

Colossians - Chapter 4
“Epaphras, the Prayer Warrior”
Colossians 4:12-13

Verse 12-13

1. “*Epaphras, which is one of you.*” Epaphras was from this church. Remember, this is the man that started this church at Colosse. 1:5-7
 - Most likely, he was one of Paul’s eager young Bible students at Ephesus. He then carried the gospel of grace back to his home town (Colosse) and neighboring cities (Laodicea and Hierapolis), planting churches in all three.
2. Epaphras, unable to deal with all the many issues in the church, made the long trip to Rome to visit Paul in prison and seek his advice.
3. But it appears that while in Rome, Epaphras was also imprisoned (Philemon 23), or he simply chose to remain and assist Paul. We know that when the time came to deliver this letter to the Colossians, Tychicus and Onesimus delivered the letters of Colossians and Philemon, while Epaphras stayed in Rome with Paul.
4. Paul obviously had the highest regard for this man Epaphras. This man was “top shelf” in Paul’s estimation. In just three verses, Paul calls him a “*dear fellowservant*” (1:7), a “*faithful minister of Christ*” (1:7), a “*servant of Christ*” (4:12), and “*my fellowprisoner in Christ Jesus*” (Philemon 23). These are some glowing accolades.
5. But do you know what Epaphras is most remembered for? His prayer ministry! Remember, Paul and Epaphras lived in close quarters, so Paul knew firsthand about this man’s prayer life. When Epaphras prayed, Paul knew about it.
6. Paul had several observations about this man’s prayer life that I believe God had Paul record in Scripture to instruct, challenge, and exhort us in our prayer lives.

Epaphras was very serious about prayer.

- Paul said that he was “*always laboring fervently for you in prayers.*”
- To Epaphras, prayer was not something to do in an emergency, or something to do if he had time. Prayer was a way of life for this man.
- The phrase “*laboring fervently*” is very strong language. It means “to struggle; to compete for a prize; to contend with an adversary.”
- **Illustration:** The average Joe’s exercise routine versus a person training for the Olympics.
- This man was earnestly seeking God and crying out to God in prayer.
James 5:16b

Epaphras prayed specifically and personally.

- Paul said, “He is praying for **you**.” And, Paul said that he is praying specifically “...*that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.*”
- To Epaphras, prayer was not simply a religious ritual in which he recited words to God. Prayer was very personal to Epaphras, and it was a product of his great love for these people. Notice in vs. 13, “...*he hath a great zeal for you...*”

- Epaphras wanted so much for these new believers to be established in their faith and to have a complete and thorough understanding of what God is doing today, in this time of grace. He wanted them to know who they were in Christ. 1:9-11
- He wanted so much for them to stand in the truth of God's Word and to grow to spiritual maturity.
- He desired some specific things from the Lord when he prayed. Epaphras knew what he was praying to God for.

Epaphras believed that God answers prayer.

- I think one of the reasons that we don't pray specifically is because we don't really believe that God answers prayer today. Therefore, we pray in very generic and broad generalities.
- Epaphras knew what he wanted to see God do in the lives of these people. So what did he do? He prayed... and he prayed... and he prayed!
- Do we really believe that God answers prayer? If we did, I don't think our prayer lives would consist of nice, little, short, general, repetitive prayers with trite Christian phrases we've learned by listening to others pray at church.
- If we believe that our prayers move the heart of God - if we believe that our God moves on the earth in answer to His people's prayers - do you know what we will do? We will do what Epaphras did. We will labor fervently in prayers.
- There are some who believe that God no longer hears and answers prayer today. But the concept of God hearing and answering prayer is a cross-dispensational principle that you find in your Bible from beginning to end.
- Of course, God answers His people's prayers in accordance with His plan and purpose for each dispensation. This is why we must study His Word diligently so that we can pray with an intelligent understanding of God's will for today.
- Romans 8:26 teaches us that we don't always know exactly what to pray for, but praise the Lord, we have the Holy Spirit living inside of us to intercede for us when we pray.
- So, when we pray, God may not always answer our prayers exactly the way we prayed. He may not always do what **we** desire Him to do. But He will answer our prayers in accordance with the Holy Spirit's intercession. He will do what is best.
 - **Illustration:** I don't always do what my boys want me to do, or request of me to do, but I try to always do what is best for them when they ask things of me.
- There is one way to be sure that God will do nothing in a situation. Don't pray at all. God works through people and He works through the prayers of His people. He always has and He still does.
- The very last book that Paul wrote was 2 Timothy, and Paul was still praying night and day for Timothy (1:3). Nowhere does he indicate in any of his letters that God no longer answers prayer. His prayer life was still fervent and effectual.
- Christian, don't be discouraged. Keep praying! What an example Epaphras is to all of us of a man who had a physical confinement (in prison), yet it couldn't hinder him in his prayer life. We can end up in prison, in a hospital bed, a nursing home, or confined to our home, but we can still have an effectual prayer ministry.

7. Paul mentions a lot of people here in Colossians, but Epaphras is the only one that he commends for his prayer life. It must have truly made an indelible impression on Paul.
8. Prayer is not an easy thing to do. Our flesh resists it greatly. Notice that Paul said that he was “*laboring fervently in prayers.*”
9. When we pray, we encounter all kinds of opposition from Satan and from our own flesh. But keep praying, Christian – be an Epaphras in your prayer life!