

Gems from Colossians

4 – Praying and Proclaiming (Col 4.2-6)

A priest or pastor has two main responsibilities: he has to present and represent people to God and he has to present and represent God to people. Here Paul says that all Christians are a holy priesthood and all who belong to Christ have these two responsibilities.

v.2: "Devote yourselves to prayer". Prayer is to be a constant part of our lives. We are to pray with depth and perseverance. We should "pray and not give up" (Luke 18.1) and "pray continually" (1 Thess 5.17).

In our prayer life we are to be "watchful and thankful". We are to be awake to the times we live in, the circumstances, the opportunities and above all to the Spirit of Jesus. As the humorous preacher put it: "God loves lerts. So everyone of us should be alert".

Paul asks the church to pray for him. We need to pray regularly for one another and for those who go out in our name to other parts of the world to make Christ known. (1 Thess 5.25, 2 Thess 3.1, Rom 15.30). We are to pray that God will open a door for their message. Note that Paul is in prison as he writes. But he does not ask for prayer that he should be released; only that in whatever circumstances he is in, he might truly present and represent Christ and enable others to see Christ.

v. 5-6: Paul now turns to the daily life and witness of believers: "Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders" he says. This echoes his words in chapter 1 verses 10 to 13. Christians are to live lives that are attractive advertisements for Christ. We are not clumsily to try to *make* opportunities for witness. But we are to *take* opportunities to engage caringly with people around us, living caringly and putting in a wise word when it is timely. Especially we should be alert for "open doors" (v.3) that the Holy Spirit creates for us.

v.6: "Let your conversation be always full of grace". Very few people are won by argument, however clever, but many are won when the caring spirit of Jesus is seen in us.

"Seasoned with salt" (Matt 5.13) may mean filled with wisdom or using wit or both. But it means in a way that makes the Gospel attractive (Cf. 1 Peter 3.15). We do well to ask "Are our lives winning and attractive for Christ?"

Questions for discussion:

1. The New Testament speaks clearly of the priesthood of all believers. What does that mean?
2. There are hundreds of prayers going up to God at any moment of the day. What makes you think God will hear yours? What does it mean to "pray continually"?
3. Do your prayers centre in what you want from God or in opening yourself to what God wants from and in you? If you, like Paul, had been in prison what would you have prayed for? What difference does it make?
4. Paul speaks of wise and winning witness. Give any examples of witness you have known which have not been wise, loving or winning. Give others that have been.
5. When is humour helpful and when unhelpful when representing Christ?
6. What made you want to follow Jesus? Share.
7. Religion is living by rules. Christianity is living in a relationship with and in the Spirit of Jesus. In society today we are usually presented as religious rather than attractive, caring and winning people. Why? And what can we do to change this – both as a church and as individuals?