainly understood that each of them individually had been called to preach the gospel. The book of Acts and the apostles' letters to the churches tell how they preached of Jesus Christ all over that part of the world.

The apostles also understood that certain other individual Christians, who were judged by the churches to be qualified, and set apart by the laying on of hands by the elders, also had been called to preach the gospel. This is why you read in Paul's letter to Timothy that he is to "preach the word."

So, the church of Jesus Christ as a whole, as a body, is to preach the gospel. And that is done by having certain carefully-chosen individuals set apart to preach.

But often we hear speakers and authors pressing it to us that every one of us, as an individual Christian, is commanded by the Lord to go preach the gospel. They tell us very forcefully that

every individual Christian is commanded to “go” somewhere and every individual Christian is commanded to “make disciples,” and every individual Christian is commanded to “preach.”

You recall that two weeks ago I proposed to you that when the Lord’s apostles wrote their letters to the churches, they simply did not put the great commission to us in those ways. I won’t today plow that same ground over again, trusting that by now you have searched the scriptures yourself to see if what I said about that is so.

Instead of putting the Lord’s Great Commission to us as an individual mandate to go and to preach, the apostles put it to us as an individual mandate to live a life of good works that will serve to endorse the gospel message that is preached.

If, then, certain individuals who have been set apart to preach are commanded to preach; and every individual Christian is commanded to live a life of good works to prove the truth of that preaching; does that mean that we are not supposed to tell other people about the Lord Jesus? Does that mean that only the official preachers are to speak of Christ? Of course it does not mean that. What, then, are we as individuals to do as to speaking for Christ to the lost?

at work? at school? in my neighborhood?

The Lord Jesus who loves us so much has not left us without answer to that question, but again has taught us by His Holy Spirit through His apostles in what way every individual Christian is to speak of Him to lost sinners, who so desperately need to hear of Him and believe.

We have seen the past two weeks how completely the apostles Peter and Paul agreed in their doctrine of our good works endorsing the gospel message. So I’m sure you will not be surprised to see today how they agree in their doctrine regarding the individual Christian’s responsibility to speak of Jesus Christ to the lost. As we look in their letters, we’ll find that instead of telling each of us to go and preach the gospel, they tell each each of us this:

**Always keep yourself ready to answer anyone who questions you.**

TEXT

Colossians 4:5-6 Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time. (6) Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to **answer** each one.

1 Peter 3:14-16 But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you are blessed. "AND DO NOT BE AFRAID OF THEIR THREATS, NOR BE TROUBLED." (15) But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a **defense [Geneva, KJV, NIV “answer”]** to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and

fear; (16) having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed.

## BODY

### **Always keep yourself ready to answer anyone who questions you.**

- I. What we are to do: Always be ready, always be prepared, to give an answer when someone asks you a question
  - A. Here in Peter we read, “give an answer” or “give a defense”
  - B. In Paul, Colossians 4:6, the word is a more general word for “answer” or “respond”
  - C. Note that what is commanded us is to maintain a state of readiness, of preparation
  - D. Of course that requires that we get ready in the first place; then we must stay ready
  - E. So, the command is to prepare yourselves and stay prepared to answer anyone who questions you.
- II. How we are to do that
  - A. Live a life of good works
    1. Peter says, “having a good conscience” or “keeping a clear conscience”
    2. Paul says, “walk in wisdom toward those who are outside”
    3. but that has so much been the subject these past two weeks that I won’t say much more about that here, just two ideas
    4. first, your life of good works sometimes prompts people to ask you questions (1 Pe 3:15)
      - a) a person probably won’t say, “what is the reason for the hope you have”
      - b) but that will be the essence of what he does say
      - c) and often it will be prompted by your life of good works
    5. second, as your life of good works endorses what the preachers are preaching, your life of good works also endorses what you yourself will say when you answer someone who questions you (1 Pe 3:16)
  - B. Instead of fearing man, sanctify the Lord God in your hearts; in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy; in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord (1 Peter 3:15)
    1. Always we are tempted to think of God as lower than He is, and to think of man as higher than he is;
      - a) regarding what we fear, this can lead to our putting God and man on the same level---we fear God, and we fear man

- b) in doing that, we are not hallowing God in our hearts, as separate from creation; not setting Jesus apart as Lord over all men, but grouping him together with other men
    - c) if you do that, you won't be ready to give an answer about Jesus Christ when someone asks a question; you'll be afraid of what man might think of you, or of what man might do to you
  - 2. So you are taught, here, to hallow God in your heart; think rightly about God, that He is far above all men; think rightly about Jesus Christ, that all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Him
  - 3. Is God, by the Lord Jesus Christ, just one of many who loves you supremely, or is God unique in His love for you?
    - a) Who created you?
    - b) Who shed His own blood for your redemption?
    - c) Whose Spirit came and changed your heart from within, so that you would repent and believe in Jesus Christ?
    - d) Of course only God loves you so much and with such power as to do all of this for your salvation to His glory
    - e) God is unique, the only true and living God; the Lord Jesus is the One and Only Savior and Lord; the Holy Spirit is the only spirit that can regenerate the heart, producing in you faith and repentance
  - 4. This right thinking about the Lord Jesus causes you to fear God, not men; the Lord is my fortress, so what can man do to me?
  - 5. So, how are you supposed to get yourself ready and keep yourself ready to give an answer when you are questioned? Instead of fearing man, sanctify the Lord God in your heart, so that you have no fear of man, and can give an answer when you are questioned
- C. Always speak with grace and salt
  - 1. What does it mean to have my speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt?
    - a) There are a couple of challenges here in understanding what is meant
      - (1) "grace" is stated very briefly
      - (2) "salt" is metaphorical; what is meant by the metaphor?
    - b) We could just start telling what we think, right? But wouldn't it be better to know what is meant?
    - c) Let's use a here a very helpful method of bible interpretation: you aren't sure what is meant in one place, so you look to see if the same author has said something similar in another place in the bible
    - d) Ephesians 4:29 Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.

- e) Let your speech always be grace
    - (1) Grace: God has favored us when we only deserved His wrath
    - (2) because He is God, that favor is accompanied by many gifts of His to us, especially knowledge of Him through the bible, and especially important in that body of knowledge is the good news about Jesus Christ
    - (3) in all our conversation, we consider how we can tell some of what we know from God's word so that the listener will receive some of the grace we have received
    - (4) this is to impart grace to the hearers, strengthening them
  - f) sprinkled with salt
    - (1) one of the main functions of salt is to prevent decay, as in meat
    - (2) here you see that having your speech seasoned with salt means to have nothing corrupt in it
  - g) So, to have my speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt means to have my speech tell something I have been blessed to know so as to meet the need of the hearers for their building up, not saying anything corrupt
2. How is it that speaking always with grace and salt makes me know how to answer when questioned? Two things
- a) First, when you are accustomed to doing something a certain way, it is relatively easy to do it that way again when you need to, but relatively hard to do it a different way
    - (1) so, if you are not used to speaking with grace and salt, it will be difficult to do so when you are questioned
  - b) Second, when you have not learned the skill of doing something, and have not exercised your muscles for it, you may simply not be able to do it at all
    - (1) e.g. I don't suppose I could today go to the olympics and reach up and grab that bar and start swinging around doing flips and twists and then dismount and stick the landing
    - (2) if you have not learned, by practicing, how to speak with grace and salt, and have not exercised yourself in speaking with grace and salt, you may not be able to give a good answer when someone questions you
3. APPLICATION: to the person not naturally talkative
4. APPLICATION: to the person naturally talkative

## CONCLUSION

Matthew 11:28-30 Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. (29) Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. (30) For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."

Expound this.

The Lord Jesus commissioned His church to go preach repentance and forgiveness of sins to all nations, so as to make disciples for Him of every nation. But that commission to go preach is not put to every individual Christian in that way. What is the individual Christian to do regarding the preaching of the gospel?

**Always keep yourself ready to answer anyone who questions you.**

As you maintain good works, be ready to answer anyone who asks

- I. Fear God instead of people
  - II. Always practice the kind of speech that will enable you to give a good answer
    - A. grace
    - B. salt
  - III. APPLICATION
    - A. Do not arrogate to yourself the position of missionary preacher
      1. the men sent were Barnabas and Saul
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- I. As we have studied the past two weeks, maintain good works, as a light by which sinners can see the truth of the gospel that is preached about Jesus Christ
    - A. Recall how the Lord Jesus put it
      1. you are the light of the world
      2. put your light up on its stand
      3. so men may see your good works and glorify the Father in heaven
    - B. Recall how the apostles Peter and Paul put it in other passages
      1. resist the sinful urges of the flesh
      2. submit to authority, especially
        - a) each of us to the government
        - b) the servant to his master
        - c) the wife to her husband
    - C. See how the apostles Peter and Paul put it to us here
      1. 1 Peter 3:16 “having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed”
      2. Colossians 4:5-6 “Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time.”
    - D. I do not offer any exposition of this concept today, because of how we have worked on this already the past two weeks.
  - II. You, as an individual Christian, are

“sanctify the Lord God”

Trapp:

Consider and conceive of him, as he stands described in the Scriptures, and as related to his people, resting upon his power and love, for safety here, and salvation hereafter.

Poole:

exalt him in your hearts, and give him the honour of all his glorious perfections, power, wisdom, goodness, faithfulness, &c., by believing them, and depending upon his promises for defence and assistance against all the evils your enemies may threaten you with.

Calvin:

Peter does not expressly bid us to assert and proclaim what has been given us by the Lord everywhere, and always and among all indiscriminately, for the Lord gives his people the spirit of discretion, so that they may know when and how far and to whom it is expedient to speak. He bids them only to be ready to give an answer

Carroll:

Concerning these exhortations on family duties, devotions, outward walk and speech, observe . . . how uniform the teaching by all the New Testament writers and speakers on all these grave matters.

Calvin:

-he reckons as tasteless everything that does not edify  
-The man who has accustomed himself to caution in his communications will not fall into many absurdities, into which talkative and prating persons fall into from time to time, but, by constant practice, will acquire for himself expertness in making proper and suitable replies; as, on the other hand, it must necessarily happen, that silly talkers expose themselves to derision whenever they are interrogated as to anything; and in this they pay the just punishment of their silly talkativeness. Nor does he merely say what, but also how, and not to all indiscriminately, but to every one. For this is not the least important part of prudence — to have due regard to individuals

Poole:

to this purpose chiefly in the main points of Christianity, that in a gospel becoming manner, you may be able to give a reason of the hope that is in you (to those that ask you) with meekness and fear, Mat\_7:6 1Pe\_3:15, courteousness and sincerity, Eph\_4:25, free from those evils of speech he had before enjoined them in this Epistle to put away, Col\_3:8.



Ellicott:

the context appears certainly to suggest that the use of the salt is to teach “how to answer every man,” and that this answer (like the “reason,” or defence, of 1Pe\_3:15) is to be given to “those without.” Probably, therefore, the “seasoning with salt” is to provide against insipidity (thus according to some extent with the classic usage of the word). Their speech is to be primarily “with grace,” kindled by the true life of Christian grace in it; secondarily, however, it is to have good sense and point, so as to be effective for the inquirer or against the scoffer.

Trapp:

Of mortification and discretion: even our common communication must be so seasoned; as we powder most those meats that be most apt to putrefy

Gill:

-a fresh exhortation to the saints to be concerned for such a share of spiritual knowledge, that they may be able to give a proper and pertinent answer, with meekness and fear, to such as shall ask a reason of the hope that is in them; and to make suitable returns to persons according to their age, sex, capacities, and circumstances;

-a person that uses himself to speaking with prudence, purity, and grace, is at all times ready to give an agreeable answer, in a graceful and acceptable manner, to everyone.

Clarke:

-Let it be such as has a tendency to oppose and preserve from the corruption of sin.

-Let all your conversation be such as may tend to exemplify and recommend Christianity; let it not only be holy, but wise, gracious, and intelligent. A harsh method of proposing or defending the doctrines of Christianity only serves to repel men from those doctrines, and from the way of salvation.

Henry:

We have need of a great deal of wisdom and grace to give proper answers to every man, particularly in answering the questions and objections of adversaries against our religion, giving the reasons of our faith, and showing the unreasonableness of their exceptions and cavils to the best advantage for our cause and least prejudice to ourselves. Be ready always to give an answer to every man who asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear, 1Pe\_3:15.

EB:

-whether you can speak smooth things or no, and whether your talk is always directly religious or no-and it need not and cannot always be that-let there ever be in it the manifest influence of God’s Spirit, Who dwells in the Christian heart, and will mould and sanctify your speech

-Our accent will betray our country.

-The Apostle here regards it as the task of every Christian man to speak for Christ. Further, he recommends dealing with individuals rather than masses, as being within the scope of each Christian, and as being much more efficacious. Salt has to be rubbed in, if it is to do any good. It is better for most of us to fish with the rod than with the net, to angle for single souls, rather than to try and enclose a multitude at once. Preaching to a congregation has its own place and value; but private and personal talk, honestly and wisely done, will effect more than the most eloquent preaching. Better to drill in the seeds, dropping them one by one into the little pits made for their reception, than to sow them broadcast.

Barnes:

-our conversation should be such as to show that we are governed by the principles of religion, and that there is unfeigned piety in the heart.

-This does not mean that our conversation is to be always, strictly speaking, religious - wherever we may be - any more than our food should be mere salt; but it means that, whatever be the topic, the spirit of piety should be diffused through it

-be prepared to answer anyone who may question you about your religion in a way that will show that you understand its nature, and that will tend to edification. This remark may be extended further. It may be understood as meaning also, "be imbued with the spirit of religion, and you will be able to answer any man appropriately on any subject. If he asks you about the evidence or the nature of religion, you will be able to reply to him. If he converses with you on the common topics of the day, you will be able to answer him in a mild, kind, affable spirit.

1 Peter 1:3-21 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living **hope** through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, (4) to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, (5) who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. (6) In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, (7) that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, (8) whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, (9) receiving the end of your faith--the salvation of your souls. (10) Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you, (11) searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. (12) To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven--things which angels desire to look into. (13) Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your **hope** fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; (14)

as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; (15) but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, (16) because it is written, "BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY." (17) And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay here in fear; (18) knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, (19) but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. (20) He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you (21) who through Him believe in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and **hope** are in God.

Ephesians 5:14-17 Therefore He says: "Awake, you who sleep, Arise from the dead, And Christ will give you light." (15) See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, (16) redeeming the time, because the days are evil. (17) Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

I have been speaking about the "individual Christian," and showing how when the Lord Jesus commanded the church to "go make disciples," by preaching "repentance and forgiveness of sins" in His name, we don't find the apostles putting it to the individual Christian in those terms. The apostles, in their letters, do not tell the individual Christian that it his duty to "go" anywhere, not his duty individually to "preach repentance."

Of course certain individual Christians actually will be sent to go somewhere and preach the good news. Certain individuals will show they are qualified to be preachers; they will preach faithfully in the local church setting; both they and the church will come to see that they should be sent.