

'LIFE' WITH CHRIST

Articles of Comfort and Blessings Offered to the Reader

Again Father Matta contemplates on the story of the book of Acts, with its rich and vivid bits and pieces of life, during the beginning of the spread of Christianity among nations wide. Enjoy! Note: All quotations are taken from the New King James Version, if not otherwise mentioned.

Volume Three

Chapter 76

"Now it happened, when I returned to Jerusalem and was praying in the temple, that I was in a trance and saw Him saying to me, 'Make haste and get out of Jerusalem quickly, for they will not receive your testimony concerning Me.' So I said, 'Lord, they know that in every synagogue I imprisoned and beat those who believe on You. And when the blood of Your martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by consenting to his death, and guarding the clothes of those who were killing him.' Then He said to me, 'Depart, for I will send you far from here to the Gentiles.'"
(Acts 22: 17- 21)

THE APOSTLE PAUL was standing in the temple praying, and it happened that he fell into a trance and saw the Lord in heaven, telling him, 'Make haste and get out of Jerusalem quickly, for they will not receive your testimony concerning Me.' Again the Lord Jesus speaks from heaven and informs Paul that the people, 'will not receive your testimony concerning Me.' And so the Lord seems to monitor the events of evangelism, one by one. This fact proves that evangelism is followed word by word and step by step. The Lord does not only see and hear but actually takes part in the rejection, hurt and insults that the evangelists meet with. Rather than follow as an onlooker, the Lord shares in their pain, beating and stoning. This is a fact that my pen bashfully states. In these verses, the Lord interferes, not only for the sake of the faith, but also for the sake of Paul the preacher, so that he does not come to any harm. From heaven, and as the author and finisher¹ of the faith, He commands Paul to quickly get out of Jerusalem.

It is to that extent, dear reader, that the Lord was concerned about evangelism and ministry. If He were on earth, we would have said that the Lord supervises His work, but the most amazing thing is that He supervises His authorship of the faith from up in heaven, where He sits in glory, on the right of the Father. What we have been trying to underscore is that the Lord watches every step of the preacher. When it reached the point that the preacher could get hurt, the Lord ordered him very quickly out of Jerusalem.

¹ Heb 12:2.

Dear reader, look at the words 'get out quickly.' Here the Lord measures time and knows the intentions of His hearers and concludes that some kind of harm will inevitably reach Paul, and so He orders him to leave quickly. Believe me, dear reader, this quick intervention on the Lord's part puts us to shame. This great interest in the minister and in his life, and in the ministry and its outreach, no apostle or prophet, nor anyone in charge of the ministry at all times and in all places, were capable of in the past.

This is my heart to heart message to the reader: know that your life is laid bare before this superintendent who feels and truly suffers for all our wrongdoings. He would wish to address us from heaven. But the great interest in the ministry which had empowered it and filled the whole earth with preachers, has come to an end. Moreover, people's fear of God has deteriorated to the extent that the Lord has ceased to follow the ministry and the ministers. His work is recorded in the Bible and whoever wants to serve, let him serve, and whoever wants to turn his back on the ministry, let him do so. The days are near and the judge is at the door.

But it is most important that we accept what the Lord did with the apostle Paul as an obvious and palpable benchmark of the importance of evangelists and evangelism, as well as of the faith and the believers. Let us not bring judgment upon ourselves because the Lord never desires the death of the sinner. Rather, His only interest now and from heaven is the return of the sinner from his ways and the vigilance of those ministering to them. The work or effort of the ministry and ministers is never forgotten. When Christ appears it will become obvious how good, meek and gentle the Lord is and that faith is the ultimate interest of God the Father and Son, something beyond the imagination of the reader.

And now, we have hope in the Lord that these writings will have an influence in the spirits of the readers, in order for us to win the interest of the Lord in our lives and His sharing in our ministry, hopes and pains. He is the greatest friend to the one who gives Him his life and accepts Him as God and Savior, so that the reader may win eternal life and the succor of the Lord Himself, as a companion who walks with us down the road as long as it is the road of righteousness.

November 10, 2005

Chapter 77

"But the following night the Lord stood by him and said, 'Be of good cheer, Paul; for as you have testified for Me in Jerusalem, so you must also bear witness at Rome.' "
(Acts 23: 11)

THE APOSTLE PAUL keeps up with Christ's loving care for him as Christ addresses him from heaven with: "Be of good cheer, Paul; for as you have testified for Me in Jerusalem, so you must also bear witness at Rome." Closely did the Lord follow Paul and his witness from city to city.

It is truly awesome and terrifying that Christ in heaven follows our every footstep, especially when it comes to faith. It seems that when Christ ascended to heaven and sat on the right hand of Majesty in His glory, He made it a point to fervently monitor faith, among all people and in every city. For the sake of those for whom the cross and suffering are not an exercise in futility, faith and testimony have become Christ's number one preoccupation. This is particularly true of sinners, especially those who follow and accept the testimony of Christ, something which bestows upon them the inheritance He

acquired for them with His cross. It is similar to someone wealthy who is keen on leaving treasures for his children, the treasures he spent his life, days and efforts on.

And so for Christ, above, it has become all-important that people might win the glory of His cross and what He prepared for them in His kingdom. Otherwise, what is the value of His pain and suffering, the nailing on the cross and the bleeding to death? It is imperative that Christ fulfills His crucifixion, death and resurrection. He ended His life in hardship and death in order that He may bestow His legacy of glory in heaven on His beloved, as well as on those who believe in His cross. In fact Christ had anticipated the time of His crucifixion by giving His disciples and His loved ones, His glory beforehand: “And the glory which You gave Me I have given them.”¹

Of what value is it all, if people do not accept the call of Christ: “he who loves Me... I will love him”²? He is the one who spilt His blood for the sake of His loved ones and those who believe in Him. To reveal the price of faith in Him, Christ said, “he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.”³

The Lord encourages Paul and calls him from heaven: “Be of good cheer, Paul; for as you have testified for Me (for my faith) in Jerusalem, so you must also bear witness at Rome.”

The words, “Be of good cheer, Paul” are considered an oath from heaven so that Paul could be encouraged and go on with his witness for the Lord from country to country. The expression, “Be of good cheer, Paul” is tantamount to a medal placed by the Lord on the chest of Paul. This means that Paul has accepted, with assurance, the promise from the Lord, and so is encouraged in the faith. He is the apostle, par excellence, of the word of the Lord; the Lord talked with him, encouraged him and gave him confidence in what he saw and witnessed.

Again, what we can deduce from the Lord’s appearance and assuring words to Paul about the witness in Rome, is the great importance that testimony has for Him, alive, up in heaven, hearing, seeing and following. Brethren, what do we say? The ever-concerned Christ makes it obvious that He is in for a prize or a great reward from the faith in Him or the testimony for Him. But we become very humbled when we find out that Christ’s reward is **our** acquisition of eternal life and **our** gain in inheriting Him in His eternal kingdom. Because of the great importance of faith and witness for Christ, it should not even occur to us to be distracted by the world, nor to waste our life away, vainly or in vanity.

Is it possible that the brethren come together and promise to witness for Christ, according to His response to sincere prayer? Is it possible that every reader witness for Christ in his circle of life and work? Is it possible that the one who has not yet given his life to Christ and is yet an unbeliever, would start a new life today, one enhanced by faith, one which would bring comfort to the heart of Christ in heaven and bring forth the obedience of witnessing from a new heart?

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1 John 17:22.

2 John 14: 21.

3 John 5: 24.

