

Philemon 1:23

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

There salute thee Epaphras, my fellowprisoner in Christ Jesus;

Analysis

There salute thee Epaphras, my fellowprisoner in Christ Jesus—ἀσπάζεται σε Ἐπαφρᾶς ὁ συναιχμάλωτός μου ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ (aspazetai se Epaphras ho synaichmalōtos mou en Christō Iēsou, greets you Epaphras my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus)—Ἐπαφρᾶς (Epaphras, Epaphras) founded Colossian church (Colossians 1:7, 4:12-13). συναιχμάλωτος (synaichmalōtos, fellow prisoner/captive of war) could be literal (imprisoned with Paul) or metaphorical (captive to Christ, Ephesians 4:8). Epaphras's presence with Paul in Rome suggests he traveled to report on Colossian church and seek apostolic guidance.

The greeting list (vv. 23-24) matches Colossians 4:10-14, confirming these letters' connection. Epaphras's Colossian origin makes his greeting especially meaningful to Philemon. The cluster of names demonstrates early Christianity's network—interconnected communities, traveling ministers, shared mission. These weren't isolated believers but members of growing movement spanning the empire.

Historical Context

Epaphras likely brought Colossian reports prompting both Colossians and Philemon. The prison epistles (Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon) form coherent group written circa 60-62 AD from Rome. Tychicus delivered Ephesians and Colossians (Ephesians 6:21, Colossians 4:7); Onesimus accompanied him (Colossians 4:9), carrying Philemon. The simultaneous delivery of Colossians (to church) and Philemon (to individual) ensured community awareness of Paul's request, preventing private harsh treatment of Onesimus.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. How does being part of interconnected Christian community affect your accountability and encouragement?
2. What traveling ministers and missionaries do you support, pray for, and learn from like the first-century churches?
3. How do you view imprisonment or hardship—as defeat or as being "fellow prisoners in Christ Jesus" with redemptive purpose?

Interlinear Text

Ἄσπάζονται σε Ἐπαφρᾶς ὁ συναιχμάλωτός μου ἐν
There salute thee Epaphras G3588 fellowprisoner my in
G782 G4571 G1889 G4869 G3450 G1722

Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ

Christ Jesus
G5547 G2424

Additional Cross-References

Colossians 1:7 (References Christ): As ye also learned of Epaphras our dear fellowservant, who is for you a faithful minister of Christ;

Romans 16:7 (References Christ): Salute Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen, and my fellowprisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me.

Colossians 4:12 (References Christ): Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.

