

## Colossians 4.<sup>2-18</sup>

### 10. 'The best friends!'

#### Background

This final study in Paul's letter to the church at Colossae is a helpful reminder that the culmination of God's purpose in Jesus is that we might be "*conformed to the image of His Son*" and "*that He [Jesus] might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters*" ([Rom.8.29](#)).

These verses illustrate and underline something of the richness of that life which is shared by those 'brothers and sisters' as part of the family of God: the blessing of such bonds of friendship which only grow and deepen with the passing years is huge!

It's worth remembering two or three points in connection with this letter of Paul. First, it was a 'circular' letter (see v.16), intended to be read to other local churches beyond simply that at Colossae.

Secondly, Colossae was a place which Paul had himself almost certainly not visited. He writes, however, as if the bonds between them are strong and satisfying, since in Christ and through the Spirit there is a richness of fellowship and friendship which transcends time and space.

And thirdly, this is one of the 'prison' epistles. Paul was imprisoned, the door of freedom closed to him – a circumstance which gives an added edge to his prayer in this passage that God might nonetheless open a door for his message that the mystery of Christ might be proclaimed. Closed doors are not an obstacle to the Lord, a truth we do well to remember in our praying for brothers and sisters in other lands and in other situations.

There are a number of passages like this in the letters of Paul which give something of a 'window' onto the life of Christ's church in the early days of gospel growth: the snapshots which we're given by such passages highlight for us some of the features of the life of the early church – and they help us see what must remain as core features of the life of any healthy fellowship.

You should note the emphasis on prayer – the significance of it, the nature of it, the burden of it – expressed in both Paul's own exhortation (vv.2-4) and in the example of Epaphras (v.12).

You should note, too, the concern for the kingdom which permeates the perspective of both Paul himself and the church as a whole. They were a thoroughly mission-oriented people, committed, wherever it might take them and whatever it might involve – committed to pointing people to Jesus as Lord and bringing to the world of their day the good news of the kingdom of God.

Note, too, the obvious affection with which their bonds in Christ were soaked. They sought always to encourage one another, to comfort one another, to commend one another, to exhort one another, to greet one another: and all because, as a genuine bottom line for them all, they had come to *love* one another.

Lessons for us all to learn! Start with **'days' (1), (3) and (6)**.

## 1) Monday 28<sup>th</sup> November – prayer

Read [Colossians 4.2-4](#)

“.. devote yourselves to prayer ..” (Col.4.2)

Prayer is the ‘bottom line’, so far as the believer is concerned. You can do nothing: He can do all things. Prayer is your acknowledgement of that foundational truth. Start from that premise and build from there – and watch the Lord grow His kingdom!

We sometimes speak about our ‘daily devotions’: how ‘devoted’ are you to prayer?

What steps might you take to deepen that devotion?

If you’re not in the habit of participating in our weekly prayer meeting, is that something to which you might consider committing yourself where your circumstances permit?

What does Paul mean by being ‘watchful’ in prayer, and how does that translate into the way you pray?

What lessons do you learn here about praying for those who are preachers of the gospel?

**Prayer:** *Lord, refresh those who ‘proclaimed the mystery of Christ’ yesterday: may the Word preached have an open door in my heart and in the heart of many others too.*

## 2) Tuesday 29<sup>th</sup> November – opportunity

Read [Colossians 4.5-6](#)

“.. let your conversation be always full of grace ..” (Col.4.6)

Each day brings countless opportunities to commend the Lord Jesus Christ. Seek the wisdom, grace and boldness of the Spirit in seeing and taking all such opportunities, and not least in how you speak and what you say. The Lord will be your enabling!

What opportunities do you have to engage with those who are ‘outsiders’?

Compare v.6 with [Eph.4.29](#): how careful are you in what you say or write (on social media, for instance) to ensure that your words build others up?

**Prayer:** *Guard my lips, my gracious Lord: may the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in Your sight always ([Ps.19.14](#)).*

## 3) Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup> November – encouragers

Read [Colossians 4.7-9](#)

“.. a dear brother, a faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord ..” (Col.4.7)

Note the terms of respect and affection! Believers hold one another in high regard for the sake of Christ, no matter who they are – free man (Tychicus) or slave (Onesimus). They shared their lives and sought to encourage one another on the way.

Are there people and fellowships with whom *you* might (like Tychicus) more regularly be passing on news about ourselves and other churches here in Aberdeen?

Sometimes receiving news of how (well) other churches are doing can be a bit discouraging! How can we ensure that news of what the Lord is doing serves to encourage rather than discourage others?

Are you speaking well of your brothers and sisters in Christ?

How well informed do you keep yourself about those who have gone from your fellowship to serve the Lord elsewhere?

*Prayer: Thank You, Lord, for the dear brothers and sisters with whom You have surrounded me: help me in turn today to find ways to encourage others.*

#### 4) Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> December – comfort

Read [Colossians 4.10-11](#)

*“.. and they have proved a comfort to me ..”* (Col.4.11)

Mark had once been a big disappointment to Paul, but now he’d proved over time to be a great comfort to the apostle: even apostles need the support of ‘fellow workers’ around them. Don’t try being a loner – it doesn’t work in God’s Kingdom!

Are there people whose past failures make you reluctant ever to welcome them properly into the family of your fellowship?

In what ways do you find particular comfort in the fellowship you have with others who share your background?

*Prayer: Your presence, Lord, is always my chief comfort! Help me, by Your Spirit, in the time I share with others to afford them a sense of Your own presence with them today.*

#### 5) Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> December – wrestling

Read [Colossians 4.12-13](#)

*“.. he is always wrestling in prayer for you ..”* (Col.4.12)

Epaphras was the one who first brought the message to the believers at Colossae (see [Col.1.7](#)): his ministry of the Word didn’t stop there – he continued to ‘wrestle’ in prayer for them as he sought their growth to maturity. Word and prayer go together.

What does it mean to be ‘wrestling’ in prayer for others?

How might you cultivate such a ministry of sustained prayer in your own life?

**Prayer:** *Forgive that apathy, Lord, which sees me careless about the eternal welfare of those around me: stir in my heart a desire for Your own glory and a burden for others.*

## 6) Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> December – home

Read [Colossians 4.14-15](#)

*“.. give my greetings to the brothers and sisters at Laodicea ..” (Col.4.15)*

In a day before local fellowships had any buildings but the homes in which believers lived, those homes became a focal point for the gathering of the church. Hearts which had been opened to the Lord issued in homes which were opened to others.

**In what ways have you found yourself encouraged and helped by a timely word of greeting from other believers?**

How good are you at being in touch with, and conveying your greetings to fellow believers?

To whom might you be extending an invitation to your home?

**Hospitality is an important ministry in the life of any church: how might we encourage and facilitate that in the life of the fellowship here?**

**Prayer:** *Give me the grace, my Lord and King, to steward well the time, the home, the gifts that You have given me, and to use them for Your glory.*

## 7) Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> December – ministry

Read [Colossians 4.16-18](#)

*“.. ‘..complete the ministry you have received in the Lord’ ..” (Col.4.17)*

Paul’s very public message to Archippus is the Lord’s message to us all as well. As a believer you’ve received a ministry. You’re challenged first to embrace it, then to exercise it, but also to complete it – as the Lord Jesus completed His ministry for you.

What is the ministry you received from the Lord?

What steps will you need to take in order to *complete* that ministry?

**Prayer:** *Thank You, Lord, that You always carry on to completion the good work which You begin in our lives: help me by Your Spirit to complete the ministry entrusted to me.*