

Colossians, Chapter Four, Lesson Three

PRAYING WITH EFFECTIVENESS Colossians 4:12-18

STIMULATE

** In our study together last week we saw the apostle Paul as he was "**Recognizing His Servants**", that is, the servants of God who had lived exemplary lives to the glory of God. Do you recall those five examples?

From Tychicus - God's servants are selfless. (V.7)

From Onesimus - God's servants are truly repentant sinners! (V.9)

From Aristarchus - God's servants are willing to suffer for His name. (V.10)

From John Mark - God's servants are always willing to reconcile! (V.10)

From Jesus Justus - God's servants seek first His kingdom and His righteousness.(V.11)

** Which of those Godly examples stood out the most to you as you considered applying the Word of God to your own life?

For myself, I found that the reminder from the life of John Mark was very encouraging. A true mark of a Christian is that God's servants are always willing to reconcile. It is refreshing to simply follow Paul's instruction in Romans 12:18 to be as peace with all men.

MOTIVATE

** The past five months have provided many blessings for us as we have given our hearts attention to the study of Paul's letter to the Colossians. This epistle is bracketed by the apostle with an emphasis on the need for prayer. Paul mentions prayer in chapter one, verses 3 and 9; and in chapter 4, verses 2, 3 and 12.

As he wraps up his thoughts for us today, Paul will once again return to the practice of instruction by showing us God's program for prayer through four different characteristics of a godly prayerlife.

He will teach us how we can be "**Praying with Effectiveness**" by merely following the example of the life of Epaphras. Let's read our passage together in preparation for the study of God's word.

Read passage (V.12-14) (V.15-18)

Opening Prayer

Praying with Effectiveness

INVESTIGATE

V.12 ** Our opening two verses for today will provide all four characteristics of a godly prayerlife for us. But before we get to that, what do we remember about this man Epaphras?

Epaphras was truly faithful servant of Christ!

He was most likely the founder of the church at Colossae and was probably their current pastor. Having heard Paul preach in Ephesus, Epaphras returned to his Lycus valley town of Colossae and spread the good news. cf. Acts 19:8-10

** What is the first phrase that Paul uses while making reference to Epaphras?

He is "one of your number". The bond of peace that is shared by Christians is something for which we should all give thanks. Epaphras was one of their elders, and as such needed to weave his life into theirs to better shepherd the flock of God. cf. 1Peter 5:2

** Do you recall anyone from last week that was described with this same phrase?

Onesimus - the "truly repentant sinner"! We are all one, and all sinners, saved by God's grace.

** Let's look now at the first characteristic of a godly prayerlife - **The Prerequisite for Prayer**. What do you suppose it is?

1) The Prerequisite for Prayer - "...a bonds slave of Jesus Christ..." Before we can pray effectively, we must first belong to Christ through faith and be living a godly life in response to the authority of His word. cf. James 5:16, Psalm 66:18

** This godly man sends his greetings to those he dearly loves in Colossae. After informing us of that fact, Paul now gives us the second characteristic of a godly prayerlife - **The Pattern for Prayer**. What does it look like?

2) The Pattern for Prayer - "...always laboring earnestly for you in his prayers..." Sadly, we know very little about this kind of prayer. The phrase laboring earnestly is translated from agonizomai, from which our English word agonize is derived. cf. 1Corinthians 9:25, Rom.15:30, and Luke 22:44

** Why should we be so intent with our prayers? What is at stake? The answer comes from the third characteristic of a godly prayerlife - **The Purpose for Prayer**. Look closely at this verse, for what does Epaphras pray on behalf of the Colossians?

3) The Purpose for Prayer - "...that you may stand perfect and fully assured in all the will of God..." This statement carries the idea of being complete, mature, persuaded or fully satisfied. Epaphras shares the same concern for those in Colossae as did Paul, that being their growth and maturity of faith in an understanding of God's will. cf. Colossians 1:9, 2:1-4, Ephesians 4:13-14

V.13 ** We have seen the Prerequisite, the Pattern and the Purpose for Prayer. What gets us started once we have been prepared by God to pray? The answer is the fourth characteristic for a godly prayer life - "**The Prompting for Prayer**". What prompted Epaphras to work so hard on behalf of the Colossians in prayer?

4) The Prompting for Prayer - "...he has a deep concern for you..." Here again is the selflessness of a bond-servant of Christ. Like Tychicus from last week (verse 7), the main concern in the life of Epaphras was not for his own needs, but for the needs of those he was to shepherd.

Paul was willing to testify on the part of Epaphras, "...for I bear him witness...!"

** Was the heart of this shepherd limited in its concern for just those people who lived in Colossae?

No - Our text tells us that he was also concerned "...for those who are in Laodicea and Hierapolis." All shepherds should be like this, because that is the example which was set for us by the Good Shepherd, Jesus Christ. All see John 10:11-15

V.14 ** Back in Colossians 4:14, now that we have learned the secrets to "Praying with Effectiveness", who is the next individual about which Paul wishes to inform the Colossians?

Luke - Paul's personal physician and close friend.

** How do we know that Dr. Luke was a Gentile believer?

There were only three "from the circumcision" who were with Paul and working for the Kingdom of God, Aristarchus, John Mark and Jesus Justus. (V.11)

** What else do we know about him?

He is mentioned by name only two other times in the New Testament - Philemon 24 and 2Timothy 4:11. He is believed to have been born in Syrian Antioch (see Acts 11:25-26) and accompanied Paul on his missionary journeys. He is the author of The Acts of the Apostles and of the third gospel.

** How did Paul feel about this man?

He considered him to be "the beloved physician". Because Luke was such a faithful "fellow worker" he had become very dear to the apostle.

** Luke sends his greetings to the Colossians, along with Aristarchus, John Mark, Jesus Justus and Epaphras. Who else is added to this list of greeters?

Demas! A fellow worker of Paul's. cf. Philemon 24

** What do we know about Demas merely from the fact that he sends his greetings to the Colossians through this letter of Paul's?

- 1) He is with Paul in his imprisonment..
- 2) He is aware that Paul is writing to them.
- 3) He, too, is concerned for those in Colossae.
- 4) He wants to express that concern enough to ask Paul to include his own personal greeting.

** Sadly, what else do we know about this man?

He was successfully seduced by the hopelessly corrupt system.

Five years later - cf. 2Timothy 4:9-10, 2Timothy 2:4 and 1John 2:15

** In the context of "**Praying with Effectiveness**", what may have been lacking in the life of Demas which left him open to the "loves" of this world?

He may have fallen short in the area of agonizing in prayer, becoming worldly minded.
cf. Titus 2:11-12

V.15 ** Who does Paul wish to greet?

"...the brethren who are in Laodicea..." About twelve miles northwest of Colossae, Paul's love would reach out to the entire world for the sake of Christ.

** Besides the brethren in Laodicea, to whom does Paul send his personal greeting?

Nympha (feminine - NASB and NIV) or Nymphas (masculine - KJV) from the Greek word numpha or numphas meaning a bride or young women. We do not know who this individual is, but we do know that he or she was devoted enough to the Lord to have a gathering of believers in his or her home.

** What does this greeting say about the amazing heart of the apostle Paul?

He expresses his God given love to all believers and has a tremendous capacity for remembering who they are!

V.16 ** What does Paul want Christians to do with his letters, the very word of God?

Read them and share them! We still do that today, it is called "Staying in the Word"!

V.17 ** Paul has one more individual in mind, who is it?

Archippus - a fellow soldier of Paul's in the battle for the Kingdom of God and possibly the son or brother of Philemon. cf. Philemon 2

** What rather ominous caution does Paul offer to him?

"Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it".

** What is the reason for fulfilling our ministry?

We have received it from the Lord and we will give and account as to how we do the job!
cf. Hebrews 13:17

V.18 ** At this point in Paul's letter, what change do we see take place?

Paul takes the pen and adds his own greeting. He customarily used an amanuensis (or recording secretary) when writing his epistles. cf. 1Corinthians 16:21, 2Thessalonians 3:17

** What does Paul want his readers to remember in their times of prayer?

His imprisonment for the cause of Christ. (Colossians 4:3)

** Even though he is in prison, what does he want for all of his readers?

That they would receive the grace of God! Paul is an amazingly selfless man, who only wants the best for every believer.

EXTRICATE

** Today we learned God's program for prayer from the life of Epaphras. Do you recall the four characteristics of a godly prayerlife which would teach us how to be "**Praying with Effectiveness**"?

- 1) The Prerequisite for Prayer** - "...a bonds slave of Jesus Christ..."
- 2) The Pattern for Prayer** - "...always laboring earnestly for you in his prayers..."
- 3) The Purpose for Prayer** - "...that you may stand perfect and fully assured in all the will of God..."
- 4) The Prompting for Prayer** - "...he has a deep concern for you..."

DELINEATE

** Are you lacking in any of those four areas? If you are, what did we learn from Paul's instruction to Archippus which could help us?

We need to fulfill our ministry (even our ministry of prayer), because we have received it from our Lord Jesus Christ.

EVALUATE

** Where did Demas go wrong in his walk with Christ?

He looked back and loved this world.

ACTIVATE

** We have learned so much in this wonderful epistle, may this study be remembered by our "**Praying with Effectiveness**" according to God's program for prayer.

Closing prayer