

Gospel Transformation: *Taking It to the Streets*
Delivering the Gospel to the Target

Text: Colossians 4:2-6

I. Introduction: The Arrow

- A. To this point in Colossians, Paul might be accused of being too inward focused.
 - i. He has spent a good deal of space expounding the virtues of Christ, the transforming work He had accomplished for the Colossians (Love the Gospel).
 - a) You have become a new man in Christ.
 - ii. He has spent a great deal of time focused on life in the church, what it means to be clothed with Christ... putting on the new man (Live the Gospel).
 - a) You need to put on the new man in Christ.
 - b) Like Lazarus, we come out of the tomb with our grave clothes still on. Paul has been telling us that we need to take off the dead man clothes, and put on the Christ clothes... the resurrection clothes.
 - iii. Now that we are all dressed up in Jesus Christ, Paul is going to turn our attention outward: This isn't just dress-up, we've got an event to attend!
 - a) (Advance the Gospel)
 - b) But this may seem to be only a token amount of space. **Is there an improper balance? Is Paul's teaching for church-life a form of *corporate navel gazing*, with merely a glance outward?**
- B. No! Paul understood that the church is the primary means of Gospel expansion in the world. This ***modern tug-of-war*** between church life and evangelism, is ill-conceived.
 - i. How much of an arrow is the arrow head? Not much.
 - a) Shaft, fletchings, nock, arrow head (which may only be the sharpened tip of the shaft).
 - b) Who would argue that spending time making sure the shaft is strong and straight, the right weight, is a waste of time... what matters is the point?
 - c) Who would argue that the fletchings, the feathers which guide it, are a waste of time putting on, and don't ultimately matter? What use is a nock?
 - d) Let's spend all our time focusing on the arrow head!
 - ii. If we lay Paul's letter to the Colossians along our arrow, we might say...
 - a) The Gospel of Christ (the message) is the **fletchings**... it should guide everything else. Loving the Gospel guides everything else.
 - b) The Church, the body of Christ, the new man wearing the new clothes, is **the shaft** which will display that message to a watching world. (Live the Gospel)
 - Just as Christ is the fullest manifestation of God; His body brings the fullest message. The church is the intended delivery system of the Gospel.
 - c) **The arrowhead** is the ***point of engagement*** with the lost soul. It is the church living the Gospel and advancing the Gospel through praying, sharing and preaching. **How effective is a bucket full of arrowheads?**
 - d) In 4:5-6, Paul is "putting the arrowhead on the wonderfully crafted arrow."
 - **His dominantly inward focus has a pointedly outward direction.**

- Before putting the arrowhead on one end, Paul puts the **nock** on the other.

II. The Nock: Pray for the Advance of the Gospel (Colossians 4:3-4 ESV)

ESV: At the same time, pray also for us, **that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison— ⁴that I may make it clear,** which is how I ought to speak.

- A. Don't forget the nock! Without it, the arrow will never get delivered to the target.
- Not only has Paul called us to be devoted to prayer because we could never accomplish anything he's talked about without God's help, but now he is going to reveal that we could never see the Gospel advanced without God's help.
 - Prayer may seem like a really small thing (nock), but without it this arrow is useless. This arrow can never be connected to the bow (God) without it.
 - These 3 prayer requests are one: the 3 sides of a triangle. (3 edges of arrowhead)
- B. **Open a door:** Is Paul merely praying for more preaching opportunities? Possibly, but I don't think so.
- Acts 14:27 Paul talks about how a *door of faith* was opened.
 - 1 Corinthians 16:9 Paul speaks of a door being opened wide and effective, in the midst of serious opposition to the preaching... so that doesn't seem like a preaching invitation. Rather it is the Gospel being received into hearts.
 - 2 Corinthians 2:12 Paul went to a preaching engagement and found a door opened for him in the Lord...as if he could have a preaching opportunity with a closed door.
 - It seems that for Paul the door is, as Zerwick put it, "*a door which allows the word to pass through*" (like oxygen into the bloodstream).
 - 1 Thessalonians 1:4-6 Welcome of the message (open the door).
- C. Declare the mystery of Christ.
- I tend to read this with the emphasis on declaring it... given Paul's emphasis on mystery in this letter, I would suggest the content, **the mystery**, is the emphasis.
 - Compare** Col 1:25-28 NIV: *I have become its servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the **word λόγον** of God in its fullness-- ²⁶ the **mystery** μυστήριον that has been **kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed** ἐφανερώθη to the saints. ²⁷ To them God has chosen to **make known** γνωρίσαι among the Gentiles the glorious riches of **this mystery**, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. ²⁸ We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ.*
 - Paul's prayer request parallels this. A door for the logos which He presents.
 - Paul wanted to declare the mystery ... what was once hidden he had a commission to make known.
 - Paul wanted God Who had chosen to make it known among the Gentiles to continue to choose to make it known, epiphany it, to new recipients just as he had done to the Colossians.
- D. **Make it clear:** epiphany it... manifest it... this is connected to God making it known.
- E. **Without a bow (God), the arrow is useless.** Without God opening hearts, giving Paul the content of what was hidden, and revealing it to the recipients, evangelism would be the equivalent of firing arrows at a concrete wall! You'd just break a lot of

arrows. **Prayer connects the arrow to the bow!**

- i. Hallesby: *“The work of the Spirit can be compared to mining. The Spirit’s work is to blast to pieces the sinner’s hardness of heart and his frivolous opposition to God. [These blasts he refers to as awakenings; but prayer as the time when the deep holes are bored” to place the explosives.] To bore these holes is a task which tries one’s patience. To light the fuse and fire the shot is not only easy but also very interesting work. One sees ‘results’ from such work. It creates interest too; shots resound, and pieces fly in every direction. . . . The Spirit calls us to do the quiet, difficult, trying work of boring holy explosive material into the souls of the unconverted by daily and unceasing prayer. This is the real preparatory work for the next awakening.”*
- ii. **Prayer may seem small like this nock; but oh how essential it is.**

F. Now Paul moves from the closet of prayer to the street corners of our lives.

III. The Arrowhead: Walk for the Advance of the Gospel (Colossians 4:5-6 NIV)

A. How are you called to live your life in the world?

- i. As a Christian, must I go to work and preach to everyone? If I am a bookseller, must I sell only Christian books? Or can I sell textbooks? If I am a musician, can I only sing songs about the Gospel? If not, then what does it mean to be a Christian who is a musician? Must I share the Gospel with the cashier while she is checking my groceries out? If not what does it mean to be a Christian at the grocery store? Must I share Jesus with the waitress at the restaurant in case she dies and I don't have another chance? Is so, how? Do I just start talking about it?
- ii. How are you, as a Christian, called to live in the world around you?
 - a) Paul has spent a good deal of time talking about how we live **in community** with one another... putting on Christ...but we spend a great deal of time out there.

B. Walk in wisdom toward outsiders (ESV (literal))

- i. In 1:10 we are told to **walk in a way that is congruent with Jesus Christ**.
- ii. In 1:15-20 Paul presents Jesus Christ as the **Wisdom of God** in Person.
- iii. In Colossians 2:6 We are told to **“walk in Him.”**
- iv. Here when Paul says, “Walk in Wisdom toward outsiders,” I think he is saying more than be shrewd in how you act, or tactful...
 - a) I believe he is saying, **Live as Christ in the world around you!**
 - Don't stop living your life hidden in Christ when you go to work, neighborhood, friends, shooting range, coffee shop, when you are returning a coffee grinder.
 - New coffee grinder, no receipt, no longer carried. Response of man...
 - We are always on display...
 - This may explain why Paul expects people to ask questions (vs. 6).

C. Make the Most of Every Opportunity

- i. This isn't just “make good use of time” as if we need to be efficient.
- ii. The word used here, is a market-place word, conveys the idea, **“Snatch up the time like bargains at a sale.... buy up every opportunity.”**
 - a) Yard sales can be a funny place: if books are \$2-\$3 each, people are cautiously perusing them, deciding; but if books are .25... they pick them up in stacks!

- b) Paul is saying, “look for these bargains... and grab them by the stack!”
- iii. Back to Starbucks: I didn't snatch up the bargain!
 - a) Me: “What are you going to do? It's not like getting angry would change things.”
 - b) Instead, I could have seasoned that conversation with grace... Gospel grace.
 - “Honestly, that is not natural for me. By nature, I am an angry selfish man, but when I consider what Christ has done to save me, forgiving my massive wrongs, I realize that it is improper for me to become angry when wronged even in a coffee grinder purchase...”
 - Good display... lousy snatching up the time!
- D. *Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt...*
 - i. This is not merely saying that our conversation should be gracious... though indeed it should be. But it is hard to imagine in the context of Colossians that Paul isn't also including Gospel grace...which will be confirmed in the next phrase.
 - ii. Seasoned with salt:
 - a) PT Obrien points out that rabbinic teaching used salt as a metaphor for wisdom, in which the Law was wisdom.
 - b) For Paul of course, in Colossians, the Gospel is Wisdom, Christ is Wisdom. Hence we are to let our season our conversations with the Gospel, with Christ.
 - iii. Walk in Wisdom (Christ); Talk in Wisdom (Christ).
 - a) Let your speech be gracious...yes, because of the effect of the Gospel.
 - b) And let it be seasoned with Gospel grace... opportunities captured.
- E. So that you may know how to answer everyone...
 - i. Paul seems to think your life lived in Christ-likeness will produce questions, comments which invite response from outsiders.
 - a) Like the Starbucks incident.
 - b) That doesn't mean you don't introduce the conversation ever. Of course we do. And we constantly season our conversation with Gospel Wisdom... Christ.
 - ii. However, **our daily lives with outsiders are to be primarily the Gospel in dialogue, not the Gospel in monologue.**
 - a) Preaching is a monologue...not a conversation. There is a proper place for monologue. God speaking, opening hearts, etc.
 - b) But a conversation seasoned with salt is not a monologue; it is a dialogue.
 - Listen carefully, speak accurately.
 - **Not like** the inexperienced sales person who works to get an appointment and just wants to make his presentation. They hear, “blah, blah, blah...”
 - No... get the appointment and draw them out, listen, discover their needs, discover what matters, find out what their business is... then speak clearly to their needs. **Books:** *Questioning Evangelism, Speaking of Jesus.*
 - c) It may be that you can share the gospel, or invite them to church... monologue...
 - d) Buy up every opportunity: at the coffee shop, the grocery store, work, etc. Not by obnoxious engagement, but through Christlike walking, and salted with Gospel grace conversation. Christ walking; Christ talking. **This is the arrowhead!**

F. What does living Colossians look like?

- i. Love the Gospel (learn it, eat it, pray it, think it, rejoice in it, sing it). (fletchings)
- ii. Live the Gospel both in fellowship and in the world around you. Applying it to your life so they are engaged by it. The old life is dead; live life hidden in Christ. (shaft)
- iii. Advance the Gospel in prayer (Nock) and conversations... listening, learning, engaging, seasoning the conversations with Gospel truth, willing to share, buying up every opportunity. (arrowhead)