

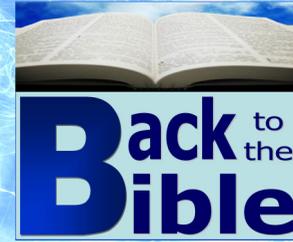
"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet,
and a light unto my path" (Psalm 119:105).

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FOR THE RECORD

| | |
|--------------------|--------|
| Sunday Bible Study | 29 |
| Sunday AM Worship | 39 |
| Sunday PM Worship | 22 |
| Wed. Bible Study | 24 |
| Offering | \$2912 |

"This is love, that we walk according to
His commandments. This is the
commandment, that as you have heard
from the beginning, you should walk in it"
2 John 1:6



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Times of Services:

Sunday

Bible Study:... 10:00am
AM Worship...11:00am
PM Worship:...6:00pm
2nd Sunday:.....1:30pm

Wednesday

Bible Study:.....7:00pm

Radio Program

Sunday:.....7:30am
"Back to the Bible"
AM 580 WSKK
93.5 FM

**We Extend A
Warm & Cordial
Welcome
To All Our
Visitors!**

BROTHER EPAPHRAS

Roger D. Campbell

Without any fanfare, the apostle Paul by inspiration wrote about a brother named Epaphras (pronounced with the accent on the first syllable) in both the Book of Colossians and the Book of Philemon. Paul was a prisoner in Rome when he wrote both of these epistles. Epaphras was his fellowprisoner at the time (Philemon 23). We learn a number of truths about brother Epaphras in the only three Bible passages in which he is mentioned (Colossians 1:7; 4:12,13; Philemon 23). Let us take a look at the Bible's record of his activities.

First, **Epaphras was a teacher of the word.** Colossians 1:5,6 states that the gospel had come to Colosse, helping the people there to know "*the grace of God in truth.*" How had they learned the gospel message? The next verses says, "*As ye also learned of Epaphras . . .*" We know little about Epaphras' personal life, but we know that he taught the gospel in Colosse. Brothers and sisters, in one way or another, all of us "*ought to be teachers*" of the word! (Hebrews 5:12). Each of us needs to seek out opportunities to sow the seed. Jesus said, "*The sower soweth the word*" (Mark 4:14). Let us all be more diligent in teaching the gospel in the time that we have remaining on the earth!

Second, **Epaphras was Paul's "dear fellowservant"** (Colossians 1:7). This expression has a ring of close

[Continued Inside]

camaraderie to it. Paul and Epaphras served together in the same Cause, a Cause which is too big for any single person to carry out by him/herself. What a thrill it is to know that we have devoted fellowservants in the church on whom we can count! They are indeed "dear" to us, as Epaphras was to Paul.

Third, **Epaphras was a faithful servant of the Christ.** He was not simply a servant: he was "*a faithful minister of Christ*" (Colossians 1:7). Colossians 4:12 simply says that he was "*a servant of Christ.*" Is that not what we are all striving to be, a faithful servant of the Lord? We either faithfully serve Jesus, or we do not. We are either with Jesus, or against Him (Matthew 12:30). We are either obedient to Him, or we are not. "*Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?*" (Romans 6:16). If we are in a situation where we are told, "Tell us a little bit about yourself," would it not be appropriate to say, "I am a servant of the Christ?" Epaphras could honestly make such a claim. Can we?

Fourth, **Epaphras was a greeter of the brethren.** "*Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth [greeteth, NKJV] you . . .*" (Colossians 4:12). It may not sound like much, but to make the effort to greet someone, whether in person, by telephone, or by sending a written message, can really be a boost to another person. It can make that person feel noticed, remembered, and appreciated. Most of us have been in situations where the thoughtful greetings of other saints were a source of encouragement to us. If I have counted correctly, *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance* lists verses from thirteen (13) New Testament books in which greetings were passed on between Christians, or else the instruction was given for saints to greet one another. That sounds like greeting our fellow saints is important, does it not?

Fifth, **Epaphras prayed for the spiritual welfare of his brethren.** "*Epaphras . . . always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God*" (Colossians 4:12). It is so easy to get caught up in our own little world and forget about the needs of our fellowservants. And, it is also possible for us to think and pray only about their physical needs. Epaphras prayed diligently, he prayed diligently for other saints, and he prayed for their spiritual well-being. It would not take much effort for us to do the same. When brothers and sisters in the Lord are truly in our hearts, then they will also be on our lips when we come before our Father in prayer.

Sixth, **Epaphras was a brother with notable zeal.** Speaking of him, Paul wrote, "*For I bear him record, that he hath a great zeal for you, and them that are in Laodicea,*

and them in Hierapolis" (Colossians 4:13). Do you and I have such a reputation? Are we known for our zeal in the Lord's work? The Lord instructs us to be "*fervent in spirit*" (Romans 12:11). Yes, the Christ wants His people to be "*zealous of good works*" (Titus 2:14). In modern language, we call it being on fire for the Lord. Does that describe us?

As we noted earlier, **Epaphras was Paul's "fellowprisoner in Christ Jesus"** (Philemon 23). More than once Paul referred to himself as the Lord's prisoner, meaning that he was imprisoned because of his loyal service to the Christ (Ephesians 3:1; 4:1). We know that Epaphras also faithfully served the Lord. It may well be the case that he, too, was imprisoned because of his unwavering commitment to righteousness. I have watched documentaries about the horrible environment that exists in many modern prisons. I have visited and taught the gospel in prisons in three different nations, seeing first hand some of the deplorable circumstances in which the inmates live. You and I would not find it pleasant to live in such a place. I cannot imagine what the prisons of Epaphras' and Paul's day must have been like. Beloved, if there someday comes a time when you and I must "do time" because our steadfast devotion to our Lord puts us in conflict with and in violation of civil law, then we need to be mentally prepared to be a prisoner for our Lord. Epaphras was.

Epaphras is not a well-known figure in history. But, he was faithful to the Lord, and that is the one thing in any person's life that really matters. May the clear Bible statements that we read about the life of Epaphras be an encouragement to all of us that want to go to heaven.

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"*Blessed art thou, O Lord: teach me thy statutes. With my lips have I declared all the judgments of thy mouth. I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies, as much as in all riches. I will meditate in thy precepts, and have respect unto thy ways. I will delight myself in thy statutes: I will not forget thy word*" (Psalm 119:11-16).

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- May 14 – Men's Business Meeting & Ladies' Bible Class after Evening Worship
- May 28 – Prayer Service
- June 4 – Men's Business Meeting & Ladies' Bible Class after Evening Worship
- June 11 – Preach & Eat & 1:30 Worship Service
- Please give support money for Chinese orphans to Minnie Kennell