

Life group Colossians Eleventh meeting

Maturity practised (IV): Involved in missions

Colossians 4: 2-6

Introduction:

Today we approach the end of Paul's letter to the Colossians. Do you remember how it began? It began with warm greetings and with the prayer of the fellowship at Rome for the young Colossian fellowship. And do you remember its main subject and target? It was all about growing mature in Christ, wasn't it? Now observe how wonderful the letter will end. It ends with Paul urging the Colossians to pray like his fellowship is praying for them. A mature fellowship is a fellowship praying like Paul and his fellowship. With thanksgiving. With longing that the Gospel may spread further. Maturity is about the ability to be and do for others, what those who took care of you were and did for you. And as the letter began with a short moment of greeting, it will also end with greetings (more about this in the next Bible study).

Read: Colossians 4: 2-6

Some observations concerning the structure of the text:

- This passage clearly consists of two (or three) parts: vs. 2-4 (on the prayers of the fellowship), vs. 5-6 (on the walk of the fellowship and on the talk of the fellowship). However, the parts belong together. Observe the similarities between the first half and the second half:
 - the reference to being watchful in verse 2 and the reference to making use of the time are similar, both referring reminding us that the Lord will soon appear (see 2:4)
 - Paul asks for prayer that an open door will be granted to his fellowship for the Gospel; he urges the Colossians to walk and speak thus that they will receive open doors for the Gospel as well.
 - Observe the 'ought' in verse 4 and in verse 6: Paul ought to speak in a certain way, the Colossians ought to answer questions in a certain way.
- In the end of the letter Paul comes back to themes he mentioned in the beginning of his letter: thanksgiving prayer, wisdom to walk worthy to the Lord (1:3, 9-10).

Text:

Verse 2 'Continue steadfastly in prayer' / 'Devote yourselves to prayer': the Greek word used here means something like 'to pay constant attention to'. Paul uses the plural; his focus here is the corporate prayer of the fellowship – though this obviously impacts personal prayers as well. 'Watchful' – see Matthew 26:41 – the church must avoid to fall asleep since the Lord will appear (see 3:4). 'With thanksgiving' – thanksgiving for what? Remember here what we learnt in 1:3-8.

Verse 3, 4 True maturity always involves mutuality. As Paul and his fellowship have been praying for the fellowship of the Colossians, now he asks them to pray for his fellowship. He doesn't ask for prayer to be liberated from prison, but for prayer that they may receive open doors to speak the Word of God. The Gospel is a 'mystery'; it's something present, but hidden. God can reveal it through Paul's speaking, when he speaks as he has to.

Verse 5, 6 For 'walk', see 1:10, 'wisdom', see 1:9, 3:16. The walk of the Christian should be remarkable; distinguished from what we normally expect. This kind of walk, combined with gracious, 'salty' talk (verse 6), may lead to positive attraction and curiosity, resulting in questions (see also I Peter 3:15). It's not necessary for all of us to become Gospel preachers and ministers like Paul – when we go to work, we don't need to be evangelists – but we ought to know how to answer questions in an appropriate way. Our coming together as a fellowship may also focus on encouraging, helping and teaching each other concerning these in order to grow. For our speech we need God's grace (remarkable walk, remarkable talk). Salt – see also Matthew 5:13. Remember 3:17 'whatever you do, in word or deed'; now Paul has made clear how this works in daily life.

Main idea of the text:

The mature fellowship should devote itself to awakened, worshipping prayer, focussed on missions, when gathered. And it should devote itself to be the answer to such prayers, when scattered.

IDEAS FOR THE LIFE-GROUP EVENING

Here are some ideas to have a (rather) short and powerful meeting:

1. **Start.** Start in time with listening to a worship song (YouTube; suggestion: `Arise o church and put your armour on) and then immediately have a prayer time together. Agree that your prayer will be concentrated on worship and thanksgiving. The rest of the prayers will come later.
2. **Read Colossians 4: 2 - 6 twice.** Take no longer than ten or fifteen minutes to dive deeper in understanding the text and answering questions.
3. **Share:** are you connected to missionaries/missions? How and when do you pray for these and support missions? Are there people praying for you?
4. **Walk & talk:** in what situation did / do you need wisdom for your walk or grace for your talk? Share about the situation you faced / face and have some InterVision with feedback.
5. **Prayer:** The group leader must ensure there is enough time to pray together. Pray for each other concerning what you have shared. And pray for the further spreading of the Gospel, at Delft and throughout the world.