

Are you a Prayer Warrior, or a Prayer Wimp?

Epaphras, We have already been introduced to this great believer of the early church in

Colossians 1:7 just as you learned it (the gospel) from Epaphras, our beloved fellow bond-servant, who is a faithful servant of Christ on your behalf.

So here, we learn several things about this believer. He most likely was the first and founding pastor-teacher of the assembly in Colossae, grounding them in the gospel. His name means lovely or impassionate. Paul considered him a beloved fellow bond-servant and faithful servant of Christ on their behalf

Colossians 4:12 Epaphras, who is one of your number, a bondsman of Jesus Christ, sends you his greetings, always laboring earnestly for you in his prayers, that you may stand perfect and fully assured in all the will of God.

Epaphras who is one of your number, Of your assembly.

a bondsman of Jesus Christ, And, he is faithful as a bond slave. In Colossians 1:7 he is a *faithful servant of Christ - diakonos* a minister, servant or deacon. Here in 4:12, he is a *bond slave of Jesus Christ. doulos* “a slave, one who is in a permanent relation of servitude to

Are you a Prayer Warrior, or a Prayer Wimp?
Colossians 4:12-14

another, his will being altogether consumed in the will of the other.” (The complete Word Study Dictionary of the New Testament)

sends you his greetings,

The next identifying phrase is powerful in the New Testament.

always laboring earnestly for you in his prayers, Pay close attention to the adverb of time—*always* used to denote what was habitual with this man.

Next, we have the *present middle participle* of a verb which fundamentally means to contend in the athletic games; to carry on a conflict. We get a good idea of what Paul is saying about Epaphras’ prayer life and a challenge to our own prayer habits.

This verb is used seven times in New Testament and we will briefly note each one so that we can get an idea of what Paul is saying about this man’s prayer life.

1. Luke uses it to describe the ongoing spiritual struggle that will take place if one is to enter the kingdom of God by the narrow door (Luke 13:24).
2. Jesus uses it in John 18:36 to refer to the struggle of using weapons if His kingdom were of this realm.
3. In 1 Corinthians 9:25, Paul uses it in the normal understanding of engaging in an athletic contest. Here, Paul uses it to teach of the self-control in all things that the Christian must exercise in the invisible spiritual warfare we are all in. Every Christian should

Are you a Prayer Warrior, or a Prayer Wimp?
Colossians 4:12-14

stress personal self-discipline and self-control which is a fruit of the Holy Spirit, indicating that the battle is a battle of faith.

4. & 5. Then, in 1 Timothy 6:12 and 2 Timothy 4:7 we have the familiar words of Paul: *fight the good fight of faith; and I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith.* God has a ‘course’ for each one of us. In order to finish that course, which few Christians do, you have to fight, every day, the battle of faith.
6. Now we come to the final two uses and both are in Colossians. In Colossians 1:29, Paul uses this word to describe the struggle in striving to do God’s will, which every one of us are involved.

Colossians 1:29 For this purpose also I labor, striving according to His power (Holy Spirit), which mightily works within me.

7. Then in Colossians 4:12 Paul uses this word to describe the fervent prayers of Epaphras.

Colossians 4:12 Epaphras, ... always laboring earnestly for you in his prayers, ...

Laboring earnestly for you in his prayers. What does this mean? Ever hear of a ‘prayer warrior?’ What does that mean? It means what it says—They pray in the battle. They are always at prayer. They pray when they lie down at night. They pray when they wake up in the morning. They are in the battle with prayer.

Ok, people, let’s be honest and open about prayer.

Are you a Prayer Warrior, or a Prayer Wimp?
Colossians 4:12-14

How long are your prayers?

How often do you pray for extended length of time?

How often do you pray? Is it enough?

To Epaphras, it was never enough. You can hear his prayer: ‘Father I pray that they will grow in the teaching of your word. I pray they will concentrate. I pray they will believe it. I pray they will walk by faith. I pray they will overcome distractions to hear the teaching of the Word of God etc.’” He struggled with his wording. He struggled that he covered all the grounds, all the obstacles. I hope you struggle as you pray for our young people in schools, colleges, universities, military or just in the work world. Some of you might grasp this by remembering the struggle to concentrate on school subjects. Yes, it was a struggle, sometimes a real battle just to sit down and concentrate on your studies. Well, this is what can happen in prayers. Struggle over covering all the issues, through all the distractions. When you love someone and they are going through sufferings like the death of a loved one, you might struggle over covering everything that needs to be covered. Then there is the struggle of making time to pray. There are so many distractions in our lives, distractions to taking time to get alone and pray. The Christian life, the Spirit-Filled Life, the life of faith is a life of struggling. You know what? It might be a struggle just to make the decision to pray instead of watching your favorite program on TV.

What does it mean to ‘*labor earnestly*’ in prayer?

Let’s take a look at the most labored prayer in history.

Are you a Prayer Warrior, or a Prayer Wimp?
Colossians 4:12-14

Matthew 26:36 Then Jesus *came with them to a place called Gethsemane, and *said to His disciples, “Sit here while I go over there and pray.”

Then Jesus *came with them. His disciples, minus Judas. See that asterisk? Well, we will see it five more times in this one event. So, what does it mean?

This asterisk is unique to the New American Standard Bible (NASB) translation. Essentially, each one of these verbs that are marked with an asterisk, are present tenses in the Greek but are translated as past tenses by the NASB. The explanation is “In regard to the use in Greek of the historical present, the Board recognized that in some contexts the present tense seems more unexpected and unjustified to the English reader than a past tense would have been. But Greek authors frequently used the present tense for the sake of heightened vividness, thereby transporting their readers in imagination to the actual scene at the time of occurrence.”

to a place called Gethsemane, Which ironically means press, oil press. This was a garden at the foot of Mount of Olives.

and *said to His disciples, “Sit here while I go over there and pray.” Think about it. He has just had Passover with His disciples and is now getting ready to go to the cross and He desires to pray!

Are you a Prayer Warrior, or a Prayer Wimp?
Colossians 4:12-14

Matthew 26:37 And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be grieved and distressed.

And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, John and James.

and began to be grieved and distressed. Now we are getting into '*labor earnestly in prayer.*' Preachers like to make emotional preaching out of the physical suffering of Jesus Christ on the cross. But dear people, I hope you can begin to appreciate the soul suffering of Jesus over being identified with our sins, and suffering, experiencing death, spiritual death. This is what was on His mind and soul at this time, not physical pain but being separated from His Father because of His being contaminated by our sins. We have two words used here to begin our understanding of praying in agony. **Grieved!** Have you ever grieved? And in that were you drawn to pray? The Greek word refers here to deep sorrow, sorrow that comes deep from the soul. As Jesus was now coming close to His spiritual death on the cross, there was dejection in His soul, misery that He was about to be sinfully separated from God His Father.

Add to being grieved, He was distressed; overwhelmed with sorrow. It is difficult to isolate all that was going on in the soul of our Savior at this time. Leave it said, He was in soul agony and pressed to pray.

Matthew 26:38 Then He *said to them, "My soul is deeply grieved, to the point of death; remain here and keep watch with Me."

Are you a Prayer Warrior, or a Prayer Wimp?
Colossians 4:12-14

Then He *said to them, “My soul is deeply grieved, to the point of death; People, please note that it was not His physical body. Nothing had happened to His body. But, His soul was wounded. We have seen many times how the battle is a battle for the soul. Satan desires to control your soul; the world desires to control your soul and of course, your own Inherited Sin Nature (ISN) desires to control your soul. So what do you do when the battle for your soul is evident within you? You go into the labor of prayer. Jesus Christ told them:

**Matthew 26:38 ...“My soul is deeply grieved,
... remain here and keep watch with Me.”**

My soul is deeply grieved. In verse 36, Jesus began being grieved. The Greek word there was *lupeo*. Here, we have a compound verb made up of the word *lupeo* and a prefix from the preposition meaning *about*. The compound word intensifies the basic meaning of ‘to grieve’ and so is here translated *deeply grieved*. People, we are getting to grasp what was in the soul of our Savior before He died for or because of our sins. His soul was surrounded with grief.

To the point of death! He would much prefer to die physically than to die spiritually!

Now, we will see praying in labor, praying fervently: We know the condition of His soul, so what does our Lord do?

**Matthew 26:39 And He went a little beyond
them, and fell on His face and prayed, saying,
“My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass
from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will.”**

Are you a Prayer Warrior, or a Prayer Wimp?
Colossians 4:12-14

And He went a little beyond them, and fell on His face. He assumes the position of fervent prayer!

and prayed, saying, “My Father, People, prayer is addressed to God the Father, even by the Son. I am always amused by people who like to boast, oh, I pray to Jesus! Well, friends, Jesus prayed to God the Father and we should follow Him.

Now we come to His prayer.

if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will.” We have studied this prayer many times. The cup refers to His spiritual death on the cross: His being identified with all the sins of the world. Now, next time you pray, ‘thy will be done,’ please think before you say these words. Do you really mean them? Jesus Christ prayed these words and it cost Him His spiritual life and His physical life on the cross. And as He said these words, He knows that He came to earth to do the Father’s will and pay for the sins of all mankind on the cross.

**John 6:38 For I have come down from heaven,
not to do My own will, but the will of Him who
sent Me.**

Why are you here today? God did not take you home the moment you believed in His Son. Why? We are here to do His will. We are here to glorify Him. And people, for some, this may include what may be considered horrible treatment as in the case of Richard Wurmbrand and the Risley’s. Multitudes have been horribly martyred for Christ, and countless others have suffered for Christ. Sometimes, just maybe, in the service of the Lord you will be cast to your knees in the labor of prayer.

Are you a Prayer Warrior, or a Prayer Wimp?
Colossians 4:12-14

Matthew 26:40 And He *came to the disciples and *found them sleeping, and *said to Peter, “So, you men could not keep watch with Me for one hour?”

Here is a sad awakening for many: don't expect others to share the depth of your sorrow, the depth of your grief. It is between you and God the Father and Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. The Lord's labor of prayer was concerning Himself and sins of the world, but He is also concerned about these young men whom He loves. Remember spiritual love sees a need. And here Jesus sees the need of these young men. And that is what verse 41 is about. Here, the Lord moves from His own grief to what these three young men need.

Matthew 26:41 “Keep watching and praying that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

Keep watching. This Greek verb means to refrain from sleep. Keep awake. While this may seem a little out of place, please remember that these are young men (late teens) and they have been up all the day before, all night long and here it is early morning. For them to be in prayer, is going to be a laborious task. How many of you pray when you are really physically tired? But the Lord warns them they must guard against falling to sleep. Pay attention to all that is going on with Jesus and what is about to happen in their presence and to them.

Are you a Prayer Warrior, or a Prayer Wimp?
Colossians 4:12-14

and praying that you may not enter into temptation; Not pray that they do not enter into temptation but keep in prayer for the purpose that they may not enter into temptation.

the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.” This is not referring to the flesh nature, but to the physical body. The body is weak, infirm, and prone to sleep and the body prefers to flee from harm. The Persian version of this passage reads ‘my spirit is firm, but my body is infirm.’

Matthew 26:42 He went away again a second time and prayed, saying, “My Father, if this cannot pass away unless I drink it, Your will be done.”

When you are suffering or are in an unavoidable circumstance, when you are in labor to pray, your prayers will often be on the same subject, perhaps worded differently. This fervent prayer of Jesus is addressed to the Father. When you labor in prayer you stay very close to God the Father, the one who is in control. This laborious prayer is centered on the Plan of God, on the Will of God.

Matthew 26:43 Again He came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy.

Again He came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy. Again, do not be heavy laden if others do not share your pain and the labor of your prayers.

Here, we can see even with more insight into the labor of our Lord’s prayer by looking at what Dr. Luke tells us at this point.

Are you a Prayer Warrior, or a Prayer Wimp?
Colossians 4:12-14

Luke 22:41 And He withdrew from them about a stone's throw, and He knelt down and began to pray,

Luke 22:42 saying, "Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Yours be done."

Luke 22:43 Now an angel from heaven appeared to Him, strengthening Him.

The message here is that while others may not see nor share the depth of the agony of your prayers, God does. God sees and God loves. And love sees a need and God's love meets that need. You are never alone, no matter how alone you may feel you are. God is there. His love is there, ready to strengthen you, garrison your soul, give you the supernatural strength to make it through this laborious hour in your life. Here is where the Love of God is so vital to you in your Christian life. But remember, being loved is only half of the issue. Being benefited is the real issue. And we are benefited by the Love of God, at this point in our lives by faith, by trusting Him, as Jesus is doing right now. He is trusting the Plan of God, the Will of God for His life.

Verse 44 gives us more insight into the agony of Jesus as He prepares to die spiritually because of our sins.

Luke 26:44 And being in agony He was praying very fervently; and His sweat became

Are you a Prayer Warrior, or a Prayer Wimp?
Colossians 4:12-14

like drops of blood, falling down upon the ground.

What is the soul condition of our Lord as He prays?

Agony. This is the only time this word is used in the New Testament. It means just that: agony, anguish. Here, it refers to inner soul torment of Jesus as He anticipates becoming identified with the judgment for our sins. And He has not been hurt at all physically as His soul is in torment. It is not in torment because of the coming of physical death but in agony because He is about to be separated from God the Father in sin. A multitude of people suffer physically, but none suffer as Jesus Christ suffered for us on the cross. The humiliation and the shame is not the dying on the cross but dying spiritually; being separated from God the Father because He chose to come in contact with our sins. Big sins, small sins, Jesus Christ died for all the sins of all the world.

And being in agony He was praying very fervently. Here is our study, praying fervently, ‘laboring earnestly’ for you in his prayers. I am not saying or even implying that anyone labors in prayer as our Lord, but we are looking at our Lord in fervent prayer to learn about being this devoted to prayer. We know no one suffers as our Lord, nor prays with the agony of our Lord but I wonder if many even pray with the labor that Epaphras prayed for those whom he loved in Colossae?

And being in agony He was praying very fervently. These two words are the translation of one comparative adverb. This adverb shows the intensity of Jesus’ prayer. He is laboriously in prayer...for or about Himself and what He was about to endure for us, for our eternal benefit.

Are you a Prayer Warrior, or a Prayer Wimp?
Colossians 4:12-14

And His sweat became like drops of blood falling down to the ground. First, He was sweating, not from the heat of the night, but from the heat of the battle He was in.

And like *drops of blood* reveals the relationship of the soul agony of Jesus and His own physical body. Unlike His disciples whose bodies labored to sleep due to the sorrow going on in them, the body of Jesus senses the agony of His soul.

“When your body starts to heat up, whether it's because of exercise, work, or outside temperature, your brain reacts by releasing **sweat** from the more than 2.5 million eccrine glands spread out across nearly all of your body, pouring liquid through pores to lower your body temperature.”

[<https://www.popularmechanics.com/science/health/a23922/the-science-of-sweat/>]

Think about the body of our Lord during this intense time of prayer. Not only sweating but sweating to where it was falling to the ground, His body reacted, not to exercise, or work or outside temperature, but to the agony of His soul. To the labor of His prayer.

Matthew 26:44 And He left them again, and went away and prayed a third time, saying the same thing once more.

Matthew 26:45 Then He *came to the disciples and *said to them, “Are you still sleeping and resting? Behold, the hour is at hand and the

Are you a Prayer Warrior, or a Prayer Wimp?
Colossians 4:12-14

Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners.

Matthew 26:46 Get up, let us be going; behold, the one who betrays Me is at hand!”

Let's summarize the laborious prayer of our Lord:

1. His soul was deeply grieved to the point of death.
2. His soul was distressed.
3. He fell on His face to pray.
4. God sent an angel to strengthen Him at this time.
5. He was in agony of soul.
6. He prayed very fervently.
7. His agony effected His body so that He sweat like drops of blood to the ground.
8. And His prayer was about His bearing the judgment of the sins of the whole world. And people want to add various things to the agony of Jesus Christ on the cross. They want to add works, rituals, emotions, repentance, all kinds of works of man to the agony of Jesus Christ. People, realize what happened on the cross and you will be in disgust of adding anything to the cross work of Jesus. Neither He nor His Father will add or accept any addition to His suffering on the cross.

Are you a Prayer Warrior, or a Prayer Wimp?
Colossians 4:12-14

Ephesians 2:8 For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God;

Ephesians 2:9 not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.

Ephesians 2:10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.

We can do nothing but faith for salvation or restoration of His Spirit.

But we are looking at prayer, specifically fervent prayer.

So here from Epaphras we learn something more about prayer—to be a prayer warrior means to struggle in prayer and in making time to pray.

Let's note some fundamental issues about prayer.

1. Pray in the Holy Spirit.

Jude 1:20 But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit,

Ephesians 6:18 With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit,

So no matter if you are praying continually through the day or are laboring in fervent prayers you must know how to be empowered

Are you a Prayer Warrior, or a Prayer Wimp?
Colossians 4:12-14

by the Holy Spirit by grace through faith and then be empowered by the Holy Spirit when you pray.

2. Often, God will bring about circumstances into our lives or allow Satan to bring them into our lives or allow our own flesh nature to place us in tribulation...so that we will come to Him in prayer.

2 Chronicles 7:14 and My people who are called by My name humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, will forgive their sin and will heal their land.

3. Praying fervently, laboring in prayer: these kinds of prayers are often so intense we do not know how or what to pray. We are on our knees, but so much in strain that we do not know what to pray. God, out of His love, sees our need and He sends recovery.

Romans 8:26 In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do *not know how to pray* as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words;

Romans 8:27 and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

Are you a Prayer Warrior, or a Prayer Wimp?
Colossians 4:12-14

What a powerful prayer! To pray according to the will of God, especially when we are hurting in our souls and bodies.

4. It is amazing how people get so far from the truth about prayer as they do about morality. Many people like to say God will always hear your prayers. He is a loving God, and if you hurt, you can turn to Him in prayer. Well, let's look at the Word of God.

Proverbs 28:9 He who turns away his ear from listening to the law, Even his prayer is an abomination.

Ok, people, here you have it in the Word of God. One who is practicing in any sin, adultery, fornication, homosexuality, etc. and in the midst of their sinning they pray...their prayers are an abomination to God.

Isaiah 59:1 Behold, the Lord's hand is not so short That it cannot save; Nor is His ear so dull That it cannot hear.

Isaiah 59:2 But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, And your sins have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear.

He can hear the prayer of repentance but not prayers crying for help that your sins have brought about.

**Are you a Prayer Warrior, or a Prayer Wimp?
Colossians 4:12-14**

Isaiah 1:12 “When you come to appear before Me, Who requires of you this trampling of My courts?

Isaiah 1:13 “Bring your worthless offerings no longer, Incense is an abomination to Me. New moon and sabbath, the calling of assemblies— I cannot endure iniquity and the solemn assembly.

Isaiah 1:14 “I hate your new moon festivals and your appointed feasts, They have become a burden to Me; I am weary of bearing them.

Isaiah 1:15 “So when you spread out your hands in prayer, I will hide My eyes from you; Yes, even though you multiply prayers, I will not listen. Your hands are covered with blood.

We cannot pray effective prayers out of the Holy Spirit which means while we are in sin. God will not tolerate such blasphemy. But He will hear a prayer from a repentant sinner.

Psalm 66:18 if I regard wickedness in my heart, The Lord will not hear;

Psalm 66:19 But certainly God has heard; He has given heed to the voice of my prayer.

**Are you a Prayer Warrior, or a Prayer Wimp?
Colossians 4:12-14**

**Psalm 66:20 Blessed be God, Who has not
turned away my prayer Nor His
lovingkindness from me.**

**Ephesians 2:18 for through Him we both have
our access in one Spirit to the Father**

Please note that all three members of the Godhead are involved in our prayers. *For through Him that is Jesus Christ we both have access in one Spirit God the Holy Spirit to the Father*

Become a prayer Warrior for Christ!