

### **"A Family Affair – Walking"**

Last week Paul was asking for prayer, **"Continue in prayer and watch in the same with thanksgiving; Withal..."**, and I mentioned, I think, Paul was from the South, **"...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."** (Colossians 4:2-4) And we took a look at three important issues. We are to continue in prayer, we are to watch and we are to give thanksgiving. And so, we encouraged you to underline those in your bible. That this now Paul, seeking to be ministered to by prayer. Then in verse three, **"...with all praying also for us..."** (Colossians 4:3) And this is an insight to the humility of this man. That he was willing to seek help when it came to a situation that was overwhelming. And he wasn't looking to get out of prison, but he was looking that God would open a door in heaven and in the earth and in prison, that he would begin to and be able to speak the word with authority.

And, I think it's a wonderful thing when you really come to understand that life of contentment. Where, no matter where you are, you desire to be a witness for Christ. And that's a difficult thing. We tend to be a witness for Christ when we get what we want. But when life doesn't give us what we want or we don't think that we deserve to have what is coming down our life, then it's difficult for us to give thanks or even be a witness. And Paul is saying, "God, open the door that I may speak with authority."

And then, in verse 4, he mentions, **"...I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak."** (Colossians 4:4) And this was the man that was taken in the Arabian Desert, you remember, for three days, and then God worked in his life for another 11 years and finally at the end of 14 years God called him with Barnabas to go into that area to

minister, taking over Peter's ministry. And here was a man that received direct revelation and he's humble enough to say, "Lord teach me how to speak". And so, just the importance of really drawing close to the Lord. So, Paul was asking for prayer and now he turns and he says to them, "**Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time. Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.**" (Colossians 4:5-6) And so Paul now is looking for an impact that would come through their life upon other people.

He is saying, "I need prayer", but then he turns the corner and he begins to tell us how we are to live our life; how we are to walk with the Lord and to be worthy of the vocation wherein He has called us. And one of the tragic things that we see the church has made a horrible mistake, is that the church has exhorted you that you ought to walk in the realm of the Spirit and you ought to be doing this and that and you ought to be having a victorious Spiritual life. But the church has not taught you who you are in Christ. And you can never have a victorious life until you, first of all, understand who you are in Christ. And when you begin to find out who you are, then you can now be all that God wants you to be and victory and joy will be there. And so, the bible tells us that we are to build the church up. That teachers and people in leadership need the gift of prophetic prophecy and to be able to bring edification to the church; for the perfecting of the church; for the building up of the church, not to evangelize the church. We are to evangelize the world, but in the church we are to minister and it is the cry of my heart that people inside of the church would teach in such a way that we might be equipped to live the life that we ought to live. And so, "by your walk" in verse 5, and then "by your words" in verse 6.

So the key is "those outside", notice in verse 5, "**Walk in wisdom...**", and underline "**toward them that are without**" (Colossians 4:5), and that's the key. The outside of the faith, evangelizing. And really in the context, this becomes a fascinating door.

Because, when you look for God to open a door, we usually mean, "God give a wife", or "give me a husband", or "God open the door that I might buy that Mercedes Benz". Or, "God open the door that I might get this house". But it's interesting that Paul wanted a door to evangelize, and then he wanted the boldness to turn outside of himself to bring a message. And so, we see Paul now is encouraging us that the doors that God desires to open are the doors of evangelism. That God would open a door to my children, that I might be able to minister the depth and the knowledge of God; And that through my life it might be such a great example that our kids and our friends would be able to follow in the ways of Christ. And so the lifestyle: Jesus said that you are the light and you are the salt of the earth. But if the salt has lost its savor, in other words, it's no good to be used as salt, then it's to be thrown out and be trodden down and they would do that in the old days. They would take the old salt, they would throw it on the trails so nothing would grow and men and women would walk over it. And you are to be the light of the world. In other words, through your life people might come to know Christ.

And so, Paul is praying for us that we might be the light. In other words, that my life might be so together that I might be able to have people willing to listen, willing to look, willing to learn, willing to understand that what I have is something that they desire. And Paul prays, very simply, **"...walk in wisdom towards them that are without..."** (Colossians 4:5) And we can only "walk" in Christ as long as we find ourselves "in" Christ. It is pretty difficult to walk if you're not hanging out with the Lord. And so the Christian walk, we're going to talk about that tonight, is one of those unique times, and it describes many different things. You remember in Isaiah, in 45:22, it speaks of the eye. **"Look unto me and be thou saved"** (Isaiah 45:22). And then it speaks of the ear in the bible, in Isaiah 55:3, **"...hear and your soul shall live..."** (Isaiah 55:3) And then, in Isaiah 27:5, it speaks of the hand, **"...let him take hold of my strength..."** (Isaiah 27:5) And then, in Psalm 34: 8, it speaks of the mouth **"...oh taste and see that the lord is good..."** (Psalm 34:8). So, throughout

the bible it does describe different avenues that God can use, but the greatest of all is the walk because in that walk, it really declares everything about a person. You remember to Noah, God said to Noah, **"...walk before me..."** He said to Abraham, again **"...walk before me..."** (Genesis 17:1) He said to Micah in 6:8, **"... Learn to humble yourself and walk before me..."** And He said to the church through Paul, **"... walk worthy of the Lord..."** (Ephesians 4:1)

Four things that come to my mind here are that Enoch walked with Me, Abraham walked before Me, Moses walked after Me and Paul walked in Me. And so, it speaks of the walk of the believer. So, let's take a look at verse 5, kind of tear it apart before we have communion, and just have a wonderful time tonight.

In verse 5 it declares, **"Walk in wisdom towards them that are without, redeeming the time..."** In another translation it reads, **"Live wisely among those who are not Christians and make the most of every opportunity..."** And then, in another translation, **"Be wise in the way you act towards those who are not believers, making good use of every opportunity you have..."** And then, the last one kind of ministers to my heart, **"Make the most of your chances to tell others the good news. Be wise in all your contacts with them."** (Colossians 4:5-6) And so, God is saying that we are to use wisdom and we are to redeem the time.

So, four things I want to take a look at this evening. Number 1, a consistent walk. And then, number 2, simply, a careful walk. And then number 3, a caring walk. And then number 4, a concise walk - all found in verse 5.

So, a consistent walk - notice he says, "Walk." The word here means, "To be consistent." It means that you're going to walk with God. In Colossians 4:5, **"Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time."** (Colossians 4:5) If you go back in Colossians, 1:10, **"...that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto**

**all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work..."** (Colossians 1:10) So in Colossians 1:10, **"...that you might walk worthy..."** (Colossians 1:10), and then in Colossians 2:6, **"...as ye therefore have received Jesus Christ, so walk in him..."** (Colossians 2:6), and then in I Thessalonians 2:12, **"...that ye would walk worthy of God..."** (1Thessalonians 2:12) So, God has laid out the importance of that consistent walk.

The book of Ephesians is laid out in just a very dynamic way. In chapters 1, 2 and 3, it tells you all that God has done for you. That He has chosen you, predestined you, ordained you. It's not until chapter 4:1, that he says, **"now because of all that God has done, therefore walk worthy of the lord"**. (Ephesians 4:1) So, my walking in consistency is based on my knowledge of God in my life. If I have a working knowledge of God, if I understand what He's really done in my life, how He has saved me, redeemed me and baptized me in the Holy Spirit. How that, He has filled my life with His goodness and His grace and how He's opened the word of God, to understand that He has delivered me. Even as Paul said, we had this sentence of death in ourselves that we were gone, but God saved us. And we were pressed out without measure, but God delivered us. And when I understand what He's done, then it's my desire to walk worthy of the Lord and to be pleasing in every given situation. The problem is as we look around the hypocrisy within our life, the double standard is not pleasing to God.

We ought to be the same way in worship as we are by our self in our home. Our lifestyles should not really change from the things that we do at church. The movies, the things that we do, there's a consistency within my life. And we can talk about that glorious peace and then we can walk around bummed out. And we can talk about the power of God, but we are so bummed out we don't know what to do. And we can talk about how the Holy Spirit will lead us and guide us, but we are just devastated because we don't know what to do. And God wants me to understand that I need to live what I

teach. If I teach a victorious life, then He wants me to live it. If I share the peace of God, He wants me to have that peace. And so I go to work, and I have an attitude and I have a chip on my shoulder and I don't want to talk to anybody and I'm just of rude and just a prude and everything else. And God has opened a door for you to witness through your life and when people see the peace in your life, they're going to say, "What are you doing? We need that peace." But I'm afraid, often times, we can talk it but we sure can't walk it. And so I would challenge you, and myself, that we would be very careful that when we begin to say, "You ought to have the peace of God", that we would have the boldness to say, "Am I living in that peace?"

And it's what my children, what my wife, what my partners see within my life. Do they see the peace of God? Do they see the victory in my life? Do they see the joy and the consistency that God will never let me down? And so when I speak of a consistent walk, what he's saying is that, "based on my knowledge of God, God will always come through". And when the world is looking and they're searching, that I am the closest thing they're going to see to Jesus Christ. And Paul said, "If you've seen me, then you need to follow me and you need to do what I'm doing." Not that he was Christ, but he was an example. Of John the Baptist, it said that we be held to be found in his light. He was the joy and the heart of the party. Let's go over to John's house and hang out.

And so, maybe we wouldn't be invited, "well, we don't want him, he's the bummer of the party". "Well, we don't want him because all he does is complain." "We don't want him because all does is eat, and he doesn't contribute." And all of a sudden you say, "Well, we'd like to have you, because you are the life of the party. The joy, the heart is in your life and that's what we want down deep in our heart." And so, we find very simply that joy.

It reminds me of a little boy. His mother said, "Don't run through that muddy field." And at the end of the day the little boy came back and his mother said, "Johnny, did

you run through the field?" He said "Nope." She looked down and said, "Then, where did you get that mud on those shoes?" You see, he could lie, but the tennis shoes couldn't. I can tell you that I'm walking in Christ, but my life will reveal that truth.

The second thing I find in this verse is a very simple thing: a careful walk. Notice the word "wisdom". Walk in wisdom. It means to have the right conduct, or say the right thing, recognize the right time, employ the right tact. We understand this to be that "gift of wisdom" where God gives to you that answer for a very difficult time. When you have the wisdom of God, then God begins to open doors and you see through another set of eyes. Oh, you can walk, but you can walk in yourself. And you can walk with the knowledge of God and you can destroy people's lives with the knowledge of God, but you need to give them the wisdom of God. That when they're out in left field you need to tell them that God is willing to reason with them and to bring them back. This is that gift, that ability to come between situations and solve a problem. This is that unique gift that can give a right answer to your children, or to take a situation between a spouse and stop it, or to take a problem within the church and diffuse it, because what you're saying is absolutely undeniably the power of God, and so, the wisdom of God. And so, we find that that wisdom comes from, where? The fear of God. In Proverbs 1:7, it says the fear of God brings wisdom. So as I connect to God, as I understand God, as I learn to fear God, then the gift is given.

James, you remember, in chapter 1, verse 5, declared, **"...if any man lack wisdom, let him ask of me freely and I will give it to him..."**, (James 1:5) And so, if you're walking and you love the Lord and you don't know which way to go, you need to ask God for direction. You need to talk to your spouse about something and you know they're going to be upset, then you need to pray for wisdom and quick tennis shoes to run after you share; or when God has shown you something about your children. The moment they walk in, you're not to pound them and hammer them and challenge them. You're to use the gift at a moment, at the right time where you can get inside their life

and make a tremendous difference. And without this gift we become hard. Without this gift we become very prideful people. Without this gift we lose mercy and kindness and understanding. For, this gift will give you insight to people's lives. You will see the pain they're going through and why they're doing what they're doing and God will give you empathy and sympathy, and God will even give you pity. And I would rather have pity for my children than to reject them for life. You see I can deal with pity because God deals in my life, sometimes, in pity. But if it wasn't for my horrible sin, God would have never died, and so I find that pity is so important. God give me mercy help me to walk in your way.

And so the word of wisdom: In Colossians chapter 3:16, **"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom..."** (Colossians 3:16) In other words, Jesus is the wisdom. So, I can walk, but am I walking in the presence of God himself? And so, the importance of being that witness.

And then number 3, a caring walk. Notice what it says, **"Walk in wisdom"** and underline **"towards them that are without"**. (Colossians 4:5) And I think that's the key tonight of what Paul was saying. Those who know not the Lord; Ephesians says they were without Christ, without God, alienated from this present world, or maybe someone who has walked away from the goodness of God. What it means is that I am to walk towards them in God's agape love. You see, if I'm walking as Christ would walk, and I'm seeking the wisdom of God to love the way that Christ would love, when my path now crosses someone who doesn't know Christ, or someone who's walked away from Christ, my response is going to be much different. I'm going to walk towards them who are without. In other words, in your workplace you are around non-believers. When you go to the grocery store you are among non-believers. How are you to walk in the grocery store? You are to walk in wisdom. And you are to walk in wisdom towards them. That is such an incredible gift.

And it goes on to declare in 1 Thessalonians 4:12, **"...that ye might walk honestly towards them that are without..."** (1 Thessalonians 4:12) Listen to what he is saying. He is saying that I am to be absolutely honest, even in front of a non-believer. So if they give me too much money, I'm not to say "thank you God", I'm to take it back. I'm to hand that money back to them and tell them they made a mistake, and they will say "What's wrong with you?" And you will say, "I'm a Christian and I want to walk towards you in honesty". It declares in 1 Timothy 3:7, **"Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without..."** (1 Timothy 3:7) In other words, it speaks of pastors paying their bills. It speaks of a church paying their bills, and in 25 years we've never been late on any payment. Because the testimony of the church is that we are to be that great example in the community and if we don't pay the bills and we don't take care of the property then it is such a poor witness. Let them criticize me, let them point their fingers at me, but our bills are paid on time and the books are balanced to the penny and our witness is in the community and we are to live that way before non-believers and we are to be honest before them.

I remember during the building project we ran out of money and we owed some of the different vendors about \$200,000 and we needed another \$100,000 to complete it. And the bank was going to come through, but I didn't know what to do. And so, me being kind of transparent, I just called Crenshaw Lumber and I said, "We don't have any money to pay the bill, OK? And we need to get more material, OK? And I can't pay you for two months." And the owner said, "Now let me get this straight. You owe me \$35,000." "Uh-huh." "And you want me to give you more material?" "Yep." "And you can't pay me for two months." I go, "yep". He says, "No one has ever asked that question." And then he said, "For you, because you're honest, we'll do it." We did it for nine different vendors, and nine different vendors – because I wasn't going to lie. This is where we're at, this is what we're doing, the bank has kind of messed around and we're kind of stuck, and we need to continue to work. And they honored it. I need to walk in honesty. I need to walk in integrity. Those people are watching what you're

doing. If you're wasting hours, they know it. If you are stealing hours from your employer, they know it. And if they don't know it, God knows it and you and I will answer to God. So, if I'm going to have a great testimony and be an evangelist, He's not asking me to stand in the pulpit, or go out to minister to the masses, or to stand like Greg Laurie and minister at the stadium. But, in my life I can be the greatest witness that anyone has ever seen by the honesty and the integrity of my heart. And then in Ephesians 2:12, **"...that at time past you were without Christ,"** (Ephesians 2:12), being alienated, but now God has brought you in. You were there once. The importance of understanding "how am I walking towards those that are without?" A great testimony.

And then lastly, we read a concise walk. And so I want a consistent walk, I want a careful walk, I want a caring walk but in my life, I like the last one, I want a concise walk. And he says here, "redeem the time". it is a word in the Greek that we get from those in the marketplace. It means to buy up every opportunity. It would be like having a couple hundred bucks in your pocket and going down to a flea market and walking it, waiting for that one moment that, all of a sudden, someone puts a watch down for \$25 bucks and you know it's worth \$2,000, and you're able to move on it instantly. It means that you are so keen and so together that you are walking through this world with absolute clarity in your heart and mind and when it's time to move to bring someone to Christ, you have the ability and you know the time. That's what He's talking about. Redeem the time.

And then in the book of Ephesians it says, **"...for the days are evil..."** (Ephesians 5:16) "The day" is what God wants you to know. There's a day that Satan is seeking to come against you, but you need to know that day and begin to walk in the fear of the Lord. And so, it means to utilize every opportunity. It means to redeem the time, because the days are evil. It means to make the most out of your time. A sense of urgency, evaluating every activity determining our effectiveness and seizing every

opportunity and moment we have. Now, here's how we walk. "(Yawn) What a bummer. Have to go to work today." "It's almost 5 o'clock, I'm out of here, in Jesus name." That is what God has to work with. That is the men and women that he has to win the world. And so the angels come and say, "Listen, we can do a better job. They really don't want to share their faith; they really don't want to stand for who you are." And Jesus says, "No, these are the ones that I have chosen." "(Yawn) Study almost over? I want to get out of here."

And so, I just meander. Now my wife meanders. She walks through the mall, she walks through a shop, and she goes from hanger to hanger. It's in her DNA - every woman, it's in her DNA: shopping. They just have an ability to know when JC Penney's is going to have a sale. Something in their mind tells them, it's coming up girls, it's coming up. And you start looking to the mailbox, having no idea, but it's coming. Now, guys don't have that ability. We are more like, "I want to buy the underwear and get out of here, in Jesus name." "I want to go to one store, get it - I'm gone." She has to go through the whole row. And then she wants me standing there with her. No. And then we walk in the mall and she looks in every mirror, and she's looking and I have one goal in my life: get out of the mall without spending any money, in Jesus name. And she's holding me back, and I'm moving on, and she's holding me back, and I want to go, and she's driving me crazy, and I'm driving her crazy. But, the difference is so important.

You see, we meander, just kind of walk...*bam* we get hit...*bam* we get hit...*bam*, where did that come from? Well, the bible says pray that you don't enter temptation. "Huh? I didn't know that." "Yeah." In other words, we're to put on the armor of God. "(Yawn) I wonder if I put that on." We're to go out with bullets in our guns. "Oh man, it's empty. I have no scripture any more in my life". And then we come back and we're black and blue and then beaten up by the enemy and we just, kind of, hate God. "Woe is me. I'm just horribly depressed." And God says, "**Walk in wisdom toward them**

**that are without, redeeming..."** (Colossians 4:5), and buying every opportunity to win them to Jesus Christ. In other words, we ought to wake up every morning with a heart to save people. And the first thing, God works on my heart. "Steven, are you ready to go?" "Yeah." "Are you willing to be led?" "Yes." "Then, go ahead and make your plans, do your thing, but stay open. Because I'm going to use you, my son, in a way that you never thought." And so, when I sit in an airplane I always ask God to bring the one he wants me to share with. Or, when I have to go somewhere and do something, God let me come across the one you want. You see my whole life is focused on other people.

**Closing Prayer: Father, we pray tonight that, God, as we look into Your word and we evaluate, Lord, the power of our walk, that, God, we are to walk in fellowship. That, Lord, that we are to be like Noah who walked before You. Like Abraham, like Moses, of men and women who have been faithful walking in Your presence. And God, You look upon our life as a walk; that we are on this journey. And God, in our walk, we desperately need to have wisdom. How often times, we walk and have an attitude, or we walk and we can't believe how everyone is doing everything they shouldn't be doing. But God, to walk with wisdom, to be led and guided by thy Holy Spirit, and Father, to walk towards them that are without Christ, to have a heart for the people that don't know You, to have a desire to reach out to the ones who have fallen away that when we come across them, Lord, our life would be tender and gentle. And God, You would give us that word of wisdom and Lord, our life would match our walk. And Father, that we would redeem the time. That Lord, when we come to church, that God, that we would give You a very open heart, an attentive mind. That we would buy up every opportunity. God, we are reminded of Samuel. It says that none of these words fell to the ground. That as a young boy, he grabbed on to everything that was for him. So God, put before us the vision of our walk. Lord, apply**

**the wisdom of Christ to our walk. God, help us to reach out to those that do not know You. And Father, help us to buy up every opportunity and seize every moment to be a witness for the glory of our Father, in Jesus' name. Amen.**