

Series: Unknown Heroes

EPAPHRAS – THE PRAYER WARRIOR COLOSSIANS 4

Text: Colossians 4:12

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¹² *Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.*

Introduction:

One of the most interesting and inspiring men I have read about is John Hyde. The son of a Presbyterian minister, he served God in India as a missionary. The people of India called him "the man who never sleeps" because of the many hours he spent in prayer. He earned the nickname, "Praying Hyde."

In 1908, at a convention in Calcutta, John Hyde dared to pray what many at the convention felt was an impossible request. He prayed that in the coming year there would be one soul saved every day in India. When they gathered at the next year's convention, he had prayed more than 400 into God's kingdom. He doubled his goal to win two souls a day over the next

year. Eight hundred conversions were recorded that year.

At the 1901 convention Hyde revealed that he was doubling his goal for the next year--four souls a day. He cried out to God, "Give me souls, oh God, or I die!" If on any day four people were not saved, Hyde said there would be such a weight on his heart that he could not eat or sleep until he prayed through to victory. God continued to hear and answer his prayers and the number of converts continually grew. Before his death he would see a mighty revival sweep through India.

You mention the name John Hyde and few know who you are talking about. Rarely do I hear anyone mention his name or read about him. He has been largely forgotten in our generation. The same is true of the New Testament personality that I want to look at in this study--Epaphras. I don't think I have ever heard a sermon about him.

Epaphras is only found three times in the New Testament.

His name means "lovely" and he is indeed a lovely example for all Christians, especially pastors. Like John Hyde, Epaphras was a praying man. As we shall see, he was a prayer-warrior. I want to take the three times he

is mentioned in the New Testament and become better acquainted with this prayer-warrior.

Note:

1. EPAPHRAS WAS A MAN WHO PREACHED FAITHFULLY

Paul writes in Colossians 1:7:

Colossians 1:7

*⁷ As ye also learned of Epaphras our dear fellowservant, who is for you a **faithful minister** of Christ;*

Paul thought of him as "our dear fellowservant." The word "dear" speaks of someone who is well loved. Often in Paul's letters he mentions those who were dear to his heart. Epaphras was one who was very much loved by Paul.

The word "fellowservant" speaks of "a servant of the same master." Paul always thought of himself as a servant of Jesus Christ. He saw the same in Epaphras. Paul saw in him one that was completely under the Lord's control.

As he refers to Epaphras he speaks of how he was "a faithful minister of Christ." Perhaps the greatest thing that could be said of a pastor is that he is a faithful. The

word "minister" is an interesting word. The word literally speaks of "running an errand." It was used to speak of being an attendant and waiting on tables.

As a faithful minister of Christ we see that Epaphras was a:

A. Faithful Pastor

Colossians 1:3-4

³ We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, ⁴ Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have to all the saints,

Paul never visited Colossae, thus never personally met these believers. However, he had heard of their faith, and from the time he had heard of them, he gave thanks for them and prayed for them.

There was a depth and quality to the faith of these believers that blessed the heart of Paul.

The faith that blessed Paul was due to the kind of pastor they had in Epaphras.

Epaphras had been a faithful pastor who preached the Word of God. Week after week, he preached the truth of God's Word. Every Lord's Day, when these believers came together, they knew they would hear God's

Word. They had a pastor who was a faithful preacher of the Word of God.

Furthermore, we see that Epaphras was not only a faithful pastor, he was also:

B. A Fruitful Pastor

Colossians 1:5-6

*⁵ For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel; ⁶ Which is come unto you, as it is in all the world; **and bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you,** since the day ye heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth:*

The Word that Epaphras had so faithfully preached to these Colossian believers had bore fruit in their life.

It seems that in our day and time we are more interested in drawing a crowd than we are building a congregation. We have sacrificed standards and convictions in order to make Church acceptable to everyone. You can draw a crowd, but if there is no change in the lives of the people, you have accomplished nothing that will bear spiritual fruit.

Illustration:

The older I get, the more I appreciate A.W. Tozer. In one of his sermons he spoke of "performers" in the pulpit. He said, "I have done everything I can to keep 'performers' out of my pulpit.

Preaching is not performing. It is opening the blessed Book of God and proclaiming the eternal truths that are within. If preachers are to be fruitful they must be faithful in preaching God's Word as was Epaphras.

Note not only was Epaphras a Man Who Preached Faithfully but also:

2. EPAPHRAS WAS A MAN WHO PREACHED FIRMLY

In the book of Philemon we read:

Philemon 1:23

²³ *There salute thee Epaphras, my fellowprisoner in Christ Jesus;*

Paul refers to Epaphras as his fellowprisoner.

Why was he imprisoned?

No doubt for the same reason that Paul was a prisoner.

A. His Stand for Christ

Most Christians raise the white flag when the least bit of trouble and difficulty arise. They are silent about their faith for fear that someone will make fun of them or criticize them.

If standing for Christ meant the risk of being put in prison, I have no doubt the ranks would thin out considerably.

Epaphras stood firmly. It resulted in his being put in prison, but he stood! Furthermore, we see his:

B. His Sacrifice for Christ

Bible historians list Epaphras as a martyr.

The ultimate sacrifice of Epaphras calls for an examination of the sincerity of our commitment to Christ. Is there anything we would not do for Him? Is there any price we would not be willing to make to remain true to Him?

Note not only was Epaphras a Man Who Preached Faithfully and Firmly but also:

3. EPAPHRAS WAS A MAN WHO PRAYED FERVENTLY

Colossians 4:12

¹² Epaphras, who is *one* of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.

Paul had observed Epaphus's prayer life. Paul knew he was a real prayer warrior.

Note the four things we learn about the kind of man he was in prayer.

A. He Prayed Persistently

Paul said that he was "always" praying for the believers at Colossae. Prayer was not an occasional matter in his life, but he prayed constantly.

Not only did he pray persistently but also:

B. He Prayed Personally

Paul said that Epaphras was persistently praying "for you." We see how personal he was in prayer.

I have no doubt that he called them by name as he prayed day by day and hour after hour.

If we were honest we would have to admit that most of our time spent in prayer is all about us. We are always talking to God about our needs and wants. Epaphras had others on his mind and heart, and as he prayed, he lifted their needs to God.

Not only did he pray persistently and personally but also:

C. He Prayed Particularly

Colossians 4:12

¹² *Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always labouring fervently for you in prayers, **that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.***

When Epaphras prayed for the Colossian believers he prayed that they "may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God."

Epaphras did not pray in generalities. He was definite, specific, and particular in prayer. He asked for particular things when he prayed. One of the secrets of effective prayer is learning to ask for particular things when we pray.

Not only did he pray persistently, personally and Particularly but also:

D. He Prayed Passionately

Colossians 4:12

¹² *Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, **always labouring fervently** for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.*

The words "laboring fervently" are actually one word. The word literally means to "agonize." It is descriptive of an athlete competing for a prize or a soldier contending with an adversary. When used of an athlete it described how they gave themselves completely to their sport.

We read in James:

James 5:16

¹⁶ *Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. **The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.***

Mechanical and memorized prayers will never be effective.

It is when we pour out our hearts to God, praying with passion, that gets results.

Close:

Prayer is a great tool that Christians have at their disposal, and so often it is forgotten, or neglected.

It is one thing that the disciples asked the Lord to teach them to do.

Luke 11:1

¹ And it came to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.

May we be men and women of prayer.