

Sunday, January 9, 2022—Colossians 4:12 Epaphras: A Dear Fellowservant & Faithful Minister of Christ

### Colossians 4:12

- **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.**
- **Epaphras**—is mentioned three times the scripture. Twice in Colossians and once in the book of Philemon.
  - Colossians 1:7
  - Philemon 23
- **Who is one of you**—Paul used the same expression in verse 12 when speaking about Epaphras that he used in verse nine when talking about Onesimus. The expression “who is one of you” literally means he is “one out of you,” a statement which clearly indicates that Colossae was the source and place which Epaphras had originated. The same would therefore be true for Onesimus.
- **A servant of Jesus Christ**—second, Paul calls Epaphras “a servant of Christ.” The word “servant” literally means a slave, bondman, or man of servile condition. Paul uses this term to describe his own relationship with Christ.
  - Romans 1:1
  - Galatians 1:10
  - Titus 1:1
- This is the same word that occurs in Colossians 3:11, 22 to describe someone who is owned by someone else.
- So, someone who is “a servant of Jesus Christ’ has devoted his life the service of God and doing his work of the ministry. The idea here is of being devoted to others and serving them to edification and not solely one’s own self interests.
- **Always laboring fervently for you in prayers**—third, Paul informs the Colossians that Epaphras is “always laboring fervently for you in prayers.” The expression “laboring fervently” is critical in terms of comprehending what Paul is saying. To “labor fervently” means to enter a contest, to content with adversaries in a fight, to endeavor with strenuous zeal, strive to obtain something.
  - Colossians 1:29
  - I Timothy 6:12
  - II Timothy 4:7

- Taken together, Paul is saying that Epaphras was “always labouring fervently” for the Colossians “in prayers.” From this we get the impression that Epaphras cared deeply for these saints. The reason for this is because we learn in Colossians 1:7-8 the Epaphras was the one who informed Paul about the doctrinal corruption that was entering the Colossian church.
  - Colossians 1:7-8—the indication is that Epaphras was the “faithful minister of Christ” who brought taught Paul’s gospel to the Colossians.
- Colossians 2:1—Given that Paul never visited Colosse himself, it seems reasonable to infer that the church was established there via converts from Paul substantial ministry in the province of Asia.
  - Acts 20:31—Paul spent three years teaching in Ephesus the capital of Asia.
  - Acts 19:8-10
  - Acts 19:14-17—the working of God in Ephesus was well known throughout the province of Asia.
  - Acts 19:26—Demetrius says that Paul’s ministry in Ephesus reached “throughout all Asia.”
    - Therefore, we conclude that the church in Colosse was established through Paul’s mighty ministry in the Roman province of Asia.
    - Colossians 1:7—presumably, Epaphras got saved under Paul’s ministry in Ephesus who then carried the contents of Paul’s preaching to Colosse. Paul calls Epaphras his “dear fellowservant.”
- Colossians 1:8—not only was Epaphras the chief evangelist in Colosse he was also the one who “declared” to Paul in the situation with the assembly there. Put another way, it was Epaphras who first caused Paul to hear of their “faith in Christ” and love “to all saints” in verse 3. It was the totality of Epaphras’ declarations that promoted the writing of this epistle.
- Colossians 2:19—the doctrinal errors that Paul was writing to correct in their midst centered around them not holding Christ as the Head.
- Colossians 4:12—Epaphras was “laboring fervently” in prayer on behalf of the Colossians that they would recover themselves out the doctrinal errors they had entered into.
- This is quite clear when you consider the end of the verse. His prayers on their behalf centered around them standing perfect and complete in God’s will. How would they do that, by submitting to the doctrine Paul was teaching them in this Epistle.
- Perfect in this case is not talking about sinless perfection but maturity. It has the idea of being brought to completion or a place of maturity, to a position of full development.

- Ephesians 4:13
- Philippians 3:15
- Hebrews 5:14
- Colossians 1:28—Paul's desire was to present every man perfect in Christ Jesus you cannot stand perfect and complete in the will of God without acknowledge the revelation of the mystery and the preaching of Christ according to it.
- To stand complete means that nothing else is need.
  - Matthew 1:22, 2:15
  - Matthew 1:15—when a prophecy is fulfilled it is completed there is nothing left that needs to occur.
  - Colossians 2:10
- To stand complete in the will of God means that you know what his will His will is and are resting your heart and mind in that knowledge and seeking to do the will of God from the heart.
  - Ephesians 6:6
- God's will for humanity has already been revealed on the pages of Scriptures. It is not something that we are charged with going out and discerning by reading the circumstances of our lives rather it is something the believer has the capacity to stand perfect and complete it based upon the sound understanding of God's Word rightly divided.
- Ephesians 1:9