

## **CROSSING THE BORDER**

An Expositional Study of Colossians

by GUY H. KING

CHRISTIAN LITERATURE CRUSADE Fort Washington, Pennsylvania

Copyright © 1957 Marshall, Morgan & Scott, Ltd.

### **CHAPTER NINE**

#### **HIS TALK OF TONGUES 4:2-6**

WHAT a lot of time we spend - and sometimes waste - in talking. So we may be quite sure that the ever-practical Paul will take up the matter, and deal with the various aspects of it from the Christian point of view.

#### **THERE IS THE SPEECH OF PRAYER**

**"Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving," 2.**

(a) **"Prayer"** - what a man of prayer he was himself, and how constantly we find him longing for the prayers of others. He knows how much we Christians can do for one another if we can only pray: we could do nothing better for a man.

He reckoned it as one of the pieces of a Christian soldier's armour - **"Praying always,"** Ephesians 6:18. I suggest that the list of armour does not end with verse 17. We understand that Paul's military guard was with him, Acts 28:16; and as he picked out the parts of the soldier's accoutrement, he used each bit as a spiritual illustration of the Christian warrior's equipment.

It seems that one item is missing from the catalogue - what was called the "greaves," a protection for the shins and the knees. Possibly the sentry of the moment was not wearing them just then, but our writer knew that the armour was not **"whole"** without them, and although because of their absence at the time he does not mention them by name, he won't leave out the spiritual truth that they stand for.

The knees: why, prayer, of course. He would so much appreciate the old prophet's exhortation, **"confirm the feeble knees,"** Isaiah 35:3.

(b) **"Watch"** - I dare say Paul would know of the Master's coupling together of **"watch and pray,"** Matthew 26:41.

(1) *Watch before you pray* - that you do not rush into the audience chamber of the King; or that Satan does not spoil your spirit before ever you draw near, for -

"Satan trembles when he sees

The weakest saint upon his knees."

(2) *Watch while you pray* - lest any wandering thought come in to distract you from the holy business. Arrest that thought at once, like a policeman on the watch, "**bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ,**" II Corinthians 10:5 - arrest it "**in the Name**" of the King.

(3) *Watch after you pray* - looking out confidently for the answer. Remember Charlotte Elliott's reminder -

"Watch, as if on that alone  
Hung the issue of the day;  
Pray, that help may be sent down;  
Watch and pray."

(c) "**Thanksgiving**" - prayer and thanksgiving are so often joined together by Paul. This is our "**Thank you**" to prayer's "**Please**". Do you feel that we are often guilty of shocking bad manners toward GOD, in that we frequently forget to thank Him for His answers to our prayers. Moreover, how thankful we must ever be that we are privileged to pray to Him at all. Let us, then, be careful to put this right.

(d) "**Continue**" - keep at it. Satan will, of course, do his evil utmost to hinder us; and, besides, often when "**the spirit indeed is willing . . . the flesh is weak,**" Matthew 26:41. We are so tired, so lazy, so impatient. so doubtful.

We recall that the Master told more than one of His parables to press home that "**men ought always to pray, and not to faint,**" Luke 18:1. We are often in such a hurry that, if the answer doesn't come at once, we drop the asking. It is well for us to bear in mind that GOD always answers true prayer - sometimes He says "Yes"; sometimes He says "No"; sometimes He says "Wait".

I heard the other day of a girl who said, "Mother has always taught me that 'No' is an answer". If He does say "No" to your prayer, will you remember to view it from this threefold background

- first, His love wants the best for you;
- second, His wisdom knows the best for you;
- third, His power gets the best for you.

Will all that not conjure up in you a readiness for His "No"? And if He, by delay, seems to say "Wait," then "**continue in prayer**" until in His own time, and in His own way, your petition is granted.

So may we learn how to speak to GOD. We do not need, in this great matter, to be self-taught, for "**the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities; for we know not what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself maketh intercession for us,**" Romans 8:26.

What a joy is this, to have Someone who is able and willing to teach us the What, and the How

of prevailing prayer, so that the effectual speech of supplication may be ours, James 5:16.

### THERE IS THE SPEECH OF TESTIMONY

**"Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds, that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak," 3-4.**

*I ought to.* So says the apostle, and so should every Christian say, for if we know GOD ourselves it is incumbent upon us to tell others of Him. **"The mystery of Christ,"** the secret of the saving grace and mercy of GOD toward sinners, hid through ages, but hinted at through type and prophecy, is now laid open in the appearing of the Son of GOD from Heaven, and in His suffering upon the Cross.

Paul now conceives it his bounden duty to **"make it manifest,"** to speak it clear and plain to the souls of men who need Him so desperately, as dying men need Water and Bread of Life. We find a pictorial illustration of the matter in the story of the four leprous men at the gate of Samaria, in their dilemma.

A **"mystery"** of supply is available to their need: It is brought about by GOD through the mysterious noise of armies that He caused the Syrians to hear.

While the unfortunate four discuss their dire hunger, the mystery is hid; but at last the plentiful store is revealed to them. in their excitement they take their fill; but, presently, one remarks, **"We do not well, this is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace,"** 2 Kings 7:9; at which they proceed at once to **"make it manifest"** to the besieged city.

We, too, live in a Gospel day: dare we hold our peace, when multitudes around us are starving for Bread? After all, **"we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the Gospel,"** I Thessalonians 2:4 - from the moment that we were, by faith in the Saviour, put in touch with it, we were put in trust with it.

Surely, then, I ought to pass it on.

*I want to.* Paul bids his friends pray for him to have **"a door of utterance"** opened to him. He knows that he ought to speak, and he longs for the opportunity to come his way. A rather cheeky boy was applying for a job; and when the prospective employer asked him, "Have you a motto in life?" he replied, "Yes, sir, same as yours". "What do you mean, son?" "Saw it on the door, sir - 'Push'."

Ah, yes; but I fancy that won't do for a Christian. Too many mistakes have been made, too many lives spoilt by trying to push doors open. This very Paul seems almost to have fallen into that error, when **"they assayed to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit suffered them not,"** Acts 16:7, and perhaps also when they **"were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia,"** 6.

In his fine eagerness, he was perhaps inclined to make opportunities; but Asia was a closed door.

Europe was GOD's door for him, 11-12. I wonder if I am right in holding, as I do, that it is better not to try to make opportunities for Christian service, but of course to be eager to take them when they appear. Paul here, you see, prefers praying to pushing. After all, if I may dare to put it so, GOD is expert in doors - I am "**He that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth . . . behold, I have set before thee an open door,**" Revelation 3:7-8.

When He shows the way in, we may expect His blessing to follow, even though there may come opposition from enemy quarters. Thus Paul is able to write of his experience at Ephesus, "**A great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries,**" I Corinthians 16:9.

Of course, we must want to have opportunities of speaking a word of testimony for our Lord, and be ready to see and seize them, otherwise doors will not open. If GOD knows that we really want them, He will assuredly offer them. Perhaps, then, the wise plan will be to stop rushing and pushing, and to ask Him to guide, to gird, to guard, and, if necessary, to goad.

*I can't do.* Forgive the clumsy phrase; but it matches up to the other two. The apostle longs to speak of the mystery, but he regrets if he can't do it, because he is "**in bonds**".

All the same, in his heart of hearts, he knows that prayer can change chains from an opposition into an opportunity. There in his prison in Rome, if he felt for a moment that the door was chained, prayer soon slipped the chain, and the "**door of utterance**" flew open to him.

Of himself, he can't do it, can't push the door open, his hands were chained, but prayer moved GOD's hand to open it. Indeed so.

- Think of the conference he had with his fellow Jews, Acts 28:17.

- Think of the correspondence he conducted - to Philippians, Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon. His pen was the tongue of a ready speaker, cf. Psalm 45:1.

- Think of the converts he won - Onesimus, Philemon 10; and soldiers who became the "**saints of Caesar's household**" Philippians 4:22.

But to speak more particularly, do any of us feel that we can't do this thing, this witnessing to another? Is it shyness that keeps us back; is it fear of what those others will think, or say, or do; is it dread of saying the wrong thing, or of becoming tongue-tied in our nervousness? You are in distinguished company. Moses felt the same - "**What shall I say . . . I am slow of speech**". Exodus 3:13; 4:10. To which GOD replied, "**I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say**".

Jeremiah felt the same - "**I cannot speak, for I am a child,**" Jeremiah 1:6. To which GOD replied, "**I have put My words in thy mouth**". And you feel the same? Not ashamed to speak - you want to; but afraid to speak - you can't do? And certainly you ought to. "**Let the redeemed of the Lord say so,**" Psalm 57:2.

Do you love Him enough to trust Him, and will you open your mouth, and begin? Remember the

infallible secret, "**They were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak . . .**" Acts 2:4: you are not concerned with "**other tongues**". It's your own tongue you are bothered about. You needn't be. Seek His infilling, and the testimony will come outflowing. Open your mouth, and begin. And don't forget that, while salvation is ours as soon as "**with the heart man believeth,**" Full Salvation is only enjoyed when "**with the mouth confession is made,**" Romans 10:10. Next

## **THERE IS THE SPEECH OF BEHAVIOUR**

**"Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time,"** 5.

In the New Testament, "**walk**" is frequently used for the life: the kind of way in which we behave; whether bad, as in Colossians 3:7, "**in the which ye also walked some time,**" or good, as in I Thessalonians 2:12, walk worthy of GOD, who hath called you unto His kingdom and glory[**/b**]."

Sometimes, alas, a Christian's walk is not consistent with his profession. It was to one such that the remark was made, when he was speaking of spiritual things to an unbeliever, "Excuse me, but what you are speaks so loudly that I cannot hear what you say". How that man needed to heed the exhortation at the head of this paragraph. But, wait a moment: do we not all need it? Are we blameless in this regard?

May we all so closely "**walk with GOD,**" Genesis 5:22; 6:9, that such a rebuke may never be brought against us.

"*Walk in wisdom*" - says our verse. What need we have of that, if we are to display the right character, if we are to say the right word, if we are to recognise the right time, if we are to employ the right tact - which shall not put them off, but pull them in. What a comfort to know that, as well as a whole lot of other fundamental necessities.

**"Christ Jesus is made unto us wisdom,**" I Corinthians 1:30. Let us watch how He walked, and then "**follow His steps**". I Peter 2:21. Yes, our walk talks.

Do you know that strange little word in Proverbs 6:13. "**He speaketh with his feet**"? A small boy was told not to walk across a certain muddy field. When he came home his mother asked him, "Did you go over the field?" "No, mum. you told me not to." She merely pointed to his shoes, covered With mud. "**He speaketh with his feet.**" His walk was inconsistent with his profession - his lips told a lie. His feet told the truth: the other way round from the more usual inconsistency. You will know that in early days the Christian religion was dubbed "**the Way**". Acts 9:2; 19:23; 24:14. How appropriate and significant a name for the following of Him who said "**I am the Way**". To company with Him is wisdom indeed.

**"Toward them that are without."** Those that are astray must always be a concern to those who are within the fold. By all means at our disposal we must seek to will them to lure them within. I expect you remember our Lord's parable of the Great Supper. Some of those invited refused to come, and the servants were sent out to the streets and lanes of the city. and to the highways and hedges, with the invitation. So are we bidden to the Gospel feast of the Christian life, where "**all**

**things are now ready".**

Some do not want it; and still, in this gospel age. the invitation runs. for "**still there is room**". Once more, the servants of the Master are graciously commissioned to "**Go out . . . and compel** [lovingly persuade] **them to come in**" Luke 14:23.

Are we intent upon that blessed task? If so, one of our secrets must be to "**walk in wisdom toward them that are without**".

To that end, how often our walk more persuasive, and more productive, than our talk. Both, please, as opportunity serves; but we will be specially mindful of our behaviour, lest, by any inconsistency, we put a stumbling block in the way of others. Some have been "**near to the kingdom**" have been put off in this very way.

It behoves us all to be very careful to seek wisdom from our Lord, that we may avoid being the cause of any such tragedy. "**Make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way**" Hebrews 12:13. Pray for them, yes, indeed; but let the life correspond. As John Keble hymns it -

"And help us, this and every day,  
To have more nearly as we pray."

"**Redeeming the time**" - buying up the opportunity as this phrase means. Losing no chance that may present itself to "catch men" in the Gospel net, Luke 5:10. But "**redeeming**", buying - such words - surely contain an idea of cost; and, assuredly, this business of soul-winning is a costly affair.

Watchfulness, patience, courage, tact prayer, testimony, life, energy - all this spiritual currency builds up into the human side of the purchase cost of this fishing industry. Recall the impelling lines of Horatius Bonar's hymn, as he originally wrote it, not as in the emasculated words of modern hymn books -

"Speed, speed thy work; cast sloth away  
With great strong wrestlings souls are won."

May GOD lay upon us all the burden of souls, and, in the light of His suffering, make us willing to pay the price! Then -:

### **THERE IS THE SPEECH OF CONVERSATION**

"**Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt,**" 6. Some years ago, Chinese Christians engaged in a form of witness which they called "gossiping the Gospel" - just talking quite naturally about CHRIST and His things in the way of ordinary conversation. A very commendable form of speech for GOD, don't you think?

"**Speech.**" James 3 warns us of the ill that our tongues can bring into other lives, yet how great the blessings they can bring. That is a remarkable claim made by the ungodly, in Psalm 12:4,

"**Our lips are our own, who is lord over us?**" No Christian can say that. CHRIST is Lord over us, our lips are not our own - nothing of ours is ours.

"**Ye are not your own,**" I Corinthians 6:19. Mind, and mouth, and members belong to Him who bought us. May our lips, then, be used always for good, and for GOD.

We do not forget that GOD hears what we say.

- Sometimes it is what distresses Him, "**He hath heard your murmurings,**" Exodus 16:9.  
- Sometimes it is what delights Him, "**Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another, and the Lord hearkened and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon His Name,**" Malachi 3:16.

That "**hearkened**" is noteworthy, as if to indicate, speaking humanly, that He not only heard, but, as it were, cupped His ear to catch it all.

In the first case, He had to listen; in the second case, He wanted to listen. Let us then, sometimes, as opportunity affords, engage our tongues, to believers or to unbelievers, to talk tactfully about the One who means everything to us.

"**Salt.**" Pungency sometimes, yes, when dealing with corrupt things. But graciousness always, as characterised the Master's conversation - "**Never man spake like this Man,**" John 7:46. If we be "**in Christ,**" if He be in us, may we not catch something of His tone and accent?

Would not this mean no repetition of slander, no suspicion of uncleanness, no temper, no criticism of others, no giving as much as we get, no undue exaggeration, no even slight variation from the truth, no unkind word. Verily, "**if any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man,**" James 3:2 - that is, a man of full stature in CHRIST. Even as I wrote the "no's" just above, my heart turned to the old prayer, "**Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips,**" Psalm 141:3.

I think that our passage has one more thing to say about the Christian ministry of the tongue.

### **THERE IS THE SPEECH OF EXPOSITION**

"**That ye may know how ye ought to answer every man,**" 6.

We link this up with a later passage, "**Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear,**" I Peter 3:15. The latter part of this verse corresponds to the "**how**" of our Colossian verse. When we are trying to explain to another the reasonableness of our belief there is a proper way to do it, a true Christian spirit in which to talk.

Almost as important as knowing what to say is to "**know how**" to say it. Like our ordinary conversation, this also is to be "**always with grace, seasoned with salt**". At the very beginnings of the Christian Church we are told of two great characteristics of the apostles' "**witness**" - which should qualify both our public and our private testimony - "**great power. . . and great grace,**"

Acts 4:33. Shall we not ask for strength of conviction, and sweetness of manner? Well now, if our "**answer**," our "**reason**," is to be intelligent, and in any degree effective, it will need careful and constant study. Shall we make it our aim to get a firm grasp of the meaning and teaching of the doctrine?

A stiff book, but excellent, is T. C. Hammond's, *In Understanding be Men*. A splendid smaller book is the late Dr. Rendle Short's *Why Believe?* Such books will greatly fore-arm us, if we get a real grip of them, for the giving of our answer to the challenge that may come to us. But, of course, our chief manual will be the Bible. To get a growing, and deepening knowledge of it will surely be the ambition of us all.

If it is to be to us, among many other things, "**the Sword of the Spirit**," Ephesians 6:17, we must learn to wield it effectively by constant sword drill. That Will come, not by reading a few verses in the morning - though that is an excellent preparation for the day - but by earnest and diligent study of the Sacred Record of GOD's dealings, and purposes of love for men. And then, added to all this equipment for the head must be a personal heart experience of GOD. This will bring the "**grace**" into our "**answer**" not only the Book knowledge, but the Look acquaintance of Isaiah 45:22.

~ end of chapter 9 ~

<http://www.baptistbiblebelievers.com/>

\*\*\*