

PROVEN FAITHFULNESS

MARKS OF SPIRITUAL AUTHENTICITY

"Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful." —1 Corinthians 4:2

EPAPHRAS...LOVED CO-WORKER

COLOSSIANS 1:1-7

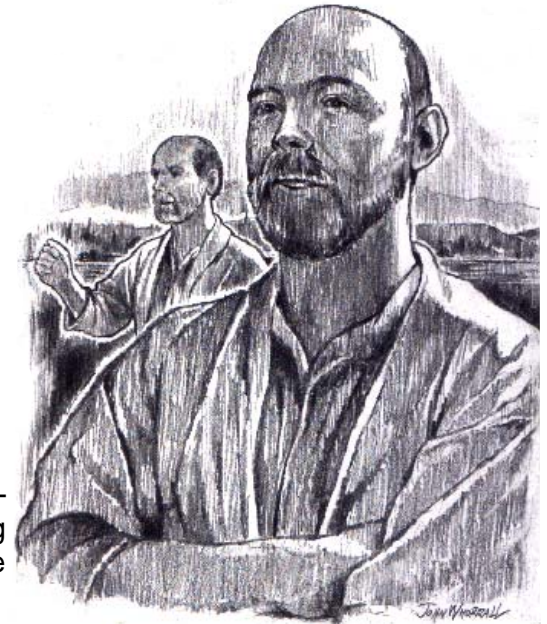
"Epaphras was a citizen of Colosse. Hence his deep interest in the Colossians. The Lord does not ask His people to give up their patriotism when they turn to Him. Epaphras had a particular desire that the Colossians should be blessed, because he was one of them." —Andrew A. Bonar

I. THE MEDIUM OF FAITHFULNESS

A. The divine essence —Deuteronomy 7:9—"Know therefore that the LORD your God is God; he is the faithful God, keeping his covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love him and keep his commands." (note Psalm 36)

B. The human responsibility —Colossians 1:7—

"Epaphras, our much loved co-worker, was the one who brought you the Good News. He is Christ's faithful servant, and he is helping us in your place. "



Επαφροδιτος

"We have nothing to do with how much ability we've got, or how little, but with what we do with what we have. The man with great talent is apt to be puffed up, and the man with little [talent] to belittle the little. Poor fools! God gives it, much or little. 'Our part is to be faithful,' doing the level best with every bit and scrap. And we will be if Jesus' spirit controls'." — S.D. Gordon

II. THE MINDSET OF FAITHFULNESS (Obedience)

A. The mind of the servant (Colossians 4:12)— "Epaphras, who is one of you and a servant of Christ Jesus, sends greetings."

B. The heart for prayer—"He is always wrestling in prayer for you"

C. The selfless burden for others— "That you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured."

"Not only did Epaphras carry the good news of Christ to Colosse, but he also brought back to prisoner Paul the good news about their love in the Spirit for Christ. Believers are in the Spirit and the Spirit is in them." (Romans 8:9)—Norman L. Geisler

III. THE MESSAGE OF FAITHFULNESS

A. A willingness to serve sacrificially—(Hebrews 10:23, 24— " Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another--and all the more as you see the Day approaching."

B. A willingness to persevere in spite of circumstances— (Philemon 1:23) "Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, sends you his greetings."

C. Note Philippians 2:25-30. If this also refers to *Epaphras*, (a contraction of *Epaphroditus*) the qualities of faithfulness are evident.

FOR CONSIDERATION...

1. What spiritual principles may be drawn from the obvious examples of character of Epaphras' life?
2. What are some of the dynamic attributes of this "much loved co-worker" of the Apostle Paul?
3. What are some lessons from these brief biographical sketches that might apply to us, as individuals, and as co-workers in the Church, the Body of Christ?