

Colossians 4:6

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.

Analysis

Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man. Paul focuses on Christian speech in evangelism. "Let your speech be alway with grace" (ho logos hymōn pantote en chariti, ὁ λόγος ὑμῶν πάντοτε ἐν χάριτι) demands gracious communication—kind, winsome, attractive, not harsh or condemning. Grace characterizes content (gospel message) and manner (how it's communicated).

"Seasoned with salt" (halati ērtymenos, ἄλατι ἡρτυμένος) uses culinary metaphor: words should be flavorful, interesting, preserving, purifying like salt. Bland or rotten speech fails to engage; gracious, salty speech attracts attention and communicates effectively. "That ye may know how ye ought to answer every man" (eidenai pōs dei hymas henī hekastō apokrinestha, εἰδέναι πῶς δεῖ ὑμᾶς ἐνὶ ἐκάστῳ ἀποκρίνεσθαι) indicates purpose: wise speech enables effective gospel response tailored to each person's unique situation and questions.

Historical Context

Greco-Roman rhetoric valued eloquence and persuasion. Philosophers engaged in public debates; sophists taught rhetorical technique. Christians needed to communicate gospel effectively in this culture without adopting manipulative rhetoric. Gracious, salty speech—winsome but substantive, kind but truthful—distinguished Christian communication. Early apologists like Justin Martyr

modeled this balance, engaging culture thoughtfully while maintaining gospel distinctiveness.

Related Passages

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. How gracious is your speech about faith—harsh and condemning or winsome and attractive?
2. What makes your Christian communication 'salty'—interesting, preserving, distinctive—versus bland or rotten?
3. How prepared are you to answer various people's questions about faith with wisdom and grace?

Interlinear Text

ο	λόγος	ύμῶν	πάντοτε	ἐν	χάριτι	ἄλατι	ἡρτυμένος
G3588	speech	Let your	be alway	with	grace	with salt	seasoned
	G3056	G5216	G3842	G1722	G5485	G217	G741
εἰδέναι	πῶς	δεῖ	ύμᾶς	ἐνὶ	ἐκάστῳ	ἀποκρίνεσθαι	
that ye may know	how	ought	ye	man	every	to answer	
G1492	G4459	G1163	G5209	G1520	G1538	G611	

Additional Cross-References

Ephesians 4:29 (Grace): Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.

1 Peter 3:15 (Parallel theme): But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and 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:

Ecclesiastes 10:12 (Grace): The words of a wise man's mouth are gracious; but the lips of a fool will swallow up himself.

Mark 9:50 (Parallel theme): Salt is good: but if the salt have lost his saltiness, wherewith will ye season it? Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another.

Proverbs 15:4 (Parallel theme): A wholesome tongue is a tree of life: but perverseness therein is a breach in the spirit.

Proverbs 15:7 (Parallel theme): The lips of the wise disperse knowledge: but the heart of the foolish doeth not so.

Colossians 3:16 (Grace): Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

Matthew 5:13 (Parallel theme): Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.

Psalms 119:46 (Parallel theme): I will speak of thy testimonies also before kings, and will not be ashamed.

Proverbs 10:21 (Parallel theme): The lips of the righteous feed many: but fools die for want of wisdom.