



Our Beloved Fellow Servant Colossians 1:7-8

“...just as you learned 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.” Colossians 1:7-8 ESV

We last saw the importance of bearing fruit for Christ (Col. 1:5-6), and how it is evidence of a saving faith to both us and others around us. And in today’s passage we get even more into the practical side of that fruit as we learn a little about the work of Epaphras.

While Epaphras is only mentioned a few times in the New Testament, twice here in Colossians and once again in the letter to Philemon, it is widely accepted that he was either the founder or overseer of the church in Colossae. As churches still met in homes during this era, leaders were established to ensure the truth was taught and that sound doctrine was being adhered to. You might think of this like small groups; these churches may have met independently during the week but were still under the spiritual authority of local overseers and elders.

As touched on in our introduction to this letter, it’s unlikely Paul ever visited the church in Colossae, and he is not credited with founding the church. Paul told the Romans, ***“I make it my ambition to preach the gospel, not where Christ has already been named, lest I build on someone else’s foundation”*** (Rom 15:20), so the fact that he wrote this letter in the first place tells us that Epaphras likely requested it. Epaphras came to Paul for help dealing with heresies and false doctrines impacting his local church body.

Paul reminded the Colossians of the truth they heard in the gospel which had been ***learned from Epaphras our beloved fellow servant***. This statement likely helped reinforce the authority and anointing of Epaphras as a leader and as one who taught them well. It also reminds us that any leader, especially in the church, must first and foremost be a ***servant***.

While there has been much talk of servant leadership in the business world, it should be the status quo in the church. Everyone ought to be willing to serve everyone. And as a leader, particularly in senior leadership, our hearts here must be right with God. If we are basking in the high position, the fame, the dotting over every word we speak, or the handshakes and praise after a good sermon, we should do a serious heart-check and ask ourselves, and God, why we are in that position in the first place. If it is not to serve the local body of believers by pouring into them the truth of Scripture and leading the flock to seek a deeper relationship with Christ, it’s time to step aside and get things straightened out.

The fruit Epaphras bore and his genuine servant’s heart was evident as Paul said he was ***“a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf.”*** Paul clearly did not blame Epaphras for the doctrinal issues the church was wrestling with, but instead pointed out his hard work and faithfulness to the gospel and truth, which was for their benefit. The Colossians were blessed to have Epaphras pastoring them!

Paul then said that Epaphras ***“has made known to us your love in the Spirit.”*** Even though the Colossians were struggling with some issues, for the most part their hearts were in the right place and Epaphras made that known to Paul and his team in Rome. We see this as we read this letter; Paul’s gentle approach, compared to other correctional letters (ie: Galatians and 1 Corinthians), showed that



he accepted Epaphras's account of their spiritual condition and just wanted to help them get back on track.

Each of us go through seasons in our walk with the Lord. Sometimes we can be so strong and well-rooted that it seems nothing can interfere with our love of the Lord and His saints. Other times, the ground seems soggy and the path unclear. While we may not have wandered from the faith, we may be tempted to believe things that aren't truly scriptural or accept beliefs that are contrary to the gospel. Even though our hearts might not condemn us, this is where our spiritual armor really comes into play and we need to don it every day (cf: Eph. 6:10-20). It is also important to remember our pastor and church leaders who give of themselves to teach us the truth and keep us on the straight and narrow path in both good times and bad. Thank the Lord for their service and faithfulness in ministering the gospel. Like the Colossians, your pastor is ministering on your behalf to help you grow stronger and more fruitful in your relationship with the Savior.

~Associate Pastor Jeremy Preece

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