

# 'LIFE' WITH CHRIST

## Articles of Comfort and Blessings Offered to the Reader

*Continuing his reflections on the book of Acts, Father Matta relates and delves into the story of the book, giving deep explanations on its meanings. Enjoy!  
Note: All quotations are taken from the New King James Version, if not otherwise mentioned.*

Volume Three

Chapter 74

"But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself,  
so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus,  
to testify to the gospel of the grace of God."

(Acts 20:24)

**A**FTER PAUL MET WITH STRONG RESISTANCE from the Jews, he insisted on going on with his journey, no matter what trappings the fanatic Jews had laid in store for him. And he said his famous saying that he does not count his life of any worth, meaning that he took it upon himself to continue with the ministry which Christ appointed for him from heaven, even unto death. He was keen on fulfilling his evangelism for Christ, the source of his joy, and his impetus for the ministry.

At this point, the totally unprecedented faithfulness of the apostle Paul, as an evangelist in the service of the Lord, is revealed. This is the reason that the message of Paul the apostle was a spectacular success in all the cities where he preached. In those days, that amounted to approximately one fourth of the earth. Moreover, the ministry of Paul was extended through those who received the ministry from him, like Timothy who was appointed bishop of Ephesus after the death of the apostle Paul. Luke, the beloved physician, who wrote the Book of Acts and whose ministry was mainly in Antioch, was also one of the most energetic evangelists who carried over from Paul and accompanied him on most of his journeys. This physician did

great works of evangelism but did not mention his name and made sure that Paul does not either, so Paul referred to him as one “whose praise *is* in the gospel.”<sup>1</sup> We must also not forget Lydia, the brave woman who was christianized by Paul and became a famous minister who turned her house into a church, where all other ministers, including the apostle Paul himself, used to meet. She was named, “a seller of purple,”<sup>2</sup> or silk dyed in red.

Paul was a live spring where many disciples were tutored, and those filled the world with their work, such as St Mark, whom Paul described as “useful to me for ministry,”<sup>3</sup> and whom the apostle Peter called “my son.”<sup>4</sup> It is believed that he accompanied St Peter on his trip to Egypt, which he called Babel. By “Babel” or “Babylon,” in Egypt, he meant the place where a big Jewish community lived around the fort of Babylon and which still exists in Old Cairo.

The apostle Mark, who was from Cyrene, on the coast of present day Libya, is the one who brought the good news of the Gospel to Egypt. He visited Egypt twice and got to know the community of Jews in Babylon in Old Cairo. Because he was originally a Jew, it was easy for him to ask St Peter to accompany him to the place of the Jews in Babylon of Egypt. From Babylon, St Peter wrote his epistle,<sup>5</sup> where he mentioned the epistles of Paul the apostle. He added that they were difficult to understand, but this goes back to the illiteracy of Peter himself in the Greek language.

But the ministry of St Paul was in the region of Asia Minor, Macedonia and the rest of the Greek lands, also Rome and perhaps Spain. It is remarkable that Paul said “to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.” By calling Christian evangelism “gospel of the grace of God,” he means the good or joyful news, while grace is the precious gift of God. This is what evangelism meant for Paul because he actually received it from the voice of Christ from heaven, and so for him it became the good news by the grace of God. This is because the gift of faith in Christ brings a new life and an eternity with God for the believers. The gospel of faith is counted a new revelation for man, enabling him to come into his eternal portion of life, along with Christ and the Father. This is considered the greatest and most glorious portion if compared with the portion of the world with all its temporary distractions, which only impart anxiety and weakness.

Paul holds the trumpet of the Gospel and goes through every town and country calling out to those who slumber that now is the time for the happy portions to be

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<sup>1</sup> 2Cor 8:18.

<sup>2</sup> Acts 16:14.

<sup>3</sup> 2Tim 4:11.

<sup>4</sup> 1Peter 5:13.

<sup>5</sup> See 1Peter 5:13.

dealt out. The wise and prudent one who asks for the best accepts free grace, winning with it the richest treasure because all its gifts are heavenly and permanent.

**November 10, 2005**

Chapter 75

“Then a certain Ananias, a devout man ... came to me; and he stood and said to me, ‘Brother Saul, receive your sight.’ And at that same hour I looked up at him. Then he said, ‘The God of our fathers has chosen you that you should know His will, and see the Just One, and hear the voice of His mouth. For you will be His witness to all men of what you have seen and heard. And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.’

(Acts 22:12-16)

THE APOSTLE PAUL to whom the Lord appeared from heaven and said, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?” also said to him: go to Jerusalem and there you will be told what to do. And Paul, who was called Saul, did in fact arrive in Damascus, where the Lord had asked the righteous and pious Ananias to go to Saul and tell him, ‘The God of our fathers has chosen you that you should know His will, and see the Just One (meaning, the Lord Jesus Christ in heaven) and hear the voice of His mouth. For you will be His witness to all men of what you have seen and heard (when the Lord appeared to him and spoke from heaven). And now what are you waiting for? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.” Actually, the Lord monitored this Biblical story from heaven and had told the pious and righteous Ananias to go to Saul in Damascus and give him the above message.

We notice that the first message which came to Saul who had been blinded by the bright light, which appeared in heaven, was “receive your sight,” and immediately scales fell off his eyes and he was able to see. Ananias told him to rise up immediately and be baptized. This makes it imperative for us to clarify for the reader what baptism has signified in the past and until now: it is a cleansing of sin, an accepting of the Holy Spirit and a confession of faith. The rest of the message was to preach in the name of the Lord. It is most important that we consider this message and this miraculous election from heaven as a witness to, and a further

clarification that faith in Christ is a mission from heaven. It set into operation the process of the belief, which has until now filled all the earth with that first divine impetus, whom Saul, later called Paul, was the first and greatest pillar thereof.

And now, we the believers are indebted to that active and faithful warrior. He is the only apostle who, throughout his years of evangelism, worked with his hands and refused to eat of the labors of others. As he himself said, he supported himself as well as his hearers: “these hands have provided for my necessities, and for those (the brethren) who were with me.”<sup>1</sup> But one must never belittle the fact that the apostle Paul is the one who laid down the charter of faith and carried it out item by item, and so became the greatest model of the Christian faith in the whole world. Like the Lord, he used to stress love. Because it was the commandment of Christ the Redeemer who made it the essence of faith, Paul made it the focus of his teaching.

Paul the apostle was the originator of the belief in the new man who is within us, whom he called “the inner man.”<sup>2</sup> Most of his commandments dealt with taking off the old man and putting on the new man. He was the first apostle who revealed our essential bond with Christ and the Father, or the holy fellowship. He was the originator of the divine doctrine that we are in Christ and Christ is in the Father, uniting us all in one. This was not just on the level of words but on the level of the real fellowship which we will experience in the kingdom with the Father and Son.

The apostle Paul is the first to reveal to us that we are created in Christ, from eternity and before the world was made. Not only were we chosen as children of God from eternity,<sup>3</sup> but we are now also fulfilling the dispensation of God from eternity for us. What has made the love of Christ for us and the love of the Father for Christ even more precious, is that the one who takes it in, is filled “with all the fullness of God,”<sup>4</sup> i.e. that he reaches to the depth of the revelation of the Father and Son.

Many extremely profound theological principles were laid down by the apostle Paul in his epistles, but they are too many for one book.

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<sup>1</sup> Acts 20:34.

<sup>2</sup> Eph 3:16.

<sup>3</sup> See Eph 1:4,5.

<sup>4</sup> Eph 3:19.

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