

# Spiritual Labor

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EPAPHRAS, WHO IS ONE OF YOU, A SERVANT OF CHRIST, SALUTES YOU,  
ALWAYS LABORING FERVENTLY FOR YOU IN PRAYERS

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(Colossians 4:12)



Many times we have heard this old expression – **Hard work never hurt anyone.**

Well, it did me. I hurt one summer during my high school days when I picked cotton for a farmer. My fingers bled from the sharp burs pricking my fingers. I was extremely sore from dragging the long cotton sack when it began to fill up.

I hurt when I worked for my grandfather who was a house mover. I crawled under the house to set the hydraulic jacks, to position the heavy oak two inch thick tracks, and to set the dollies in place.

I hurt when I worked one summer during my college days for a contractor, building a school building. Handling the heavy, rough, twelve-inch concrete blocks wore holes in my gloves, exposing my fingers, causing them to bleed. The heat was almost unbearable for me, and the strain of pushing the wheel bearer up a ramp to the level where the block layers were working was about more than my 130-pound body could endure. Yes, hard work does hurt, but it was necessary for me to earn the money I needed to accomplish some objectives facing me.

*Now what about spiritual labor? Yes, it hurts also:*

Paul's description of Epaphras, his prison companion, is what this article is about: Consistent Spiritual labor, which is the labor of intercession. We will say more about him later.

There is in many faithful churches a nucleus of God's people who are concerned about the prevailing state of affairs in spiritual matters in the Lord's work and are an exception to my observation. Hopefully, my comments will answer some questions and offer some solutions. Please pardon my negativity while I get to the positive. I must be forthright in expressing my heart and speaking my mind, but I do so in a loving and kind way. *Consider these observations:*

## ❖ A False Maturity

Through the years, the evangelical church has come into an imagined maturity. In some ways, she has grown up, but a proud sophistication besets her. Having come into her own in matters of prosperity and education, she is described by Jesus in His letter to the Laodiceans in Revelation 3 as having developed a *need-nothing* attitude. They not only thought it, they said it. But Jesus described them as spiritually dead and nauseating – wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked (Revelation 3:17).

## ❖ A Self-Centered Ministry

In Isaiah 55:8, the Lord said to His unfaithful people, *For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways.* And He admonished them to forsake their own thoughts and ways. Concerning God's Word, superficial in understanding of the great principles of Scripture describes the church today. God's ways of ministry are considered outworn theological baggage not needed in these modern times.

### ❖ A Love of Ease

At one time the Lord told Isaiah to warn His rebellious people by writing: *This is a rebellious people...who say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophecy deceits* (Isaiah 30:9-10).

Many churches today want a pastor who makes them feel good and happy. He must not make waves and trouble the waters. He must be a “man about town,” loved by all, but they reject a man who preaches the whole counsel of God.

The visitation program is a thing of the past—it is too demanding and inconvenient. They may want new people, but will not go out of their way to reach them. They love their plush carpet, padded pews, and stain-glass windows. They will sing in the choir, work in the nursery, teach Sunday School, and give their money, and they are to be commended for these things. These are “smooth things,” but that is as far as they go. **They don’t want the hard work of – spiritual labor.**

They think – You may have as much of my temporal things as I can spare, but don’t expect anything of my private and spiritual life. I don’t like anything that causes discomfort or inconveniences me. I have my own ideas and ways in my spiritual or church life. **So they come as they are and leave as they were.** And they live in their own little world of isolation from the souls of the lost.

### ❖ A Diminished Vision

Many of the church folks have closed their eyes to hurting, empty, desolate souls who are lost without God and without hope, unless some genuine intercessor begins to care enough to pray and weep, agonize and travail for their salvation. They may see the souls in foreign lands, but overlook even their unsaved family members, their neighbors, friends and other associates. They are oblivious to the command of Jesus who said, *Say you not, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest* (John 4:35).

### ❖ Loss of Compassion

Most of the so called sponges you buy in stores today are not true sponges. Instead, they are synthetic materials made to look and to clean like true animal sponges. These sponges are soft and can absorb large amounts of water. And they have qualities that make them excellent cleaning tools. In a certain period of their development the real animal sponges, attract flint-like particles from the silt in the bottom of the ocean. After a period of time, they become as hard as a rock and lose their characteristics of a true sponge.

Does not this describe many individual Christians and, consequently, churches. They take on the attitudes of their environment that result in the loss of sensitivity to the needs of others, especially the unsaved. I read the story of a woman who went to her pastor and asked him why she could not win her two boys to Christ. He asked her a few questions to which she gave the right answers. Then he concluded with this bold and forthright statement, “Lady, the reason you can’t win your two boys to Jesus is because **your eyes are too dry.**” How true of many parents!!! They take their children, when sick, to the doctor, but fail to take them to the great Physician, the Lord Jesus for their spiritual needs to be supplied. If some disease threatens their lives, they will weep with grievous concern, but neglect to pray and travail in intercession for their salvation.

An expectant mother will care for her health to maintain strength to give birth to her baby, but may neglect her spiritual welfare that she may have power to bring souls to birth. Take note of Hezekiah's statement: *This day is a day of trouble, and of rebuke, and of blasphemy: for the children are come to the birth, and there is not strength to bring forth* (Isaiah 66:9).

Renown Evangelist, Vance Havner who died in 1986, is credited with this profound statement: **There are churches today that traffic in unfelt truth.** I don't like repeating his statement, but I know it to be true. I have preached in churches where there was no evidence of a burden for souls—no awareness of unsaved people who were present in the services.

I heard of an unsaved man who ceased to attend a certain church and went to another. Someone asked him why he went to the other church. His reply was, "They love a fellow down there." One church failed to intercede for souls—the other, aware of his unsaved condition, loved him and led him to Christ.

#### ❖ The Ministry of Intercession: What is it?

Paul wrote to young Timothy, the pastor of the Church at Ephesus, *I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men;* (I Timothy 2:1).

As Paul exhorts Timothy in the matter of prayer, he names the different aspects of prayer. In General prayers we have various objectives, such as praise and worship, thanksgiving and petitions for particular needs. Objective prayer, as in supplication and intercession has to do with the intensity of prayer. As we continue, we will come to an understanding of what intercession is and why it is in a special category of prayer. We will learn from the lives of the several people I have selected to describe.

When we understand what true intercession really is, we will see our failure in this ministry . With an understanding, we can see the way God works in us, by us, and through us to accomplish His purposes. He does not work independently of His people.

Why did God give us talents, spiritual gifts, promises, the privilege of prayer, and the fruit of the Spirit? These are for the fulfillment of His purposes in salvation and sanctification—and for intercession. Intercession is an added dimension of prayer. Prayer is a part of it, but not the extent of it. In intercession, we participate with Jesus in His suffering for lost souls. We take the place of others before Him and act as their advocate or spiritual attorney. By intercession we receive from God by faith what those for whom we intercede need. We will discuss more about this later. Remember, we are no more like Jesus in faith and obedience than when we are in intercession for the unsaved. We are following His ways to accomplish His purposes as we intercede for others.

#### ❖ The reason for the lack of intercession:

*Jesus said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abides alone: but if it dies, it brings forth much fruit* (John 12:24).

Now here is a great truth – locked up in a seed is the germ of life that cannot get out until it dies. Unless we die to the self-life, the corrupt nature of fallen Adam, it has dominion in our lives instead of God. And we have no power to intercede and bear the fruit of souls. This is the meaning of Jesus' statement: **When the seed dies the harvest will rise.** Paul wrote, *So then they who are in the flesh cannot please God* (Romans 8:8). Death to the self-life is **to consign it to the cross of Christ.**

In regard to the ministry of the Holy Spirit, the church has tried to get God's work done by the energy of the self-life and has not taught the truth of the fullness of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:18). We cannot even pray without the Holy's Spirit's power, and we certainly cannot intercede. The bottom line is the failure to implement God's ways of ministry. Self does not want to suffer the pain of travail and agony. Thus God's people do not desire the fellowship of the sufferings of Christ—it is repulsive to the modern church, for it takes place in the very inner recesses of the heart and mind. It is not something you turn off like saying amen to close your prayers. When you enter intercession for an individual, you continue until God lifts the burden or until that soul comes to Christ.

### ❖ An Interceding Church.

How well I remember the days when the churches were filled with joy and concern for the unsaved. I have known the time when the people sang the old hymns with uplifted faces as though toward the Lord. I have seen them when their faces were wet with their tears of concern for their loved ones. I recall a meeting on the gulf coast of Mississippi when the young people filled the altar, praying for their unsaved parents and friends. I recall the time when we gathered on Saturday afternoon at a recreation center for a family pick nick. One man had my attention as he tried to start the fire in a charcoal grill with his family gathered around. He had never done that before, for he had recently come to Christ from out of a life of drunkenness and did not know what clean recreation was. **That man was the object of the agony and travail of the intercession of the church of which I was the pastor.**

I recall the unique, hallowing, manifest presence of the Holy Spirit settling down in our services like a gentle rain on a hot summer day—all because of the interceding hearts of Godly saints, and as the choir began to sing in the invitation:

Out of my bondage, sorrow, and night, Jesus, I come; Jesus, I come;  
 Into Thy freedom gladness and light, Jesus, I come to Thee;  
 Out of my sickness into Thy health, Out of my want and into Thy wealth,  
 Out of my sin and into Thy Self, Jesus, I come to Thee.

And as they came and our tears of agony changed to tears of rejoicing as God honored our intercession in the salvation of the souls of men, women and young people who came from out of every background you could imagine to a new life in the Lord Jesus Christ. Yes, intercession for souls is demanding and the cost is great, but look at the results and consider the joy of fellowship with Jesus in His sufferings. Isaiah tells us:

**When Zion travails, then will sons be born.  
 and  
 When a Church Intercedes, souls will be saved.**

### ❖ An Interceding Deacon

I recall s well a true intercessor who became concerned for a man and his family in our city who were unsaved. A Deacon in the church, Bill was involved with a group of men who met for prayer at 9:00 o'clock every Saturday night. Without fail, he would ask the men to join him in prayer for his new friends to be saved. Bill's burden so touched my heart I was compelled to visit Bill's friends. In a heavy rain storm, I made my way to their home and when I arrived I saw Bill's little blue Vokes Wagon parked

in the driveway. I just turned my engine off and prayed, thanking the Lord for a deacon who would get out on such a rainy night to visit that family of unsaved souls. Bill's intercession paid off. One Sunday morning Bill said to me, "Pastor, they are coming today." They did come and they came to Christ. Oh, if churches could understand and catch the vision of how God works through His intercessors to bring souls to Himself. Spiritual labor is demanding of us, but **it is what God honors.**

### ❖ My Interceding Father

How grateful I am for the most Godly man I ever knew – my father, my preacher daddy. Known as a man of prayer, he was also a man of the Word of God. He taught me to pray and to love God's Word. I never knew a man with a greater compassion for souls. Prayer for souls was his passion. On the night he died in 1986, he had spent several hours in prayer. So his life ended in prayer. After retirement from his pastorate, he and my mother moved to the city where I was serving as a pastor. They joined my church and oh, what a blessing they were. God gave me an encourager, a prayer warrior, an intercessor. When I stood to preach, he was in prayer and when I began the invitation, he stood with hands gripping the back of the pew in front him, and with bowed head, wept and prayed. I not only had a prayer partner in the invitation **I had a pleading partner as he poured out his heart for souls to come to Christ.**

### Consider Some Intercessors in the Bible

I want to emphasize that the state of affairs in the anemic dysfunctional, superficial church will never change until the ways of God, the ministry of intercession, are employed. We cannot tone down or change the truth of God's ways of operation to suit our spiritual taste. He will not comply with our ways that reject His. We may market the church, utilize organization and promotion to enhance our image in order to attract people—there is nothing wrong with these things, but we must focus on God's way of reaching souls—**spiritual travail for souls will result in spiritual birth.**

As I describe the intercession of several individuals, I pray that the Holy Spirit will reveal the secret and teach us to become effectual in the ministry of intercession. This is a serious matter and we must not deviate from it. By appealing to the carnal and worldly taste of people, a mega church can be built, but if it does not comply with God's way of a burden for souls, the agony of compassion, the pain of travail that comprise the sufferings of Jesus, it will not have God's blessing and power. Why strive for the superficial when we can have the real work of the Holy Spirit? Oh, may God give us genuine intercessors!!! Please understand, the intercessor spiritually takes the place of someone before God and through the prayer of faith receives from God what that person needs. *Now let's consider two Divine Intercessors, Jesus and the Holy Spirit, and Moses, a Human Intercessor:*

#### A. Jesus – The Intercessor in Heaven

If it is true that God works in His people, by His people, and through His people to accomplish His objectives – and it is true – then an intercessor is such a person. An intercessor is a conveyor of God's truth, His grace and love. Cold hearts without deep concern for souls are not effectual vessels of the gospel to the hearts of people who need forgiveness and the peace of God. Jesus even yearned for the souls of the enemies of the gospel. *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets, and stone them who are sent unto you how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and ye would not* (Luke 13:34). If you would be an intercessor, observe the characteristics of Jesus as an intercessor and you will know what God expects.

### ❖ His Identification

Identification with those for whom you intercede is the first pre-requisite. This does not mean that you must know and personally identify with them—it means to identify with them in your heart and mind with love and a passion for God to intervene in their lives to meet their needs.

To become our intercessor with the Father, Jesus became like us in the flesh. He became a man, the God man or the Son of man as He calls Himself. To satisfy the justice of God, Jesus became our sin and was crucified in our place to pay the penalty for our sin. He not only died for us, He was buried and rose again for our justification. As our intercessor, Jesus ascended back to Heaven and was seated at the right hand of the Father. Note the words of Paul:

*Who is he that condemns? It is Christ who died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us* (Romans 8:34).

*And this is the way He intercedes for us now:*

### ❖ By His Presence—He is there FOR US.

*For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us* (Hebrews 9:24). In intercession, we are present there before the throne of God for someone else, pleading their case to the Lord. The most noble thing we could do is to *appear* in the presence of God for others—**one of the ways of God.**

### ❖ By His Presentation – His Own Blood

*Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.*

Jesus is with the Father as our attorney to plead our case that is comprised of this truth. His very presence as the sinless, virgin born, crucified, risen, ascended with His own blood is the evidence of His case He is presenting to the Father for us. Nothing else is needed—**it is a winning case.**

### ❖ His Supplication

The supplication of Jesus' prayer was in His sufferings. *But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man. For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings* (Hebrews 10:9-10). – **one of the ways of God.**

*He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities* (Isaiah 53:11).

Jesus' supplication also was in the agony of travail. Isaiah prophesied that He would taste death for us and bear our iniquities and would see the travail of His soul—and it came to pass.

Jesus' supplication in His intercession was no ordinary prayer we might hear in the typical church. Hebrew 5:7 tells us that in the days of His flesh, He *offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears.* And Jesus has not ceased His intercession for us.

## B. The Holy Spirit – The Intercessor within Us.

Jesus said, *And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever; Even the Spirit of truth;...he dwells with you, and shall be in you* (John 14:16-17).

The Holy Spirit began to permanently indwell believers at Pentecost and ever since, He, upon one's repentance and faith, enters his life to regenerate and indwell that soul. Before Pentecost, He was with, upon, and at times within. Note again Jesus' words: He dwells with you (before Pentecost) and shall be in you (beginning at Pentecost). The Holy Spirit is God's gift to the Church, and that happened at Pentecost, the beginning of the dispensation of the Church.

There are several purposes for His ministry through the church: conviction of sin, empowering for service, divine direction, enlightening, but I deal with only one now. He is the intercessor in our hearts who helps us in prayer – communion or communication with the Father. Now note the words of Paul about the intercession of the Holy Spirit.

*Likewise the Spirit also helps our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groaning that cannot be uttered. And he who searches the hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because he makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God* (Romans 8:26-27).

We have a problem of not knowing what to pray for as we ought, but thank God, according to Paul, He has provided a solution to that problem. And it is an amazing solution! At times when we don't know how to pray about a matter, don't despair, for the Holy Spirit enables us to sigh. And don't despise the sighs and groans for they are given by the Holy Spirit. Sighs or groans are wordless prayer.

In our behalf, the Holy Spirit, knowing what the sighs and groans are about makes them known to the Father. When we are pressed down before the Lord by the intense longing of our hearts and don't know how to pray, the Holy Spirit intercedes to the Father for us by prompting our groans. **He searches our hearts and reads our thoughts.** The Father knows what is the mind of the Spirit who always intercedes in the will of God.

We must recognize and acknowledge the importance of the ministry of the Holy Spirit. We cannot communicate with the Father without Him, we cannot worship, praise, nor give thanks without Him. We certainly cannot intercede for souls without Him, for He is the One who gives us guidance, compassion, and power to do so. He originates and gives assignments for intercession.

I ask myself, am I willing to ride,  
The high tide of God's Purpose.  
Or do I want to stay safely anchored  
In the harbor of my own mediocrity?

-Joan McDonald  
Queensland, Australia

## C. Moses – The Emancipator

I cannot cover the life and ministry of Moses in this article, I will merely deal with some highlights of his life and intercession. Of all the great men of the Bible, there is no one who was given a greater assignment of intercession than Moses, the deliverer of Israel from Egypt. Let's note first,

## \_\_\_\_\_ Moses: The Man \_\_\_\_\_

The background of this great man tells us that he was no weakling, spiritually or otherwise. Regardless of his stature, large or small, he was **A Man Among Men**. He was no coward, no compromiser, but a man of moral strength. Every fiber of his being was saturated with truth and Godliness, determined to accomplish his mission. If you have ever wondered what kind of man God needed to bring His people out of bondage, consider these characteristics:

### ❖ Unfaltering in Faith

In his encounter with the great I AM, the Lord at the burning bush that was not consumed, God gave Moses his assignment to deliver Israel from Egypt. After the Lord countered Moses' excuses, Moses responded by faith and never wavered.

### ❖ Undaunted in Courage

Moses knew that His God, who turned the serpent into a rod that became the symbol of authority with which God vested him, would surely sustain him in his assignment.

### ❖ Unequaled in Intellect

*Paul tells us that, Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds* (Acts 7:22). The Lord knows how to equip and prepare His people for the task He assigns to them. **This was the providence of God.** When in the *University of Egypt*, **Moses had no idea that he would use his training later in the emancipation Israel. Oh, the amazing providence of God.**

### ❖ Unsurpassed in Compassion

*And Moses returned unto the LORD, and said, Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold. Yet now, if You will, forgive their sin; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written* (Exodus 32:31-32).

*No man had a greater concern for people.* Moses was definitely serious, choosing to be obliterated if God refused to forgive His people for their idolatrous rebellion (Exodus 32:31-32).

### ❖ Unbiased in Arbitration

Does it surprise you to learn that Moses was a judge? God equipped him with a spirit of discernment necessary in settling disputes between the thousands of the Hebrews. A man of great meekness, Moses was also a man of wisdom and patience. Lastly, Moses was:

### ❖ Unparalleled in Endurance

Use your imagination to see Moses leading the masses of the people of Israel through the wilderness for forty years. Think of the stress that would have driven others to despair, but consider what God was doing in Moses' life to keep him going with the murmuring, complaining, criticizing people. In the life of intercession, we encounter some serious *people problems* that will vex us to wear us down. But consider the promise of God in Isaiah 40:

*Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, faints not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding. He gives power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increases strength.....But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength* (Isaiah 40:28-29, 31).



Not every intercessor is a Moses, but God equips us as He did Moses. Whatever the assignment, the Lord says, *My Grace is sufficient for You*. He resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.

#### D. Moses: The Mission

I'm sure you have heard it said, God does not build His church on a man. Now that sounds like a wisely founded statement, but there is no truth to it. He is building His church on the Lord Jesus, the Son of Man. And through the years, He has been working in His people, by His People and through His people. God does not work independently of His people.

We find a statement in Psalm 106:23 regarding the intercession of Moses: *Therefore he said that he would destroy them, had not Moses his chosen stood before him in the breach, to turn away his wrath, lest he should destroy them* (Psalm 106:23). This is a tremendous statement concerning intercession. I want to use three words to further emphasize the power of Moses' intercession:

#### Had Not Moses:

Moses was certainly the man for the mission. God makes no mistakes. He accomplished His purpose **through Moses' life and intercession**. Just consider what would have happened to Israel had it not been for Moses. These words reveal **the importance of human involvement in intercession**. When Israel left Egypt, they numbered over one million souls headed out on a two hundred mile journey that took forty years.

**Had Not Moses** believed God when He told him to *Speak unto the children that they go forward* to cross the Red Sea, the water of which parted to allow them to walk across on dry ground, Israel would have perished at the hands of the powerful army of Pharaoh coming toward them. It took great faith and courage to tell the people to walk toward the sea, but Israel survived, and Pharaoh's army drowned.

**Had Not Moses** followed the counsel of Jethro, his father-in-law, who instructed him to organize the people of Israel into thousands, hundreds, and fifty's so as to develop and utilize leaders, he would have collapsed under the extremely heavy load he was carrying. A single judge to arbitrate surely was not enough, for one man could not survive such a responsibility Moses was trying to handle himself. But he did an unimaginable job through the men God gave him.

**Had Not Moses** discerned the meaning of the tree the Lord showed him at Marah, the children of Israel would have died from the lack of water. They had gone out into the wilderness for three days after crossing the Red Sea and when they arrived at Marah, they found only bitter water they could not drink. The people began to murmur and cry *what shall we drink?*

Now note Moses' faith in action. He cried unto the Lord and *the Lord showed him a tree* that he cut and cast into the water. The tree turned the bitter water into sweet water. Moses' knew the significance of the tree God showed him. Surely, in his communion with the Lord he learned the significance of the tree of the cross of Christ and its power to turn the bitterness of a guilty soul into the sweetness of love and forgiveness. Moses had the insight to observe what God had in mind when He showed him the tree.

**Had Not Moses** utilized the authority God committed to human hands Israel would have been defeated by Amalek at Rephidim (Exodus 17:8-13). **At** the burning bush, the Lord asked Moses what he had in his hand. A rod, Moses replied. The Lord told him to throw it down; he did and it became a snake. Pick it up Moses, the Lord commanded. Moses picked it up and the snake turned to a rod—not just an

ordinary rod, but *the rod of God*, the symbol of authority God committed to Moses. At Rephidim, Moses told Joshua to choose men to fight against Amelek, an evil army empowered by Satanic forces.

Now note Moses' intercession. While Joshua and the fighting men of Israel were engaged in battle with Amelek, Moses was on the top of the hill, engaged with Satan in spiritual battle. How? He lifted up the rod of God with the authority vested in him, represented by the rod—the only way to defeat Satanic forces. Who won the battle? *And Joshua defeated Amelek and his people with the edge of the sword.*

**Intercession involves spiritual warfare and had not Moses engaged Satan in battle, Israel would have been defeated.** Is this not the reason for our defeat many times in our intercession for souls? We don't take seriously the admonition to lift up the hand and voice of authority over the powers of darkness. It is as clear as day—*we wrestle not against flesh and blood*, but against powerful demonic forces that are defeated only in the authority of Christ delegated to us.

Paul tells us that *the god of this world has blinded the minds of them who believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them* (II Corinthians 4:4).

The heart of souls in darkness can be opened only by the authority of Christ that we must exercise in spiritual warfare. Jesus said, *Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.* Jesus spoke to Satan, and so can we. In the place of Christ, we must act in His authority and issue the command to him to loose his captive that he may be set free to respond to the gospel. We issue our command to Satan here and it is executed by Jesus **from His throne in Heaven**. Satan is great in power and intelligence—in our own strength we are no match for him. However, he is no match for Christ who is *all powerful*. Paul said, *be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might*. Therefore, in Him we are stronger than the powers of darkness—*greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world, AMEN! So don't fear, but fight.*

#### **Conclusion:**

The fourth chapter of Paul's letter to the Colossians is a great chapter for all who would be effectual intercessors. Note what he said: *Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, salutes you, always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God. For I bear him record, that he has a great zeal for you....*

Here Paul describes the intercession of his companion. He was a fellow prisoner in Rome but he interceded for those at home in Colossae. Filled with great zeal (love and compassion) he was consistent in prayer. Now Epaphras' prayer was not **general**, but **adversarial** prayer. He *labored*. This word in Greek means **to contend with an adversary to accomplish a definite objective**. Epaphras was not involved in his daily devotional or quiet time prayer—he was in spiritual warfare with the forces of Satan, for the spiritual victory of the saints and the salvation of the unsaved. Now this is the *spiritual labor* the Church must be engaged in today. Shall we say, *had it not been for you* your loved ones and others would have continued lost in their unbelief, souls you should intercede for now?

A further word: In Matthew 15, Jesus said to a gentile Canaanite woman, *great is your faith*. WHY? That woman took the place of her daughter before the Lord; her daughter's need and pain became hers—and Jesus said, *Be it unto you...AS YOU WILL. Before the Lord she, by faith, received what her daughter needed—deliverance from a demon spirit. This illustrates true Intercession – Spiritual Labor. The woman travailed in faith for her daughter's deliverance – her faith, not her daughter's faith.*