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# EPAPHRAS:

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## The warrior, intercessor, wrestler--Colossians 4:12-13

**INTRODUCTION:** The highest level of human affirmation we can give to another is if we pray for them--Luke 22:31-32. Romans 8:34 reminds us: “*Christ Jesus, who died — more than that, who was raised to life — is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.*” At this moment Jesus is at the right hand of the Father talking to Him about us. If we intend to be a participant in a Jesus style of living, we, too, must mimic Him and discover the joy and agony of deep prayer and intercession.

### THE BIOGRAPHY OF EPAPHRAS

An example of one who purposed to follow the Lord’s lead in prayer is found in Colossians 4:12-13.

- Paul uses Epaphras as an example of the kind of prayer that’s needed to impact our world and bring about spiritual revitalization in individuals and churches.
- In these two verses we have a description of the life of an intercessor who is mature and effective.

**Background:** Before we get into Epaphras’ prayer life, let’s review what we know about him--Colossians 1:7; Philemon 1:23. He was a member of Paul’s ministry team - a fellow worker. It’s possible he was also a prisoner with Paul. It was because Paul observed Epaphras in these confined quarters that He was so impressed with this young man, and wanted the Colossians to know how Epaphras prayed.

Here’s the two sentence summary of his life and ministry. Colossians 4:12-13—“*Epaphras, who is one of you and a servant of Christ Jesus, sends greetings. He is always wrestling in prayer for you, that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured. 13] I vouch for him that he is working hard for you and for those at Laodicea and Hierapolis.*”

### I. CHARACTERISTICS OF AN EFFECTIVE INTERCESSOR

#### A. **His relationship:** “...One of you...”

- This implies he was from Colosse and had a personal stake in their spiritual lives.
- He knew these people and he loved them. (This is an important element if possible.)

How about his motivation?

#### B. **His attitude:** It’s as “...a servant of Christ Jesus...”

- The attitude of service reminds us that the one who serves Jesus will serve others.
- If we want to be an intercessor, it should be understood it’s primarily a service for our Lord.
- This is important, because there will be times in intercession when we’ll feel all alone and people won’t appreciate what we’re doing. This is where knowing we’re serving Jesus will count.

Is it easy to be effective in prayer? Next we see:

#### C. **His action:** “*He is always wrestling in prayer for you...*”

- *Wrestling* means “agonize” and it was primarily an athletic term. It meant “to contend for a prize,” or “to engage in a contest,” or “to wrestle in prayer for you.”
- Intercession isn’t an easy wrestling match; it’s **rigorous**, and at times an **agonizing experience** as we contend for the spiritual lives of others.

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1. **Now how is wrestling used to describe prayer?** Two main ways:
  - a. **One is where we're wrestling with God concerning a personal issue, something we want or don't want.** (See Genesis 32:24-32.)

**Sidelight:** Those who wrestle for others learned to fight, to wrestle as they worked through their own issues, their own stuff. It's only as we're pinned, made weak, lose our battle with sin and self that we're able to wrestle for others as intercessors--Psalm 13:2.
  - b. **The second way we see wrestling in Scripture has to do with the enemy of our soul.** Ephesians 6:12 says: "*For our struggle* ('...we wrestle..' KJV) is *not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.*"  
We must see the context to understand Eph. 6:10-18. See also Luke 22:41-44; Rom. 15:30.
2. **Now what could possibly require this kind of agony and wrestling for anyone?**

- D. His requests for the Colossians were twofold.** He was always wrestling in prayer because:
- He wanted to see them "...stand firm in the will of God..." and be "...mature and fully assured."
  - This is a summary of all that is most important in intercession. The word *assured* means "to bring in full measure...to fulfill, accomplish...to persuade, assure, or satisfy fully."
  - What a wonderful goal and prayer for a local church (this church): to stand firm in the will of God and to be mature and fully assured.
  - Growing into maturity is not an easy, it's a struggle, and as we can see, it takes a spiritual fight! (It takes not only personal commitment, but corporate prayer and intercession.)
  - **Can you imagine what a church looks like as this prayer is answered?**

- E. His endorsement:** "*I vouch for him...he is working hard for you...*"
1. **How do we know he's a legitimate intercessor?** Paul vouches for him.
  2. **Why is this helpful to a local church?** This endorsement provides spiritual covering and safety for all intercessors. **Intercessors are like the offensive and defensive lines of a football team; but they, too, need the rest of the team to be effective.**
  3. **How hard did Epaphras work for the Colossians?** The phrase is "working hard" or "zeal." But the expanded definition came to mean "great trouble, intense desire." Thus the *wrestling* of the intercessor includes not only the **physical** side, but also the **emotional** - not casual prayers.

**Conclusion:** Let's conclude by observing that if we see a church or an individual having significant ministry, it should be obvious to us it's because there's an Epaphras somewhere in the picture.

## CUPS OF COFFEE

This can be a self-study or a group study. It's designed to help you hear and apply this study to your life and to those you may influence.

1. What excites and scares you about this model of Epaphras?
2. What impact would 100 intercessors have on Shoreline's ministry/outreach?
3. What personal training do you think you'll need to engage in intercession?
4. What might keep you from seasons of rejoicing after a spiritual wrestling match?
5. Why do you believe your connection to a local church is vital for you as you pray? How will you evidence that connection? How will you know how to pray and when to pray for your church?