

INTRODUCTION.

AS NOTED LAST WEEK, ~ BEFORE MOVING INTO HIS FINAL GREETINGS ~ TO THE Church at Colossae, ~ ¶¶

▶▶ Paul gives ~ some final instructions, ~ finishing up the body of his letter ~ in 4:2-6.

IN THIS BRIEF PARAGRAPH, ~ PAUL HAS ~ INSTRUCTIONS FOR BELIEVERS ~ in two areas.

▶▶ 1st, ~ instructions for prayer, ~ verses 2-4.

▷▷ Last week.

▶▶ And 2nd, ~ instructions for effective evangelism, ~ verses 5-6.

▷▷ Today.

IN HIS INSTRUCTIONS FOR EFFECTIVE EVANGELISM, ~ PAUL GIVES US THREE DIRECTIVES.

▶▶ 1st, ~ verse 5a, ~~ Walk in wisdom ~ toward outsiders.

▶▶ 2nd, ~ verse 5b, Making the best use of the time.

▶▶ And 3rd, ~ verse 6, ~~ Let your speech ~ always be gracious, ~ seasoned with salt, ~~ ¶¶

▷▷ so that ~ you may know how you ought to answer ~ each person. ¶¶ 1/14

PAUL'S FIRST DIRECTIVE, ~ VERSE 5a.

WALK IN WISDOM TOWARD OUTSIDERS.

▶▶ If believers ~ are to be effective in evangelism, ~ we must ~ behave wisely ~ toward outsiders.

"OUTSIDERS" = UNBELIEVERS.

▶▶ But consider ~ "outsiders" ~ for a few minutes.

▶▶ Believers: ~ no longer strangers and aliens, ~ according to Paul ~ in Eph. 2:19.

▶▶ The words ~ "strangers" and "aliens" ~ in the Greek text ~ combine ~ to express and emphasize ~ one idea.

▷▷ And that is, ~ believers are no longer ~ outsiders.

▷▷ When we were unsaved, ~ we were ~ outside ~ of the kingdom of God.

→→ We were ~ outside ~ of God's family

→→ We did not have ~ a relationship ~ with the one true God.

→→ And, ~ we had no hope.

▷▷ And Paul says that that is no longer true. ~ This has all been reversed.

↪↪ Believers are no longer outsiders. ⇔⇔ We are now insiders, ~ thanks to what Jesus has done. ↴↴ 2/14

▶▶Paul's use of the term outsiders ~ to refer to unbelievers ~ should prompt ~ at least two responses from us.

▷▷1st, ~ sadness. ⇒⇒ Sadness that ~ those on the outside ~ are not on the inside with us.

▷▷2nd, ~ it should ~ prompt a desire within us ~ to bring as many outsiders ~ inside with us.

IN PAUL'S FIRST DIRECTIVE REGARDING EFFECTIVE EVANGELISM, ~ ¶¶

▶▶he is exhorting us ~ to live wisely ~ among those ~ who are not believers.

THIS MEANS ~ WE ARE TO ACT IN A WAY ~ THAT IS AWARE ~ ¶¶

▶▶of who is watching ~ and ~ of the impact ~ our behavior may have for the gospel.

▶▶Our Christian lives ~ are publicly witnessed.

▷▷Jesus tells us, ~ i.e., ~ his people, ~ ¶¶

↪↪You are the light of the world. ~ A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. ~ Nor do people light a lamp ~ and put it under a basket, ~ but on a stand, ~ and it gives light to all in the house.

▶▶Paul exhorts us ~ to live ~ wholesome Christian lives ~ that do not detract from our message.

▷▷In the passage just quoted, ~ Jesus goes on to say, ~ ¶¶

↪↪In the same way, ~ let your light shine before others, ~ so that ~ they may see your good works ~ and ~ give glory to your Father who is in heaven. ¶¶ 3/14

▶▶ To put it simply, ~ Paul says, ~ our walk ~ must match ~ our talk.

▷▷ Otherwise, ~ why should unbelievers listen to us?

▷▷ If our lives ~ are no different from theirs, ~~ what makes us think ~ that they will ever ~ feel a need for Jesus?

▷▷ If we are known ~ for typically having ~ a bad or joyless attitude, ~~ why ~ would unbelievers ever want ~ what we have?

▷▷ If we are ~ frightened or troubled ~ by current events, ~ ¶¶

↳↳ how do we think ~ they will respond ~ when we speak to them ~ about the sovereignty of God?

PAUL'S DIRECTIVE ~ TO BEHAVE WISELY TOWARD UNBELIEVERS ~ MOST LIKELY ~ ALSO means, ~ ¶¶

▶▶ that believers ~ are to be cautious and tactful ~~ so as to avoid ~ needlessly antagonizing or alienating ~ our unbelieving neighbors.

▶▶ Gospel offensive enough

▶▶ 1 Cor. 10:32. ~~ Give no offense ~ to Jews ~ or to Greeks ~ or to the church of God.

IN ALL LIKELIHOOD, ~ PAUL'S DIRECTIVE ~ to behave wisely toward unbelievers ~ further means ~ that believers ~ are to live in a way ~ ¶¶

▶▶ that will ~ attract, ~ impress, ~ and convict ~ non-Christians.

▷▷ And ~ give the unbelieving community ~ a favorable impression of the gospel. ¶¶ 4/14

▶▶Peter has much to say about this.

▷▷1 Pet. 2:12. ⇔⇔ Keep your conduct among the Gentiles ~ honorable, ~ so that ~ when they speak against you as evildoers, ~ they may see your good deeds ~ and glorify God on the day of visitation.

▷▷As we've noted before, ~ Peter's primary idea here ~ was that ~ ¶¶

↳↳in the midst ~ of people speaking against us "as doing evil," ~ ¶¶

→→some unbelievers ~ will come to Christ ~ through the witness ~ of our honorable lifestyle.

▶▶We also talked about this ~ when we discussed ~ Christians whose spouses ~ are unbelievers.

SO, ~ AGAIN, ~ OUR LIFESTYLE ~ IS AN IMPORTANT FEATURE ~ IN ~ our evangelism.

▶▶But again, ~ gospel must be preached

▷▷Faith ~ comes from ~ what is heard, ~ and what is heard ~ comes ~ through the message ~ about Christ.

NOW LET'S LOOK AT PAUL'S ~ 2nd DIRECTIVE ~ REGARDING EFFECTIVE EVANGELISM.

VERSE 5b, ~ MAKING THE BEST USE ~ OF THE TIME.

▶▶Command. ⇔⇔ Make the best use of the time.

▶▶If believers ~ are to be effective in evangelism, ~ we must ~ Make the best use ~ of the time. ¶¶ 5/14

THE WORD "TIME" HERE ~ DOES NOT MEAN ~ A SPECIFIC POINT ~ IN TIME.

▶▶ Rather ~ it means ~ each and every opportunity ~ offered by time.

THE WHOLE PHRASE ~ REFERS TO ~ TAKING ADVANTAGE ~ OR MAKING GOOD USE ~ OF any opportunity ~ that comes our way.

▶▶ And of course, ~ being in the context of evangelism, ~ it means ~ 77

▷▷ to take advantage ~ of every opportunity to share the gospel ~ that comes our way.

SO WE NEED TO BE ALERT ~ IN OUR RELATIONS WITH UNBELIEVERS ~ for an opening ~ to tell them about Jesus.

▶▶ And then take advantage of it ~ in a natural way, ~ not a forced, ~ cue-card-following way.

▷▷ Coca-Cola driver

WHAT PAUL HAS IN MIND HERE ~ IS NOT ~ DIRECT EVANGELISM ~ but ~ responsive evangelism.

▶▶ Direct evangelism

▶▶ Responsive evangelism ~ is responding ~ to the opening for the gospel ~ that has just occurred.

▶▶ DE has its place ~ and ~ is important.

▶▶ But in this context, ~ Paul is talking about RE. 11 6/14

▶▶ Responsive evangelism means then, ~ that at times ~ we are to accept openings for the gospel ~ rather than make them.

THIS ~ I WOULD SUGGEST ~ LEADS TO AT LEAST THREE IMPLICATIONS.

▶▶ 1st, ~ we need to become ~ good observers and listeners.

▷▷ So we don't miss ~ the gospel opportunities ~ when they arise.

▷▷ And that ~ consequently means ~ that we need to have ~ a genuine interest ~ in unbelievers.

▷▷ Because ~ disinterested people ~ cannot be ~ good observers and listeners.

▶▶ The 2nd implication that RE leads to. ⇨⇨ We should not ~ dominate conversations.

▶▶ And the 3rd implication from RE.

▷▷ It is incumbent upon us ~ to have a good understanding of the times in which we live.

▷▷ 1 Chron. 12. ⇨⇨ List of David's first supporters.

↳↳ 32 (NLT), ~ From the tribe of Issachar, ~ there were 200 leaders of the tribe with their relatives. ~ All these men ~ understood the signs of the times ~ and ~ knew the best course for Israel to take.

▷▷ The intention of this verse ~ seems to be ~ that the men of Issachar ~ ¶¶

↳↳ had some skill ~ in discerning the meaning of current political events.

→→ Rally around David. ⇨⇨ Troubling times ¶¶ 7/14

SO, ~ ACCORDING TO PAUL'S 2nd DIRECTIVE ~ REGARDING EFFECTIVE EVANG., ~ ¶¶

▶▶ to be effective in our evangelism, ~ we are to make ~ good use ~ ¶¶

▷▷ of every opportunity to share the gospel ~ that comes our way.

NOW LET'S EXPLORE ~ PAUL'S 3rd DIRECTIVE TO FOLLOW ~ IN ORDER TO BE EFFECTIVE
in evangelism, ~ verse 6.

LET YOUR SPEECH ~ ALWAYS BE GRACIOUS, ~ SEASONED WITH SALT, ~ SO THAT ~
you may know how ~ you ought to answer ~ each person.

▶▶ If believers ~ are to be effective ~ in our evangelistic efforts, ~ this is what we must do.

▶▶ Here Paul gets into the area of ~ proper speech ~ in our evangelism.

▶▶ Now, ~ at the outset, ~ we need to understand ~ something extremely important here.

▷▷ Referring to the manner of our speech. ⇨⇨ Correct content presupposed.

↪↪ Focus is on ~ how ~ we are to share ~ the correct content ~ of the gospel.

OK, ~ PAUL'S 3rd DIRECTIVE ~ DEALS WITH ~ HOW ~ to share the good news about Jesus.

▶▶ Three characteristics of proper speech ~ for the believer are stated here.

1st CHARACTERISTIC.

▶▶ Let your speech ~ always ~ be gracious, ~ seasoned with salt. ¶¶ 8/14

▶▶ Speech = conversation.

▷▷ Context: ~ conversations ~ with unbelievers ~ about the gospel.

▷▷ We could paraphrase it this way.

↳↳ Let your conversations with unbelievers about the gospel ~ always ~ be gracious, ~ seasoned with salt.

▶▶ Boiled down, ~ here is the overall point ~ Paul is making.

▷▷ In our evangelistic conversations with unbelievers ~ always speak with them in such a way ~ that ~ they will want to listen to us.

▷▷ Not compromise. ⇔⇔ How to share the correct content.

▶▶ We are to keep our side of the conversation ~ courteous, ~ kind, ~ pleasant, ~ and compassionate.

▷▷ Our eagerness to witness to an inquiring unbeliever ~ must not ~ ❗❗

↳↳ be an excuse for ~ brash arrogance or a condemning attitude.

▷▷ If our answers ~ are ~ heard or felt as ~ an authoritarian pronouncement ~ ❗❗

↳↳ or ~ a rebuke for ignorance, ~ the argument may be won ~ but the person lost.

▷▷ Foolish remarks, ~ ungracious, ~ bad-tempered, ~ or cutting responses ~ never ~ do the Christian cause any good. ❗❗ 9/14

▷▷Furthermore, ~ there is no excuse ~ for a Christian's conversation ~ becoming rude and unpleasant.

↳↳It may be necessary ~ to speak plainly and boldly at times.

→→But ~ the way of doing even that graciously ~ ought to characterize us.

▷▷What's more, ~ we should be ~ cheerful ~ without silliness, ~~ serious ~ without gloom.

↳↳We have ~ incredibly ~ good news to share.

→→It shouldn't come across ~ as bad news.

▷▷As noted earlier, ~ the gospel is offensive ~ in and of itself.

↳↳If people are offended, ~ let be from ~ the content ~ of the gospel ~ ¶¶

→→not ~ the manner ~ in which we present it.

IN PROVERBS, ~ SOLOMON SHOWS US ~ SOME OF THE BENEFITS ~ of gracious speech in general.

▶▶Proverbs 15, ~ verse 1, ~ NIV, ~ "A gentle answer ~ turns away wrath, ~ but a harsh word ~ stirs up anger."

▷▷I.e., ~ "A gentle answer ~ turns away anger at its hottest. ~~ But a harsh word ~ makes tempers flare."

▷▷Our speech has the potential ~ ¶¶

↳↳to quiet a riot ~ or to fan the embers of anger. ¶¶ 10/14

▷▷ The Hebrew word ~ "gentle" ~ here ~ means ~ soft, ~ tender, ~ or delicate.

↳↳ Here the idea ~ is probably that of a conciliatory tone.

▷▷ We should be "gentle" in ~ tone of voice, ~ terms chosen, ~ ¶¶

↳↳ and ~ non-verbal communications ~ that accompany our speech.

▷▷ Harsh words ~ escalate any ill will ~ that may be already present.

↳↳ A "harsh word" here ~ is not simply one spoken with abrasiveness ~ or out of irritation, ~ ¶¶

→→ but one designed ~ to wound ~ the other person.

▶▶ And Proverbs 25, ~ verse 15 says, ~ ¶¶

▷▷ "With patience ~ a ruler may be persuaded, ~ and a soft tongue ~ [i.e., ~ soft speech] ~ will break a bone."

▷▷ The bones are the most rigid body parts inside of a person, ~ and fracturing the bones here ~ ¶¶

↳↳ refers here ~ to breaking down ~ the deepest, ~ most hardened ~ resistance ~ to an idea a person may possess.

IN ~ OUR EVANGELISTIC CONVERSATIONS ~ AND ~ IN OUR CONVERSATIONS IN general ~ ¶¶

▶▶ our words ~ must be ~ courteous, ~ kind, ~ pleasant, ~ and compassionate. ¶¶ 11/14

NOW LET'S LOOK AT ~ THE 2nd CHARACTERISTIC ~ OF PROPER SPEECH FOR BELIEVERS.

▶▶ Notice ~ the word ~ *always* ~ in *verse 6*.

▷▷ Let your speech ~ always ~ be gracious, ~ seasoned with salt.

▷▷ I.e., ~ in our evangelistic conversations with unbelievers ~ always ~ speak with them in such a way ~ that ~ they will want to listen to us.

▶▶ At all times ~ and ~ under all situations, ~ our speech ~ is to be gracious.

▶▶ Even in the face of ~ open hostility or persecution. ⇨⇨ *Jesus*.

▷▷ when he was insulted, ~ he did not insult in return; ~ when he suffered, ~ he did not threaten ~ but entrusted himself ~ to the one who judges justly. (CSB)

▷▷ Impossible task. ⇨⇨ *Matt. 10:16-20*

AND NOW ~ THE 3rd ~ CHARACTERISTIC OF PROPER SPEECH FOR BELIEVERS.

▶▶ Our replies ~ to unbelievers' questions about the gospel ~ should always be ~ ¶¶

↳↳ adapted ~ to the needs of everyone ~ with whom we speak.

▶▶ So that ~ you may know ~ how you ought to answer ~ each person.

▷▷ "each person." ⇨⇨ *Individually*.

▶▶ Command. ⇨⇨ *Learn ~ how best to respond ~ to each person ~ you meet. ¶¶ 12/14*

▶▶ IOW, ~ not a one-size-fits-all approach ~ to sharing the gospel.

▷▷ Our speech ~ must manifest ~ a sensitivity to and awareness of ~ the needs of each individual.

▶▶ The content of the gospel ~ must never change.

▷▷ But the manner in which it is presented ~ must be adapted ~ to give an answer ~ ¶¶

↳↳ suitable ~ for ~ each occasion ~ and each need ~ to each separate individual.

▶▶ We're not just ~ to barrel into a conversation ~ and say ~ ¶¶

▷▷ whatever pops into our minds ~ when asked a question by unbelievers.

▶▶ We need ~ wisdom from God ~ beforehand

▶▶ We also need ~ to better understand ~ unbelievers in general ~ and the ones we are talking to in particular.

▷▷ How do we do that?

↳↳ Well, ~ for a start, ~ gain a biblical understanding about sin and human nature.

↳↳ Also, ~ remember that ~ we were once lost. ⇔⇔ There but for the

↳↳ Furthermore, ~ ask them ~ caring and gently-probing ~ questions ~ ¶¶

→→ to see what's going on in their lives. ¶¶ 13/14

↪↪ And ~ take a genuine interest in them.

→→ Don't look at them as ~ merely statistics ~ to add to the church roll.

CONCLUSION.

EFFECTIVE EVANGELISM ~ TAKES A LOT OF ~ TIME, ~ EFFORT, ~ WISDOM, ~ AND prayer.

▶▶ But ~ the great commission does tell us ~ to make disciples ~ not statistics.

LET'S PRAY 14/14