

THE TESTIMONY OF THE APOSTLE PAUL TO THE PHILIPPIANS - Parts 1 through 10

By Elder Ronnie Loudermilk

THE TESTIMONY OF THE APOSTLE PAUL TO THE PHILIPPIANS (part 1)

Paul the Exhorter of Unity

Philippians 4:2, "I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord."

In the 4th chapter of Paul's letter to the Philippians, we find the Apostle on 16 occasions using the word/letter "I". But when Paul uses this word/letter, he is not trying to draw attention to himself. He is laboring to share, with the Philippians, his experience as a disciple of the Lord. Paul hoped, that by his testimony, the brothers and sisters would be established in their service to the Lord Jesus Christ.

In the verse previously cited, we find Paul exhorting two sisters in the congregation to be in unity in the service of the Lord. Whether these two sisters were involved in a trivial quarrel of some type, or they were of different opinions in the house of God on a regular basis, we are not for sure. But the Apostle knew that if these two could be in accord, surely the remaining congregation should have no struggle with unity. The Apostle made it clear that the two sisters, as well as the entire congregation, should labor diligently to be "of the same mind in the Lord."

A few weeks ago I was reading and came across some interesting information about the redwood trees of California. To my surprise, I learned that it is very rare for redwood trees to have roots deeper than 4-6 feet. One would think that trees towering up to 385 feet in height would need extremely deep roots to withstand the storms and winds that would come against them. But what the roots of these trees lack in depth, they make up for in length. The roots of these trees will travel as far as 100 feet from the trunk of the tree and intertwine, even fuse, with the roots of other redwood trees. By the length of their roots and the fact that they intertwine with others, these trees have the strength to stand up to the storms and winds that blow hard upon them. Brothers and sisters, I hope we all can receive the lesson the Apostle is teaching us in Philippians 4:2. The Apostle, in his exhortation, is teaching us the importance of unity. The congregation in Macedonia needed unity to stand and be steadfast in their service to the Lord, and we in the upcoming year need each other as well. Let us all be like the redwoods, reaching outward to our brothers and sisters in the Kingdom of God, being intertwined in fellowship, helping one another to stand against the winds and storms we will face in this world. Amen!

Elder Ronnie B. Loudermilk

THE TESTIMONY OF THE APOSTLE PAUL TO THE PHILIPPIANS (part 2)

The Testimony of a Caring Servant of God

Philippians 4:3, "I intreat thee also, true yokefellow, help those women which laboured with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and with other my fellowlabourers, whose names are in the book of life."

The Apostle Paul's zeal for the glory of Christ and the truth was one that could be easily seen. Paul understood there was a labour for him in the gospel and he was very zealous for others to understand what he was blessed to understand. One of the motivating forces for Paul's extraordinary zeal, was his love and care for the children of God. Paul loved God's children with an unfeigned love and showed it in the way he served them. Paul, in the verse previously cited, intreated the disciples of the Lord with the loving care of a servant of Christ. The gentleness and kindness shown by Paul was in perfect accord to Peter, who said in 1 Peter 5:3, "Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock." Paul, in this verse of scripture, is teaching the disciples in Macedonia, as well as us today, that every profitable servant of Christ must love the Lord and His people. Please notice three things that the Apostle says in this verse that manifests his care:

(1) We are laboring together, not against one another ("true yoke-fellow", "fellow labourers"). The word fellow, as Paul employed in this verse, means to be yoked together in the same work. The Apostle Paul refers to them as his "fellow labourers". Paul had spent a great deal of his life persecuting and working diligently to destroy the faith, now his desire is to work together with the disciples for the Glory of Christ. Paul wanted to show his love and respect for them, not by making a command as a king, but beseeching them with the care of a servant of the King.

(2) The manifest appreciation for the help that had been given to him ("which laboured with me"). The brothers and sisters of the Church had done so much for Paul. In Acts 16:15 it was Lydia who gave the Apostle Paul a place to abide while in Macedonia. In Acts 16:33 it was the jailor who comforted Paul and Silas by washing the stripes they had received by way of persecution. The people at Philippi not only believed the gospel, they laboured to help Paul in his gospel service. By Philippians 4:1 alone we can see how Paul was touched by this outpouring of kindness and love. Paul called them his "dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown..."

(3) Paul's mentioning of them being children of God ("whose names are in the book of life.") Paul understood that the Lord had loved this people even before the world began (Eph 1:4-5), and loved them so much that He gave His only begotten Son to die for them on the Cross of Calvary (Jn 3:16). If the Lord loved them that much, Paul knew that the Lord would watch over them as a Shepherd would watch over His sheep (Ps 23:1; John 10:11). Paul considered this to be a powerful reason for him, as well as his true yoke-fellows and kindred in Christ, to have a sincere care for the family of God.

Brothers and sisters, in closing I would like to draw your attention to a statement the Apostle Paul makes in 1 Thessalonians 2:7, "But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children." The word gentle in this verse of scripture encompasses a host of virtues. The word teaches us of Paul's kindness, respect, compassion, tolerance of imperfections, and loyalty he had for the saints. Paul believed it was better to lead the sheep by example, than to drive the sheep as a dictator. This lesson is one that is important for every disciple of Jesus Christ. In order to serve profitably, you must first love. I pray we all will consider the example of Paul, so that we ourselves will gain a greater experiential love for Jesus Christ, and a greater love for the care of God's children. Amen!

Elder Ronnie B. Loudermilk

THE TESTIMONY OF THE APOSTLE PAUL TO THE PHILIPPIANS (part 3)

Paul the Encourager of the Disciples

Philippians 4:4, "Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice."

The Apostle Paul, in fulfilling his call to Apostleship, understood that the disciples of Jesus Christ, throughout the regions he preached, would need encouragement to be able to "stand fast in the Lord" (Phil 4:1). Paul knew, because of the persecution that they would face, it would be a constant spiritual fight for the believers in Christ to remain faithful to the truth.

One way the Apostle labored to encourage the believers was by pointing their thoughts toward better things. Paul knew if the disciples in Macedonia were to remain faithful in their service, they needed their thoughts directed away from the troubles at hand and upon those things they could always rejoice in.

In like manner, we who live in this time, face the discouragements of this world. Oftentimes we will fix our eyes on the troubles at hand and forget about all we have to rejoice in. I've heard it said that 'the world is headed downhill faster than a greased ball bearing on a plate of glass; the government is falling apart, our economy is falling apart, and we have so much sickness on every hand.' And, if our thoughts are continually on such things, we may be so dismayed that rejoicing is not even considered. But according to the Apostle, the Philippians and the disciples throughout every generation, always have much to rejoice in. We can always rejoice in:

(1) Our salvation in Christ Jesus! In Luke 10:20, the disciples had returned from preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ and were rehearsing all that was subject to them through His name. Jesus tells them to not rejoice in this, but rather rejoice that "your names are written in heaven." Jesus knew this time of miracles would soon end and their mountain top experience of the manifested supernatural gifts of the Holy Ghost would cease, but their rejoicing in the hope of eternal life was something that could be done on every mountain and valley of life throughout every generation of time.

(2) Our hope of a better day! In Romans 5:2 the Apostle Paul says, he "rejoiced in the hope of the glory of God." I'm very thankful to go to Church on Sunday morning and see the family of God gather to glorify the Lord in worship, and am sad to see those Services end, but Hallelujah, as the hymn writer stated,

"There is coming a day, when no heartache shall come,
No more clouds in the sky, no more tears to dim the eyes,
All is peace forever more, on that happy golden shore,
What a day glorious day that will be."

Brothers and Sisters, our hope of that day is something we can rejoice in always.

(3) The Lord being on His throne! In 1 Chronicles 16:31 it was David who said, "Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice: and let men say among the nations, The LORD reigneth." We are not always able to rejoice in who is in the White House, who is our Senator or who is our Representative in national government, but we can always rejoice in the Lord being on His throne and His authority being higher than any earthly man.

(4) The truth! In 1 Corinthians 13:6 the Apostle Paul says that charity "rejoiceth in the truth." It's never a time to rejoice in a lie, but it's always the right time to rejoice in the truth. The gospel truth is able to bless the family of God to rejoice in the Lord.

(5) The word of God! In Psalms 119:162 David writes, "I rejoice in thy word, as one that findeth great spoil." It seems that everything in this world is constantly changing, but one thing will always remain

the same, God's Holy Word. If you are ever blessed to rejoice one time in His Word, you will be able to do so till the end of your life, because His Word never changes.

In closing, I would like to share something that my daddy used to say quite often in his preaching. When he felt lifted up by the Spirit he would say, 'I believe I could swing over hell on a rotten grape vine singing Amazing Grace How sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me.' When I would hear him say that, it would remind me of the text in Philippians 4:4, "Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice." Amen!

Elder Ronnie B. Loudermilk

THE TESTIMONY OF THE APOSTLE PAUL TO THE PHILIPPIANS (part 4)

Paul the Thankful Servant of God

Philippians 4:10, "But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again; wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity."

In Acts chapter 16 when the Apostle Paul arrived at Macedonia to preach the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, a love began that would continue throughout Paul's ministry. The Apostle loved the congregation there at Philippi and they loved him. Most of all, they all loved the Lord Jesus Christ and longed to show that love by their care for one another. And now, even after several years had passed since Paul was in Macedonia, this love and care had not wavered. Paul was very thankful for their love and care of him. While reading the verse previously cited, any sincere Bible student should be able to clearly see the warm, thankful spirit the Apostle felt when penning these words. Paul was thankful because:

(1) He understood their care of him was pleasing to God! The Apostle "rejoiced in the Lord greatly" because of their willingness to give to him and to the labors of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. According to Paul in 2 Corinthians 9:7, "God loveth a cheerful giver", and this group at Macedonia, even while being in a state of deep poverty (2 Cor 8:2), were glad to give. Paul would say in 2 Corinthians 8:3-4, "For to their power, I bear record, yea, and beyond their power they were willing of themselves; Praying us with much intreaty that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints." This congregation had given more than they were able and even pleaded with Paul to take their offerings. They thought it to be a great privilege to share with Paul and other disciples of Jesus, what God had blessed them to have. According to Paul, this willingness was not only commendable, but was very pleasing to God the Father.

(2) Their gifts were encouraging to the Apostle! Travel throughout the regions where Paul preached the Gospel of Christ was not easy. Paul did not own a Honda or a Toyota. He traveled at times by foot, but often would need to pay passage by ships (Acts 20:13; Acts 21:2). Without question, the expense of those trips was a burden. Paul, like every man, needed food, clothing and a place of rest. What a great encouragement and blessing it must have been for Paul when these believers would give to him for his journeys. Paul would say "your care of me hath flourished again". Like a flower that would bloom in the morning toward the sun, this congregation, time and time again, would give to Paul's ministering service to the saints of the Lord Jesus Christ.

(3) Their gifts were a blessing and encouragement to OTHER children of God! Paul was not the only

person who benefitted from the Macedonian's generosity. The other Churches also were blessed by their giving.

In Acts chapter 18, when Paul arrived at Corinth, he abode with Aquila and Priscilla and wrought with them as tent makers. In verse 5 of this chapter Timothy and Silas came from Macedonia. These two brothers evidently brought with them a precious gift from the Church at Philippi which freed the hands of Paul to preach the gospel of God in that region. Paul, when writing to the congregation at Corinth, would say, "I robbed other churches, taking wages of them, to do you service" (2 Cor 11:8). In Philippians 4:15-16 we read about the Apostle's trip to Thessalonica and how the saints at Macedonia had "sent once and again unto my necessity." The Church at Philippi had given so much to Paul that he could say, while in Thessalonica, "we would not be chargeable to any of you" (1 Thess 2:9, 2 Thess 3:8). The help of the Macedonians (Church at Philippi) had provided for Paul, not only there in Thessalonica, but in other places as well, freeing him to preach in those regions, including Thessalonica, without being in need of necessities from them.

In closing, I would like to draw your attention to Philippians 4:14. The verse teaches us of well doing in communicating our care and love. If we have a love for the saints and the Gospel of Jesus Christ, we would do well in showing that love by giving to those in need, the Church, and the ministry. If we have received, we would do well to be thankful. And in the well doing of giving and thanksgiving, let us not seek glory for ourselves, but let us rejoice and give glory to God. Paul would write in verse 20 of this same chapter, "Now unto God and our Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen." And may I also say, Amen!

Elder Ronnie B. Loudermilk

THE TESTIMONY OF THE APOSTLE PAUL TO THE PHILIPPIANS (part 5) The Testimony of an Experienced Teacher

Philippians 4:11-12, "Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need."

The Apostle Paul, in his effort to fulfill the calling of Apostleship, understood that the family of God not only needed instruction in Godly living, but also needed comfort in their trials and troubles. One way the Apostle would comfort the believers in Jesus was by sharing his own personal experience. Paul would never shun to "speak" to them those things he had "learned". The Lord had taught Paul many things in his life and Paul wanted the congregation at Philippi to "know" the things he knew. When we read Paul's other epistles, he seems to do this quite often. Let us notice at least three times the Apostle shared his experience and also notice some of the rich blessings that may be received in reading and knowing.

(1) In 1 Timothy 1:15 we read, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief." The Apostle Paul shared with Timothy and the saints throughout the generations that would follow, of him being the chief of sinners. We all may have had days in our lives when we wanted to argue with Paul concerning his claim, but Paul not only said it, he was inspired of the Holy Spirit to write it (2 Tim 3:16). Why is this

such a blessing to the readers? Because Paul is saying if the Lord Jesus Christ can save the Chief sinner, He is able to save all His little sheep. I conversed once with a man so condemned of his sins that he thought there was no way he could go to heaven. I turned to this portion of scripture, and upon relating to him what Paul was saying, the man began to smile in hope of salvation. 'There's hope for me Bro. Ronnie, he said.' I responded, 'Yes there is, and hope for me too.'

(2) In 2 Corinthians 12:4 we read, "How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter." In this verse of scripture we learn how Paul was taken up by the power of God into the third heaven to receive this amazing revelation from Jesus Christ. The revelation the Apostle received was in such a way that the Lord suffered the "messenger of Satan to buffet" him lest Paul would be "exalted above measure". Even though there are many lessons in this chapter of God's Holy Word, one is very evident. If the Lord would have no difficulty in taking Paul up to the third heaven to give to him this revelation, the Lord will have no difficulty in revealing to me those precious truths in His Word. Have you ever read your Bible and come to a place you didn't understand? This shouldn't come as a surprise, it happens to every Bible student. When I come to a place in my study like that, I bow my knees to the one that "caught up" Paul, and ask Him to let down some truth to me.

(3) In 2 Corinthians 11:24-25 we read, "Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep;..." In this portion of scripture, the Apostle tells of the many times he suffered in his service in the Kingdom of God. And you may be asking, 'What type of comfort could we possibly receive in reading about Paul's sufferings?' We all can receive comfort in knowing how God was with Paul and how He gave him strength to face it all in his gospel labors. If the Lord can strengthen Paul, God is able to strengthen us as well.

In closing, I would like to encourage every disciple of Jesus Christ to have a willingness to share their experience with other believers. And, in doing so you too, as Paul, will be able to comfort another child of grace by telling them How much God has done for you! Amen!

Elder Ronnie B. Loudermilk

THE TESTIMONY OF THE APOSTLE PAUL TO THE PHILIPPIANS (part 6)

The Testimony of a Spiritual Education

Philippians 4:11, "Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content."

The Apostle Paul was a man who received an amazing education while living and interacting among the Jews. In Acts 22:3 he said of himself, "I am verily a man which am a Jew, born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, yet brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous toward God, as ye all are this day." Like Moses of Old had learned in the ways of the Egyptians for 40 years (Acts 7:22), Paul had learned much from his teachers in the world. But the learning the Apostle refers to in the text previously cited is not that from his forefathers or worldly teachers, it is the education that a child of God can receive at the feet of his or her Father in heaven. Just as Elijah had learned to

depend on God by the brook Cherith and at the home of the widow of Zarephath (1 Kings 17), and even as David had learned of the Lord how to lead and feed the people of God by tending to his father Jesse's sheep (Psalms 78:70-72), Paul had learned much by spending time with Jesus Christ. What a wonderful testimony to leave to this group of believers, not that the Apostle didn't appreciate the education he had received in Judaism, but he understood that there was a higher level of learning that could only be received from the Lord of Glory. The Lord who taught the saints in times past, is able to teach us today. Whether it be through the teaching of the Gospel, reading and meditating on His Holy Word, or kneeling to Him in prayer, the Lord is able to teach us those things we stand in need of that will undoubtedly help us as we pass through this weary land of sin and sorrow. So let us be found spending more time with God and less time with the entertainments of the world, that we may possess the wisdom required to answer the questions and problems a life in this world will bring. Amen!

Elder Ronnie B. Loudermilk

THE TESTIMONY OF THE APOSTLE PAUL TO THE PHILIPPIANS (part 7)

The Testimony of Contentment

Philippians 4:11, "Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content."

When the Apostle Paul departed from Macedonia (Philippians 4:15), he understood that the believers in Christ in that region would face much in persecution. The days that followed Paul's leaving would be filled with physical opposition and ostracization. This persecution would bring deep poverty (2 Corinthians 8:2) and without doubt, fear and worry (Philippians 4:6). Paul, being not ignorant of Satan's devices (2 Cor.2:11), knew that along with those troubles would come the temptations that the temporal glamour of this world could offer. In an effort to instill peace and stability into this group, Paul shared his experience of being content in the service to Jesus Christ our Savior. Paul said that he had "learned" to be content, and he was willing to share the recipe of contentment with the Macedonians. Paul taught them in order to have contentment, you must:

(1) Be continually thankful for what you have! When Paul said "Not that I speak in respect of want", there is a declaration of the thanksgiving that was in his heart. There is nothing that will fight the "want" problem like being thankful. According to verse 6 in this chapter, even in those times when we ask the Lord for those things we stand in need of, we at the same time should be thankful for His unmerited blessings.

(2) Labor diligently to maintain a healthy spiritual love for the Lord Jesus Christ! Paul loved the Lord when he was "full" and when he was "hungry". Whether on the mountain, or down in the valley, the Apostle Paul's love for the Lord stayed the same. The Lord loved Paul before the world began, and loved him so much He gave His precious life for Paul on the Cross of Calvary. Paul was constrained (2 Corinthians 5:14) by that love, and fought the good fight of faith that the "little foxes that spoil the vines" (Song of Solomon 2:15) would not have room to ply their trade in his heart.

(3) Maintain focus on the source of all spiritual strength - the Lord! In Philippians 4:13 when Paul says "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me", he is openly declaring his dependence on Jesus Christ for his strength. Please notice that Paul did not say, did strengthen, nor has strengthened, but "strengtheneth". Paul is saying that Christ had strengthened, does strengthen, and will continue to strengthen. And the Lord that

strengthened Paul, is still able to strengthen us today that we could overcome the temptations of covetousness and serve Jesus Christ faithfully, giving Glory to His name.

Elder Ronnie B. Loudermilk

THE TESTIMONY OF THE APOSTLE PAUL TO THE PHILIPPIANS (part 8)

The Testimony of a Trusting Servant

Philippians 4:13, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

Being a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ in Philippi was not an easy task for the congregation in Macedonia. The opposition that they would face on a social, physical, and religious (because of the idolatry) level was/is beyond the comprehension of us today. The Apostle Paul, in his sincere desire to see the saints at Philippi overcome this opposition, shared his personal experience in trusting in Christ's strength. Paul had been in the low valleys of life, as well as on the mountain tops in his service to the Lord and in having faced the troubles that they would encounter, he knew they needed encouragement to keep their eyes focused on the only source of strength in those times, Jesus Christ our Lord. How easy it is for every disciple in times of trouble to become discouraged thinking and asking, "How am I going to get through this?" And if we focus on nothing but ourselves, defeat will look inevitable. But when we compare everything that we face in this world to the power and glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, those things shrink into nothing. Think about it, the same God that parted the Red Sea in Exodus 14:21; stopped the sun in Joshua 10:13; fed Elijah with ravens in 1 Kings 17:4; destroyed 185 thousand of the Assyrian army with one angel in Isaiah 38:36; shut the mouths of lions in Daniel 6:22; and caused a virgin to conceive and bear a Son (Jesus Christ) in Luke 2:7; is still the same today. And if He's still the same today, we can trust Him the same as the saints of old trusted in Him. Solomon tells us in Proverbs 3:5, "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." So when we, in our labors to serve the Lord, are struggling to keep our heads up because of the weight of distress, let us remember the words of the Apostle Paul. "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." Amen!

Elder Ronnie B. Loudermilk

THE TESTIMONY OF THE APOSTLE PAUL TO THE PHILIPPIANS (part 9)

The Testimony of Paul the Evangelist

Philippians 4:15-16, "Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only. For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity."

The Apostle Paul, during his time in Macedonia, was blessed of the Lord to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ and to build a joyful fellowship with the Philippian congregation (Phil 4:1). As we read through Paul's letter to the Philippians, it is very easily gathered that Paul loved this group of believers. In my mind as I read verse 15 of the fourth chapter, I can see Paul with a face of sadness saying his goodbyes. When Paul would say "I departed from Macedonia", he had no liberty nor plans of immediately returning home. When he departed from the Philippians, in following the leadership of the Spirit, he would go to other cities preaching the gospel

of Christ. According to Acts chapters 17-18, Paul would travel from Macedonia to Thessalonica, Berea, Athens and then to Corinth. Without debate, this man, in order to go forth and serve Jesus as he served must have had:

(1) A longing willingness to share the truth with others! Paul understood the Lord had given to him, that he may give to others. Paul would write in Ephesians 4:8, "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ;..." What an amazing, longing desire this man possessed to leave the comforts of home and his home Church to travel abroad to tell others about Jesus. And even though, like most of us today, many of the Macedonians had responsibilities at home (wives and children, mothers and fathers, which the gospel forbids neglect), they were motivated, as we should be, to share what they had with others in the capacity afforded to them. Each of us have more opportunities than we will ever realize to talk to others about the truth of Jesus Christ, if we would just utilize them (Mark 5:19).

(2) A genuine love for the Lord Jesus Christ and His children! In Proverbs 27:2 we read, "Let another man praise thee, and not thine own mouth; a stranger, and not thine own lips." The Apostle Paul will never need to convince others of his love for Jesus and His children. Paul showed the love that was in his heart by denying himself in his service of Christ. In John 21:15-17, Jesus asked Peter three times "lovest thou me?" Peter would answer, "thou knowest..." Jesus would follow each answer with a command of service, "Feed my lambs"; "Feed my sheep"; and "Feed my lambs...". Jesus said in John 14:21, "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me". If we sincerely love Jesus, we should show that love by serving Him and His children.

(3) An enduring spirit to face the opposition! In 2 Timothy 2:3 the Apostle Paul exhorts Timothy to "endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." When the Apostle penned these words, by the inspiration of God, he had already shown himself to be an example of his own exhortation. Paul had endured being beaten with rods; being stoned; being imprisoned; being shipwreck; being robbed; being hungry; being thirsty and having to face the cold, heat and storms of the world (2 Corinthians 11:24-27). Paul thought it a blessed privilege to suffer for the cause of Christ (Acts 5:41). Troubles that would cause most people to give up and go home would motivate Paul to labor more diligently (Acts 16:25).

Apparently the testimony and example of Paul had an impact on the lives of the Macedonians. They, as Paul, were willing to give and do for others (Phil 4:15). And might I say, this example should have an effect on all of us today. If a man is willing to do what Paul did, facing what he faced, in his labors of the gospel, we all should be compelled to be better servants of our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, right now. Amen!

Elder Ronnie B. Loudermilk

THE TESTIMONY OF THE APOSTLE PAUL TO THE PHILIPPIANS (part 10)

The Servant's Longing Desire of the Church

Philippians 4:17 "Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that they may abound to your account."

When the Apostle Paul penned his Spirit Inspired Letter to the Philippians, he was, by the evidence of his own words, in prison (Phil 1:16). When reading through the four chapters of his letter, it is easily seen how much he loved and appreciated the congregation of believers there in Macedonia. Paul had come to that region preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ and saw the believers following the Lord in the obedience of baptism. Now, years later, even while in prison, Paul still thinks on them and calls to memory their fellowship with one another. Paul thinks back and recalls the time he spent there, and also the times that they thought on him and sent help for him in his afflictions of the gospel (Phil 4:14). What a precious blessing it was for Paul to receive from these poor saints the gifts that they had sent. By the account of Philippians 4:10 alone, we know the Apostle "rejoiced in the Lord greatly" because of their care. And yet, Paul desired something else from them. Not that he was ever unthankful for their care and love, but he desired most of all to see them manifesting the fruit of the Spirit in their service to the Lord, which is the proper and scriptural attitude that every servant of the Lord should have. Paul longed to see and hear that this congregation loved the Lord Jesus Christ more and

more, and the world less and less. Paul yearned to hear about their faithfulness to the cause, and devotion to the truth. Paul's greatest desire of them was to know that they glorified Jesus by putting Him first in their lives. The Apostle's hope was that they would follow the words of Jesus when He said, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 5:16). Amen!

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