

PM Colossians 1:1-14, 4:12-13 Epaphras

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[0 : 00] Let us open God's word then in the epistle of Paul to the Colossians chapter 1.

Just reading the first 14 verses and a couple of verses in chapter 4. Greetings. Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus, by the will of God and Timothy, our brother, to the saints and faithful brothers in Christ at Colossae, grace to you and peace from God our Father.

We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints, because of the hope laid up for you in heaven.

Of this you have heard before in the word of truth, the gospel, which has come to you, as indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit and increasing, as it also does among you since the day you heard it and understood the grace of God and truth.

Thus you shall learn it from Epaphras, our beloved fellow servant. He is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf, and has made known to us your love in the Spirit.

[1 : 20] And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will, in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy, giving thanks to the Father who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints and light.

He has delivered us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption and forgiveness of sins. And then a few verses there in chapter 4, just in verse 12.

Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ Jesus, greets you, always struggling on your behalf, in his prayers, that you may stand mature and fully assured, in all the will of God, for I bear witness that he has worked hard for you, and for those in Laodicea and Hierapolis.

May God bless these readings from his own inspired word. Returning to this portion of his own word, let's talk in the intimation sheet.

The talk tonight is about Epaphras. Now, Epaphras, there's two ways you can translate that name, but it's a different Epaphras from, I think the other guy is called Epaphroditus, two different people.

[3 : 07] And sometimes Epaphras is called, in other footnotes, Epaphroditus, so some folk get confused about that. But this is a character that we know very little about, Epaphras.

So just, what we do have is interesting here, in Colossians. Colossians. So before we talk about, it's necessary to, talk about verses before, because all that's relevant to what Epaphras was doing, within this congregation that he founded, and was helping, in Colossae.

And, as Paul starts the epistle, you notice the authority, he starts with, that he was an apostle of Christ Jesus, by the will of God. I'm Timothy, our brother.

It's interesting that, in the New Testament, when they were, working together, as missionaries, and writing, quite often they weren't alone. And, there were two folk, remember how the disciples were sent out, two by two.

So I think there's a practical lesson, in that. That, we should always try to, work together with someone, and that will be a great blessing. So he writes to the saints, and faithful brothers, in Christ, in Colossae.

[4 : 28] So as he, as he writes to this church then, not only him, but Timothy as well, along beside Paul, as he writes, to encourage this church, in Colossae. This is how he starts, when we read this.

We always thank God, the Father, of our Lord Jesus Christ. So the first thing, that Paul starts with, as he's mentioning Apaphras, and as we lead into that, is how they, always thank God.

You notice how it starts, we. It's great in prayer, if you can find a prayer partner. And this is what Paul and Timothy, were doing. They were prayer partners. Many years ago, I seem to remember, there was something called, the prayer triplets.

I don't know if that's still about, but the idea was that, three people would get together, and pray. And this, well, it's two people here, but it's great, to find someone, isn't it, to pray along the side. And that's what, all these years ago, Paul and Timothy, were we always, we were together in prayer, encouraging one another. And it gives us an idea, of the importance, of meeting with prayer, with one another, so that we're, as good as we read elsewhere, isn't it, to shut our room, and be close to God, on our own.

[5 : 44] But also, it's very important, to pray along, with other people. But always note, it says, we always, it was a continual prayer, for this church in Colossae.

It wasn't just a one-off, they were continually, remembering this small church, that was newly planted, in Colossae. And they remembered them, before God, in prayer. But not always, as they were praying, they were thanking God, for them.

Thanking God, for this particular church, that had sprung up, in Colossae. And it's good, you know, we have this, in our own church, I'm sure many of you, receive, praying for one another.

And in that, every week, there's two churches, that are mentioned. And it's a great blessing, that we can bring, churches like that, in our prayers, before God.

And that's what they were doing, they were praying, for Colossae. Not just once, but continually, before God. They were always praying, to God the Father, for Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you.

[6 : 50] And there was, something that encouraged them, when they were hearing, about this church. There were two things, here that encouraged them. We heard of your faith, faith in Christ Jesus.

Now, when we come across people, who have faith, in Christ Jesus, what Paul did, was thank God, that that person, that congregation, had faith, in Christ Jesus.

It's great, to thank God, for when people, come to faith, and to, thank God, when we hear, of people coming, to faith, especially for the first time. first time.

So Paul, along with Timothy, when they hear about, this church, and their faith, they thank God, for that church, and for the believers, who have that kind of faith, in the church. But not only, did they have faith, in Christ Jesus, but they had love, that you have, for all, the saints.

Not just, your friends, but all, the saints, even the ones, perhaps, that are a bit difficult. They had that kind of love. They had heard, these two aspects, within this congregation.

[7 : 57] They heard about, their faith, in Christ Jesus, but also, they heard, about their love, for all the saints. I wonder here, in Dumfries, when folk hear about you, they'll say, you know that church, it's got a real strong faith, in Christ Jesus.

Do you know, their love, for one another. And that's what, Paul and Timothy, were hearing. They heard, about this church, in Colossae, and that's what, they were hearing. And it's a challenge, to us, as our church, and as, when folk, may it be, not only in the Vries, but in Leith as well, that when they hear, about our church, these are some of the things, that identify us, as a congregation, our faith, in Christ Jesus, and our love, for all, the saints, without exception.

They have to love them. And this is what, Paul and Timothy, were hearing. And this, this brings us, to Epaphras, and this is what, Epaphras was, speaking about, as he was a faithful, preacher of God's word.

That's the first thing, we see about this, Epaphras. It all stemmed, from Epaphras's, teaching, that, that Colossae, were having these, gifts from God, that, that they were identified, in that way.

And it was because, of Epaphras's, preaching, of God's word, a faithful, preacher of God's word. He's a faithful, minister it says, of Christ.

[9 : 25] And because of, the things that, he was preaching, he was preaching, it says, the hope. That's his main theme, Epaphras's main theme, as he came to this, preaching, faithful ministry, that he had, in that church.

His main theme, was focusing, on the hope, of the gospel. It says, because of the hope, laid up for you, in heaven, of this you have heard, before, in the word of God, the gospel, which has come to you, is indeed, in the whole world.

It's bearing fruit, and increasing, as it also does, among you, since the day you heard it, and understood the grace, of God, in truth, just you had learned it, from Epaphras. So, Epaphras, in this congregation, was focusing, on the theme, of hope.

That was, and, by concentrating, on the hope, of the gospel, this inspired, people, to have, more faith, in Christ Jesus, because they were listening, to what the hope was.

And it also inspired them, to have one, love for one another. So this was, Epaphras, a faithful, minister, of Christ, on your behalf, a faithful preacher, of God's word.

[10:40] His main theme, was hope. He concentrated, on the hope, of the gospel. The gospel, of course, as you heard, many a time, just means, the good news. I think that's, interesting, that, many, if you read, some of the old, sermons, there's a lot of, focus, on the other side, of, which is quite right, in its place, about, the condemnation, that those, who aren't in Christ, Jesus have, and, and that, has a place, but, Epaphras's focus, was opposite to that.

He was focusing, on the good news, the hope, that they have, in Christ Jesus. And because, he was focusing, on the hope, that gives people, more faith. They heard, what their hope was.

And it helped, their love, by focusing, on this main theme. It's brought, out again, in verse 21, that we didn't read, in this chapter, I suppose, it's a short chapter, maybe I should have read, these verses as well, but read them now, in verse 21, it says, and you, who were once, alienated, and hostile, and mined, doing evil deeds, he has now, reconciled, in his body, of flesh, by his death, in order to present you, holy and blameless, and above, reproach, before him, if indeed, you continue, in the faith, stable, and steadfast, not shifting, from the hope, of the gospel, you have heard.

And so, one time, it says, in verse 21, onward, that they were, alienated, and hostile, but now, they have this hope, of the gospel, because they have heard it, especially from, Epaphras, Epaphras, sorry, and, that enabled them, to realize, that their life, had completely changed about, this is how, Paul puts it, in Ephesians 2, 20, at one time, separated from God, and strangers, having no hope, that's what, these folk, and that's church, at one time as well, but then, because of Epaphras, this focus, and hope, they were, they had been brought, to faith, and they had been brought, to this love, for one another, and, in verse 27, of this same chapter, it's called, the hope of glory, you'll notice, in verse 27, and that's the kind of, preaching, and teaching, that Epaphras, was involved in, focusing on the hope, of glory, now that's a subject, in itself, is it not, the hope of glory, and that's what, he was preaching about, and the fact, what lay ahead, when God, took them from this earth, the hope of glory, and that, helped them, to have faith, and it helped them, to have love, for one another, because, that was the focus,

Peter, as you know, in his letter, calls it a living hope, it's not just a hope, it's a living hope, a hope, that gives us life, a hope, that we have, the hope of glory, in verse 10, it says, because of this hope, it says in verse 10, here, of chapter 1, so, because we have this hope, so as to walk, in a manner, worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing, to him, because we have this hope, and Epaphras, was focusing on the hope, it has, practical, consequences, because of this, the hope, that we, that Epaphras, was teaching, and what we're hearing about, this evening, it affects, our walk, our walk now, is to be in a manner, worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, if we focus, in the hope of glory, and the living hope, what, Epaphras was, and we learn from here, in Paul's prayer, was that, it affects, how we live, if we have this hope, of glory, it should affect, how,

[14:47] Paul and Titus, brings us out, Titus 2, 11, for God's grace, has appeared, bringing salvation, for all training, for all training us, to renounce, ungodliness, and worldly passions, and to live, self-controlled, upright, and godly lives, in this present age, waiting for our, blessed hope, the appearing of the, of the glory, of our great God, and Saviour, Jesus Christ, who gave himself, for us, to redeem us, for all loneliness, and to purify, for himself, a people, for his own possession, who are zealous, for good works, so waiting for the, blessed hope, and as Titus, takes up this theme, it says that, it trains us, to renounce, ungodliness, and worldly passions, and to renounce, ungodliness, godly chatter, it's translated, elsewhere, that comes under, ungodliness, godless chatter, how we speak, to one another, can be, ungodly at times, and we're to avoid that, ungodliness, we're reminded as, under the wrath of God, in Jude, ungodliness, we're told,

God will judge, and convict, all the ungodly, for the ungodly acts, and it goes on, to explain about, this ungodliness, speaking harsh words, grumbling, fault finding, and these are, kind of practical things, if we have the hope, of glory, that, and because of, what it says in verse 10, here, to walk in a manner, worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, things like, harsh speaking, harsh words, grumbling, fault finding, as Jude explains, these things, shouldn't be in our lives, because of the

hope, of glory, these ungodly things, must be put away, as worldly passions, Peter puts it, this way, set your hope, on the grace, to be brought, to you, when Jesus Christ, is revealed, that is coming, that's the hope of glory, that, that, Epaphras, was focusing on, set your hope, on the grace, to be brought to you, when Christ Jesus, is revealed, that is coming, as obedient children, do not conform, to the evil desires, you had, when you lived, in ignorance, but just as he, who called you, is holy, so be you holy, in all you do, you see verse 10 again, brings that, truth out, walk in a manner, worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, because we have this hope, because Epaphras, was teaching about this hope, it had these, practical implications, that we are obedient children, not conforming, to evil desires, but instead, to be holy, so the more, we focus on the hope, of glory, the more, we should become holy, because he is holy, and, and, that, it calls it the hope, that it's laid up, for them, in heaven, now Paul elsewhere, writes about this hope, laid up, for them in heaven, he puts it this way, the time of my departure, has come, he says,

I fought the good fight, I've finished the race, I've kept the faith, henceforth, it has laid up for me, a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award, to me, on that day, and not only to me, to all, who have loved, his appearing, you see, that's, what we're to focus on, that's I think, what Epaphras, was teaching about, this hope of glory, as it, brings out there, in Timothy there, and he realises, departure was, getting close, he focused on, what was laid up for, him, a crown of righteousness, and here, we read about, the hope, that was laid up, for them in heaven, so how much, do we focus, on the hope, how much should we, focus on the hope, because I think, Epaphras says, he was teaching, about the hope of glory, it helped the believers, faith, it helped them, love each other, the more, he focused on that theme, and, the more, it was bearing fruit, in every good work, among them, it says, and that's encouraging, as Paul prays for them, in that prayer, from verse 9 onwards, it says, that they were bearing fruit, in every good work, because Paul was praying, for them, that they would be filled, with the knowledge, of his will, and all spiritual wisdom, and understanding, so that they might walk, as it seemed, worthy of the Lord, so they were bearing fruit, it says, in every good work, so, this hope, of glory, it says,

Epaphras, he is a faithful minister, of Christ Jesus, he was a faithful witness, for him, and, we read, not only, was he a faithful preacher, focusing on the hope, of the gospel, and how that, teaching, implied, how they were to live, a holy life, and how it helped their hope, and how it helped them, love each other, but also, it says, of Epaphras, that he, he was a faithful minister, of Christ, in your behalf, and he's made known, to us, your love, in the spirit, in verse, 12, of verse 4, chapter 4, that we read, reads, a second thing, about Epaphras, and it's Epaphras, one, who is one of you, a servant, of Christ Jesus, he was a faithful witness, he was one of you, in other words, Epaphras, was from,

Colossians, he was from Colossia, he was from that place, because it says there, verse 12, it says, who is one of you, most commentators, understand that, meaning, Epaphras, was from, this church, in Colossians, and, he was a faithful witness, in that church, in his home church, in his home community, and that's one of the most, difficult things, for us, as Christians, isn't it, to be faithful witnesses, where we are, and that's what, Epaphras was, he was one of them, and he was a faithful witness, spreading the gospel, among his own folk, there, in Colossae, he was a faithful witness, among those, who knew him, you remember, when Lazarus, that encounter with Lazarus, and, and, when Christ found him, he had many demons, and, and, and, and, when he was, cured, he begged, that he might be with him, he wanted to go with Christ, remember what Jesus said to him, return to your home, he said, and declare how much God has done for you, and he went away, proclaiming, throughout the whole city, how much Jesus had done for him,

[21 : 59] I think that's something, what Epaphras did, he was one of them, he was from Colossae, and he had that, desire, proclaiming, throughout the whole city, how much Christ had done for him, go and, go and do that, Lazarus, go and, go and tell folk, within your community, and he was a faithful witness, starting in his own home, remember when, Jesus sent out his disciples, where did they start?

At Jerusalem, at their own, at the start, that's where they were to start, and then to Judah, and then to all the ends of the earth, and so, he was a faithful witness, and that's the challenge for us, like Epaphras, one of, it says, he was from, I understand that verse, and others with me, that, he was one of you, he was there, in the community, and able to witness for him, and I think, part of the reason for that, is, as we sang in that hymn, he was assured of his faith, he had that, blessed assurance, that Jesus was mine, and, he had that, assurance, of faith, he was assured, of, the

hope, that he had, in the gospel, we can't share, someday, our hope, if we think, well, we think there's a heaven, we need to have that assurance, of what the hope of glory, means for us, and then we can share, this is what it says, about Abraham, against all hope, Abraham, and hope, believed, and so became, the father, of many nations, just as has been said, of him, so shall your offspring be, without weakening, in his faith, he faced the fact, that his body, was as good as dead, since he was about, a hundred years old, and that Sarah's womb, was also dead, yet he did not waver, through unbelief, regarding the promises, of God, but was strengthened, in his faith, and gave glory, to God, being fully persuaded, that God had power, to do, what he had promised, he was fully persuaded, that was the assurance, that Abraham had, and I think, if you look through, what we know of Epaphras, and how he communicated, the hope, he had that full assurance, of the hope, and that's why, he was able, to share it with others, he knew, Christ for himself, and was able to, do that, within his own community, he was strong, be strong, and courageous, Joshua was told, and that's, the kind of, person, I think, Epaphras was, as he, as he witnessed, in that community, and as I said, there, and made, known to us, your love, in the spirit, he says, he made known, to us, your love, in the spirit, their work, was evidenced, by the love, of the spirit, it was an arc, that Paul saw, that, it was made, known to him, that these people, had love, in the spirit, so that, they had that, evidence, about them, so that's the second thing, I think, really, that small part, verse, 12 of chapter 4, Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant, of Christ Jesus, he was a faithful servant, in his own community, the next thing, you'll see, about Epaphras, is, that, it says of him, he greets you, always struggling, on your prayers, and, always struggling, it says, on your behalf, in his prayers, the next thing, we see about Epaphras, was the idea, of praying man, that, emphasis, on struggling, it brought to my mind, I'll get this right, Jacob, as he struggled, in prayer, remember that incident, when Jacob had held, wrestling, in prayer, and it brings to mind, that picture, of Jacob wrestling, in prayer, wrestling, in prayer, wrestling with that angel, and, do not, let me go, until you bless me, that's the kind of, emphasis, in this word here, that's struggling, on your behalf, in his prayers, it's used, in chapter 1, verse 29, of Paul himself, for this I tell, struggling, with all, his energy, that he powerfully, works within me, it's the same word, Paul was struggling, with all his energy, and that's the kind of, effort, that Epaphras, put into his prayers, now maybe some of you, find prayers, that they're easy, no problem, you shut yourself, in the closet, and you never interrupted, and your thoughts, don't wander, but I think,

[27 : 01] I know myself, that it's, very difficult, sometimes, just to focus, in prayer, and that's why, it's called, here, that he's always, struggling, on your behalf, in prayers, it takes, an effort, to pray, and, that's the kind of, effort, in prayer, earnest, in prayer, discipline, in prayer, and, as Paul, prayed for them, that they would, stand firm, in the will of God, mature, and fully assured, he was praying, that they would, become fully mature, in Christ, and that's, as, Epaphras is praying, that they would, become mature, here, it says, all the struggling, on your behalf, in his prayers, you may stand mature, and fully assured, in the will of God, see there's the assurance, again, coming in his prayer, that these people, would come, have that type of assurance, knowing what God's will, was for them, that they would become, mature disciples, under his teaching, this is, this talks about, discipleship, within the church, and many of you know, some of these courses, like discipleship explored, and other, hope, hope explored,

I think the newest one's called, and these are all courses, good to have, amongst believers, so they become, more mature, in their faith, and that's, that was Epaphras's prayer, for this congregation, that the maturity, would develop, and it would become, disciples, that were fully assured, of God's will for them, as he prayed for them, so that's the kind of, prayer, life that Epaphras had, and that glimpse, of that one word, struggling, on your behalf, and his prayers, the effort he put onto it, we're encouraged in scripture, doesn't it say, ask of me, there are many references, if you go through, Luke's gospel, if you ever, want to have a task to do, maybe you've done this already, but note, how often, in Luke's gospel, specifically, Jesus is mentioned, praying, that's a challenge, for you, maybe you've done that, exercise before, but right through, Luke's gospel, we find the Lord's, at prayer, when he chooses his disciples, in the garden of Gethsemane, and also, a lot of his teaching, is about prayer, he has many parables, of prayer, remember the widow, the persistent widow, before the judge, or the story of the publican, and the Pharisee, God be merciful to me, a sinner, there's many, about, friend at midnight, going, and asking, that was a teaching, about persistent prayer, and of course, the Lord's prayer, there's so much references, to

pray, and encouragement, and expectancy, that we pray, and that's the kind of man, Epaphras was, struggling, in prayer, that these, believers, in Colossae, would be mature, and assured, in their faith, and praying, always like Paul, for them, so that we'd have, that kind of faith, remember when, Paul was converted, and I was a bit suspicious, about what was happening there, quite rightly, I suppose, given Paul's background, and Ananias says, go to the house of Judas, on Straight Street, and ask for a man, from Tarsus, named Saul, for, he, is, praying, one of the first things, that Paul did, when he was converted, he is praying, and that's,

God's gift to us, it can be a struggle, in it not, at times, and, it's good, like Paul, as we started thinking, to, have that kind of, prayer life, we all would thank God, for the Lord Jesus Christ, as we pray for you, so that's the kind of, so that's the kind of, so as seen, in Epaphras, he was faithful, to God's word, especially focusing, on the hope, the glorious hope, of the gospel, that was his emphasis, and that helped, her faith, that helped, her love, as he focused, on the hope, of glory, and then, the second thing, was he was faithful, to the witness, especially, at his own home, in Colossae, he was faithful, in his prayer life, for others, and finally, he was faithful, to his local church, it says in verse 13, of chapter 4 there, for I bear him witness, that he has worked, hard for you, you know, somebody,

I remember talking about, a minister, recently, I won't mention his name, but just this afternoon, we were talking about a minister, I think he works hard, it was said of him, well that was like Epaphras, I bear witness, that he has worked, hard for you, remember ministers, I was saying to Daphne, recently, I don't know, some of these ministers, have got the gospel, to preach, and Lord's Day twice, and they've got, their midweek meetings, but then they're cumbered, with committees, they're cumbered, with admin, they're cumbered, with reports, it takes me all time, just to focus, on a sermon, without, so do remember, those, who are working hard, in the ministry, and uphold them, in prayer, that was Epaphras, attitude, he was faithful, in his calling, he worked hard, for Christ, and he was faithful, in that ministry, faithful, in his local church, but also, he had, extension work to do, not only was he involved, in Colossians, in Colossae, but he was also involved, in Laodicea, and Hierapolis, so he was a busy man, he had all these, churches, and he was faithful, to them, [33 : 14] I was talking to, somebody recently, no names, as you used to say, no names, no patroll, but I was talking, to somebody, recently, about somebody, and he had moved, from one congregation, to another congregation, and there, he found difficulty, so that same person, moved to another congregation, guess what, he's finding difficulty, it's important, to be faithful, but we're all, going to encounter, problems, imagine how often, maybe, I've felt, like, leaving my own, congregation, because there's, so many problems, but, Epaphras was faithful, a servant of Christ, to that local congregation, and these other, congregations, he was faithful, remember, Christ said, well done, good and faithful servant, you've been faithful, for a few things, I'm in charge, of many things, let us be faithful, servants of God, where God has placed us, yes, there'll be problems, but there's problems, elsewhere, you can't escape them, by running away, and, we should be faithful, ministers, and that's, he was faithful, to his local church, so these are four, brief things, that Epaphras, we can learn, from his ministry,

I think, obviously, to announce, the good news, obviously, you do have to touch, on the bad news, but I think, our gospel, should be, good news, and we should, concentrate, on the hope, of the gospel, the hope of glory, we should be, faithful, in our witness, at home, faithful, in our prayer life, and faithful, to our local church, so these are, just briefly, four things, I wanted to share, about this man, who was a, Epaphras, who was a faithful, minister of Christ, and to challenge, each one of us, to be, follow, his example, may these few thoughts, be, blessed by God, through, x!

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