

# 'LIFE' WITH CHRIST

## Articles of Comfort and Blessings Offered to the Reader

*Father Matta continues his reflection on the book of Acts, and part of the Epistle to the Romans. Note: All quotations are taken from the New King James Version, if not otherwise mentioned.*

Volume Three

Chapter 78

"For there stood by me this night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve,  
saying, 'Do not be afraid, Paul; you must be brought before Caesar;  
and indeed God has granted you all those who sail with you.' "  
(Acts 27: 23, 24)

**A** GAIN THE LORD GOD sends an angel from heaven to tell him (St Paul), "Do not be afraid, Paul; you must be brought before Caesar." This is not for the purposes of immediate evangelism, but for the purposes of deferred evangelism, in anticipation of Paul's exit from the open prison, where he was left unchained, because of the gentleness of his manners and behavior.

But Paul here describes himself as belonging to the God whom he serves, meaning, he is a follower of Christ in heaven. The wheat-carrying ship had been tossed by such strong sea currents that first the tackle, then the wheat itself, were hurled overboard to reduce the weight and make the ship better able to confront the waves and strong winds. But in spite of that, the ship was carried and tossed by the wind, to the extent that the sailors lost all hope of rescue. Paul was praying for the ship to be saved, and the Lord answered immediately from heaven, and sent him an angel to tell him "Do not be afraid," for the Lord had granted him the entire ship, i.e. He had stopped it from sinking. Calm started

reigning once more in spite of the strong winds, and so, according to the promise of the Lord, at the hands of His angel, no one was hurt. Furthermore, the Lord assured him that he yet had to stand before Caesar.

Thus we find the Lord Jesus monitoring Paul's ship almost from start to finish. The Lord gave His promise that He was the keeper of the souls of the sailors, a great blessing which saved Paul's respect and dignity. One of the customs of the sailors was to throw the criminals on board—without regard for their persons—into the sea, because in that was the salvation of the whole ship. But because of the providence of God, Paul was granted the ship until the first land sighting. The waves broke up the ship near the shores of Malta, but no one was hurt and all were saved.

The Lord's direct intervention in St Paul's trip is amazing, something that makes us feel that preaching faith in Christ was supported by heaven, either from the mouth of Christ Himself or straight from His angel. At this point, we can contemplate for a moment Paul's trip to see how the Lord was steering from heaven, to the extent that He sent His angel to comfort him with this assurance. As a consequence, we cannot see Paul the apostle as doing the preaching on his own. This ought to lead our thinking towards the spiritual truth that preaching the faith of Christ was not done through preachers alone. The strength, direction, guidance and support were all from above, from heaven. In this understanding, preaching was merely an orientation, but the groundwork was done by the Lord Jesus Himself from heaven.

Dear reader, isn't this enough to prove that the work is heavenly since it was done by selecting the chosen who would fulfill the work of heaven? This makes preaching the faith of Christ a true extension of heaven, fulfilling what Christ did on the cross, in the tomb and the Resurrection. This is why Christ, at the beginning, was urging the apostles to manage the preaching of the faith. This insistence was because evangelism was on the Lord's agenda as something to be carried out immediately as an extension of the work of salvation and redemption. Without evangelism, without faith, salvation and redemption were incomplete. Faith in Christ holds up His cross and declares it in the hearts of the believers. Evangelism was and still is the practical extension of salvation, and an actual fulfillment of redemption. This is why it received tangible support from Christ, by the election and encouragement of evangelists to fulfill salvation and redemption and by finding believers who testify to the truth of salvation and evangelism.

**November 11, 2005**

## Chapter 79

"Concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, *and* declared *to be* the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead. Through Him we have received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith among all nations for

His name."

Romans 1: 3-5

**A**CCORDING TO LINEAGE AND GENEALOGIES, Christ is considered a descendant of David since the Virgin Mary is of the family of David the prophet. As a consequence, Christ was born in His hometown, Bethlehem. But according to the Spirit, Christ was, by God, declared to be the Son of God, and His real home is heaven. The Bible says: "declared *to be* the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." How?

According to the psalm, God said: "You *are* My Son, Today I have begotten You."<sup>1</sup> "Today" was a reference to the day of Christ's resurrection. With His resurrection from the dead by the power and glory of God, Christ was indeed looked upon as the Son of God. Furthermore, since the body of Christ is, through the Holy Spirit, the body of all humanity, we too have been born again with the resurrection of Christ from the dead.

In fact, we have not only received the second birth through the Resurrection, but we also obtained what Christ Himself had received: namely, the power of grace acquired through His cross, death and resurrection. And this—the work of grace manifested in the Resurrection—we received as partners in Christ's resurrection and its entitlements. We, if we receive this grace, immediately receive, along with it, what it fulfilled in Christ, especially where it comes to death and resurrection. This grace has worked in us to testify to the death and dynamic resurrection of Christ. In us grace has become a mission, a mission we have been made eligible for through our partnership in the death, resurrection and the grace of Christ. The essence of this mission, received from Christ, is witness and testimony for the faith, so that, along with us, all nations would submit to Him.

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<sup>1</sup> Ps 2:7.

Dear brethren, we, therefore, ought to seriously acknowledge grace as a divine reality granted us. We should do so in the confidence and assurance that it is the selfsame grace which worked in Christ, in His death and resurrection, and which subsequently became the power granted to all who believe in Him. Grace, as divine power given for free through faith in Christ, is what drives us to testify to His death and resurrection. This testimony, through the power of grace, penetrates the heart of the one presented with the faith, besides granting the preacher favor in the eyes of his audience.

It therefore follows that grace—received through inner faith in Christ—has become the vital element in any witness or testimony in His name. Grace is what accompanied the crucifixion and death of Christ, and grace worked with the glory of God in His resurrection. Who can ever get to know or understand the death and resurrection of Christ without the work of grace? It is grace which brings about in us the death of Christ as well as, with the glory of God, His resurrection.

If the preacher acquires the grace of God, blessed is he because he will then speak about Christ's death as though he has lived it and about the resurrection of Christ as though he can see it. Thus, the testimony and witness of faith become a vital and ever-present reality, not a past tense event. But to receive the power and efficacy of grace, we need to pray, holding on to the words of Christ, as well as to his timing and promises. These are the gifts—a natural outcome of His death and resurrection—which Christ Himself is anxiously waiting for us to claim. Who did Christ die for, if not for you, dear reader? Who did He rise from the dead for, except for you reader? Know and be assured full well that Christ died especially for you and rose from the dead especially for you. And this is the work of grace that was with Christ and became in us, so that we can receive all that is Christ's.

**November 11, 2005**

#### Chapter 80

"For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to  
faith; as it is written,

*'The just shall live by faith.'* "

Romans 1:17

IN THIS VERSE and through inspiration, the apostle Paul brings to light that Christ—through His works—revealed the righteousness of God. The verse says, “from faith to faith.” The first “faith” is a reference to faith pronounced as a declaration or proclamation; the second “to faith,” is a reference to life lived in that faith, i.e. from faith as confession to faith as a way of life. Dispensable faith is faith only of the mouth. Faith which truly counts as faith has to be life, confession, and true witness.

In short, we can say that theoretical faith, which is uttered by mouth, can lead to real faith, that of life in Christ. But what is indeed striking in this revelation, is that the true believer is considered righteous. What is righteousness and who is righteous? Christ was righteous, but righteous with the ability and power to make the others righteous in Himself. Why was Christ considered righteous? Not only because He fulfilled the wishes of the Father, but also because there was no deceit in His mouth.<sup>1</sup> In reference to that, He Himself said, “Which of you convicts Me of sin?”<sup>2</sup> Not even one sin. And so through Christ and faith in Him, we become righteous, on condition we keep ourselves from sin, and do works according to His will. When it says, “*The just shall live by faith,*” it means that righteousness besides being faith and testimony, is life and works which prove that one truly lives according to God’s way, in faith and in truth. His will be a life of faith through works.

The just shall live by faith, and faith is the greatest testimony to righteousness because faith is faith in Christ’s death and resurrection. Christ received righteousness from God as a result of His voluntary death and His resurrection. In this way, He fully fulfilled the will of the Father and so received the righteousness of God and became the source of justification of all those who believe and live His death and resurrection.

And so faith became the inroad to righteousness. After being exclusively the Son’s, or Christ’s, righteousness became the prerogative of all. With this faith, man has appropriated righteousness from Christ, but this is done with Christ’s total consent because it indicates that His death has produced fruit which will last forever.

The verse here states that righteousness is of God, or of the Father, pointing to the truth of the absolute equality between the Father and Son. The Son, in His Father’s will, is worthy to receive the Father’s or God’s righteousness.

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<sup>1</sup> See 1 Peter 2:22.

<sup>2</sup> John 8:46.

The righteousness of Christ is what He received with His obedience to the Father, obedience even unto death, the death of the cross. It was revealed in the Resurrection that Christ merited the righteousness of the Father for His obedience and the fulfillment of the will of the Father. Faith in Christ's death and resurrection has clothed us with the righteousness which Christ had received through His death and resurrection. We became partners in the death and Resurrection and, therefore, partners in Christ's righteousness. If we look closely at the righteousness received from Christ, it becomes quite clear that righteousness is a free gift, the work of grace. We have not done anything to deserve this gift except offer faith. Righteousness and faith are therefore inextricably entwined.

Whoever has believed in the death and resurrection of Christ and has realized he was a partner in Christ's death and resurrection, has become righteous, having the righteousness of Christ and the Father. With this merit, the believer has received the promise of eternal life with the Father and Son in God's eternal kingdom.

The words: "that He might be just and the justifier of many"<sup>3</sup> are about Christ, our beloved Lord. He has introduced into our world divine righteousness, one of the attributes of Deity.

For all who believe in Him, it has become a legacy.

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<sup>3</sup> See Romans 3: 26.

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**FATHER MARYA EL-MESKEEN**

## **The Mystery of God's Love in relation to Renewed Mankind**

"THE FATHER loves the Son" (Jn 3:35) because He is of His own nature.

"As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you" (Jn 15:9) because he took on our nature.

"And hast loved them even as thou hast loved me" (Jn 17:23). A love springing from the Father's nature to us, as was given to Him.

"For the Father himself loves you, because you have loved me" (Jn 16:27) because of our fellowship in the nature of the Son.

"That the love with which thou hast loved me may be in them" (Jn 17:26). Thus we have fellowship through the Father and through the Son.

His love emanates from His own nature, and not due to anything within us. Therefore, He loved us without any prerequisite or merit on our part.

Our love for Christ through the Holy Spirit uncovers the depth of our love to God the Father and opens up the flow of the Father's love to us:

"For the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me and have believed that I came out from God" (Jn 16:27).

Our love for God was impossible because of sin and the judgment of death. Removing the barricade, Christ, the Son, opened the way for us to God the Father's love. Through the cross He broke down the barriers, sin and the curse of death, that separated us from God the Father. He revealed God the Father's love which he held bound within Himself, waiting for redemption, the forgiveness of sins and the removal of the barriers: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son" (Jn 3:16). The Father's love was then poured out upon us.

The Father's love, which had been confined and forbidden to us, overflowed upon us freely in Christ through the cross. Previously impossible due to our unworthiness, through the opening Christ made for us through the cross, our love easily ascended to God the Father.

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