

## Epaphras

Col. 4:12,13 “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. For I bear him record, that he hath a great zeal for you, and them that are in Laodicea and them in Hierapolis.

Starting next month I want to look at the subject of *Revival*. And leading up to that most important of subjects we continue to look at some of the characters of the New Testament, ... some of the members of those early churches. This morning we are going to consider the Pastor who had the responsibility for the fellowships in Colosse, Laodicea and Hierapolis, - a distance of about six mile separated them.

- It is very likely that Epaphras founded the church in Colosse (1:7)
- He had reported to Paul concerning the state of the church (1:4,8)
- Paul had sent back greetings to the Colossian church from Rome through Epaphras (4:12)
- Paul considered him and referred to him as a “fellow-prisoner” (Phm. 23)

What, though, can we learn from Epaphras? ... To be specific, what can he teach us regarding his particular ministry, - his ministry of prayer?

### I. Epaphras Prayed *Seriously*

#### He was CONSTANT

- “always labouring fervently for you in prayers”; “He is always wrestling in prayer for you”.
- Epaphras was well-disciplined in his Christian life; how do I know that? ... because *he was constant in prayer*.
- Isn't that the most difficult part of the Christian life?
- I go into my Study, - there are sermons and Bible Studies to prepare, letters to write, people to phone, a daily agenda, - it's so easy to squeeze out prayer.
- It says much for Epaphras that God records in His Word he was constant in prayer.
- How did he become constant in prayer? ... would he have found it easy? ... perhaps he didn't have as many distractions as we have?
- You can be sure, - very sure, - that Epaphras had his distractions.
- He could have made the *excuses* up as to why he wouldn't be out at the place of prayer,

- But as a Christian he was aware of the importance of prayer, and to have remained well-disciplined would have been a constant battle for him.
- What about your prayer life? Do you have one?
  - I don't mean, "God bless mummy, daddy, and cousin Tom down the street and all the people in the world. Amen."
- I mean that prayer is talking to God seriously from the heart.
- We are told about Epaphras that he is "always labouring fervently for you in prayers".

### He was CONVINCED

- He was convinced that prayer was worthwhile and that was why he was willing to fervently labour/wrestle in prayer.
- His meetings with God in the quiet place were worth nurturing, developing, spending time on and working hard at.
- Here is a man who wasn't satisfied *until he got in touch with God*.
- Prayer for him was speaking *with* God, and entering into the holiness of His presence.
- Epaphras knew his ministry would be 'on the rocks' if he wasn't fervent in prayer.
- He knew his ministry would have no direction unless he was fervent in prayer.
- The hub, - the kernel, - of his success in Christ was *only* in the place of prayer.
- There was no doubt in his mind that spending time in prayer was never wasted,
- ... aye, even in the times when he had to *wrestle* as Jacob wrestled with the angel at Peniel centuries before.

### He was CONCERNED

- in the church at Colosse heresies were beginning to creep in; another church of which he was pastor was Laodicea!
- He had to contend with *Judaistic Christianity* and *Gnosticism*; there was also *lukewarmness* and *spiritual apathy*.
- And these things are in the church today.
- I have had members in my previous churches *whom I have never seen at a prayer meeting!* That's disgusting, absolutely disgusting!
- They don't have any excuse, no reason for their absence.
- The place of the prayer meeting is central to the work of any Bible-believing church.

- ... and there is got to be concern when God's people don't bother to meet to speak to Him in prayer.
- I know that because of age and infirmity, some of you can't get out to pray with us, - then, on a Monday and Thursday evenings pray with us in your homes.
- But there are others, - and you, *before God*, know if you are one of them, - and you don't make any effort to meet with us and to pray *seriously* for the work here in Pathhead Baptist.
- Epaphras was concerned too, - he was well aware of the need for God's people to pray if any land was to be conquered for God.
- He was concerned that his people would be taken in by all sorts of false doctrines that surrounded them.
- He was **concerned** for their spiritual welfare and progress with the Lord.

## II. Epaphras Prayed *Specifically*

Surely one of the most ineffective prayers is the prayer that travels all around the world and lands nowhere.

Notice how Epaphras prayed *specifically* for the people in his church.

### He prayed for their standing

- He prayed seriously for them that they would "stand perfect/firm" in the faith that God had so graciously given to them.
- It is a work of grace, - you know, - that God sent His Son to die on the cross of Calvary for you, believer.
- God did for you something that we never hear about any of the other idols ever doing for their believers.
- It is because of God's Sovereign and Free Grace that He reached down and saved you,
- And as Epaphras comes before God in prayer he comes to do business with God,
- He is specific, - he knows exactly what he wants to say!
  - "Lord, I'm praying for these people; I'm praying that they will make a firm stand against the apostasy all around them. Lord, I'm praying that they don't soil their clothes in the filth which threatens them."
  - He realised that the battle was on for the hearts and minds of these people to whom he was pastor, and he earnestly and *specifically* prayed for their standing in the Lord Jesus Christ.

### **He prayed for their sanctification**

- This is an old word, but it's a Biblical word.
- You don't find it in too many of the publications in Christian bookshops nowadays.
- It's an old-fashioned word; it is the manner/process by which the believer is being made to conform to the image of the Saviour.
- Martin Luther:
  - "We in Christ, - that's justification; Christ in us, - that's sanctification".
- Epaphras prayed that his people would stand firm in the will of God, and that they would become mature in the faith.
- Someone has said,
  - "Live so that the preacher can tell the truth at your funeral!"
- Epaphras prayed for the ongoing sanctification of his people.

### **He prayed for their security**

- He wanted them to be fully assured, - no doubts causing them to sway, but sure in their God.
- Some of the people in this church at Colosse had become confused about their salvation, - they had become all 'mixed up'.
- Like a good pastor he was praying for his people that and for their security in Christ.

### **CONCLUSION.**

Do you notice something that comes across here very definitely? *These are people whom Epaphras really loves!* They are constantly upon his heart. He has a burden for them. We often talk about having a burden for lost souls; here is a Christian who has a burden for his fellow Christians!

We are talking here about relationships in the church, in the fellowship, among God's people. Of course it is important to remember the missionaries, the evangelists, the preachers, but what about taking a lead from Epaphras,

*What about praying seriously and specifically with and for your brothers and sisters in Pathhead Baptist Church?*

May God lay it upon our hearts to seriously consider this matter before Him and to be like Epaphras who always laboured fervently in prayer.