

Criminal Encouragement

Colossians 4:2-4:6

Today in chapter four of Colossians the Apostle Paul finishes his instructions for practical living. In the process he reveals his unusual location.

Paul reveals something his readers might not know. He's in jail. (4:3)

And he gives three encouragements appropriate (and ironic) for an incarcerated man:

1. **Steadfast Prayer.** A prisoner is saying this?—when it must be tempting to give up.
2. Pray for **Open Doors.** His doors are literally locked.
3. Offer **Salty Speech.** Wait... what kind of salty speech is this criminal advocating?

1. Steadfast Prayer

Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving. (4:2)

- Is it easier to give up if you believe God is in control? Why am I here in prison??

2. Open Doors

Pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ. (4:3)

- Same goes for today, because not every country is open.

3. Salty Speech

Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person. (4:6)

- Results aren't guaranteed, but Paul is calling us to wisdom and effort.

Questions for Reflection and Application

Read Colossians 4:2-4:6.

1. Paul doesn't simply command us to pray in 4:2. How does he specifically describe such prayer? Note three descriptions.
 - Which of the three is the biggest challenge for you and why?
2. Name a few countries that are officially closed to Christian missionaries. Look this up if you need to. Pray for these countries.
3. What do you think about "open doors" in your life and work? Do you need to pray for more open doors? Or do you think the "closed doors" you fear are imaginary or exaggerated?
4. Consider an encouraging example of how the Lord helped you learn how to talk to an outsider. (4:6) If you're in a small group, share it with others.